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# 1+1=3? EU-US Voting Cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly

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DEPARTMENT OF EU INTERNATIONAL  
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## **EU Diplomacy Papers**

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### **1 + 1 = 3? EU-US Voting Cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly**

**Kirsten Lucas**

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## **About the Author**

Kirsten Lucas holds an MSc in Political Science from Leiden University in the Netherlands (2011) and an MA in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies from the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium (2012). Her main fields of interest are the European Union's external representation in international organizations and transatlantic relations. This paper is a shortened version of her Master's thesis submitted at the College of Europe (Marie Skłodowska-Curie promotion).

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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates the factors that explain the voting cohesion of the United States (US) and the European Union (EU) on foreign policy issues in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). It is often argued that the EU and the US are simply too different to cooperate within international organizations and thus to vote the same way, for example, in the UNGA. However, there is still a lack of research on this point and, more importantly, previous studies have not analyzed which factors explain EU-US voting cohesion. In this paper, I try to fill this gap by studying voting cohesion from 1980 until 2011 on issues of both 'high' politics (security) and 'low' politics (human rights) not only as regards EU-US voting cohesion, but also concerning voting cohesion among EU member states. I test six hypotheses derived from International Relations theories, and I argue that EU-US voting cohesion is best explained by the topic of the issue voted upon, whether an issue is marked as 'important' by the US government, and by the type of resolution. On the EU level, the length of Union membership and transaction costs matter most.

## Introduction: explaining voting cohesion in the UN

Since the Second World War, the United States (US) has played an important role in the reconstruction of Europe and has stimulated European integration. Today, the transatlantic relationship is still strong. However, some scholars argue that the European Union (EU) and the US are too different to understand each other and therefore unable to agree on foreign policy issues.<sup>1</sup> Transatlantic cohesion would enlarge the economic, geographical and political weight of the European Union on the world stage and could make it more effective in multilateral organizations.<sup>2</sup> Whether the EU and the US are indeed too different is studied by looking at transatlantic cooperation in international organizations, for example in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). Cooperation is studied by measuring voting cohesion, that is, whether the US and the EU member states vote the same way on UNGA resolutions. Previous research has produced mixed results on this EU-US voting cohesion. Moreover, the current literature has failed to explain why the EU and the US vote together or not. In this paper, I answer the following question: Which factors determine EU-US voting cohesion on foreign policy issues in the United Nations General Assembly?

In order to fully explain EU-US voting cohesion, both the cohesion between the United States and the European Union and voting cohesion within the EU (that is between the 27 member states) will be taken into account. Knowing what can explain why member states vote together can also provide insights into why the EU votes cohesively with the United States or not. Based on International Relations approaches and European integration theories, six possible explanatory factors are identified and formulated as hypotheses. To study EU-US voting cohesion, the influence of the issues voted upon, whether an issue is marked as 'important' by the United States, whether a resolution is 'new' or a so-called 'repeat resolution' and whether it matters who is the president of the US is analyzed. To explain EU voting cohesion, the effects of the length of Union membership and of the institutional reforms as promoted by the Treaties of Maastricht, Amsterdam and Lisbon are studied. I argue that EU-US voting cohesion is best explained by the topic of the issue

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, R. Kagan, *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*, London, Atlantic Books, 2003, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. R. Ginsberg, *Foreign Policy Actions of the European Community*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1989, p. 35; K. Laatikainen, "Pushing soft power: middle power diplomacy at the UN", in K. Laatikainen & K. Smith (eds.) *The European Union at the United Nations: intersecting multilateralism*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp. 70-92.

voted upon, whether an issue is marked as 'important' by the US government, and by the type of resolution voted upon. On the EU level, the length of Union membership and transaction costs matter most.

My research focuses on a period ranging from 1980 until 2011, which enables me to look at the influence of the 'important' issues (the US started to mark certain resolutions as important in the 1980s), but also at the influence of the institutional reforms of, for example, the Maastricht Treaty. The data I use is an update of Erik Voeten's 'United Nations General Assembly Voting Data V1',<sup>3</sup> which consists of roll-call votes.<sup>4</sup> The data enables me to determine the level of voting cohesion of the EU and the US in the UNGA. Moreover, it is possible to compare different types of resolutions, for example the levels of voting cohesion on more technical, 'low politics' issues and on 'high politics' issues of national sovereignty and identity. In this paper, I use resolutions on human rights as representative for 'low politics' issues, and resolutions on security issues as representative for 'high politics' issues.<sup>5</sup> In order to identify these issues, I use the case selection method developed by Hosli *et al.*<sup>6</sup> which is based on keyword searches.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> E. Voeten & A. Merdzanovic, "United Nations General Assembly Voting Data", 2008.

<sup>4</sup> During a roll-call, the numbers of the members of the UNGA are called and the representatives reply 'yes', 'no' or 'abstention'. In the literature there is a debate about whether roll-call votes are representative for all issues discussed in the UNGA (e.g. C. Carrubba, M. Gabel & S. Hug, "Voting at the surface: roll call votes in the European Parliament", Paper presented at the IEE-ULB, Brussels, 29 April 2009; J. Thiem, *Nationale Parteien im Europäischen Parlament: Delegation, Kontrolle und politischer Einfluss*, 2009, Wiesbaden, VS Verlag. Some scholars argue that representatives only ask for a roll-call vote when they want to show how cohesive they are on an issue (Carrubba *et al.*, *op.cit.*). However, research is lacking on this point (D. Bearce & S. Bondanella, "Intergovernmental organizations, socialization, and member-state convergence", *International Organization*, vol. 61, no. 4, 2007, pp. 703-733).

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, M. O'Neill, *The politics of European integration: a reader*, London, Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> M. Hosli, E. van Kampen, F. Meijerink & K. Tennis, "Voting cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly: the case of the European Union", Paper presented at the ECPR Fifth Pan-European Conference, Porto, 24-26 June 2010.

<sup>7</sup> The keywords used to select the resolutions are:

*Human rights*: "human rights", "elections, effectiveness", "Geneva protocol", "South Africa, embargo", "democratic order", "democracy", "right of everyone", "human cloning", "periodic and genuine elections", "religions", "Khmer rouge, "death penalty", "children", "torture", "right to food", "executions", "execution", "front-line states, assistance", "right to peace", "right of peoples to peace", "life in peace", "peace declaration", "displaced persons", "South Africa, situation", "civil, political rights", "death sentences", "prostitution", "right to life", "right to housing", "South Africa, IMF collaboration", "well-being", "persons who disappeared", "human settlements", "credentials", "article 25", "UNRWA", "oppressed people", "inalienable rights", "missing persons", "South Africa, oil embargo", "South Africa", "economic isolation", "Kampuchea", "South Africa, assistance to opposition", "UNHCR", "human right", "South Africa, membership", "war crimes", "racist", "South Africa, sanctions", "capital punishment", "genocide",

Since more than 75 percent of the issues discussed in the UNGA are not put to a vote, my results have to be placed in perspective.<sup>8</sup> On human rights issues this percentage is even 90 percent, while on security issues it is with around 40 percent lower. Despite these numbers, from 1980 until 2011 more than 430 resolutions on human rights and 820 resolutions on security were passed on the basis of roll-call votes in the UNGA, which makes it possible to use statistical methods.

The next section will discuss the literature that has already been published on EU-US voting cohesion, but also on EU voting cohesion in international organizations. After this, I identify factors that could explain EU-US voting cohesion and formulate six hypotheses that will then be tested. Finally, I will conclude by discussing some implications of my findings.

## Literature review

As set out in the introduction, I will analyze both voting cohesion between the European Union and the United States and voting cohesion between the EU member states in order to fully answer the research question. In this section, I review the literature that has already been written on these topics.

### *EU-US voting cohesion*

The relationship between the United States and the European Union in international organizations has been studied by a number of researchers. Much of this work concerns the UNGA because it offers an opportunity to analyze vote coordination on foreign policy matters in a quantitative way. Kim and Russett, for example, have

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"freedom", "repression", "refugees", "imprisonment", "forced labor", "racial", "Indians in South Africa", "apartheid", "rights of", "globalization", "minorities", "prisoners of war", "racism", "discrimination", "women".

*Security*: "warfare", "military installations", "armaments", "missiles", "missile", "Bosnia and Herzegovina", "verification", "South Atlantic", "remnants of war", "US-USSR", "confidence-building", "peacekeeping", "durable peace", "Iraq", "mercenaries", "non-use of force", "prohibition, use of force", "religious intolerance", "terrorism", "Indian Ocean", "Cuba", "Korea", "US and Soviet relations", "big powers", "Hungary", "Tibet", "peaceful", "armistice", "Suez", "aggression", "Korean question", "nuclear", "arms", "security", "weapons", "rearmament", "disarmament", "fissionable material".

<sup>8</sup> M. Peterson, *The UN General Assembly*, New York, Routledge, 2006, p. 74. The fact that the majority of issues is not put to vote is partly caused by the rules of procedure of the UNGA. The Special Committee on the Rationalization of the Procedures and Organization of the General Assembly recommended that "delegations should endeavor not to request such a vote [a roll-call vote] except when there are good and sound reasons for doing so". See UN, "Rules of Procedure", 2011, Annex IV, art. 84.

observed that during the 1980s and the early 1990s, France, Germany, the UK and the Benelux countries could be seen as the closest and most reliable allies of the United States.<sup>9</sup> According to Fassbender, little has changed for the UK and France who still “often [align] themselves with the United States, emphasizing their role and rank as ‘great powers’”.<sup>10</sup> Other scholars see a significant change over the years, though. Johansson-Nogués finds that the “EU convergence with the USA in the UN General Assembly is in overall decline”.<sup>11</sup> And Voeten shows that although compared to other big powers, France and the UK were in the 1990s still the closest to the US, the preferences of these two countries have been moving away from the American interests.<sup>12</sup> This finding is also supported by Luif:

The distance between the EU consensus and the United States was small in 1979, but during the ‘Second Cold War’ this distance increased; it did not diminish immediately after the end of the Cold War. Only during the Clinton administration did it decrease somewhat, to rise again from 2000 on.<sup>13</sup>

Here I see a gap in the literature. First, many studies have focused on the distance of preferences or voting behaviour between the EU member states and the US. However, the distance between the Union (taken as a whole, with all member states included) and the US is not often measured.<sup>14</sup> Besides, recent data on EU-US voting cohesion, especially after the EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007, is lacking. Therefore, an overview on whether a transatlantic divergence in interests exists is missing.

Second, some scholars have failed to analyze whether these different preferences also lead to dissimilar voting behaviour.<sup>15</sup> This is problematic since countries with different preferences will not necessarily also vote in different directions. States may decide not to vote in line with their preference on a single issue, for example because they have made a trade-off on other issues. This leads to another point of

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<sup>9</sup> S. Kim & B. Russett, “The new politics of voting alignments in the United Nations General Assembly”, *International Organization*, vol. 50, no. 4, 1996, pp. 639-642.

<sup>10</sup> B. Fassbender, “The better peoples of the United Nations? Europe’s practice and the United Nations”, *The European Journal of International Law*, vol. 15, no. 5, 2004, p. 862.

<sup>11</sup> E. Johansson-Nogués, “The fifteen and the accession states in the UN General Assembly: what future for European foreign policy in the coming together of the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ Europe?”, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2004, p. 74.

<sup>12</sup> E. Voeten, “Resisting the lonely superpower: responses of states in the United Nations to US dominance”, *The Journal of Politics*, vol. 66, no. 3, 2004, pp. 742-744.

<sup>13</sup> P. Luif, “EU cohesion in the UN General Assembly”, *Institute for Security Studies*, no. 49, 2003, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> Here the only exception is Johansson-Nogués, *op.cit.*

<sup>15</sup> e.g. Voeten, “Resisting the lonely superpower”, *op.cit.*

criticism: Kim and Russett have looked at voting behaviour and have, based on these votes, identified the preferences of member states.<sup>16</sup> I would argue that this is not the right sequence since preferences are formulated before the actual voting takes place, and there may be a gap between preferences and voting behaviour.

Third, the existing studies have not tried to explain why the EU member states and the US have different interests, although this question is much more interesting than simply measuring whether a difference exists. The only exception is a study conducted by Birnberg: she found that EU member states “disagree more often in the face of transatlantic divergence compared to transatlantic convergence”.<sup>17</sup> In order to explain why, Birnberg analyzed the strength of the bilateral transatlantic relationship in the political, economic and cultural areas. Strong economic and cultural transatlantic ties of an EU member state make ‘vote defection’, that is a different vote than the EU majority, more likely. With political transatlantic ties, this is not the case.<sup>18</sup> However, more specific explanations, such as the influence of US President Bush jr., or of the issue area discussed, are not tested. In this paper, I will take these factors into account.

### *EU voting cohesion*

The same criticism – a lack of explanations – also applies to the studies of EU voting cohesion. A lot of attention has been paid to whether or not the Union speaks with one voice in international organizations, although the conclusions differ.<sup>19</sup> Hosli *et al.* and Luif have shown that over a long period of time EU cohesion levels have increased, while Jakobsson has found a decrease.<sup>20</sup> And, as I have said before, the studies did not succeed in explaining satisfyingly why voting cohesion levels have increased or decreased. Both Luif and Hosli *et al.* studied whether EU voting cohesion in the UNGA depended on the issue areas discussed and found that voting cohesion is higher on more technocratic issues.<sup>21</sup> However, both studies fail to address whether

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<sup>16</sup> Kim & Russett, *op.cit.*

<sup>17</sup> G. Birnberg, “The voting behavior of the European Union member states in the United Nations General Assembly”, Ph.D. thesis submitted to the Department of Government of the London School of Economics, London, 2009, p. 148.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 187.

<sup>19</sup> Hosli *et al.*, *op.cit.*; Luif, *op.cit.*; S. Meunier, “What single voice? European institutions and EU-U.S. trade negotiations”, *International Organization*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2000, pp. 103-135.

<sup>20</sup> Hosli *et al.*, *op.cit.*; Luif, *op.cit.*; U. Jakobsson, “An International Actor Under Pressure: The Impact of the War on Terror and the Fifth Enlargement on EU Voting Cohesion at the UN General Assembly 2000-05”, *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2009, p. 549.

<sup>21</sup> Hosli *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p. 27; Luif, *op.cit.*, p. 51.

these differences are significant, and both find exceptions to the rule. This means that the topic voted upon cannot explain all differences in the levels of voting cohesion.

The current literature has not properly analyzed which other factors could explain EU voting cohesion. Luif concludes that after the Cold War some of the new EU member states quickly adjusted to EU positions, while others did not.<sup>22</sup> But how can these differences be explained? What is the influence of the length of membership on the level of EU voting cohesion?

### Data analysis

Before starting with the data analysis, I will give an overview of the development of EU-US voting cohesion. Here the following formula is used (as developed by Hosli et al.<sup>23</sup>):  $Cx = |AVx - 0.5| \times 2 \times 100$

Cx is the cohesion of votes on resolution x and AVx stands for the average vote of the EU member states and the US on resolution x (when measuring EU voting cohesion, AVx stands for the average vote of EU member states on resolution x). 'Yes' votes are coded as 1 and 'no' votes are coded as 0.

In the literature, there is a discussion about the way of measuring abstain-votes. Some scholars place vote choices on an interval scale; a 'yes' vote is coded as 1, 'no' as 0 and 'abstain' as 0.5.<sup>24</sup> This makes it possible to discern the different choices a representative in the UN can make. However, the method led to criticism from scholars who have coded abstention as a 'no' vote, based on the idea that it is quite common for UNGA representatives to vote 'abstain' on a resolution, while meaning 'no'.<sup>25</sup> When measuring voting cohesion, these researchers also assume that abstain-votes lead to the same level of cohesion as when members are voting 'no'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> Hosli et al., *op.cit.*

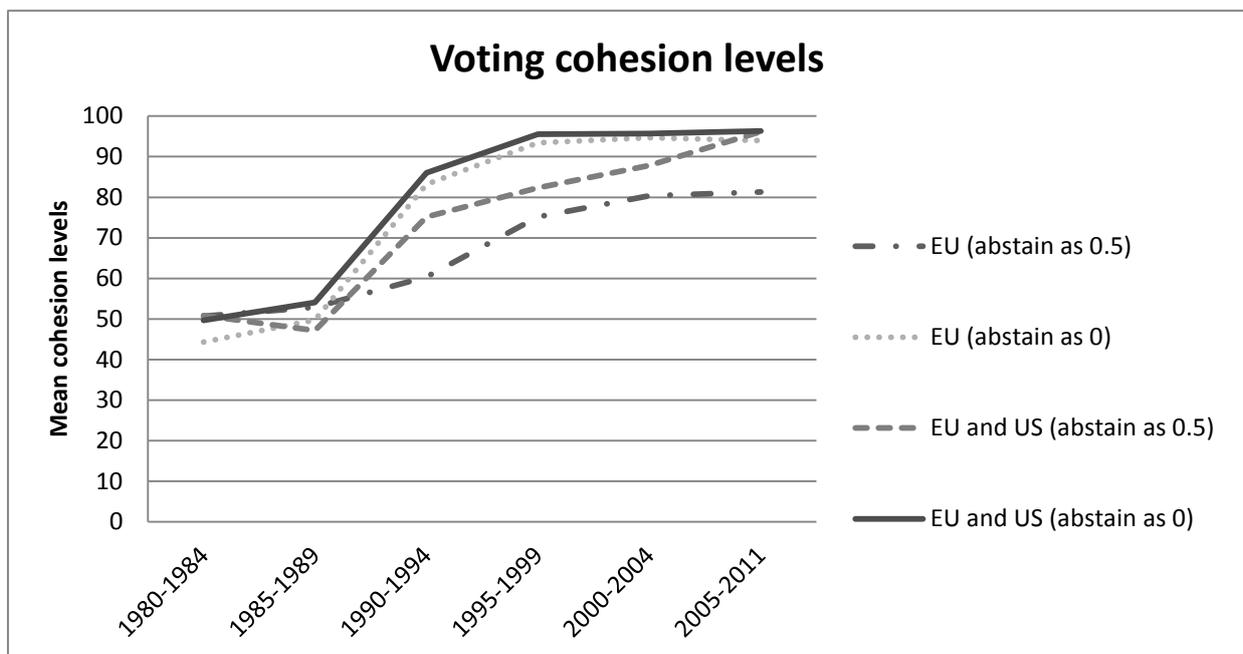
<sup>24</sup> e.g. Luif, *op.cit.*

<sup>25</sup> e.g. E. Voeten, "Clashes in the Assembly", *International Organization*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2000, pp. 185-215; and T. Volgy, D. Frazier & R. Ingersoll, "Preference similarities and group hegemony: G-7 voting cohesion in the UN General Assembly", *Journal of International Relations and Development*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2003, pp. 51-70.

<sup>26</sup> Hosli et al., *op.cit.*, p. 18.

I argue that states only choose to abstain from voting when the UN resolution voted upon is not a key issue to them. In other cases states will vote in favour or against a resolution. It would therefore be incorrect to assume that an abstain-vote has the same weight as a no-vote. Moreover, I do not agree that the level of cohesion is automatically the same between abstain- and no-votes. When there is disagreement between member states, but they believe that a cohesive Union is needed in order to be influential at UN level, countries can choose to abstain. In these cases, treating an abstain-vote as a 'no' leads to a lower level of voting cohesion than is actually the case. Therefore, I measure the votes on an interval scale. In order to make sure though that my results are consistent, I will also perform an analysis with abstention of voting measured as no-votes. In Figure 1, voting cohesion levels of the EU and the EU with the US are included.

Figure 1: Voting cohesion levels in the UNGA



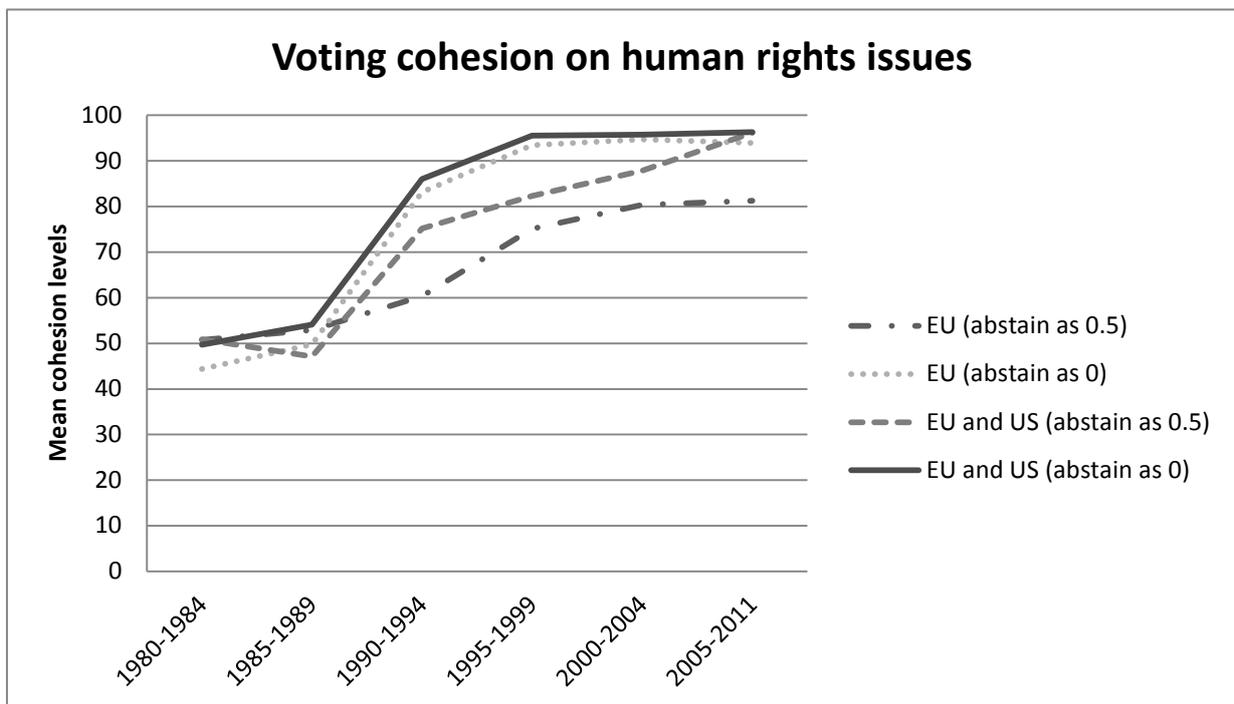
Source: author's compilation

The graph shows that, generally, EU-US voting cohesion is high. When the abstain-votes are coded as 0.5, EU-US voting cohesion lies around 86 percent in the period of 2005-2011. When the abstain-votes are coded as a 'no', the level of cohesion is even higher, around 92 percent in the same period. Another interesting observation is the rapid growth of voting cohesion during the 1980s. In the period of 1985-1989, voting cohesion was around 45 to 50 percent, but it grew to more than 80 percent in the 1990s. Looking at history, the period towards the end of the 1980s, under US President

Reagan, is described as the 'coolest ever'.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it would be interesting to see whether a presidential effect is significant. Moreover, in the graph one can observe that EU member states seem to 'abstain' quite often, which affects that level of EU voting cohesion.

In order to find out whether the issues discussed matter for cohesion levels, I have also calculated voting cohesion on both human rights and security issues. The results can be seen in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 2: Voting cohesion on human rights issues

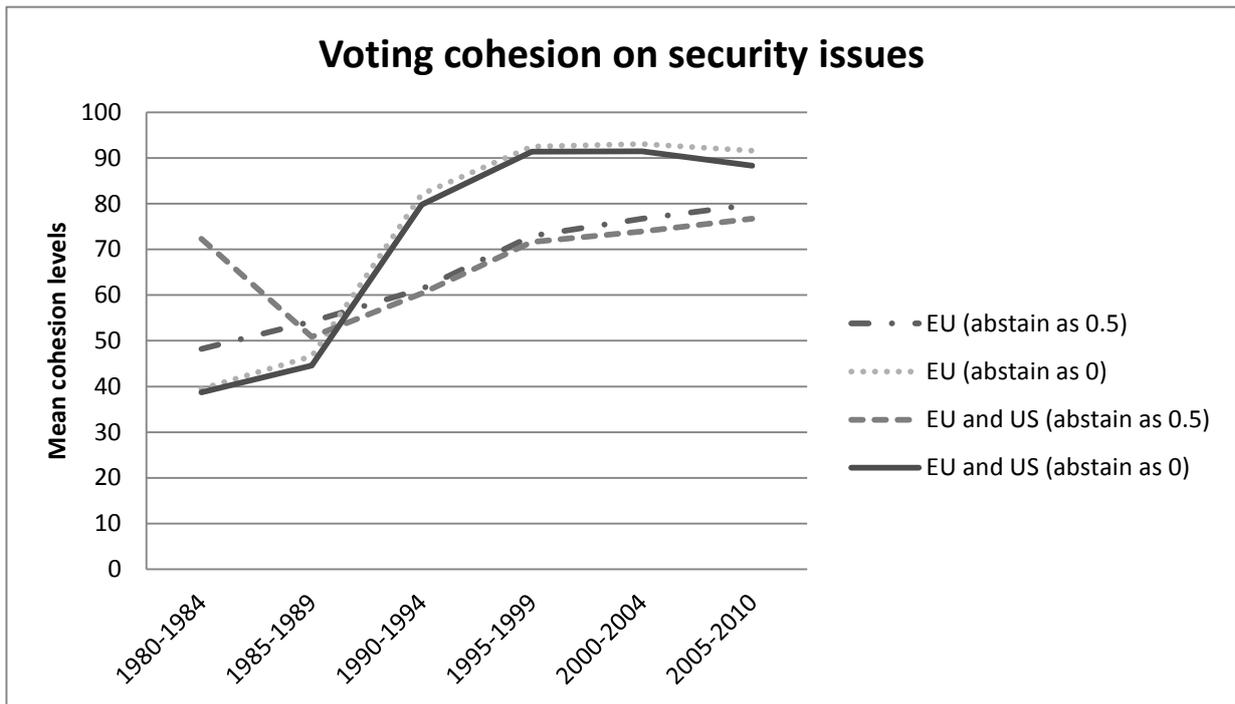


Source: author's compilation

On human rights issues, voting cohesion levels since 1999 were around 95 percent (when the abstain-votes are coded as no-votes). When a difference is made between abstain and voting no, EU-US voting cohesion is lower, although in the period 2005-2011, one can barely observe a difference.

<sup>27</sup> G. Lundestad, *The United States and Western Europe since 1945*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, p. 232.

Figure 3: Voting cohesion on security issues



Source: author's compilation

As Figure 3 shows, voting cohesion levels on security issues were lower; with abstain-votes coded as 0.5, the level lies around 75 percent in 2005-2011, and with abstain-votes as 'no', the level is 90 percent. On security issues, the EU and the US thus diverge slightly. Another interesting conclusion which follows from Figures 2 and 3 is that on human rights issues, including the US in the calculations increases the level of voting cohesion, while on security issues, including the US tends to lead to lower levels of voting cohesion.

### Hypotheses testing

Based on theories of International Relation and European integration, I have derived six hypotheses that could possibly explain EU-US voting cohesion in the General Assembly.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> For more details, see K. Lucas, "1+1=3? EU-US voting cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly", Master's thesis, Bruges, College of Europe 2012, pp. 15-27.

*Hypothesis 1: issue areas*

Figures 2 and 3 indicate that there is a difference in the levels of voting cohesion between human rights and security issues, as was suggested by intergovernmentalists such as Stanley Hoffmann: he argued that cooperation is possible in technocratic areas ('low politics'), but impossible on issues over autonomy ('high politics').<sup>29</sup> However, as is pointed out by critics of his theory,<sup>30</sup> high politics areas are not immune for cooperation, but it is more difficult. The graphs, though, do not tell whether there is a significant difference between high and low politics issues. Therefore, the following hypothesis based on intergovernmentalism was tested:

*H1: issue area hypothesis: Voting cohesion is stronger in areas of low politics than on issues of high politics.*

In order to compare the levels of voting cohesion, I have created two groups within each voting cohesion index: the levels of voting cohesion on the low-politics issue of human rights and on the high-politics issue of security. An independent t-test is performed on the two different groups. Looking at the results, on average, voting cohesion is higher on low politics issues (M=65.02, SE=1.76) than on high politics issues (M=61.53, SE=1.23). This difference was not significant (with  $t(1250)=0.065$ ,  $p>0.05$ ), and the effect size was very small (0.046). When the abstain-votes were coded as no-votes, the null hypothesis had to be rejected; the variances between voting cohesion on low politics and high politics issues are significantly different, which means that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated. The results show that, again, voting cohesion is higher on low politics issues (M=73.89, SE=1.36), than on high politics issues (M=67.04, SE=1.16). This difference was significant (with  $t(1011.63)=0.000$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), with an effect size of 0.12, which is relatively small since the effect explains 1.2 percent of the total variance.

*Hypothesis 2: salience of resolutions*

A second hypothesis that I have tested follows constructivist thinking and is concerned with whether voting is different if the resolutions voted upon are marked by the United States as 'important' or not. Constructivists believe that states act in a

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<sup>29</sup> S. Hoffmann, "Obstinate or obsolete? The faith of the nation-state and the case of Western Europe", *Daedalus*, 1966, vol. 95, no. 3, p. 877.

<sup>30</sup> C. Webb, "Theoretical prospects and problems", in H. Wallace, W. Wallace & C. Webb (eds.) *Policy-making in the European Community*, Chichester, John Wiley and Sons, 1983, pp. 1-42; M. Cini, *European Union Politics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., p. 105.

way that is seen as “natural, rightful, expected and legitimate”, the so-called ‘logic of appropriateness’.<sup>31</sup> Every year, the US government marks certain resolutions that will be voted upon in the General Assembly as important. In order to ensure that major partners, such as the European Union, support the US, the administration sends out lobbyists.<sup>32</sup> I expect that this lobbying pays off and that EU member states feel obliged to follow the United States, out of this ‘logic of appropriateness’. Therefore, I expect higher levels of voting cohesion on the so-called lobbied resolutions than on other resolutions.

*H2: salience hypothesis: Voting cohesion is stronger on resolutions which the US had marked as important than on issues without this label.*

In order to test this hypothesis, I have again performed an independent t-test, for which I have created two groups within each voting cohesion index. The first group consists of the issues marked as important; the second group does not have this label. However, when I tested this hypothesis, two problems appeared: first, the data of salient issues is not available for every year.<sup>33</sup> Second, the US has marked a maximum of 15 resolutions per session in all policy areas. Therefore, in every session, only a few resolutions were included in my dataset. This makes the number of cases without the ‘important’-label (331) compared to the number of cases with a label (68) rather unbalanced. Both problems should be kept in mind when interpreting the results.

On average, voting cohesion is higher on the issues that were marked as important (M=89.18, SE=3.05) than on issues without this label (M=76.92, SE=1.89). This difference was significant ( $t(124.79)=0.00$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with an effect size of 0.29, which is close to a medium effect (the threshold generally being 0.3). When the abstain-votes were coded as no-votes, the direction of the result was the same; a higher level of voting cohesion on important issues (M=96.32, SE=0.77) than on non-important issues (M=90.91, SE=0.88). This difference was, again, significant ( $t(264.83)=0.00$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) with a small effect size of 0.27. The results indicate that the US is successful in getting its close allies to support its position on issues that are seen as vital for American interests.

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<sup>31</sup> J. March and J. Olsen, “The Logic of Appropriateness”, ARENA Working Papers, no. 4, Oslo, ARENA, 2009, pp. 3.

<sup>32</sup> Birnberg, *op.cit.*

<sup>33</sup> The data on salient issues is not available for the years 1984, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993, 1995 and 1996.

However, for both tests, the null hypothesis had to be rejected. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, and the variances between voting cohesion on important and non-important issues are significantly different. This violation could possibly be explained based on the number of years that were missing and the unbalanced number of important and non-important issues.

### *Hypothesis 3: repeat resolution*

The third hypothesis that I have tested is again based on constructivism and concerns the type of resolution. In the UNGA, certain resolutions are voted upon every year. This means that the positions of states are no longer a surprise: countries rarely vote in a different direction than the previous year. This means that countries can cooperate in the UNGA within relatively full knowledge of each other's positions on those issues. I have not formulated a direction of this hypothesis. One could argue that voting cohesion is likely to be stronger on annual resolutions because socialization takes place, while one could also argue that repeat resolutions do not differ from other resolutions because the countries had different positions from the very beginning and they will probably not change their positions.

*H3: repeat resolution hypothesis: Voting cohesion is different on repeat resolutions compared to 'new' resolutions.*

I have identified the resolutions in my database which are annually voted upon, such as on the Mine Ban Treaty. I have created two groups; the first one consists of annual resolutions, the second of 'new' resolutions. The results show that, on average, voting cohesion is lower on annual resolutions ( $M=62.4404$ ,  $SE=1.18$ ) than on 'new' resolutions ( $M=63.25$ ,  $SE=1.98$ ). This difference is not significant ( $t(1253)=0.070$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) with an a really small effect size of 0.01. When the abstain-votes are coded as 'no', the results show that, again, voting cohesion is weaker on annual resolutions ( $M=66.52$ ,  $SE=1.09$ ) than on 'new' resolutions ( $M=77.33$ ,  $SE=1.49$ ). Here the difference is bigger than when the abstain-votes are coded as 0.5. The difference is significant, which means that there is no variance of homogeneity ( $t(726.49)=0.000$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) and the effect size is 0.21, which is small.

The results of the t-tests seem to indicate that, indeed, the socialization process within the framework of the UNGA is not strong enough for countries to develop a common position on issues. On the contrary, if countries start off with a different position, they

are unlikely to change it. A possible explanation could be that a switch in position is seen as weak and not credible.

*Hypothesis 4: blame Bush jr.*

Another hypothesis that I have tested concerns the influence of the American president on voting cohesion levels. Since in the literature, the influence of Bush jr. on transatlantic relations is often discussed,<sup>34</sup> I have formulated the following hypothesis:

*H4: blame Bush hypothesis: Voting cohesion is lower under the presidency of Bush jr. than under other US presidencies.*

To find out whether President Bush jr. has truly had a negative influence on voting cohesion between the US and the EU, I have created dummy variables for each presidential period. The period under President Carter is taken as the reference category, which allows me to find out whether there is divergence and, if so, when it has started (under Clinton, or already before, under George H.W. Bush or Reagan) and whether the Presidency of Bush jr. has worsened the transatlantic divide or whether the already existing differences just became more apparent. The dummy variables entail the period of Reagan (1981-1989), Bush sr. (1989-1993), Clinton (1993-2001), Bush jr. (2001-2009) and Obama (since 2009). The period up to each president is coded as 0, afterwards it is coded as 1 (until the end of the presidential period). After testing whether the assumptions of regression were satisfied,<sup>35</sup> I have run a regression analysis.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, there is a multicollinearity problem. This refers to the situation in which two, or more, predictors are strongly (but not perfectly) correlated to each other, which makes interpretation of the strength of the effect of each predictor difficult. Therefore, the results have to be treated with care.

In order to make sure that any measured effect is truly caused by the President in place, I have created the variable 'year' which allows me to control for any time effect. In the following tables, the results of the regression analyses are presented:

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<sup>34</sup> For example P. Gordon, "Bridging the Atlantic divide", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 82, no. 1, 2003, pp. 1-9; S. Patrick, "Beyond coalitions of the willing: assessing US multilateralism", *Ethics and International Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2003, pp. 37-54; M. Hirsch, "Bush and the world", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 81, no. 5, 2002, pp. 18-43.

<sup>35</sup> A. Field, *Discovering statistics using SPSS*, London, Sage Publications, pp. 169-170.

<sup>36</sup> This is a linear model in which one variable or outcome is predicted by a linear combination of two or more predictor variables. The model takes the form of  $Y_i = (b_0 + b_1X_1 + b_2X_2 + \dots + b_{n1}X_n) + \varepsilon_i$

Table 1: Regression analysis of presidential influence (abstain as 0.5)

	<b>B (abstain as 0.5)</b>
<b>Year</b>	0.495 (0.449)
Reagan	0.383 (5.348)
Bush sr.	0.852 (7.163)
Clinton	21.106* (9.107)
Bush jr.	20.142 (12.200)
Obama	16.743 (14.682)
Constant	-934.296 (889.222)
R Squared	0.155

Notes: main entries are unstandardized coefficients; robust standard errors are in parentheses.

N=1255, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01.

Table 2: Regression analysis of presidential influence (abstain as 0)

	<b>B (abstain as 0)</b>
<b>Year</b>	1.014** (0.311)
Reagan	-0.711 (3.708)
Bush sr.	14.962* (4.966)
Clinton	33.279** (6.314)
Bush jr.	25.370* (8.459)
Obama	18.707 (10.179)
Constant	-1966.144 (616.536)
R Squared	0.483

Notes: main entries are unstandardized coefficients; robust standard errors are in parentheses.

N=1255, \* p<0.05, \*\* p<0.01.

Source: author's compilation

When the abstain-votes are coded as 0.5, only the variable Clinton is significant. The other variables do not seem to have any explanatory power. Moreover, any change in the level of voting cohesion cannot be seen as a time effect since the variable 'year' was not significant. Overall, the model seems to explain 15.5 percent of the variance in voting cohesion (R Squared<sup>37</sup>).

However, when the abstain-votes are coded as no-votes, there seems to be a time effect. For each year, EU-US voting cohesion increases with 1.014. In addition, it seems to matter who is the President. Quite interesting, the direction of the effect of the variable 'Reagan' is negative, which indicates that voting cohesion is likely to decrease. However, this variable is not significant, and therefore does not have enough explanatory power. Under Bush sr., Clinton and Bush jr., voting cohesion is likely to increase. This is an interesting finding, especially the fact that Bush jr. seems to have a positive effect on voting cohesion and thus not the negative effect that is expected by 'blame Bush'

<sup>37</sup> Statistical measure of how well a regression line approximates real data points or how well future outcomes are likely to be predicted by the model. If the R Squared is 1 (100%), there is a perfect fit.

theorists. Moreover, the model has improved significantly when the abstain-votes are measured as no-votes. Now, I am able to explain almost 50 percent of the variance in voting cohesion. Therefore, the hypothesis needs to be rejected, although the results have to be read with caution due to a multicollinearity problem.

Following liberal intergovernmentalists such as Putnam,<sup>38</sup> I acknowledge the importance of studying the 'domestic' level in explaining EU-US voting cohesion. If I find, for example, very low levels of EU-US voting cohesion on high politics issues, it could be caused by EU member states who try to protect their sovereignty. Therefore, I will also test two hypotheses that can explain why EU member states vote together in the UNGA or not. The two hypotheses are selected based on previous research that I have conducted with regards to voting cohesion of the European Union in the UNGA.<sup>39</sup>

#### *Hypothesis 5: length of EU membership*

First, I will test a hypothesis based on constructivism and the idea of a socialization process, which is concerned with the influence of the length of EU membership on the level of voting cohesion. According to constructivists, states can become committed to exchanging views, begin to perceive common interests and, in the end, become 'socialized'.<sup>40</sup> One could imagine that within the European Union, such as 'socialization process' is taking place and member states start to develop more and more common interests over the years. Therefore, I have tested the following hypothesis.

*H5: length of membership hypothesis: The longer a country is a member of the EU, the more cohesively it votes with the EU bloc in the UNGA.*

This hypothesis gives us some insight in the strength of socialization processes within the European Union. In the end, countries are expected to develop a 'co-ordination reflex',<sup>41</sup> leading to more cohesive voting behaviour at the UN.

To find out whether the length of membership does indeed have an influence on voting cohesion within the EU, a variable that measures the length of membership was created.

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<sup>38</sup> e.g. R. Putnam, "Diplomacy and domestic politics: the logic of two-level games", *International Organization*, vol. 42, no. 3, 1988, pp. 427-460.

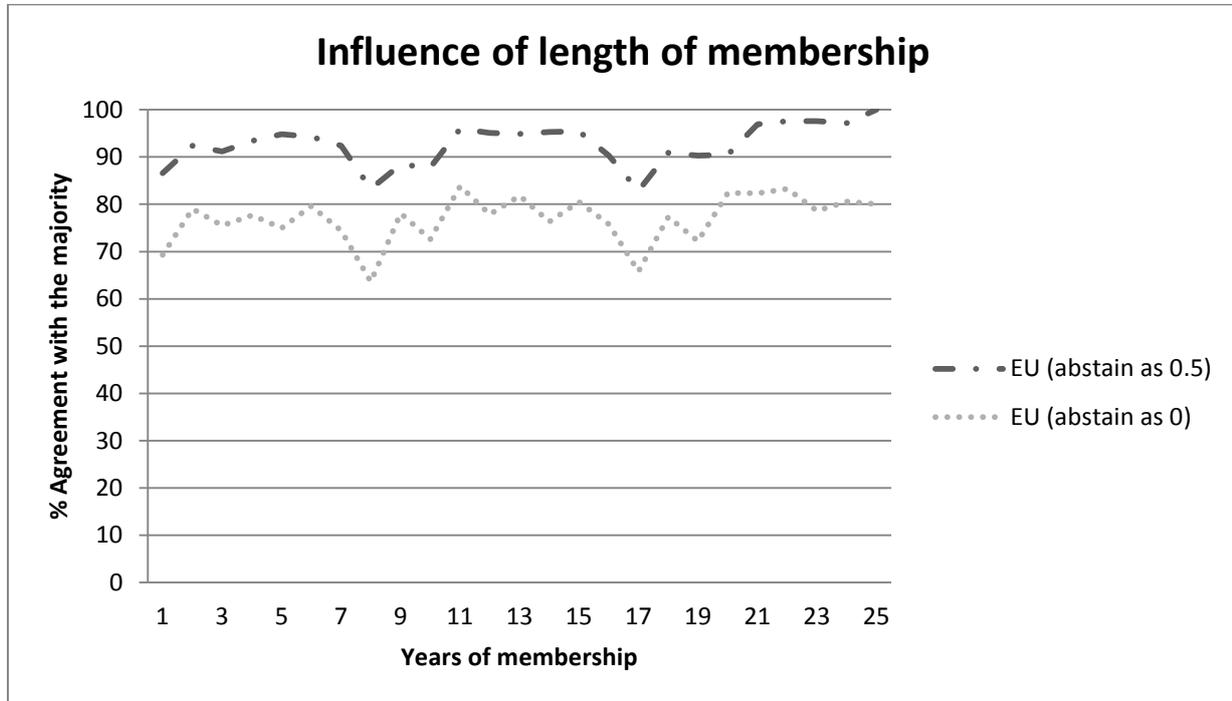
<sup>39</sup> K. Lucas, "United Europe at the United Nations? EU voting cohesion in international organizations explained", Thesis submitted to the Department of Political Science of Leiden University for the Degree of Master in Political Science (research), Leiden, 2011.

<sup>40</sup> K. Smith, "Speaking with one voice? European Union coordination on human rights issues at the United Nations", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2006, pp. 115-116.

<sup>41</sup> e.g. Birnberg, *op.cit.*, pp. 45-46.

All countries that became members of the EU from the 1980s onwards have been included. The results are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The length of EU membership and agreement with the majority vote



Source: author's compilation

Indeed, the percentages show that when the abstain-votes were coded as 0.5, there seems to be an upward trend over the years when it comes to voting with the majority. The longer a country is a member of the European Union, the more likely it is to agree with the majority. When the abstain-votes were coded as no-votes, the figure suggests a similar trend, but the effect of the length of membership is weaker. However, the figure does not tell whether the length of EU membership has a significant influence on whether countries agree with the majority-vote. Therefore, I have run a logistic regression,<sup>42</sup> the results of which are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Logistic regression analysis on the length of membership (abstain as 0.5)

	B	S.E.	Exp (B)
Length	0.032	0.008	1.032**
Constant	2.276	0.066	9.736**

N=6311, \*\* = significant at 0.01 level  
 B=coefficient, S.E= standard error, Exp (B)=the odds ratio

Source: author's compilation

<sup>42</sup> A version of multiple regression (two or more predictor variables) in which the outcome is dichotomous (two categories): agreement with the majority or not.

Table 4: Logistic regression analysis on the length of membership (abstain as 0)

	<b>B</b>	<b>S.E.</b>	<b>Exp (B)</b>
<b>Length</b>	0.014	0.005	1.014*
<b>Constant</b>	1.080	0.043	2.946**

N=6311, \*\* = significant at 0.01 level  
 B=coefficient, S.E= standard error, Exp (B)=the odds ratio

Source: author's compilation

The length of EU membership has a significant influence on voting cohesion, but the influence is relatively small. Being a member for a long time increases the odds of voting along with the majority of the EU member states with a factor of 1.032. When the abstain-votes are coded as 'no', the effect becomes even smaller (odds ratio of 1.014). This is an interesting finding since constructivist theory "has thus far been somewhat silent about precisely how many years are necessary for socialization to emerge and mature",<sup>43</sup> although in the literature the average expectation of such a socialization process is that it takes a minimum of three to four years.<sup>44</sup>

My results show that indeed socialization is a long-term process because voting cohesion only grows very little over the years. A possible explanation could be the 'ceiling effect'. As presented in Figure 1, EU voting cohesion levels have increased over time to almost 95 percent cohesion when the abstain-votes were coded as 0. This means that there is little room for improvement of the voting cohesion levels through institutional reforms. One could imagine that, in general, some countries are more likely to follow the majority than others, simply because the preference of the majority is closer to their own preference. Therefore, I have run another logistic regression in which I have controlled for differences among countries. Here only the countries that joined the EU after 1980 have been included. The results are reported in Tables 5 and 6.

<sup>43</sup> D. Bearce & S. Bondanella, "Intergovernmental organizations, socialization, and member-state convergence", *International Organization*, vol. 61, no. 4, p. 716.

<sup>44</sup> e.g. M. Zürn & J. Checkel, "Getting socialized to build bridges: constructivism and rationalism, Europe and the nation-state", *International Organization*, vol. 59, no. 4, pp. 1045-1079.

Table 5: Logistic regression analysis about the length of membership, controlled for country (abstain as 0.5)

	B	S.E.	Exp (B)
<b>Length</b>	0.083	0.010	1.087**
Bulgaria	2.196	0.602	8.988**
Cyprus	0.589	0.262	1.803*
Czech Republic	1.377	0.341	3.963**
Estonia	1.377	0.341	3.963**
Finland	0.284	0.210	1.328
Hungary	1.377	0.341	3.963**
Latvia	0.917	0.290	2.501**
Lithuania	1.708	0.387	5.516**
Malta	0.331	0.245	1.393
Poland	1.286	0.329	3.618**
Portugal	-0.264	0.177	0.768
Romania	1.319	0.416	3.739**
Slovakia	1.476	0.354	4.377**
Slovenia	1.586	0.369	4.883**
Spain	0.231	0.191	1.260
Sweden	-0.249	0.189	0.780
Constant	1.526	0.154	4.599**

N=6311, \* = significant at 0.05 level, \*\* = significant at 0.01 level

Source: author's compilation

First, Tables 5 and 6 show that even when other variables are entered into the regression model, the relationship between the length of EU membership and the level of voting cohesion remains significant. However, the explanatory power of length is relatively small. For each year of EU membership, the odds of voting with the majority increase with a factor of 1.049. Second, regardless of how the abstain-votes are coded, there are differences between countries when it comes to voting with the majority. For example, Lithuania is 5.5 times more likely to vote with the majority than Austria (when the abstain-votes are coded as 0.5). Portugal, on the other hand, is less likely to agree with the majority than Austria. The results show that regardless of differences among countries in the likelihood to vote with the majority, the length of membership has a positive influence on the levels of voting cohesion. The results support the hypothesis that EU membership leads to more cohesive voting behaviour, due to socialization.

Table 6: Logistic regression analysis about the length of membership, controlled for country (abstain as 0)

	B	S.E.	Exp (B)
<b>Length</b>	0.048	0.006	1.049**
Bulgaria	0.568	0.237	1.765*
Cyprus	0.384	0.182	1.468*
Czech Republic	0.625	0.192	1.868**
Estonia	0.429	0.184	1.536*
Finland	0.190	0.145	1.209
Hungary	0.476	0.186	1.610*
Latvia	0.453	0.185	1.573*
Lithuania	0.524	0.188	1.689**
Malta	0.233	0.178	1.262
Poland	0.549	0.189	1.731**
Portugal	-0.385	0.126	0.680**
Romania	0.481	0.232	1.618*
Slovakia	0.453	0.185	1.573*
Slovenia	0.524	0.188	1.689**
Spain	-0.407	0.126	0.665**
Sweden	0.000	0.142	1.000
Constant	0.759	0.109	2.136**

N=6311, \* = significant at 0.05 level, \*\* = significant at 0.01 level

*Hypothesis 6: transaction costs*

The last hypothesis that will be tested is based on constructivism as well and concerns the influence of institutional reforms on EU voting cohesion. Constructivists believe that the structures in which states interact are important and shape behaviour. When there are institutional reforms that make coordination among, for example, EU member states easier and states become 'socialized', constructivists believe that cohesion levels should increase.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, I have tested the following hypothesis:

*H6: transaction costs hypothesis: The more powerful the coordination apparatus of the Union, the lower the transactions costs and thus the higher the levels of voting cohesion.*

I would like to point out that the coordination apparatus, as developed through Treaty reforms, is not only relevant to achieve cohesion among the EU member states, but it can also be used to achieve cohesive action with other states such as the United States.

Three treaty reforms in the historical development of EU foreign policy could have seriously affected its coordination apparatus and thus EU voting cohesion. First, the Treaty of Maastricht established a Common Foreign and Security Policy and coordination was made easier through several instruments such as the introduction of common positions and joint actions. A second reform concerns the Treaty of Amsterdam which introduced the position of High Representative (HR). The third reform is the Treaty of Lisbon, in which the HR has gained more power and the European External Action Service (EEAS) has come into place. Again, I have created dummy variables, in which the period before the Maastricht reforms is coded as 0 because it is the reference category. The dummy variables are coded in the following way: the period up to the reforms is coded as 0, afterwards it is coded as 1. In order to find out whether the size of the EU matters or whether each of the institutional reforms have had a significant effect on the level of EU voting cohesion, I have run linear regression analyses. Again, there is a multicollinearity problem, but the rest of the assumptions were satisfied for both ways of measuring. The results of the regression are presented in Tables 7 and 8.

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<sup>45</sup> K. Smith, "Speaking with one voice?", *op.cit.*, pp. 115-116.

Table 7: Regression analysis on institutional reforms (abstain as 0.5)

	<b>B</b>
Year	0.440 (0.327)
Maastricht reforms	18.167** (4.472)
Amsterdam reforms	2.717 (4.161)
Lisbon reforms	-4.501 (5.206)
Constant	-821.226 (649.626)
R-Squared	0.137

Notes: Main entries are unstandardized coefficients; robust standard errors are in parentheses.

N=1258, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01

Source: author's compilation

Table 8: Regression analysis on institutional reforms (abstain as 0)

	<b>B</b>
Year	1.722** (0.234)
Maastricht reforms	22.301** (3.192)
Amsterdam reforms	-11.318** (2.970)
Lisbon reforms	-12.608** (3.716)
Constant	-3466.082 (463.734)
R-Squared	0.448

Notes: Main entries are unstandardized coefficients; robust standard errors are in parentheses.

N=1258, \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01

When the abstain-votes are coded as 0.5, only the Maastricht reforms seem to significantly predict voting cohesion levels. Other reforms do not have a significant influence on voting cohesion. Moreover, any change in the level of voting cohesion cannot be seen as a time effect since the variable 'year' was not significant.

However, when the abstain-votes are coded as 'no', there seems to be a time effect. For each year, EU voting cohesion levels increase with 1.722. Institutional reforms also have influence on voting cohesion, even though the direction is different. The Maastricht reforms seem to have led to higher levels of voting cohesion, while the findings suggest that the Amsterdam reforms have led to lower levels of voting cohesion. The Lisbon reforms also have a significant negative influence, although one should bear into mind that it will probably take a few more years before the effects of the reforms become fully visible.

Because of the multicollinearity problem, the results have to be interpreted with a certain caution. Regardless of how the abstain-votes are coded, the Maastricht reforms had a positive significant influence on voting cohesion. When the abstain-votes are coded as no-votes, the Amsterdam and Lisbon reforms have explanatory power. However, the direction of the influence is not in line with my expectations. With the introduction of the reforms of the Amsterdam and the Lisbon Treaties, the level of EU voting cohesion has decreased. While I expected that the transaction

costs would decrease with an increasing coordination apparatus, the Amsterdam and Lisbon reforms have actually made it more difficult to come to an agreement. A possible explanation for this finding could, again, be the 'ceiling effect'. Moreover, the actual effect of the Lisbon Treaty might not yet be known.

### **Conclusion: what matters for voting cohesion**

This paper has examined the extent and reasons of EU-US voting cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly. I have tested six possible explanatory factors of EU-US voting cohesion. It is important to bear in mind that I have not only studied cohesive voting behaviour between the United States and the European Union, but I have also tried to explain why EU member states reach voting cohesion.

To explain EU-US voting cohesion, I have identified four potential explanatory factors: the issues voted upon, whether an issue is marked as 'important', whether a resolution is 'new' or a so-called 'repeat resolution' and whether it matters who is the President of the US. To explain EU voting cohesion, I analyzed the effects of the length of Union membership and of relevant institutional reforms. To test these six factors, I have looked at voting behaviour in the UNGA on both high politics (security) and low politics (human rights) issues. All the relevant UN resolutions in the period between 1980 and 2011 were manually selected on the basis of keywords. With the selection of resolutions, a new data set was created and the voting cohesion levels on all those resolutions were calculated, using both the method in which the abstain-votes were treated as abstentions and the method in which the abstain-votes were treated as a 'no'. After this, independent t-tests were performed to find out whether the issues voted upon, the marking of an issue as 'important' or the nature of a resolution have any influence on the level of voting cohesion. Moreover, linear regressions were run to analyze the influence of the American President on voting cohesion and to study at the EU level whether the institutional reforms have had a positive effect on voting cohesion levels. Finally, logistic regressions were run to find out whether the length of membership of the Union impacts on EU voting cohesion.

The results of all these analyses indicate that to explain EU-US voting cohesion, the issues voted upon, the 'important' label and the type of resolutions matter. On the EU level, both the length of membership and the institutional reforms have explanatory power. First, the issue area hypothesis is partially supported. With both ways of

measuring, voting cohesion is higher on low politics issues than on high politics issues. However, when the abstain-votes are coded as no-votes, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated and, therefore, the results have to be taken with care. Second, the hypothesis of salience is partially supported. Voting cohesion is higher on 'important' issues than on not important issues. Again, though, the assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated, which could possibly be explained by the number of years that were missing and the unbalanced number of important and non-important issues. Third, I have tested whether the type of resolutions matter. The results indicate that voting cohesion is weaker on annual resolutions than on issues that are 'new'. Fourth, the results indicate that the 'blame Bush' hypothesis has to be rejected. Under Bush jr., voting cohesion was likely to increase instead of decrease, although one has to take the multicollinearity problem into account.

Besides studying EU-US voting cohesion, I have analyzed EU voting cohesion. The results support the hypothesis that the longer a country is a member of the Union, the more likely it is to vote along with the majority. The final hypothesis that I have tested focused on transaction costs. The Maastricht reforms had a positive significant influence on voting cohesion. When the abstain-votes are coded as 'no', the Amsterdam and Lisbon reforms have explanatory power. Hence, the hypothesis that the reforms have led to higher levels of voting cohesion, due to more coordination, is only partially supported.

There are some interesting scientific and societal implications of my findings. Previous research<sup>46</sup> has shown that the issues voted upon do not explain why EU member states vote together or not. When looking at EU-US voting cohesion, though, the variable does have significant explanatory power. This might be an indication that the United States and the European Union do indeed have very different security strategies.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, another known area of disagreement in transatlantic relations is the death penalty. Every year, the UNGA votes on the moratorium of the death penalty, and the countries of the European Union are always in favour, while the United States is a strong opponent. Again, it shows that whether an issue is repeatedly voted upon does not influence the levels of EU-US voting cohesion. What does seem to matter though, is whether the US has marked the issue as important. The EU is more likely to vote along with the United States on those issues, which shows

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<sup>46</sup> Lucas, 2011, *op.cit.*

<sup>47</sup> Kagan, *op.cit.*

that the diplomatic pressure and persuasion of the US on the EU is successful. Another remarkable finding is the fact that Bush jr. did not have a negative effect on voting cohesion levels, but neither did Clinton. This makes my study an interesting first step to analyze the influence of a US President in general on foreign policy and in relations with other states. At the EU level, my results support the idea of socialization and also show that this process takes time. It would be an interesting suggestion for further research to analyze how this process exactly takes place.

Overall, the prospects for EU-US agreement are not bleak. In the UNGA there are high levels of voting cohesion. This is even the case on security issues, despite the fact that the US and the EU might have different security strategies and strategic outlooks.

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