An empirical analysis of the EAEU's voting behavior in the UN General Assembly, 2000–2020

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Abstract

This paper examines the voting behavior of the member states of the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) to find out their preference similarities on foreign policy issues. Based on a specific data set of UNGA resolutions from 2000 to 2020 and using two different indexes 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 secondly, what was the impact the formation of the EAEU in 2015 had upon common foreign policy? The results reveal that the EAEU scores a “medium” level of cohesion as measured within the UNGA context which may indicate that members oftentimes speak with one voice while defections still occur on controversial votes. Besides, the findings suggest that no meaningful cohesion difference exists between pre- and post-EAEU periods. Finally, the study finds that the Eurasian nations are most cohesive on developmental resolutions, but least cohesive on security and human rights issues as expressed in their recorded voting behavior.

Keywords: Eurasian Economic Union, Eurasian integration, Eurasia, United Nations, UN General Assembly, voting cohesion.

1. Introduction

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Eurasian integration¹ has gone through several stages, following the “CIS-EurAsEC-CU/SES-EAEU” line² (Vinokurov, 2018), and ultimately establishing the EAEU, the most sophisticated regional organization that

1 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 is taken here to refer to the current five EAEU member states.

2 Respectively, these abbreviations stand for the Commonwealth of Independent States–the Eurasian Economic Community–Customs Union of Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus–Single Economic Space–the Eurasian Economic Union.

unifies the core integrationist states in the post-Soviet space. Some of these nations were hailed as “the biggest 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 is to create a “powerful supra-national union” of sovereign states “that is capable of becoming a pillar in today’s world” (Halbach, 2012). As argued by Lane (2017), the EAEU was formed both in response to the growing power of the EU and the weaknesses of the CIS. Acknowledging the EAEU as an EU-like bloc, this paper investigates the extent to which Eurasian nations act as a solid “pillar” externally, speaking with one voice on global issues. More specifically, the aim is to give an empirical account of the voting patterns of EAEU members in the UNGA from years 2000 to 2020 and to further our understanding of whether the institutionalization had an impact upon the convergence of foreign policy preferences among the member states. Engaging with the question of whether the Eurasian nations do reconcile their national interests externally is critical for understanding not only the EAEU’s foreign policy outlook but also the future trajectory of the geopolitical pluralism in the 21st century Eurasia.

The EAEU was formed in 2015 when the “troika” (Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia) which today remain the core of the Eurasian integration (Vinokurov, 2018), signed the Treaty on the EAEU, an accord that terminated previous structures and instituted a new international organization for regional cooperation and development through economic integration. In the same year, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan have acceded to 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 scholarly research. But little has appeared on the degree of EAEU’s integration concerning unity (or lack thereof) among member countries on the international plane: to what extent and on what substantive issues do the EAEU members speak in unison externally. After all, as Hurwitz (1974) has persuasively argued, “integration is not only increasing the transaction of goods, services, and people or the sharing of common attitudinal maps,” it also entails the capability of the member countries to harmonize their “external behavior and to form a consensus on external questions.”

The literature on quantitative analysis of voting behavior of states in the UN bodies is voluminous. Voting behavior of states and bloc politics in the assembly has attracted scholars' attention right from the UN's inception (Voeten, 2012). Most recent studies are dealt with the recorded votes to generate measures for assessing the degree of political closeness among states or tracking the cohesion of groups of states (Peterson, 2014). There has also been active scholarly debate over whether the intensified cooperation within the EU, BRICS, and ASEAN is translated into common positions on issues discussed in the UNGA. Only a few recent works analyze the voting behavior of post-Soviet nations within the UNGA. Yet, empirical analysis of EAEU's voting cohesiveness has so far received virtually no attention in the scholarly literature. Thus, this article aims to extend the existing research on Eurasian integration by analyzing UN voting data to measure the level of foreign policy convergence among Eurasian nations on various global issues.

Based on the above research question, and consistent with the assumptions held by realist and liberal understandings, the following testable hypotheses have been formulated to achieve the purpose of the present research: Firstly, since realism argues that states pursue their national interests to survive, and therefore cooperation is hard to achieve (Frieden et al., 2013), realist scholars would hypothesize (**H₁**) that little consensus would exist among EAEU members on "high politics" issues which are of the most important for the survival of the state such as security and arms control, whereas a higher degree of cohesion should be expected on issues of "low politics" which involves socio-economic concerns (e.g. development, human rights).³ Also, according to neo-realists, Russia would display less cooperative behavior than other EAEU members precisely because it is "more powerful and possess more information because of (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

3 To test **H₁**, this study further classifies important resolutions into four categories based on their subject matter. Categorization was generated in line with earlier works by Voeten (2000) and Hosli et al. (2010). Based on the selected keywords, resolutions are coded into the following categories: development, human rights, Middle East, and security. Table 3 shows the share of these four categories. Only one resolution from the 62nd session was not assigned to 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, if included in calculations, this category would suffer from a small-*n* problem, it is therefore omitted from the analysis of voting cohesion on "substantive" categories.

interdependence that facilitate interstate cooperation (Owen, 2017). Accordingly, this would lead liberal scholars to hypothesize (**H₂**) that EAEU states would display high levels of cohesion over time, particularly following the formation of the economic union in 2015, assuming that the institutionalization of economic integration could have intensified the convergence of members' voting preferences. Liberals would also expect (**H₃**) that those states deeply integrated within the EAEU, economically or in some other ways, would display higher cohesion levels 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 extensively lobbies other countries (Voting Practices, 2019). It includes the roll-call voting records of the EAEU members in the UNGA from the 55th (2000-2001) to and including the 74th session (2019-2020). The study thus measures pre-EAEU (2000-2014) and post-EAEU (2015-2020) voting cohesion in the UNGA. The temporal analysis starts 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 has "served as the institutional springboard" (Vinokurov, 2018) for subsequent integration initiatives. Second, a more practical reason was the fact that online data on "important" resolutions was only available beginning from 2000 on the website of the US State Department.

The article is organized as follows. The next section provides a short background to the foreign policy coordination among the Eurasian nations which is followed by a discussion on the voting practices in the UNGA. In the succeeding two sections, the data and methodological procedure used in the analysis are described. Major 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 cohesively⁴ in international organizations. Article 1 of the treaty merely calls for the parties to "ensure

⁴ This article defines the concept of cohesion as "the degree to which an entity is able to formulate and articulate internally consistent policy preferences"; voting cohesion, therefore, is considered as "output generated by the coordination process" (Hooijmaaijers and Keukeleire, 2016).

free movement of goods, services, capital and labor as well as coordinated, agreed or common policy in the economic sectors” (EAEU, 2014). Although EAEU enjoys observer status at the UN since EurAsEC was granted this status in 2003, unlike for example the EU, it does not entertain a permanent observer mission at the headquarters of the UN (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 most of the time the issues of coordination 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). Likewise, Degterov 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 be no exaggeration to assert that formal foundations for foreign policy coordination among Eurasian nations lie elsewhere: one of them is the Charter of the CIS which was signed in 1993 by the heads of state parties. While member states are invited to respect the principle of “non-interference into domestic and foreign affairs of each other,” Article 4 states explicitly 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 instituted under Article 27 of the Charter to coordinate the foreign political activity of members, including their positions in international organizations, and to organize consultations on issues of world politics. While these stipulations suggest that the drafters’ initial desire was decidedly to see 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 as well as national security also occurs under the institutional setting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), another Eurasian bloc that shares largely overlapping membership with EAEU (plus Tajikistan). The CSTO was formed as a successor organization to the Collective Security Treaty when its Charter was approved in 2002.

The organization was granted observer status in the UNGA 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 the issues of coordination of the member states’ interaction in the field of foreign policy. Through these mechanisms, member states develop common positions and seek joint actions to 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 agenda items of the UNGA, as well as other topics affecting the interests of the parties (CSTO, 2019). Official meetings and consultations occur mostly in New York, Moscow, and other capital cities of the member states.⁵ Meetings are usually attended by plenipotentiaries at the CSTO, 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 seen 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 how far this community of nations has succeeded to coordinate their actions and to adopt common positions in the UNGA. In other words, did ministerial meetings, consultations, and institutionalization lead to significantly higher voting cohesion among the EAEU members? A systematic analysis of voting records of the 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 UN General Assembly Voting

According to the UN Charter, the General Assembly is one of the six “principal organs” of the UN (Article 7). It constitutes the most representative and, perhaps, most formal organ that serves as the collective voice for its now 193 member-states and provides a

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

forum for discussion of virtually all matters covered by the Charter, such as security, development, human rights, etc. Member states reaffirmed the UNGA's central role in the 2000 Millennium Declaration as the chief deliberative, policy-making, and representative organ of the UN. 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, *inter alia*, set the global agenda, consolidate international law, engage in norm-creation, and represent the organized views of the member states (Peterson, 2006; Ferdinand, 2014; also Hosli et al., 2010).

Resolutions may 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. roll call vote) identifies the stand that a country takes on the issue under discussion (Hug, 2012). On average around 20 to 30% of the resolutions each year are accepted by a roll call vote where each member votes openly with "yes" (in favor), "no" (against) or "abstain" (or "absent" from the vote) (Luif, 2003). Data for adopted resolutions may be found in the Voting Data collection of the UN Digital Library.⁶ Overall most countries vote in favor of resolutions. Ferdinand's (2014) study, for example, found that the positive voting rate in the Assembly for all recorded votes for the period 1974-2008 was about 84%.

For analytical purposes, it is important to note that various blocs and groups exist in the Assembly, and play a conspicuous role in the decisions of the UNGA (Lijphart, 1963). One example is that member states are arranged by geographically based (five) regional groups to allocate seats on the UN bodies (Peterson, 2014). Accordingly, the EAEU members are split between the Asia-Pacific Group (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) and the Eastern European Group (Armenia, Belarus, and Russia) which arguably adds a layer, however tenuous, into the coalitional divides among Eurasian nations. Besides regional groupings, other stable voting coalitions with varying degrees of cohesion exist in the UNGA. One such caucus is the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)⁷ which represents the so-called global South and serves as a platform to engage

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

⁷ Belarus is a member of the NAM, while Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Armenia are observer states.

in cooperative activities across different issue areas. According to Peterson (2014), it remains (together with Group of 77) the source of primary cleavage in the UN.

Various aspects of voting in the UNGA have been extensively studied to evaluate the foreign policy preferences of member states. Much scholarly attention has focused on measuring the degree of voting cohesion in the Assembly to identify voting blocs and dimensions of contestation in world politics (Voeten, 2012). The literature 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 notable, albeit limited, interest in studying voting patterns of post-Soviet nations in the UN, using various methodologies and focusing on different issue areas and voting groups. For example, one of the earliest studies, done by Hansen (2014) explores the foreign policy orientations of the CIS members, relying on a large quantitative data set from the UNGA voting records in the years 1992-2013. Hansen's study shows that the level of disagreement between the members has increased significantly. In their analysis of whether the Turkic Council's members act cohesively in the UNGA, Kaplan et al. (2015) find that voting agreement among Turkic nations has been increasing steadily.

Some scholars focused on particular 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 extent of their normative convergence as reflected in the UNGA. He finds that among these republics there is high convergence on pluralist norms of international society and that they tend to agree on many issues at the international level. 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. They argue that CIS countries strive for equidistance from Russia and the US when voting in the Assembly, taking opposing approaches on various issues to achieve a policy of balance.

Patarai's (2015) work explicitly focused on the voting practices of Armenia and Georgia in the UNGA between 1998 and 2013 and concluded that Armenia's cohesion level with Russia and the EU decreased. A recent study conducted by Lennon and Becker (2019) specifically examines Belarus' global policy alignment from 2007 to 2017 by analyzing its voting patterns on contested 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 nations in the UN, no one has so far studied the EAEU's voting behavior systematically. Thus, the main contribution of this paper would be the mathematical analysis of the EAEU voting cohesion using two different voting behavior indices, the results of which may have practical as well as 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 nations based on a select data set manually compiled from the annual reports titled "Voting Practices in the United Nations" which has been published by the US State Department since 1984. Only those resolutions that are designated as "particularly important to US interests" were coded here. On average each year between ten to 30 "important" resolutions are listed by the State Department and reported to the US Congress under Public Law 101-246. These actions are defined as "votes on issues which directly affected important United States interests and on which the United States lobbied extensively" (Voting Practices, 2019) other UN members to vote in line with American preferences.

An explanation is necessary regarding the reasons why only "important" resolutions are selected for analysis. First of all, important resolutions are widely used by previous scholars (Wang, 1999; Voeten, 2004; also Yuvaci & Kaplan, 2013a). These actions tend to be more contentious and force states to make clear choices on important votes (Yuvaci & Kaplan, 2013b). Although a country's voting record in the UN is only one dimension of its foreign relations, a country's behavior at the UN is always relevant to its bilateral relationship (Voeten, 2004). Hence only on such resolutions do a vote would provide strong evidence that the interests of Eurasian nations converge (or perhaps diverge) when they clearly express their positions on issues for which the US has extensively lobbied. I, therefore, assume that a vote choice of each member is affected by, among other things, how it sees its relationship with the US as an external factor, especially at the time when "Russia's relations with the West are in deep turmoil" (Charap et al., 2018). Second, these votes are quite representative of all recorded votes cast in the UNGA as they deal with different topics such as security,

development, and human rights (Yuvaci & Kaplan, 2013b). Nevertheless, some caution may be in order, since the temporal scope is small and only several resolutions are marked “important” each year resulting in a relatively small sample size (n=277).

The number of roll call votes ranges from 11 (2000/01) and 28 (2019/20) in each session. 277 “important” resolutions were included in the data set, with the vote choices of five states. The total number of observations is 1135 individual votes. There are 276 abstentions, 200 no-votes, 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 nations 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 1135 votes cast by the EAEU members 64% were “yes,” 15.1% were “no” and 20.9% were abstentions. It is notable, while not surprising, that the Eurasian voting is less positive on important actions 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 the 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” as often as Russia did over the same period.

Figure 1. Vote choice in UNGA on “important” issues, 2000-2020: all member states.

Figure 2. Vote choice in UNGA on “important” issues, 2000-2020: the EAEU members.

Moreover, Figures 1 and 2 graphically show the share of yes, no and abstentions cast by the whole UNGA membership and the Eurasian nations over time. The share of yes-votes as compared to no-votes is higher for the global community than for the EAEU. The figures also suggest that global levels of votes appear fairly stable than the EAEU’s voting patterns. While positive votes on important resolutions for the entire UNGA fluctuates between about 60 and 80% for the period covered, there are significant ebbs and flows across time in the votes of the EAEU. Also very noticeable is that from 2000 the EAEU’s positive voting starts gradually to decline, with the lowest value of 30% cast in 2016, followed by a spike in yes-votes (63%) and then remaining

at about this level (see Figure 2). Such variations suggest that future research may focus on the reasons associated with these fluctuations.

5. Methodology

Different methodologies have been proposed to measure the extent of the UN voting cohesion within specific regional groups or voting blocs. The academic literature is divided on the questions of data collection, the resolutions to be counted, indices of voting cohesion to be used, and the question of how to deal with absenteeism and abstentions.⁸ 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 originally devised 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).

Measurement with the Agreement Index (AI) establishes an indicator that provides the level of the cohesion of a group as a whole. The AI is frequently utilized in analyses of the voting patterns in the UNGA since it allows “abstentions” to be included in the calculation. It also treats “yes”, “no,” and “abstain” as equal, producing a unique tally of each vote option for each resolution, shown by Y, N, and A accordingly (Hosli et al., 2010). The AI formula is, as presented by Hix et al. (2005), 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 count of “yes” votes cast by group i on a particular resolution, N_i the count of “no” votes, and A_i the count 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. The AI value is between 1 (perfect cohesion indicating that all members of a group vote alike) 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 between voting patterns within a group (Ferdinand, 2014).

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

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 for voting agreement between pairs of states, 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 in percentage, is used to calculate dyadically the voting similarity rate of countries on every given roll call resolution:

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

whereby f represents the number of votes in which a pair of nations are in full agreement (either “yes”, “no” or “abstain”), g is the number of resolutions for which one of the parties to the dyad votes “yes” or “no” while the other chooses abstaining, 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 despite being complicated compared to the AI, this formula has an advantage of highlighting changes in voting patterns for a given pair of states that would otherwise be subsumed in an overall AI value.

As already alluded to above, both methodologies ensure that abstentions are reflected in 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 distinct voting option. Following the literature, I assume that abstentions are apparently “neutral” votes, that is, neither for nor against the resolution, and hence abstentions are regarded as partial agreement and scored at one-half maximum cohesion (Hurwitz, 1975; Luif, 2003; Bailey et al., 2017; also Costa-Buranelli, 2014). Counting abstentions with a half-point gives a more inclusive review and more nuance to the voting coincidence metric (Voting Practices, 2019).

Finally, countries may choose not to participate in voting. In about one out of ten occasions, a delegation does not cast a vote at all and is consequently registered as absent in the UNGA (Panke, 2014). The reasons for absence can vary from political (purposely skipping) to situational (unable to attend) or staff bottlenecks (for small

missions), and even to civil wars (Voting Practices, 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).⁹ 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 for three groupings and substantive categories separately. The second sub-section illustrates the 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 the EAEU – the “Eurasian troika” (Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Russia) and Russia-Kazakhstan pairing. They provide valuable insights into the Eurasian voting cohesion. One caveat, however, has to be kept in mind: as pointed by Hosli et al. (2010), with fewer members, cohesion calculations for groupings get more easily distorted when a single member opposes the majority.

⁹ An exception to this rule is that, following Luif (2003), when a delegation is absent in more than a third of all votes in a given session, related data is coded as missing values. This is only relevant to Kyrgyzstan’s voting in 2001 when Kyrgyz diplomats were absent throughout the 56th session during which 12 “important” resolutions were adopted. Kyrgyzstan had no vote in the 56th 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.

Figure 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 it increased again, with values reaching the levels of 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 plunge in 2016 when the lowest level of convergence for all Eurasian caucuses could be noted. It is also noteworthy that, when compared to the entire EAEU, the Russia-Kazakhstan pairing exhibited a higher level of cohesion until 2010, whereafter the pair became the least cohesive group, at least till the 74th 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 other two groupings' cohesion levels.

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 clues for the voting patterns of the three Eurasian caucuses for the pre- and post-EAEU periods. Despite declaratory statements and a growing collaborative engagement for cooperation, what is obvious from the results is that the Eurasian nations became a little less consensual since the formation of the EAEU in 2015. The troika maintains its status as the most cohesive caucus even if the convergence among them suffered a slight drop in the post-EAEU period. The two largest economies of EAEU were the least coherent caucus with the lowest AI value of 0.62. The results also suggest that the new members of EAEU (Kyrgyzstan and Armenia) appear to have lowered the overall cohesiveness of the union.

Table 3 shows the indices of agreement on substantive categories, again grouped into two periods for comparison. It reveals the shifts in pre- and post-EAEU voting cohesion levels across four issue areas. While only one category (security) registered a significant decline in the degree of convergence, the remaining three categories saw 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 conspicuous shifts can be detected regarding “low” politics (development) and “high” politics (security) resolutions. First, identical EAEU voting on security-related resolutions suffered a setback of -0.29 points during the post-EAEU period (down from 0.87 to 0.58). What it means is that Eurasian states have become less consensual, and more divided, on issues of security in recent years. Second, what stands out markedly in the results is that generally, EAEU members are the most cohesive on developmental issues than any other category. Moreover, cohesiveness on developmental votes increased substantially in the post-EAEU period, during which it voted with near perfect cohesion. On the Middle East and human rights questions, while cohesion among Eurasian countries remained somewhat stable, it was substantially lower than in any other area, with the exception of the security category in the post-EAEU period. In other words, Eurasian countries are more likely to pursue their specific

national interests on highly politicized resolutions, even if it is contradictory to 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 EAEU. In the pre-EAEU period, only one pair falls within a “high” degree of external cohesion (90+ level), the following four pairs are ranked at the ranges of 80-90 (a “medium” level of cohesion), and the remaining dyads are broadly placed in a “low” level of cohesion (70-80).¹⁰ Perhaps not surprisingly, all dyads containing Russia are ranked at the positions eight to ten within the 75-76 range, except for the Belarus-Russia pair that came in the fourth rank. It can be said that Russia arguably acts as the EAEU’s most non-conformist member in the pre-EAEU period. The closest dyad in both periods is Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan whereas Russia-Kazakhstan is the farthest apart, and perhaps the most interesting pair on the list. The two largest countries of the union placed themselves at the bottom level with the lowest cohesion score of 74.6%.

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. Foremost, while three pairs’ indices rose distinctly, all remaining dyads’

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

scores fell by 4%, on average, during this period. More specifically, each pair involving Russia, Belarus, and Armenia experienced about a 6% increase. The highest decline on a pairwise score came in the second period between Kazakhstan and Russia (65.3%) which has the lowest IVC level recorded for all pairs in pre- and post-EAEU periods. The most cohesive pair on the list (Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan) maintained its ranking in the second period, although it underwent a slim decline in its voting convergence. Another noticeable trend is that 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 gives the Eurasian voting convergence on four categories computed by averaging pairwise indices. On the whole, the results confirm AI scores on substantive categories discussed above. The average IVC score for all categories is at the medium level of external cohesion (83%). A high level of cohesion among the pairs exists only on developmental issues, although the temporal scope of this category is the smallest with 20 votes. Convergence among the pairs on Middle East resolutions has experienced a slight increase since 2015 so that it is now at the medium level of cohesion (81%). The remaining two categories (security and human rights) are within the 75-77 range in the post-EAEU period which shows that Eurasian nations are less-consensual on these issues. Results can be interpreted as demonstrating that the disagreement does exist, and the EAEU does not always speak with one voice in the UNGA, especially on matters concerning human rights and security.

7. Discussion of the results

The empirical results just discussed provide some implications for the theoretical debates as well as for the EAEU's foreign policy outlook, assuming that a state's foreign policy preferences are reflected in how it casts its vote in the UNGA. Several research questions framed the analysis. First and foremost, as predicted in **H1**, both AI

and IVC results on substantive categories lend partial support to the argument put forward by realists that voting on resolutions in areas of “low” politics is highly cohesive than on issues of “high” politics. Empirical evidence shows that **H₁** is substantiated for developmental issues and to some extent security and Middle East questions. Both indices of voting cohesion reveal that agreement among Eurasian nations is quite high in development matters (roughly 0.96 with AI and 98% with IVC in the post-EAEU period). Similarly, AI scores for the Middle East category largely support **H₁** prediction since disagreement among Eurasian nations is comparatively higher on this “high politics” issue. On security matters, results partially support **H₁**, in that levels of Eurasian divergence on this issue only become meaningful in the post-EAEU period for both indices. For the category human rights, the trend, however, was quite on the contrary. In stark contrast to **H₁** prediction, Eurasian nations’ voting behavior on human rights-related resolutions displays a modicum of unity throughout the years under examination.

Interestingly, however, findings strongly support another realist prediction that Russia would demonstrate different behavior than Eurasian “mainstream” due to its unique position as a global power. As voting records in Table 1 revealed, Russia was the only state among the EAEU members which have voted less positively than any other member. In other words, results suggest that Russia is an outlier of voting cohesion of the EAEU since it is Russian votes that decrease EAEU’s average. Likewise, Russia has the lowest IVC scores pairwise with all Eurasian states except Belarus. And lastly, while the average level of IVCs for the four countries stand above 80% (“medium” degree of common foreign policy), Russia’s average pairwise score is within the range of “low” level of external cohesion. One possible explanation might be the fact that Russia holds a seat in the UNSC as a permanent member which may affect the way it acts 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). For example, a study conducted by Hansen (2014) finds that Russia has been a leading outlier throughout the 1990s, occasionally finding itself completely isolated on votes. Some of the more notable outlier issues included the Middle East as well as human rights resolutions.

Second, **H₂** was based on liberal assumptions suggesting that, given their shared domestic institutions and common principles, Eurasian convergence increases over

time. In particular, one strand of liberal thought would expect that higher voting convergence would follow from the formation of EAEU in 2015 onward. Although this prediction is somewhat substantiated by the empirical analysis of voting results from the “development” category and also for pairwise IVC scores of select countries (Armenia, Belarus, and Russia), no meaningful cohesion difference exists 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 tentative **H₂**, 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 series of recent developments sketched below, further research is needed to provide a robust explanation of why Eurasian cohesion levels decreased after 2015.

Finally, **H₃** predicted that states deeply integrated within the EAEU, economically or in some other ways, would display higher cohesion levels in the UNGA. Empirical evidence from the pairwise IVC scores provides support for this hypothesis, at least partially.¹¹ For example, the evidence from IVC measurement has revealed the existence within the EAEU of highly cohesive groupings which are more interdependent and interlinked, politically, economically, or socio-culturally, than others. One such reference group is the Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan dyad, to begin with. IVC analysis reveals that the pair is the most cohesive voting caucus among the EAEU dyads. They have voted opposite ways only on two resolutions since 2000.¹² The two also exhibit quite similar voting patterns in the UNGA (see Table 1). This pattern is in line with the findings of previous empirical research. Costa-Buranelli (2014), for example, found that at the international level Central Asian republics speak the same language, and conform to the same institutions implying the presence of a Central Asian “club” or of a “Central Asian standard.”

The reasons for the pair’s high voting convergence are less apparent 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,

11 Although similar conclusions can be drawn from AI results for the Eurasian troika which exhibits a higher convergence levels than the entire EAEU membership, those scores should be interpreted with a certain caution due to the distortion caused by the small number of members in the group.

12 The resolutions in 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).

several exploratory comments are in order. Firstly, for Kyrgyzstan, there is a structural dependency on Kazakhstan in terms of trade, investments, and labor market (Vinokurov, 2018). Kazakhstan is among the top export markets for Kyrgyz goods. Secondly, these 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, particularly their independence from the Russian center (Kudaibergenova, 2016). Finally, their overlapping membership in other coalitions (the NAM, Asia-Pacific Group in the UN, Turkic Council,¹³ etc.) may also lead them to hold similar positions in the UNGA.

Another caucus which confirms **H₃** is the Belarus-Russia pair which ranks the second most cohesive among Eurasian nations pairwise.¹⁴ The pair was either unanimous or in partial agreement in almost all votes except six resolutions out of 277 adopted in the UNGA since 2000.¹⁵ This strikingly high affinity can be explained by the existence of deep institutional and socio-cultural links as well as high economic interdependence between the two. As Yeliseyeu (2019) has persuasively argued, Belarus appears to have swapped “geopolitical loyalty and military cooperation for Russia’s generosity.” Politically, they have achieved a special level of integration reflected in a “union state” (Mukhametdinov, 2020). The union state treaty stipulated the coordination of socio-economic policies and intense cooperation on 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 beneficial energy deals. Russia is Belarus’s primary lender: public and private loans from Russia totals 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 that warrants perhaps separate discussion: the

13 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 been increasing steadily.

14 Hansen (2014) finds a similar pattern in that, Belarus was closer to Russia than any of the other CIS countries in the UNGA, suggesting that politically the country can be seen as Russia’s closest ally.

15 These are resolutions on security matters (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).

Kazakhstan-Russia dyad.¹⁶ This is of course far from surprising since, as Mukhametdinov (2020) notes, a range of disagreements have existed between the two, especially on 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 "multivectorism," seemingly contradicting the arguments made by the EAEU skeptics, especially in Kazakhstan, who opposed the integration because it "could strike a blow against multi-vector foreign policy" (Satpayev, 2015). Besides 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 in terms of their global trade, despite being the largest economies of the union. Second, as noted by Yelisseyu (2019), Kazakhstan depends on short-term labor migration to Russia less than other union members due to a comparatively higher standard of living. Further, with an oil- and gas-dependent economy, Kazakhstan is receiving neither financial nor oil and gas subsidies from Russia as an exchange for its membership in the EAEU (Tarr, 2016).

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

16 This observation is contradictory to what has been reported by Kurylev et al. (2018) in that their research finds that Kazakhstan was among the Russia's top three in terms of both the average level of support and the number of sessions with the maximum support among the CIS countries. This inconsistency in results, however, is partly due to the different methods of calculations.

Since voting against the will of the majority or powerful nations might have unpleasant consequences (especially for smaller countries) (Ferdinand, 2014), a more interesting question would be to ask on which resolutions the two countries are specifically divided. The findings of this study clearly indicate that Russia and Kazakhstan have mostly disagreed on important resolutions concerning security and human rights. The first group relates to disarmament, elimination and prohibition of nuclear weapons, chemical weapons convention, and cyberspace security.¹⁷ Especially on issues of nuclear disarmament, Kazakhstan stands apart from other Eurasian nations, consistently casting a positive vote on such resolutions. By contrast, and quite understandably, Russia mostly voted against these actions, or at times, abstained. The second group that divides the pair contains resolutions critical of human rights situations in Sudan, Myanmar, North Korea, Syria, and the human rights of Rohingya Muslims.¹⁸ Although Eurasian nations have usually been reluctant to support resolutions critical of human rights records of other countries (seen as a domestic issue), Kazakhstan nevertheless voted differently than Russia in the UN bodies (Amanov, 2020). The latter's divergent position on human rights is arguably the result of an overall policy change in Moscow since the 2000s, as Russia under President Putin has sought increasingly to distance itself from the West (Ferdinand, 2014).

8. Conclusion

The post-Soviet republics have, since independence, involved in various integration processes with varying degrees of success. The EAEU forms the core of integration initiatives in today's Eurasia. The aim of the present research was to examine a specific aspect of this integration process, and that is the external cohesion among the member states of the EAEU in the UNGA voting. Previous sections provided an analysis of the level of voting cohesion among Eurasian nations in general, and on substantive categories. The study also proposed preliminary explanations for the findings that may hopefully encourage other researchers to dig more deeply into these (a relatively

17 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.

18 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.

understudied) areas of inquiry. While recognizing the limitations of this type of research (Hooijmaaijers and Keukeleire, 2016; Rasch, 2008) and acknowledging the fact that explaining why countries vote in an identical (or opposite) manner is difficult to answer, 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, in terms of both AI scores and IVC levels as shown in the previous section. Overall, the EAEU scores a “medium” level of cohesion. They 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, specific dyads (mostly with Russia) demonstrate low convergence level which may indicate that bilateral disagreement does indeed exist on specific issue areas. To return to the research questions, what stands out most is that the institutionalization process does not seem to have a positive effect on the voting cohesion of Eurasian nations in the UNGA since all of the reference groups became, to a varying degree, less cohesive in the post-EAEU period,¹⁹ suggesting that no support can be given to **H₂**. In terms of substantive categories, Eurasian nations enjoy the highest voting cohesion on developmental issues. In contrast, EAEU shows a high degree of disagreement on security-related resolutions on which member states are less successful in finding a shared position. Also, EAEU displays a considerably low, albeit stable, degree of agreement on questions of the Middle East and human rights. This may indicate that, though limited, **H₁** finds some support. On a pairwise basis, the EAEU’s most cohesive dyad was Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan and the least coherent pair was Kazakhstan-Russia in both periods analyzed. The interdependency argument of **H₃** receives partial empirical support in the IVC model. Overall, “high,” “medium,” and “low” external cohesions do exist simultaneously among Eurasian nations, and a “medium” level of common foreign policy has remained somewhat stable during the whole period, although it experienced some setback and rise on a dyadic basis.

The findings also suggest that unity cannot be taken for granted even on “low” politics issues such as human rights. Despite a 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

19 Still, one must be cautious in interpreting these findings due to the limited *n*’s in the second period and also an upward trend that emerged recently in the convergence levels of Eurasian nations.

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 reflected in the existence of competing regional organizations), as Kurylev et al. (2018) claim, makes cooperation more complicated, unstable, and ineffective while enhancing the space for independent action by states. There are sensitive issues that emerged over the Ukrainian question which continue to foment discord among EAEU members involving a conflict of interests (Vinokurov, 2017). In particular, it should be noted that Kazakhstan and Belarus became disinterested in supporting Russia’s foreign policy goals, especially in Russia’s struggle with the West (Mukhametdinov, 2020). And these are occurring against the background of increasing skepticism towards Eurasian integration (Vinokurov, 2018). Kudaibergenova (2016) also reached a comparable conclusion concerning Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, in that, despite positive public opinion, skepticism is also growing over the Ukrainian crisis, anti-Russian sanctions, and currency devaluations in Russia and Kazakhstan. It is plausible to suggest that externally EAEU moves along with the Eurasian public opinion. In the UNGA context, what this means is that group discipline among the EAEU members exhibited an inconsistent trend and has swung across issue areas throughout the period 2000-2020. Taken together, the findings of this research may provide additional evidence for 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 to get a broader outlook of the EAEU’s international relations, because this research studies only “lobbied” resolutions. Another possible area of study would be to focus on EAEU’s voting behavior as compared 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 voting for a resolution depends on various factors, like agreements with third parties, as well as political and economical 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 will supplement the findings of this study and would enrich our understanding of Eurasian integration process.

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