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# THE EXTERNAL CONVERGENCE OF THE EAEU ON GLOBAL ISSUES: EVIDENCE FROM THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY VOTE, 2000–2020

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*This paper examines the voting behavior of the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in order to find out their preference similarities on foreign policy issues. Based on a specific dataset of UNGA resolutions from 2000 to 2020 and using two different indices of voting cohesion, the present research addresses two empirically motivated questions: To what extent does the EAEU speak in unison externally in the context of UNGA plenary? And second, what has been the impact of the formation of the EAEU in 2015 on the common foreign policy? The results reveal that the EAEU scores a ‘medium’ level of cohesion as measured in the context of the UNGA, which may indicate that members often speak with one voice, while defections still occur during controversial votes. Moreover, the findings suggest that there is no meaningful difference in cohesion between the pre- and post-EAEU periods. Finally, the study finds that Eurasian states are most cohesive on development resolutions, but least cohesive on security and human rights issues, as reflected in their recorded voting behavior.*

**Keywords:** *EAEU, Eurasian integration, Eurasia, United Nations, UNGA, voting cohesion.*

## 1. Introduction

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Eurasian integration<sup>1</sup> has gone through several stages, following the ‘CIS-EurAsEC-CU/SES-EAEU’ line<sup>2</sup> (Vinokurov 2018), culminating in the establishment of the EAEU, the most sophisticated regional organization that unites the core integrationist states of the post-Soviet space. Some of these nations have been hailed as ‘the greatest Eurasian-optimists’ (Kudaibergenova 2016). Basing the Eurasian Union on the model of the European Union (EU), Russia's then Prime Minister Vladimir Putin wrote in 2011 that the aim was to create a ‘powerful supranational union’ of sovereign states ‘that is capable of becoming a pillar in today's world’ (Halbach 2012). As Lane argues (2017), the EAEU was formed in response to both the growing power of the EU and the weaknesses of the CIS. Recognizing the EAEU as an EU-like bloc, this paper investigates the extent to which Eurasian states act as a solid ‘pillar’ externally, speaking with one voice on global issues. More specifical-

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ly, the aim is to provide an empirical account of the voting patterns of the EAEU members in the UNGA from years 2000 to 2020 and to advance our understanding of whether institutionalization has had an impact on the convergence of foreign policy preferences among the member states. Engaging with the question of whether Eurasian nations align their national interests externally is crucial for understanding not only the EAEU's foreign policy prospects but also the future trajectory of the geopolitical pluralism in the twenty-first century Eurasia.

The EAEU was formed in 2015 when the 'troika' (Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia) which remains the core of Eurasian integration today (Vinokurov 2018), signed the Treaty on the EAEU, an agreement that ended the previous structures and established a new international organization for regional cooperation and development through economic integration. In the same year, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan joined the treaty. The five countries agreed to create conditions for stable economic development, a common market for goods, services, capital, and labor, and comprehensive modernization, cooperation, and competitiveness of national economies within the global economy (EAEU 2014). All of these domestic (intra-EAEU) aspects of integration processes have been widely assessed by academic research. However, little has been written on the degree of EAEU's integration in terms of unity (or lack thereof) among member states at the international level: to what extent and on what substantive issues do EAEU members speak with one voice externally. After all, as Hurwitz (1974) has argued persuasively, 'integration is not merely an increase in the transaction of goods, services, and people, or the sharing of common attitudinal maps,' it also entails the ability of member countries to harmonize their 'external behavior and to reach a consensus on external issues.'

The literature on the quantitative analysis of state voting behavior in the UN bodies is extensive. The voting behavior of states and bloc politics in the Assembly has attracted scholars' attention since the founding of the UN (Voeten 2012). Most recent studies have dealt with the recorded votes in order to generate measures for assessing the degree of political closeness between states or to track the cohesion of groups of states (Peterson 2014). There has also been an active scholarly debate on whether the intensified cooperation within the EU, BRICS, and ASEAN translates into common positions on issues discussed in the UNGA. Only a few recent works have analyzed the voting behavior of post-Soviet states in the UNGA. Yet, the empirical analysis of the EAEU's voting cohesiveness has so far received virtually no attention in the academic literature. Thus, this article aims to extend the existing research on Eurasian integration by analyzing UN voting data to measure the degree of foreign policy convergence among Eurasian states on various global issues.

Based on the above, and in line with the assumptions held by realist and liberal understandings, the following testable hypotheses have been formulated to achieve the purpose of the present research: First, since realism argues that states pursue their national interests in order to survive, and therefore cooperation is hard to achieve (Frieden *et al.* 2013), realist scholars would hypothesize ( $H_1$ ) that there would be little consensus among EAEU members on 'high politics' issues that are most important for the survival of the state, such as security and arms control, whereas a higher degree of cohesion should be expected on 'low politics' issues which involve socio-economic concerns (*e.g.*, development, human rights).<sup>3</sup> Also, according to neo-realists, Russia would behave less cooperatively than other EAEU members precisely because it is 'more pow-

erful and has more information due to (its) permanent membership of the UN Security Council (UNSC)' (Hosli *et al.* 2010). Unlike realists, liberals tend to emphasize, among other things, the importance of institutions, international norms, trade relations, and economic interdependence that facilitate interstate cooperation (Owen 2017). Accordingly, this would lead liberal scholars to hypothesize ( $H_2$ ) that EAEU states would exhibit high levels of cohesion over time, especially after the formation of the economic union in 2015, on the assumption that the institutionalization of economic integration may have intensified the convergence of members' voting preferences. Liberals would also expect ( $H_3$ ) that those states that are deeply integrated within the EAEU, economically or in some other ways, would exhibit higher levels of cohesion in the UNGA.

The data for this study is obtained from the US Department of State's annual reports which contain a list of 'important' votes for which the US lobbies extensively with other countries (US Department of State 2019). It includes the roll-call voting records of EAEU members in the UNGA from the 55<sup>th</sup> session (2000–2001) up to and including the 74<sup>th</sup> session (2019–2020). The study thus measures voting cohesion in the UNGA before the EAEU (2000–2014) and after the EAEU (2015–2020). The temporal analysis begins in 2000 for two reasons. First, the year 2000 marks an important milestone reached in the integration process, when the five nations formed EurAsEC, which 'served as an institutional springboard' (Vinokurov 2018) for subsequent integration initiatives. Second, online data on 'important' resolutions were only available from 2000 onwards on the website of the US State Department.

The article is structured as follows. The next section provides a brief background on the foreign policy coordination among Eurasian nations, followed by a discussion of voting practices in the UNGA. The following two sections describe the data and methodological procedure used in the analysis. The main findings derived from the data analysis are presented in section six. The final section discusses the implications and interpretations of the results.

## 2. EAEU and Foreign Policy Coordination

The Treaty on the EAEU neither establishes an institutional framework nor provides legally-binding rules for coordination of national positions and acting cohesively<sup>4</sup> in international organizations. Article 1 of the treaty merely calls for the parties to 'ensure the free movement of goods, services, capital and labor as well as coordinated, agreed or common policy in the economic sectors' (EAEU 2014). Although the EAEU enjoys observer status at the UN since EurAsEC was granted this status in 2003, unlike the EU, for example, it does not entertain a permanent observer mission at the UN headquarters (which would allow the members to coordinate their positions). Hence, cooperation is arguably a challenging task for EAEU members in the absence of a formal framework that would otherwise provide incentives or disincentives to achieve common foreign policy positions. It should be noted, however, that in most cases coordination issues are addressed through bilateral consultations. For example, as noted by Russian Ambassador Alexei Borodavkin, Russia and Kazakhstan maintain close coordination of positions and joint promotion of agreed foreign policy objectives in the UN bodies on a wide range of issues (Chetyre goda v YEAES 2018). Similarly, Degtrev *et al.* (2018) explain high voting cohesion scores of some CIS countries in the UNGA by the existence of close political consultations and bilateral dialogue at the highest levels.

Still, it would not be an exaggeration to assert that the formal foundations for foreign policy coordination among Eurasian nations lie elsewhere: one of them is the Charter of the CIS, signed by the heads of state in 1993. While the member states are called upon to respect the principle of ‘non-interference into domestic and foreign affairs of each other,’ Article 4 explicitly states that spheres of joint activity of the member states include ‘coordination of foreign political activities,’ among others (Commonwealth 1995). The Council of Foreign Ministers is established under Article 27 of the Charter to coordinate the foreign political activity of the members, including their positions in international organizations, and to organize consultations on issues of world politics. While these provisions suggest that the drafters’ initial desire was decidedly to achieve a greater policy convergence among the CIS members (Hansen 2013), the union appears to have failed to deliver on its ambitious mandate and goals, including in the area of foreign policy alignment.

Moreover, a great deal of consultation on matters of foreign policy and national security issues also occurs within the institutional setting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), another Eurasian bloc with largely overlapping membership with the EAEU (plus Tajikistan). The CSTO was established as a successor organization to the Collective Security Treaty when its Charter was approved in 2002. The organization was granted observer status in the UN General Assembly in 2004 (CSTO 2020). Article 9 of the Charter stipulates that ‘the Member States shall approve and coordinate their foreign policy positions on the international and regional security problems, using, in particular, consulting mechanisms and procedures of the Organization’ (CSTO 2002). The Charter also establishes the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMFA), the advisory and executive body of the Organization for coordinating the interaction of member states in the field of foreign policy. Through these mechanisms, the member states develop common positions and seek joint actions on current issues on the international agenda (CSTO 2020).

The meetings of the CSTO foreign ministers are conventionally convened on the margins of the UNGA sessions where delegations discuss issues of coordinating the positions of the CSTO members on the UNGA agenda items, as well as other issues affecting the interests of the parties (CSTO 2019). Official meetings and consultations take place mostly in New York, Moscow, and other capitals of the member states.<sup>5</sup> The meetings are usually attended by CSTO plenipotentiaries, heads of specialized units of the ministries of foreign affairs, representatives of embassies of the member states, as well as the staff of the CSTO Secretariat. As noted by Armenian Foreign Minister, Zohrab Mnatsakanyan, the traditional format of ministerial meetings is considered as an effective platform for foreign policy coordination (CSTO 2018).

Since voting in the UNGA is, in fact, a manifestation of foreign policy (Rai 1972), it would be interesting to see to what extent this community of nations has succeeded in coordinating their actions and adopting common positions in the UNGA. In other words, have ministerial meetings, consultations, and institutionalization led to significantly greater voting cohesion among EAEU members? A systematic analysis of the voting records of EAEU members can be useful in answering this question, as it measures how successful Eurasian nations have been in speaking with one voice in the UNGA.

### 3. Analysis of the Votes in the UN General Assembly

According to the UN Charter, the General Assembly is one of the six ‘principal organs’ of the UN (Article 7). All member states participate in the meetings of the Assembly, where ‘the will of the majority of the members as expressed in the resolutions and decisions adopted’ (UN 2017). Although the Assembly resolutions, unlike the UNSC actions, are not binding on the UN member states, it has been widely recognized that the resolutions set the global agenda, consolidate international law, engage in norm-building, and represent the organized views of the member states (Petersen 2006; Ferdinand 2014; also, Hosli *et al.* 2010). Resolutions can be adopted with or without a vote in plenary meetings where each country has one vote. The majority of them are adopted by consensus (without a recorded vote) each year. Only a recorded vote (*i.e.*, a roll-call vote) reveals a country's position on the issue under discussion (Hug 2012). On average, about 20–30 per cent of resolutions are adopted each year by a roll-call vote, where each member openly votes ‘yes’ (for), ‘no’ (against) or ‘abstains’ (or ‘is absent’) (Luif 2003). Data on adopted resolutions can be found in the Voting Data collection of the UN Digital Library.<sup>6</sup> Overall, most countries vote in favor of resolutions. For example, Ferdinand's (2014) study, found that the positive voting rate in the Assembly for all recorded votes for the period 1974–2008 was about 84 per cent.

The literature on various aspects of voting in the UNGA is vast and diverse, with different scholars measuring voting cohesion in different ways and reaching different conclusions (Hosli *et al.* 2010). More recently, there has been a notable, albeit limited, interest in studying the voting patterns of post-Soviet nations in the UN, using different methodologies and focusing on different issue areas and voting groups. For example, one of the earliest studies, conducted by Hansen (2014), examines the foreign policy orientations of the CIS members, relying on a large quantitative dataset of the UNGA voting records in the years 1992–2013. Hansen's study shows that the level of disagreement among the members has increased significantly. Kaplan *et al.* (2015), in their analysis of whether the Turkic Council's members act cohesively in the UNGA, find that voting agreement among the Turkic nations has steadily increased.

Some scholars have focused on specific aspects of Eurasian voting patterns in the Assembly. For instance, Costa-Buranelli (2014) analyzes the existence of normative stands among the five Central Asian republics and the degree of their normative convergence as reflected in the UNGA. Other scholars (Kurylev *et al.* 2018) have used the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods to assess the level of geopolitical pluralism in the CIS space, surveying the member states' voting behavior in the UNGA. Patarai's (2015) work explicitly focused on the voting practices of Armenia and Georgia in the UNGA between 1998 and 2013, concluding that Armenia's level of cohesion with Russia and the EU has decreased. A recent study conducted by Lennon and Becker (2019) specifically examines Belarus' global policy orientation from 2007 to 2017 by analyzing its voting patterns on contentious issues in the UNGA, and finds insufficient evidence to believe that Belarus might be aligning more with the West and moving away from Russia. Despite a growing number of scholarly works on the external cohesion of the post-Soviet states in the UN, no one has so far systematically studied the EAEU's voting behavior. Thus, the main contribution of this paper would be the mathematical analysis of the EAEU's voting cohesion using two different voting behavior indices, the results of which may have both practical and theoretical implications.

#### 4. Data Description

Taking a cue from the works of Hurwitz (1975) and Hosli *et al.* (2010), this paper analyses the voting behavior of Eurasian states based on a selected dataset manually compiled from the annual reports entitled ‘Voting Practices in the United Nations’ published by the US State Department since 1984. Only those resolutions that are designated as ‘particularly important to US interests’ were coded.<sup>7</sup> On average, between ten and thirty ‘important’ resolutions are listed each year by the State Department and reported to the US Congress under Public Law 101–246. These actions are defined as ‘votes on issues that directly affected important United States interests and on which the United States lobbied extensively’ (US Department of State 2019) other UN members to vote in line with American preferences.

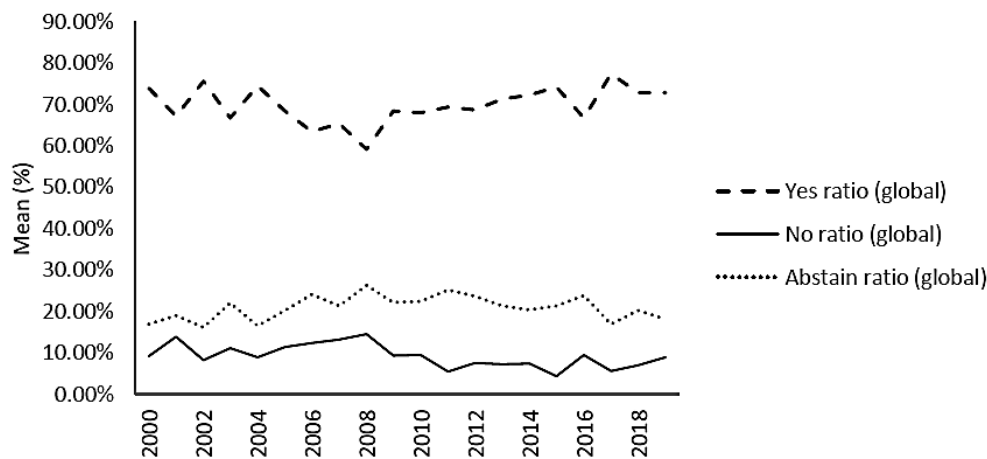
The number of roll-call votes ranges from 11 (2000/01) to 28 (2019/20) per session. 277 ‘important’ resolutions were included in the dataset, with the voting choices of five states. The total number of observations is 1,135 individual votes. There are 276 abstentions, 200 votes against, and 69 absences in the data. The results presented in Table 1, and in Figures 1 and 2 provide some insights into the positive voting of Eurasian states on ‘important’ resolutions in the UNGA.

Table 1

Voting records of the EAEU in the UNGA, 2000–2020 (%)

	Yes	No	Abstain
Armenia	64.2	10.9	24.9
Belarus	62.6	21.8	15.6
Kazakhstan	77.2	9.9	12.9
Kyrgyzstan	72.4	9.3	18.3
Russia	43.8	23.6	32.6
EAEU	64.0	15.1	20.9
UNGA	69.8	9.2	21.0

As Table 1 reveals, of the 1,135 votes cast by EAEU members, 64 per cent were ‘yes’, 15.1 per cent were ‘no’ and 20.9 per cent were abstentions. It is noteworthy, though not surprising, that the Eurasian voting on key actions is less positive than the average for the UNGA as a whole. Two of the EAEU members (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) have a stronger record of voting in favor of important resolutions. Most strikingly, the former voted in favor of almost eight out of ten important resolutions, followed by the latter with 72.4 % positive votes. In contrast, among EAEU members, Russia appears to be less consensual on important resolutions, with the lowest positive voting. Also, it is no surprise perhaps that Belarus voted ‘no’ just as often as Russia over the same period.



**Fig. 1. Vote choice in UNGA on “important” issues, 2000–2020: all member states**



**Fig. 2. Vote choice in the UNGA on ‘important’ issues, 2000–2020: the EAEU members**

In addition, Figures 1 and 2 graphically show the proportion of ‘yes’, ‘no’ and ‘abstentions’ over time for the entire UNGA membership and for the Eurasian nations. The share of ayes as compared to nays is higher for the global community than for the EAEU. The figures also suggest that global voting patterns appear to be more stable than those of the EAEU. While positive votes on important resolutions for the UNGA as a whole fluctuate between about 60 and 80 per cent over the period covered, there are significant ups and downs in the EAEU’s votes over time. It is also very noticeable that, from 2000 onwards, EAEU’s positive voting starts to gradually decline, with the lowest value of 30 per cent cast in 2016, followed by a spike in positive votes (63 %) and then remaining at about this level (see Figure 2). Such variations suggest that future research could focus on the reasons associated with these fluctuations.

## 5. Methodology

Different methodologies have been proposed to measure the degree of the UN voting cohesion within particular specific regional groups or voting blocs. The academic literature is divided on the issues of data collection, the resolutions to be counted, the indices of voting cohesion to be used, and the question of how to deal with absenteeism and abstentions.<sup>8</sup> The present study uses ‘the two most prominent and widely used indices of voting cohesion’ (Burmester and Jankowski 2014): the first is the Agreement Index (AI) originally developed by Hix *et al.* (2005) to calculate voting cohesion in the European Parliament; and the second is the Index of Voting Cohesion (IVC), also known as Rice-Beyle method, first developed by Lijphart (1963) and later amended by Hurwitz (1975).

Measuring with AI produces an indicator that provides the degree of cohesion of a group as a whole. AI is frequently utilized in analyses of voting patterns in the UNGA since it allows ‘abstentions’ to be included in the calculation. It also treats ‘yes’, ‘no’, and ‘abstention’ as equal, producing a unique tally of each voting option for each resolution, represented by Y, N, and A respectively (Hosli *et al.* 2010). The AI formula, as presented by Hix *et al.* (2005), is given by

$$AI_i = \frac{MAX\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\} - \frac{1}{2} \times [(Y_i + N_i + A_i) - MAX\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\}]}{Y_i + N_i + A_i}$$

where  $Y_i$  represents the number of ‘yes’ votes cast by group  $i$  for a given resolution,  $N_i$  is the number of ‘no’ votes, and  $A_i$  is the number of ‘abstentions’.  $MAX\{Y_i, N_i, A_i\}$  stands for the number of voting choice that appears most often (whether  $Y$ ,  $N$  or  $A$ ) for a particular group for a given resolution. AI value is between 1 (perfect cohesion indicating that all members of a group vote the same way) and 0 (absolutely no cohesion where the three voting choices are equally divided). While this technique is suitable for measuring changes in cohesiveness for the same group of states over time, it is less helpful for identifying differences and changes in voting patterns within a group (Ferdinand 2014).

It is precisely here that the second approach comes in. The IVC, as presented by Lijphart (1963), is primarily utilized to estimate the degree of voting cohesiveness for a dyad of states. This approach produces an index of voting agreement between pairs of states by matching each state with others within the group (Hosli *et al.* 2010) and averaging the scores of all these pairings across the whole group (Ferdinand 2013). The following equation, expressed as a percentage, is used to calculate dyadically the voting similarity rate of countries on every given roll-call resolution:

$$IVC = \frac{\left(f + \frac{1}{2}g\right)}{t} \times 100$$

where  $f$  represents the number of votes on which a pair of nations are in full agreement (either ‘yes’, ‘no’ or ‘abstention’),  $g$  is the number of resolutions on which one of the parties in the dyad votes ‘yes’ or ‘no’ while the other chooses to abstain, and  $t$  denotes the total number of votes cast by each dyad (see Hix *et al.*, 2005; Hosli *et al.*, 2010 for more). If all the members of a group vote ‘yes’ or all vote ‘no’, then the index is 100,



whereas an equal number of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ votes would give an index value of 0. Ferdinand (2014) notes that although this formula is complicated compared to AI, it has the advantage of highlighting changes in voting patterns for a given pair of states that would otherwise be subsumed in an overall AI value.

As indicated above, both methods ensure that abstentions are reflected in the calculations. In the UNGA context, abstentions have a specific meaning and cannot just be seen as a ‘nay’ vote or be ruled out from the computations (Hurwitz 1975). According to the rules of procedure of the UNGA, abstaining is considered as a separate voting option. Following the literature, I assume that abstentions are apparently ‘neutral’ votes, neither for nor against the resolution, and therefore abstentions are considered as partial agreement and scored with half of the maximum cohesion (Hurwitz 1975; Luif 2003; Bailey *et al.* 2017; also, Costa-Buranelli 2014). Counting abstentions at half a point allows for a more inclusive review and more nuances in the voting coincidence metric (US Department of State 2019).

Finally, countries may choose not to participate in voting. In about one in ten cases, a delegation does not vote at all and is consequently registered as absent in the UNGA (Panke 2014). The reasons for absence can vary from political (deliberate skipping) to situational (unable to attend) or staff bottlenecks (for small missions), and even civil wars (US Department of State 2019; Voeten 2004, 2012). Some authors, therefore, code absences as missing values. In this study, however, absences are treated like abstentions since ‘both have in common that it is about non-voting’ (Hooijmaaijers and Keukeleire 2016).<sup>9</sup> This position assumes that the delegation is considered as ‘not knowing how to vote, it is “in-between” a pro and a contra vote; it is therefore regarded as a “partial disagreement” if confronted with a “yes” or “no” vote and given a value of 0.5’ (Luif 2003).

## 6. Results: Eurasian Voting in the UNGA

The findings of this study are summarized in two sub-sections. The first set of findings results from the AI analysis, calculated separately for three groupings and substantive categories. The second sub-section illustrates IVC scores computed dyadically.

### 6.1. Agreement Index Scores

Figure 3 reveals the results of the AI analysis for three different groupings: indices for the entire EAEU membership and two sub-groups within EAEU – the ‘Eurasian troika’ (Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia) and the Russia-Kazakhstan pairing. They provide valuable insights into Eurasian voting cohesion. One caveat, however, must be kept in mind: as pointed by Hosli *et al.* (2010), with fewer members, cohesion calculations for groupings are more easily distorted if a single member opposes the majority.



**Fig. 3. AI Scores for the EAEU members in the UNGA (2000–2020)**

The first observation to be made is the fact that all three groupings share a similar general trend: all AI indices gradually declined until 2016, after which they increased again, with values reaching the levels of the early 2000s. Another important observation is that all Eurasian cohesion levels experienced fluctuations up and down from year to year. Historically, the highest AI value for the entire EAEU was scored in 2000 (0.81) and for the Eurasian troika in 2001 (0.83). Interestingly, unlike these two groupings, the Russia-Kazakhstan pairing reached the highest point in 2019 with an index of 0.89. Moreover, the AI approach highlights a sharp drop in 2016, when the lowest level of convergence was observed for all Eurasian groupings. It is also noteworthy that, compared to the EAEU as a whole, the Russia-Kazakhstan pair exhibited a higher level of cohesion until 2010, after which the pair became the least cohesive group, at least until the 74<sup>th</sup> session. Finally, the main observation to be made for the troika countries, in which the integration project continues to enjoy consistent public support (Vinokurov 2018), is that on the whole, the degree of voting convergence among the three was slightly higher than the cohesion of the other two groupings.

*Table 2*

**AI Scores for the EAEU members in the UNGA (2000–2020)**

AI (Index)	pre-EAEU	post-EAEU	Change
EAEU	0.68	0.65	–0.03
Eurasian troika	0.73	0.69	–0.04
Kazakhstan-Russia	0.69	0.62	–0.07

Table 2 provides additional evidence on the voting patterns of the three Eurasian caucuses for the pre- and post-EAEU periods. Despite declaratory statements and a growing commitment to cooperation, what is obvious from the results is that Eurasian nations have become somewhat less consensual since the establishment of the EAEU in 2015. The troika retains its status as the most cohesive caucus, although the convergence among them has declined slightly in the post-EAEU period. The two largest economies

of the EAEU were the least cohesive groups with the lowest AI value of 0.62. The results also suggest that the new members of the EAEU (Kyrgyzstan and Armenia) appear to have reduced the overall cohesiveness of the union.

Table 3 shows the indices of agreement on substantive categories, again divided into two periods for comparison. It reveals the shifts in the level of voting cohesion before and after the EAEU in four subject areas. While only one category (security) shows a significant decrease in the degree of convergence, the remaining three categories show a slight increase in the post-EAEU period.

Table 3

**AI Scores for the EAEU in the UNGA on substantive categories**

Category	Votes	pre-EAEU	post-EAEU	Change
Development	20	0.85	0.96	+0.11
Human Rights	106	0.60	0.62	+0.02
Middle East, Israel, Palestine	78	0.57	0.62	+0.05
Security, Arms control, Cuba	72	0.87	0.58	-0.29

Two fairly striking shifts can be detected regarding ‘low’ politics (development) and ‘high’ politics (security) resolutions. First, in the post-EAEU period, identical EAEU voting on security-related resolutions suffered a setback of -0.29 points (down from 0.87 to 0.58). This means that Eurasian states have become less consensual, and more divided, on security issues in recent years. Second, what stands out markedly in the results is that EAEU members are generally the most cohesive on developmental issues than any other category. Moreover, cohesiveness on developmental votes increased significantly in the post-EAEU period, when it was almost perfect. On the Middle East and human rights issues, while cohesion among Eurasian countries remained somewhat stable, it was substantially lower in the post-EAEU period than in any other area, with the exception of the security category. In other words, Eurasian countries are more likely to pursue their specific national interests in highly politicized resolutions, even if this contradicts the majority position of the bloc.

### 6.2. Index of Voting Cohesion levels

Table 4 reports the IVC results for each of the ten dyads within the EAEU. In the pre-EAEU period, only one pair falls within a ‘high’ level of external cohesion (90+ level), the following four pairs are in the 80–90 range (a ‘medium’ level of cohesion), and the remaining dyads are broadly placed within a ‘low’ level of cohesion (70–80).<sup>10</sup> Perhaps unsurprisingly, all of the dyads that include Russia fall within the 75–76 range in positions eight to ten, with the exception of the Belarus-Russia pair, which ranks fourth. It can be said that Russia is arguably the most non-conformist member of the EAEU in the pre-EAEU period. The closest dyad in both periods is Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan, whereas Russia-Kazakhstan is the most distant, and perhaps the most interesting pair on the list. The two largest countries in the union are at the bottom of the list, with the lowest cohesion score of 74.6 per cent.

Table 4

**Pairwise IVC scores for the EAEU members in the UNGA, 2000–2020 (%)**

Country pair	Rank	Votes	pre-EAEU	post-EAEU	Change
Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan	1	265	90.5	90.2	−0.3
Armenia-Kazakhstan	2	277	84.9	82.5	−2.4
Armenia-Kyrgyzstan	3	265	84.2	83.2	−1.0
Belarus-Russia	4	277	83.4	90.0	+6.6
Armenia-Belarus	5	277	81.2	88.0	+6.8
Belarus-Kazakhstan	6	277	79.8	74.6	−5.3
Belarus-Kyrgyzstan	7	265	79.3	76.0	−3.3
Armenia-Russia	8	277	76.1	80.3	+4.2
Kyrgyzstan-Russia	9	265	75.1	71.1	−4.0
Kazakhstan-Russia	10	277	74.6	65.3	−9.3
			80.9	80.1	−0.8

In the post-EAEU period, there are some striking changes in the degree of voting cohesiveness. First and foremost, while the indices of three pairs increased significantly, the scores of all remaining dyads fell by an average of 4 per cent during this period. More specifically, each pair involving Russia, Belarus, and Armenia experienced an about 6-percent increase. The largest decrease in the pairwise score occurred in the second period between Kazakhstan and Russia (65.3 %), which has the lowest IVC level of all pairs in the pre- and post-EAEU periods. The most cohesive pair on the list (Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan) maintained its ranking in the second period, although it experienced a slight decline in its voting convergence. Another noticeable trend is that the pairwise scores of both Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan with all other union members have declined in the post-EAEU period.

Table 5

**IVC scores for the EAEU by substantive categories, 2000–2020 (%)**

Category	Votes	pre-EAEU	post-EAEU	Change
Security, Arms control, Cuba	72	92.3	75.2	−17.1
Development	20	90.0	97.5	+7.5
Middle East, Israel, Palestine	78	77.0	81.0	+4.0
Human Rights	106	75.4	77.4	+2.0
	276	83.7	82.8	

Table 5 shows Eurasian voting convergence on four categories, calculated by averaging pairwise indices. Overall, the results confirm the AI scores on the substantive categories discussed above. The average IVC score for all categories is at the medium level of external cohesion (83 %). A high level of pairwise cohesion exists only on development issues, although the temporal scope of this category is the smallest at 20 votes. Convergence between the pairs on Middle East resolutions has experienced a slight increase since 2015, and is now at the medium level of cohesion (81 %). The remaining two categories (security and human rights) are in the 75–77 range in the post-EAEU period,

showing that Eurasian states are less united on these issues. The results can be interpreted as showing that there is disagreement and that the EAEU does not always speak with one voice in the UNGA, especially on human rights and security issues.

## 7. Discussion of the Results

The empirical results just discussed provide some implications for the theoretical debates as well as for the foreign policy outlook of the EAEU. Several research questions framed the analysis. First and foremost, as predicted in  $H_1$ , both AI and IVC results on substantive categories provide partial support for the realists' argument that voting on resolutions is more cohesive in areas of 'low' politics than on issues of 'high' politics. Empirical evidence shows that  $H_1$  is confirmed for development issues and to some extent for security and Middle East issues. Both indices of voting cohesion reveal that agreement among Eurasian states on development issues is quite high (about 0.96 for AI and 98 % for IVC in the post-EAEU period). Similarly, AI scores for the Middle East category largely support  $H_1$  prediction, as disagreement among Eurasian nations is comparatively higher on this 'high politics' issue. For security matters, the results partially support  $H_1$ , as the degree of Eurasian divergence in this area only becomes meaningful in the post-EAEU period for both indices. For the category of human rights, the trend, however, is quite the opposite. In stark contrast to the prediction of  $H_1$ , the voting behavior of Eurasian nations on human rights-related resolutions shows a certain degree of unity throughout the years under study.

Interestingly, however, the findings strongly support another realist prediction that Russia would demonstrate different behavior than the Eurasian 'mainstream' because of its unique position as a global power. As the voting records in Table 1 has revealed, Russia was the only state among the EAEU members to vote less positively than any other member. In other words, the results suggest that Russia is an outlier in the voting cohesion of the EAEU since it is Russian votes that decrease the EAEU average. Likewise, Russia has the lowest pairwise IVC scores with all Eurasian states except Belarus. Finally, while the average level of IVCs for the four countries is above 80 per cent ('medium' level of common foreign policy), Russia's average pairwise score is in the range of 'low' level of external cohesion. A possible explanation could be the fact that Russia holds a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, which may influence its behaviour not only in the Council but also in the Assembly. This voting pattern is consistent with several other quantitative works (Degterov *et al.* 2018; Kurylev *et al.* 2018; Hansen 2014).<sup>11</sup>

Second,  $H_2$  was based on liberal assumptions suggesting that Eurasian convergence increases over time due to shared domestic institutions and common principles. In particular, one strand of liberal thought would expect higher voting convergence to follow the creation of the EAEU in 2015 onward. Although this prediction is substantiated to some extent by the empirical analysis of voting results from the 'development' category and also for pairwise IVC scores of selected countries (Armenia, Belarus, and Russia), there is no meaningful difference in cohesion between the two periods analyzed. In other words, the increase in voting convergence among EAEU countries in the UNGA did not occur after the formation of the EAEU in 2015. In direct contradiction to the tentative  $H_2$ , both average AI levels and IVC figures registered a slight decline in the post-EAEU period. While preliminary reasons for the decline could be sought in a number of

recent developments sketched below, further research is needed to provide a robust explanation of why Eurasian cohesion levels declined after 2015.

Finally,  $H_3$  predicted that states that are highly integrated within the EAEU, economically or in some other ways, would exhibit higher levels of cohesion in the UNGA. The empirical evidence from the pairwise IVC scores provides at least partial support for this hypothesis.<sup>12</sup> For example, the evidence from the IVC measurement has revealed the existence of highly cohesive groupings within the EAEU that are more politically, economically, or socio-culturally interdependent and interlinked than others. One such reference group is the Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan dyad, to begin with. The IVC analysis reveals that this pair is the most cohesive voting bloc among the EAEU dyads. Since 2000, they have voted in opposite ways on only two resolutions.<sup>13</sup> The two also exhibit quite similar voting patterns in the UNGA (see Table 1). This pattern is consistent with the findings of previous empirical research.<sup>14</sup>

The reasons for high voting convergence of this pair are less obvious than, for instance, the Belarus-Russia dyad, the second most cohesive grouping in the union. While the content analysis of the resolutions could shed some light on this question, a few exploratory remarks are in order. Firstly, for Kyrgyzstan, there is a structural dependence on Kazakhstan in terms of trade, investment, and labor market (Vinokurov 2018). Kazakhstan is one of the main export markets for Kyrgyz goods. Secondly, they are the only Central Asian republics in the union with strong socio-cultural, geographical, and historical ties. Thirdly, both countries highly value their independence from other states, especially from the Russian center (Kudaibergenova 2016). Finally, their overlapping membership in other coalitions (the NAM, the Asia-Pacific Group in the UN, the Turkic Council,<sup>15</sup> *etc.*) may also lead them to hold similar positions in the UNGA.

Another group that confirms  $H_3$  is the Belarus-Russia pair, which is the second most cohesive pair among Eurasian nations.<sup>16</sup> The pair was either unanimous or in partial agreement on almost all votes except six resolutions out of 277 adopted in the UNGA since 2000.<sup>17</sup> This strikingly high affinity can be explained by the existence of deep institutional and socio-cultural ties as well as high economic interdependence between the two. As Yeliseyeu (2019) has convincingly argued, Belarus appears to have exchanged ‘geopolitical loyalty and military cooperation for Russia’s generosity.’ Politically, they have achieved a peculiar level of integration, reflected in a ‘union state’ (Mukhametdinov 2020). The union state treaty stipulated the coordination of socio-economic policies and intensive cooperation in foreign policy and defense (Preiherman 2020). Economically, Russia remains the main trading partner of Belarus, which is also heavily dependent on Russian financial support and advantageous energy deals. Russia is Belarus’ main lender: public and private loans from Russia account for about half of Belarus’ debt (Yeliseyeu 2019).

Moreover, the results also point to another particularly unique pair with the lowest IVC level for all votes, which perhaps warrants a separate discussion: the Kazakhstan-Russia dyad.<sup>18</sup> This is, of course, far from surprising, since, as Mukhametdinov (2020) notes, there have been a number of disagreements between the two, especially regarding the degree of alignment of their interests with the US. In some respects, the results can be interpreted as supportive evidence for Kazakhstan’s foreign policy strategy of ‘multi-vectorism,’ seemingly contradicting the arguments of EAEU skeptics, especially in Kazakhstan, who opposed the integration because it could ‘strike a blow against multi-

vector foreign policy' (Satpayev 2015). In addition to Russia's exceptional voting behavior, other factors may also help to explain this low voting convergence. First, both countries are the least dependent on the EAEU for their global trade, despite being the union's largest economies. Second, as noted by Yeliseyeu (2019), Kazakhstan is less dependent on short-term labor migration to Russia than other union members due to its relatively higher standard of living. Furthermore, as an oil and gas dependent economy, Kazakhstan does not receive financial or oil and gas subsidies from Russia in exchange for its membership in the EAEU (Tarr 2016).

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, from the very beginning, Kazakhstan emphasized only economic integration and rejected any move that would sacrifice its sovereignty. Although cooperation with Russia is indispensable for Kazakhstan in many respects, the Kazakh leadership was adamant to contend with anything that would amount to a loss of sovereignty. A recent example of this was at a video summit of EAEU leaders on 19 May 2020, where Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev expressed his concerns about a strategic blueprint for the union, saying that 'the strategy will limit the sovereign rights of the government and parliament' (Leonard 2020). It can be argued that sovereignty norms largely determine Kazakhstan's behavior on regional and international platforms. After all, despite being an ally in the UN, 'Kazakhstan has its own national interests and its own vision of international politics; therefore, its opinion may sometimes differ from the opinion of Russia' (Shibutov *et al.* 2019).

Since voting against the will of the majority or powerful nations can have unpleasant consequences (especially for smaller countries) (Ferdinand 2014), a more interesting question would be to ask on which resolutions the two countries specifically disagree on. The findings of this study clearly indicate that Russia and Kazakhstan have mostly disagreed on important resolutions related to security and human rights.<sup>19</sup> The first group relates to disarmament, the elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons, the Chemical Weapons Convention, and security in cyberspace.<sup>20</sup> Particularly on nuclear disarmament issues, Kazakhstan stands apart from other Eurasian states, consistently voting in favor of such resolutions.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, and quite understandably, Russia has mostly voted against these measures or sometimes abstained. The second group that divides the pair includes resolutions critical of the human rights situation in Sudan, Myanmar, North Korea, Syria, and the human rights of Rohingya Muslims.<sup>22</sup> Although Eurasian nations have usually been reluctant to support resolutions critical of other countries' human rights records (seen as a domestic issue), Kazakhstan has nevertheless voted differently from Russia in the UN bodies (Amanov 2021). The latter's divergent position on human rights is arguably the result of a general policy shift in Moscow since the 2000s, as Russia under President Putin has increasingly sought to distance itself from the West (Ferdinand 2014).

## 8. Conclusion

The post-Soviet republics have been involved in various integration processes since independence, with varying degrees of success. The EAEU forms the core of integration initiatives in contemporary Eurasia. The aim of the present research was to examine a specific aspect of this integration process, namely the external cohesion of EAEU member states in the UNGA voting. The previous sections provided an analysis of the level of voting cohesion among Eurasian nations in general, and on substantive catego-

ries. The study also proposes preliminary explanations for the findings, which hopefully will encourage other researchers to delve more deeply into these (relatively understudied) areas of research. While acknowledging the limitations of this type of research (Hooijmaaijers and Keukeleire 2016; Rasch 2008) and acknowledging the fact that it is difficult to explain why countries vote in the same (or opposite) way, several conclusions can be drawn from the analysis.

The findings presented in this paper suggest that the general trend in cohesion indices is rather stable, both in terms of AI scores and IVC levels, as shown in the previous section. Overall, the EAEU scores a 'medium' level of cohesion (80.50 %). This score can be contrasted with the cohesion levels of other regional organizations, as it would be interesting to take a look at the Eurasian grouping in a comparative perspective. Although different studies have used different methods to measure the level of voting cohesion for different groupings and voting blocs, some of these analyses reveal an interesting empirical pattern. For example, the EU member states' score is relatively higher than that of the EAEU, arguably, due to its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), that has been around 95 per cent since the mid-1990s (European Commission, 2004). This score is in line with the EU's agreement index of 0.9478 measured by Hopmann (2010). Similarly, the original members of the SCO tend to vote cohesively in a significant number of resolutions, with the votes of the six countries aligned or not conflicting (abstention or no vote) in 84.7 per cent of cases (Maduz 2018). In a similar study on the voting behavior of the BRICS in the UNGA for the period 1974–2008, Ferdinand's (2014) analysis comparatively shows that both the AI and IVC scores of this grouping (0.80 and 87.06 respectively) were higher than those of the EAEU. Finally, a study by Kaplan *et al.* (2015) found that the level of cohesion of the Turkic Council states in 2011 (82.60 per cent) was at about the same level as that of EAEU members.

Overall, the Eurasian states do indeed speak with one voice most of the time. However, the union is not perfectly harmonious in the UNGA context, since competition and defections often occur. As shown in Table 4, certain dyads (mostly with Russia) show a low convergence level, which may indicate that there are bilateral disagreements on certain issues. Returning to the research questions, the most striking finding is that the institutionalization process does not seem to have a positive effect on the voting cohesion of Eurasian nations in the UNGA, as all reference groups became less cohesive to varying degrees in the post-EAEU period,<sup>23</sup> suggesting that  $H_2$  cannot be supported. In terms of substantive categories, Eurasian states show the highest voting cohesion on developmental issues. In contrast, the EAEU shows a high degree of disagreement on security-related resolutions, where member states are less successful in finding a common position. The EAEU also shows a considerably low, albeit stable, level of agreement on issues relating to the Middle East and human rights. This may indicate that there is some support, albeit limited, for  $H_1$ . On a pairwise basis, the EAEU's most cohesive dyad was Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan and the least cohesive pair was Kazakhstan-Russia in both periods analyzed. The interdependence argument of  $H_3$  receives partial empirical support in the IVC model. Overall, 'high,' 'medium,' and 'low' levels of external cohesions exist simultaneously among Eurasian nations, and a 'medium' level of common foreign policy has remained somewhat stable throughout the period, although it has experienced some setbacks and increases on a dyadic basis.



The findings also suggest that even on ‘low’ politics issues such as human rights, unity cannot be taken for granted. Despite growing rhetorical alignment and an intensified dialogue on foreign policy issues, Eurasian convergence is not a given condition. Achieving external solidarity and geopolitical loyalty in the UNGA is a challenging task. After all, it is the place where ‘promises of eternal friendship fade into the background and a state’s true stance on various issues manifests itself’ (Kurylev *et al.* 2018). Geopolitical pluralism in Eurasia, as Kurylev *et al.* (2018) have argued, makes cooperation more complicated, unstable, and ineffective, while increasing the space for states to act independently. There are sensitive issues that have arisen over the Ukrainian question, which continue to fuel discord among EAEU members and involve a conflict of interests (Vinokurov 2017). A recent example of such discord is the UNGA resolution 77/229, adopted on 15 December 2022, on the ‘Situation of human rights in the temporarily occupied Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine.’ Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia voted against this resolution, while Kyrgyzstan and Armenia abstained, along with some other Eurasian countries. In another critical UNGA resolution condemning Russia’s annexation in Ukraine passed on 12 October 2022, with 143 votes in favor, Russia and Belarus voted against the resolution, while Armenia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan all abstained. Exactly the same division appeared in a March 2022 resolution, entitled ‘Aggression against Ukraine.’

These are occurring against the background of increasing skepticism towards Eurasian integration (Vinokurov 2018). It has been noted that Kazakhstan and Belarus have become disinterested in supporting Russia’s foreign policy goals, especially in Russia’s struggle with the West (Mukhametdinov 2020). Moreover, Kudaibergenova (2016) came to a comparable conclusion regarding Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, that despite positive public opinion, skepticism is also growing over the Ukrainian crisis, anti-Russian sanctions, and currency devaluations in Russia and Kazakhstan. As Malikbayeva and Gabdullin (2023) have argued, the Ukrainian crisis appears to be fuelling anti-Russian and anti-Eurasian narratives, particularly in Kazakhstan, also exacerbated by the growing concerns about the country’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and national identity. According to the results of the annual public opinion polls conducted by the EDB (Eurasian Development Bank) Integration Barometer, a decline in public support for the EAEU has also been observed in Armenia, falling from 61 to 46 per cent between 2012 and 2017 (Malikbayeva and Gabdullin 2023), but has arguably occurred for a different reason than the situation in Ukraine. One explanation, as suggested by Vinokurov (2017), can be found in the escalation of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Although the extent to which these and other developments unfolding in and around the Eurasian core have influenced the public and elite attitudes towards Eurasian integration is a matter for dispute, a series of recent upheavals in EAEU member countries (such as the mass protests in Belarus in 2020, the Second Karabakh War that broke out the same year, the mass uprising in Kyrgyzstan in the fall of 2020, and the tragic events of January 2022 in Kazakhstan) may have ‘transformed the perception of Eurasian integration among the population or further exacerbated anti-Eurasian sentiment’ as some scholars have argued (Malikbayeva and Gabdullin 2023; Kesarev 2020). It is plausible to assume that externally the EAEU moves with Eurasian public opinion. In the UNGA context, this means that group discipline among EAEU members has shown an incon-

sistent trend and has fluctuated across issue areas throughout the period 2000–2020. Taken together, the findings of this research can provide additional evidence on the EAEU's current foreign policy outlook by establishing a quantitative framework which will be of interest to both policy-makers and researchers.

In terms of directions for future research, it would be interesting to analyze all recorded votes taken in the UNGA in order to get a broader view of the EAEU's international relations, as this research studies only 'lobbied' resolutions. Another possible area of study would be to focus on the EAEU's voting behavior in comparison to the entire UNGA membership as well as other reference groups (the EU, ASEAN, *etc.*). Also, since 'the definite materialisation of the result in a vote on a resolution depends on various factors, like agreements with third parties, as well as political and economic stick and carrot policy measures' (Rasch 2008), it would be important to further investigate resolutions from a thematic perspective using qualitative analysis (such as interviews or content analysis), which would complement the findings of this study and would enrich our understanding of the Eurasian integration process.

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> In this paper, 'Eurasian integration' refers to the integration process in the post-Soviet space, primarily within the EAEU, as opposed to an alternative Eurasian 'continental' integration, promoted by China (through the Belt and Road Initiative), Russia, and Kazakhstan, among others (Vinokurov 2018). Likewise, while I am aware of the multiple meanings that the term 'Eurasia' entails, it will be used here to refer to the current five EAEU member states.

<sup>2</sup> These acronyms stand for the Commonwealth of Independent States–Eurasian Economic Community–Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus–Single Economic Space–Eurasian Economic Union.

<sup>3</sup> To test  $H_1$ , this study further classifies important resolutions into four categories based on their subject matter. The categorization is based on previous works by Voeten (2000) and Hosli *et al.* (2010). Based on the selected keywords, the resolutions are coded into the following categories: development, human rights, Middle East, and security. Table 3 shows the proportions of these four categories. Only one resolution from the 62<sup>nd</sup> session did not fall into any of these categories: A/Res/62/236. This is a budget-related resolution and typically included in the 'UN-internal' category (Hosli *et al.* 2010). Since this category would suffer from a small- $n$  problem if included in calculations, it is therefore excluded from the analysis of voting cohesion on 'substantive' categories.

<sup>4</sup> In this article, the concept of cohesion is defined as 'the degree to which an entity is able to formulate and articulate internally consistent policy preferences'; voting cohesion is therefore considered as an 'output generated by the coordination process' (Hooijmaaijers and Keukeleire 2016).

<sup>5</sup> References to official meetings and consultations can be found at <https://cstorussia2020.mid.ru/ru/news/>.

<sup>6</sup> See UN Digital Library at <https://digitallibrary.un.org/>.

<sup>7</sup> An explanation is necessary regarding the reasons why only 'important' resolutions are selected for analysis. First of all, important resolutions have been widely used by previous scholars (Wang 1999; Voeten 2004; also, Yuvaci and Kaplan 2013a). These actions tend to be more contentious and force states to make clear choices on important votes (Yuvaci and Kaplan 2013b). Although a country's voting record in the UN is only one dimension of its foreign relations, a country's behavior in the UN is always relevant to its bilateral relations (Voeten 2004). Hence, it is only on such resolutions that a vote would provide strong evidence that the interests of Eurasian states converge (or perhaps diverge) when they clearly express their positions on issues for which the US has extensively lobbied. Therefore, I assume that each member's vote choice is influenced by, among other things, how they view their relationship with the US as an external factor. Second, these votes are quite representative

of all recorded votes cast in the UNGA as they deal with different issues such as security, development, and human rights (Yuvaci and Kaplan 2013b). Nevertheless, some caution may be in order, as the time span is small and only a few resolutions are marked 'important' each year, resulting in a relatively small sample size (n=277).

<sup>8</sup> For more on methodological considerations, and also on the advantages and limitations of using this measure, see Voeten (2012) and Hooijmaaijers and Keukeleire (2016).

<sup>9</sup> An exception to this rule is that, following Luif (2003), if a delegation is absent for more than a third of all votes in a given session, the relevant data are coded as missing values. This is only relevant for Kyrgyzstan's voting in 2001, when Kyrgyz diplomats were absent for the entire 56<sup>th</sup> session, during which 12 'important' resolutions were adopted. Kyrgyzstan had no vote in the 56<sup>th</sup> session of the UNGA under the terms of Article 19 of the UN Charter. See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 11 (A/56/11)*, para. 104.

<sup>10</sup> I have borrowed these terms (low, medium, and high voting cohesion) from Hurwitz (1975), who uses them *arbitrarily* to distinguish between different levels of cohesion.

<sup>11</sup> For example, a study conducted by Hansen (2014) found that Russia was a leading outlier throughout the 1990s, occasionally being completely isolated in terms of voting. Some of the more notable outlier issues included the Middle East and human rights resolutions.

<sup>12</sup> Although similar conclusions can be drawn from the AI results for the Eurasian troika, which exhibits a higher convergence level than the entire EAEU membership, these results should be interpreted with some caution due to the distortion caused by the small number of members in the group.

<sup>13</sup> The resolutions on which the pair cast opposing votes are A/Res/68/144 (Report of the Human Rights Council) and A/Res/71/69 (Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction).

<sup>14</sup> Costa-Buranelli (2014), for example, found that at the international level, the Central Asian republics speak the same language, and adhere to the same institutions, implying the existence of a Central Asian 'club' or of a 'Central Asian standard.'

<sup>15</sup> For example, in their analysis of whether the Turkic Council's members act cohesively in the UNGA, Kaplan *et al.* (2015) find that voting agreement on foreign policy issues among member countries has steadily increasing.

<sup>16</sup> Hansen (2014) finds a similar pattern in that, Belarus was closer to Russia than any other CIS country in the UNGA, suggesting that the country can be seen politically as Russia's closest ally.

<sup>17</sup> These are resolutions on security issues (A/Res/55/33N-Reducing Nuclear Danger; A/RES/72/50-on the elimination of nuclear weapons) and human rights issues (A/Res/58/194-Situation of Human Rights in Turkmenistan; A/Res/66/136-Report of the Human Rights Council; A/Res/68/144-Report of the Human Rights Council; A/RES/74/132-Report of the Human Rights Council).

<sup>18</sup> This observation is contradictory to what has been reported by Kurylev *et al.* (2018), as their research shows that Kazakhstan is among Russia's top three CIS countries in terms of both the average level of support and the number of sessions with the maximum support. However, this inconsistency in results is partly due to the different methods of calculations.

<sup>19</sup> The three resolutions on human rights related issues adopted during different plenary sessions of the General Assembly provide a striking example of the incohesive voting patterns of Eurasian states. The resolution on the human rights situation in Myanmar (A/RES/75/287) was opposed by Belarus, abstained by Russia, and was supported by Armenia and Kazakhstan, while Kyrgyzstan was absent. On the resolution on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia (A/RES/73/298), Armenia remained absent, Russia and Belarus voted against, while Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan chose to abstain. Russia surprisingly voted in favour of a resolution critical of the human rights situation in Turkmenistan (A/Res/58/194), while Belarus voted against, Kazakhstan abstained and Armenia and Kyrgyzstan were absent during the vote.

<sup>20</sup> See A/Res/60/72; A/Res/71/63; A/Res/71/69; A/RES/72/43; A/RES/72/31; A/RES/72/50; A/RES/73/266; A/RES/74/28; A/RES/74/41; A/RES/74/45.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Kazakhstan's position in the UNGA resolutions A/RES/74/41 Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, A/RES/72/31 Taking forward multilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations, A/RES/72/43 Implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on their Destruction, A/Res/71/75 Convention on the Prohibition of the Use of Nuclear Weapons, and A/Res/71/63 Nuclear disarmament.

<sup>22</sup> See A/Res/57/230; Motion to delay (58th session); A/Res/61/174; A/Res/61/232; A/Res/62/167; A/Res/62/222; A/Res/63/190; A/Res/63/245; A/Res/64/175; A/Res/64/238; A/Res/65/225; A/Res/65/241; A/Res/66/174; A/Res/67/183; A/Res/68/144; A/Res/69/188; A/Res/70/172; A/RES/72/248; A/RES/74/246.

<sup>23</sup> Still, one must be cautious in interpreting these findings, given the limited number of  $n$  in the second period and also an upward trend that emerged recently in the convergence levels of the Eurasian nations.

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