Pre- and Post-Lisbon:

European Union Voting in the United Nations General Assembly

Xi Jin
Department of Political Science
Leiden University
x.jin@umail.leidenuniv.nl

and

Madeleine O. Hosli
Department of Political Science
Leiden University
hosli@fsw.leidenuniv.nl

Paper to be presented at the Workshop
‘Decision-making in the European Union Before and After Lisbon’,
Leiden University, 3-4 November 2011
Abstract

This paper studies effects of the Lisbon Treaty on the ways in which the EU presents itself as an actor in global politics. It analyses this issue for the case of voting in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). We explore the voting behaviour of EU states in the UNGA between 1993 and the present, and assess voting cohesion among EU member states for the phases pre- and post-Lisbon. We interpret EU presence at the UNGA in terms of a principal-agent model within the neo-institutionalist framework. Our empirical findings, comparing EU voting in the UNGA before and after the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty, reveal that there is no significant difference in the voting cohesion of the EU within the UNGA before and after ratification of the Lisbon Treaty. It even seems, comparing average values on EU coherence, that voting cohesion has slightly declined in the post-Lisbon as compared to the pre-Lisbon era. In addition to this, currently EU voting cohesion is not markedly different from that of other regional organizations within the UNGA. This implies that EU coordination in international organizations, although stronger than in earlier decades, may still need strengthening in the future if the EU really aims to be speaking ‘with one voice’ in the global realm.
1. Introduction

The EU is clearly committed to strategies of effective multilateralism in the framework of international organizations, most notably the UN (e.g., European Council 2003; European Union 2004; Ortega 2005; Ojanen 2006). The Treaty of Lisbon (ToL), which entered into force in December 2009, has reaffirmed the Union’s adherence to multilateral cooperation and its attachment to the UN system more generally (Langenhove and Marchesi 2008). The ToL aimed to render the EU a stronger and more coherent actor, also on the international level, by clarifying the Union’s competencies and strengthening its ‘external actorness’ (Drieskens 2008). However, the ToL’s impact on the EU’s external representation has not yet been fully established. This paper contributes to attempts to investigate the extent of coherent EU representation internationally for the case of the UN General Assembly (UNGA). We notably intend to answer the questions about who is and has been representing the EU, pre-Lisbon and post-Lisbon, and whether EU external cohesion is likely to increase in the post-Lisbon period. EU representation in its core depends on how successfully the Union can coordinate internally and comes up externally with a common stance (Rasch 2008).

Adopting a principal-agent model, we theorize that the variation in EU representation at the UNGA is based on changing agency relationships. To assess the evolution of EU representation at the UNGA, it is helpful to examine developments over time. Hence, our empirical analysis is for the time span between 1993 -- when the Maastricht Treaty officially created the EU-- until the present, as the ToL has been in force for almost two years now. The quantitative differences in EU voting cohesion will be tested on the basis of a data set on UNGA roll call votes, extended with information on the most recent sessions of the UNGA.

Prior to the ToL, the EU member states holding the rotating Presidency assumed the major responsibility in terms of representing the EU externally. The ToL introduced a set of significant structural innovations to the Union’s external relations, notably the granting of a legal personality to the EU, the creation of a President of the European Council (President), currently Herman van Rompuy, and the appointment of a High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.
(HR), Catherine Ashton, assisted by the European External Action Service (EEAS).\footnote{The EEAS was officially launched on 1 December 2010.} This paper explores the implications of these institutional innovations on EU external actorness using principal-agent theory as an analytical framework and exploring empirical data on voting behaviour in the UNGA to this end.

We expect to observe higher EU cohesion in the UNGA than in other UN bodies, for instance the UN Security Council (UNSC), which has a fairly pronounced state-centric foundation. Unlike the UNSC, the fact that both the EU and all of its member states actively engage in various coordination meetings of the UNGA makes this institution a popular setting to investigate EU agency relationships (Birnberg 2009). In addition to this, the broad range of issues covered by the UNGA discussions provides a fairly comprehensive picture of the EU’s external actorness (Hosli et al. 2010). While it is difficult to measure the coherence of EU external representation in general terms, UNGA voting data is readily available and relatively well-documented, allowing us to assess the extent of coordination in voting behaviour in statistical terms over time (Kissack 2007). However, as in any institution, voting outcomes in the UNGA only reflect the outcome of a longer chain of decision-making and cannot capture the essence of the process before this final decision. Nonetheless, they can demonstrate the extent to which states coordinate their voting behaviour, which is particularly relevant when assessing the role of EU member states in an organization such as the UN.

This study aims to make several contributions to ongoing research. First, examining the transition of EU representation helps advance our understandings of the depth of European integration in the field of foreign policy making. Second, analyses of EU voting behaviour in the UNGA may enrich previous EU studies by not just looking at the Union’s internal coordination, but also its external capacity and representation as documented in actual UN voting behaviour. Third, based on an institutional and principal-agent perspective, a statistical analysis of changes after Lisbon may corroborate or contradict claims made by this theoretical framework.

Our paper is structured as follows. Section 2 introduces a principal-agent approach as a theoretical setting, presents the main assumptions this generates for our analysis and aims to provide links between
this theoretical framework and relations between the EU and the UN. Section 3 presents a review of developments and recent relevant work dealing with EU representation at the UN over time. Section 4 presents results of the empirical assessment of EU voting cohesion over time, and evaluates the principal-agent model in the light of these findings. Section 5 concludes the paper, by briefly reflecting about results, contributions, and limitations of this analysis, and prospects for future research.

2. The UNGA and the EU as a Principal –Agent Structure

A principal-agent model, in essence, is a theoretical expression of the agency relationship governed by a contract, in which the principal expects the agent to act on its behalf (Ross 1973). Originating from an economics paradigm describing business relations, this theoretical framework was soon introduced to political science (e.g., Pollack 2006). In political settings, the principal delegates authority to a chosen agent to carry out its policy preferences, based on a pre-agreed arrangement (Shapiro 2005). In general terms, the principal-agent approach explores three central questions: (1) Why and under what conditions does delegation occur? (2) What are the main problems in a principal-agent relationship? (3) What measures can the principal take to prevent agency losses?

Principal-agent theory, developed within the rational choice tradition of neo-institutionalism, assumes that both the principal and the agent are essentially rational players, whatever elements may define ‘rationality’ in this context. The primary motivation driving delegation is to minimize transaction costs (Nielsen and Tierney 2003). Hawkins and his co-authors identify six main benefits of delegation (Hawkins et al. 2006). In short, the principal grants authority to a selected agent to reduce the transaction costs of coordination, policy-making or dispute resolution. Delegation also occurs when the principal intends to ensure credible commitments or lock in its policy biases. The principal often relies on the agent for its specific expertise, experience or knowledge in order to reap higher gains. The larger the benefits, the greater the likelihood that the principal will use an agent. However, the benefits alone do not suffice for delegation. Preference heterogeneity, institutional rules and power balance may act as mitigating dynamics that affect the agency relationship. The greater the preference heterogeneity among a group of actors, the less willing they are to appoint a single representation. Institutional rules
determine how decisions are made within a collective principal and further influence the autonomy enjoyed by the agent. While powerful states are capable of acting unilaterally outside the institution, weak states usually favour delegation and rely on the institution to obtain more benefits.

As far as agency losses are concerned, a core challenge in a principal-agent relationship -- the 'principal’s problem' -- is that the principal cannot expect the agent to maximize its welfare all the time (Ross 1973). ‘Agency losses’ are inevitable since the agent, though complying with the constraints imposed by the principal, enjoys a certain autonomy and has an incentive to pursue its own interests at the expense of the principal (Pollack 2004). The fact that information is usually distributed asymmetrically in favour of the agent allows agent shirking, which leads to poor coordination and makes supervision more costly (Kiewiet and McCubbins 1991). The risk of shirking is exacerbated by slippage, where for example the delegation structure itself, the decision-making process or voting rule, offers room for agent manoeuvre. Instead of deliberate defection, sometimes an agent fails to fulfil its duty because of its weak capacity, such as the lack of internal solidarity, resources, professionalism or continuity. An agency relationship can also be undermined by exogenous factors, for instance, an extraneous circumstance that may lead to unintended consequences beyond the agent’s control, or an international atmosphere that may offer more leeway for the agent to act independently.

The principal’s problem becomes more challenging when the principal is made up of multiple actors with divergent policy preferences. The tensions inside a collective principal may result in internal competition, time-consuming coordination and ineffective control over the agent. When efficient oversight instruments are absent, agent slack will become more serious. In terms of control mechanisms, the principal designs a control system, including both ex ante and ex post mechanisms, to reduce agent losses. The very nature and strictness of oversight instruments, however, vary with delegation tasks. Ex ante mechanisms comprise agent selection and contract design. The principal can steer the delegation from the start by choosing an optimal agent with parallel interests and qualified skills. But in reality, adverse selection happens when the agent withholds information and hides its true preferences. It is also possible to limit agent discretion in advance through a carefully designed agreement. A profit-sharing contract helps encourage the agent to realize the principal’s objectives. The agent will be more potent if it is granted a legal mandate to represent the principal. The more precise the
mandate, the smaller is the leeway enjoyed by the agent. In addition, the principal can turn to economic or administrative methods, such as cutting the agent’s budget or establishing particular decision-making rules, to constrain the agent’s behaviour (Blom-Hansen 2005). Deciding on the scope of the agent’s discretion becomes harder if the different actors inside a collective principal have diverse interests.

*Ex post* controls include monitoring and sanctions. There are two forms of monitoring: *police patrol*, a centralized approach allowing the principal to conduct a thorough supervision of the agent’s activities and *fire alarm*, a relatively decentralized arrangement relying on third parties to hold the agent responsible (McCubbins and Schwartz 1984). The former is direct and effective, but more costly and time-consuming. The latter is generally more preferable since it can externalize the oversight costs. Imposing sanctions is another option for the principal to punish the errant agent and force its compliance. Common sanctioning practices consist of cutting off funding, legislative overruling, or re-contracting. The last measure is most effective, but also most costly, so the principal normally hesitates to resort to re-delegation. Collective principals face even more difficulties in implementing sanctions because the agent has the opportunity to exploit the preference divergence among the multiple actors to escape punishment. Though such *ex post* mechanisms can help mitigate agency losses, for the purpose of this study the discussion will focus on how shifts in agents and *ex ante* mechanisms influence agent effectiveness.

Principal-agent theory has emerged as a dominant tool to analyze delegation in international organizations, and is also particularly suitable to analyze the EU (Kassim and Menon 2003). Discussions on EU integration have long been caught in divisions between major theoretical approaches such as neo-functionalism, intergovernmentalism and related, newer theoretical approaches. To a certain extent, the principal-agent model contributes to bridging the divide between some major theoretical approaches by combining and integrating basic insights of different streams of theorizing. For example, it accepts the notion of a continuing centrality of member states in building and amending EU institutions; meanwhile, drawing on insights from historical and sociological institutionalism, it also maintains that once created, EU institutions will gain a certain extent of independence and then influence the interests of member states and ultimately EU foreign policy making (Pollack 1996). Principal-agent analysts generally believe that agent effectiveness varies across issue areas and with the
level of preference heterogeneity, the distribution of information, control mechanisms and international settings. The approach holds considerable promise in grasping the structural complexity of how the EU is represented at international organizations, including the UN, also due to its emphasis on the path-dependency of the coordination process. Furthermore, it transcends extremities of more traditional international theories by stressing the crucial role of states, but without ignoring the role of institutions. Therefore, this approach is able to make further contributions to insights generated by other theoretical approaches.

Usually, EU scholars conceptualize EU supranational institutions, such as the European Commission, as executive agents speaking on behalf of member states in the international realm, particularly in the area of EU economic governance (Pollack 2004; Hodson 2009; Billiet 2009). The principal-agent approach also bears explanatory strength in understanding EU representation behaviour at the UNGA, where the situation is more complex, because the Union is considered to be a collective principal while the actor that plays the role of the agent has varied over time. The next section of this paper will describe how this variation has occurred and how it has been institutionally embodied. Based on the insights described above, we can assume that the addition of middle-sized powers to the EU -- in the context of the 2004 and 2007 enlargements -- is likely to have increased preferences for delegation due an increase in membership, but to also have induced an increased demand for a strengthening of delegation mechanisms to avoid agency loss (as coordination was likely to become more difficult). These effects of this assumption on voting cohesion are addressed in further detail in section 4. Simultaneously, the ToL’s change in actors representing the EU externally is likely to strain principal-agent relations, and possibly increase the likelihood of resorting to national interests instead of collective EU behaviour in international politics. In other words, we expect that the EU does not necessarily act as a more decisive and coherent actor after the implementation of the ToL, but may do so in the years to come when responsibilities in EU foreign policy making are delineated more clearly, and the EU’s new External Action Service, the EEAS, will represent the EU more strongly in the global realm. After a discussion over the EU’s changing role in the UN, we will examine this conjecture empirically, looking at voting patterns, the effects of enlargement, and finally a brief comparison with voting cohesion in other regional organizations.
3. The European Union and the United Nations General Assembly: An Overview of Developments and Related Literature

Assessing the EU’s presence at the UN, some scholars have explicitly focused on the Security Council (Drieskens 2008; Pirozzi 2010), coming to the conclusion that the ToL is not likely to have enhanced the effectiveness of EU representation. While Drieskens argues that increased EU actorness still largely depends on the willingness of member states to act as agents of the Union, Pirozzi holds a fairly optimistic view as regards the opportunities brought by the ToL. Others investigate how the EU is represented in given UN bodies or specialized agencies, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and other UN institutions located in Geneva (Kissack 2006; Taylor 2006; Wouters et al. 2006).

Given that the ToL is still a fairly new creature, however, literature exploring its influence on the Union’s external presence is still quite limited in number and scope. In general terms, the uniqueness of the UN system provides a useful context to examine patterns of cooperation and representation of the EU in international settings. Academic discussions regarding the EU-UN relationship have spanned several decades. We provide a short review of some existing literature, notably on the incremental development of the EU’s external representation, to show some of the core elements of this topic.

To assess the EU’s capacity to act cohesively in international organization, scholars have usually resorted to an analysis of patterns of voting behaviour. Earlier studies have examined EC voting patterns at the General Assembly, for example, with reference to the potential effects of European Political Cooperation (EPC). According to such studies, the EPC regime has increased EC cohesion, although in limited ways since member state influence was still considerable (Hurwitz 1976; Lindemann 1982). Subsequent investigations have evaluated the function of EU representation at the UN in the framework of the effects of the Common Foreign Security Policy (CFSP). Such analyses focus notably on the coordination process before roll-call votes take place and describe general trends of EU voting cohesion (Luif 2003; Rees and Young 2005; Rasch 2008; Hosli et al. 2010). Birnberg has used nested analysis in an attempt to explore the concrete factors determining whether or not EU member states can speak with a single voice in international organization, backing up statistical analyses with an in-depth case study of the Arab-Israeli conflict (Birnberg 2009). Other scholars have
examined how external powers and developments have affected EU foreign policy cohesion, such as the influence of the US as an external power (Luif 2003; Birnberg 2009), the Iraq crisis (Jakobsson 2009), or EU enlargement (Johansson-Nogues 2004; Rasch 2008). These studies assess the EU’s representation at the UNGA in terms of the voting behaviour of its member states. In general, they tend to confirm that voting cohesion of the Union has increased over time, though the level of its external actorness is found to oscillate from time to time, varying by issue areas and across EU voting blocs. Several of these studies maintain, however, that the development of EU representation at the UN largely depends on how much member states are willing to reconcile their national interests with those of the collective of members, and uphold a common EU position.

Another group of studies examines EU coordination for specific issue areas and explores the nature of decisions. Dijkstra argues that the Presidency matters decisively for EU collective representation in the case of contested resolutions (Dijkstra 2009). Others have carried out research on EU-UN coordination on areas such as human development, human rights or security issues (Smith 2006; Wouters 2007). Literature concerning the broad EU-UN relationship tends to focus on the effectiveness of the EU at the UN. Recognizing the supranational nature of the EU, such studies tend to emphasize further deepening of the partnership between the two organizations and their commitments to the principle of effective multilateralism (European Commission 2003; United Nations 2006; Farrell 2006; Ojanen 2006).

Given that the ToL is still rather young, its potential impact on the EU presence at the UN has not yet been submitted to much systematic analysis. A limited number of studies dealing with effects on EU foreign affairs or security policy in the post-Lisbon era have started to emerge, however. These studies assess the institutional arrangements introduced by the ToL and anticipate future challenges faced by the EU, arguing that the ToL may enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of EU external representation. But clearly, as such research also demonstrates, the real effects still depend on the further elaboration and implementation of the ToL, and member states’ willingness to cooperate and compromise in this regard (Langenhove and Marchesi 2008; Paul 2008; Duke 2009; Blockmans and Wessel 2009; Koehler 2010). Most scholars interpret the ToL in the sense that the institutional innovations will increase the capacity of the EU to ‘speak with one voice’ externally, but views are
ambiguous at best about whether the amendments will truly strengthen the coherence of EU representation. Most studies rely on interpretation of legal provisions; such analyses can profitably be complemented by approaches based on an analysis of actual voting records in international organizations, such as the UNGA.

In the traditional discussion between theoretical approaches on the EU, there is a certain deadlock between neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism: neo-functionalism tends to emphasize the supranational nature and respective functions within the Union, whereas intergovernmentalism stresses the role and significance of member states. Analysis of EU representation in the UNGA may help to further the discussion on these and newer theoretical approaches, focusing on the role of institutions as independent actors compared to member state activities, and by empirically assessing developments in processes of international representation.

In terms of EU representation within the UN, before comparing the different situations regarding EU representation pre- and post-Lisbon, it is necessary to first focus on two fundamental concepts: ‘representation’ and ‘actorness’. ‘Representation’ refers to the capability of the Union to deliver common positions toward the outside world (Kissack 2007). ‘Actorness’ is the capacity of the EU to behave actively and deliberately in relation to others in the international system (Sjøstedt 1977). Both terms reflect how the Union is perceived by other international entities, with the former focusing on its declaratory ability to speak with a single voice, while the latter emphasizes its power to act effectively. In spite of the fact that the concrete meanings of these terms differ somewhat, it is commonly accepted that a unified and strong EU representation is a crucial precondition for increased EU actorness (Gstöhl 2008).²

In a principal-agent perspective, the phase pre-Lisbon can be seen in terms of the rotating Presidency having acted as the agent. In fact, the EU’s presence at the UN can be traced back to the original information office created by the European Commission in New York. It was formalized in 1974 as an official delegation when the Commission was granted observer status by the General Assembly, implying that a representative of the European Community could take the floor on the issues

---

² For the sake of parsimony, the two terms will be used interchangeably throughout this article.
within its exclusive competences (Rasch 2008). However, the Community then did not enjoy the right to vote or to participate in intergovernmental negotiations. It was only allowed to address the UNGA meetings after all the member states had done so (Pirozzi 2010).

The EU can appear fragmented and weak if member states present their national preferences separately instead of upholding a common stand through the representative appointed by the Union. Besides, it is more efficient for other UN members to talk with a well-coordinated EU than to negotiate separately with 27 states. In the years just preceding the ToL, the EU had two collective spokespersons: the member state holding the rotating Presidency and the High Representative for the EU’s Common Foreign Security Policy (the HR for the CFSP). The former assumed the leading role of representing the Union externally on matters within the scope of the CFSP (Degrand-Guillaud 2009). This representation reflected a typical principal-agent relationship, with the EU being a collective principal and essentially, both the HR and the Presidency acting as agents.

The Presidency represented the Union at the UNGA mostly through delivering the Presidency statements on official occasions. Assisted by the HR for the CFSP and the Liaison Office of the Council Secretariat, it provided member states information about UN activities. The Presidency negotiated on behalf of the EU with other UN members or regional groupings on CFSP matters (e.g., EU@UN 2011). The Foreign Minister of the Presidency state formed a troika along with the European Commissioner for External Relations and the HR for CFSP, who also held the post of Secretary-General of the Council. The effectiveness of the Presidency was largely determined by how it combined conflicting national interests and represented the EU as a whole. The workload of the Presidency was large, with over 1,000 coordination meetings on average in New York per year. The Presidency had to mediate among its peers, and balance its own interests with the collective ones of the EU. In order to relieve the Presidency’s burden, and provide additional continuity, the idea of presidency trios was put forth in 2007 where three successive presidencies worked together on a common program and approach. Each Presidency differed considerably in terms of capacities and ambitions in representing the Union. Large and powerful member states, possessing more strategic information and political experience, were traditionally more assertive and engaged in the delegation if it suited their national goals, whereas smaller and new member states could be powerless due to their lack of diplomatic resources or appear
indifferent simply because they did not share the respective sensitivities (Tallberg 2006; Dijkstra 2009). In this sense, the agent was weakened in the overall principal-agent relation. In general terms, the Presidency was subject to the supervision of national representatives of member states, the Commission officials, and the Council Secretariat and it was obligated to consult the European Parliament (EP) on CFSP issues.

Representing the EU, however, was an option rather than an obligation for the Presidency (Drieskens 2008). The risk of agent *shirking* was unavoidable, since national interests were likely to take precedence. Member states, especially those serving on the UNSC, could utilize their privileged resources to satisfy domestic needs. The need for unanimity in CFSP decision-making further increased their power to channel the coordination meetings toward the outcomes they preferred themselves. Additionally, the old pillar structure led to overlapping competencies and leadership rivalries among EU actors and institutions, particularly between the Presidency and the Commission President (Paul 2008). The Presidency rotated every six months, which was usually accompanied by a shift in political focus, diplomatic reputation and global influence. This resulted to a certain extent in non-continuity of EU external presence and impeded the creation of a stable pattern of EU foreign policy making. The control system was weak, if not nonexistent, since the Presidency as the agent was part of the collective principal, and thus participated in deciding the scope of agent discretion. The agent was thus likely to ‘shirk’. The Union was short in means to enforce compliance because the European Court of Justice (ECJ) was excluded from the CFSP area. Therefore, the Presidency acting as the EU representative was initially somewhat problematic. The EU was stuck with member states’ reluctance to introduce radical changes in terms of representation in the UN, but the Union would soon take a step toward structural reform leading to re-delegation.

Despite the fact that insufficient EU outward representation called for institutional amelioration, the fierce disputes around the Constitutional Treaty and its eventual abortion reflected member states’ hesitation to reform. The ToL, inheriting most arrangements incorporated into the Constitutional Treaty, aimed to upgrade the EU’s external actorness, mostly by creating a permanent leadership and a head for the EU’s foreign policy making. Currently, the European Council is no longer chaired by the rotating Presidency. Instead, the ToL has created an office of a permanent president, elected by qualified
majority (QMV) for a term of two and a half years, and renewable once (see article 15 TEU). Accordingly, the President has to ensure the representation of the Union on CFSP issues, without prejudice to the powers of the HR. The European Council, with the agreement of the Commission, appoints the HR on the basis of QMV for a term of five years (article 18 TEU). Presiding over the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), and simultaneously occupying the position of Vice-President of the Commission, the HR represents the Union for CFSP matters and assists both institutions to ensure the consistency of the EU’s external actions (articles 21, 27 TEU). Together with the Council, the HR bears the responsibility to facilitate member state compliance with their CFSP obligations (article 24 TEU). The office is supported by the EEAS, which contains staff from the relevant departments of the Commission, the Council’s General Secretariat, and the diplomatic services of EU member states. The EEAS also assists the President of the European Council and the Commission (Bouchard and Drieskens 2011). As the ToL took effect, the Community was replaced and succeeded by the EU, including in its observer status at the UN. More importantly, with the newly granted legal personality (article 47 TEU), the EU obtained the right to sign contracts and seek membership in international organizations, implying a greater chance to seek an advanced status in organizations such as the UN. In addition, under the authority of the HR, the Commission Delegation and the Council’s Liaison Office merged into an EU Delegation. The delegation plays an essential role in identifying EU common positions and drafting EU statements in regard to UN resolutions and other texts. It functions as an information communicator, actively organizing regular briefings and interacting with international media. In this sense, the HR and the EU Delegation have gradually assumed the role of the former rotating Presidency, representing the EU at the UN, when consensus has been reached among the EU’s member states (EU@UN 2011).

Just before the EU obtained speaking rights at the UNGA, the EU was represented at the UN jointly by two actors: the EU Delegation and the Permanent Mission of Hungary, on behalf of the HR. The UNGA adopted Resolution 65/276 on 3 May 2011, permitted EU representatives, including the President, the HR, the European Commission and EU Delegations, to be invited to participate in the

---

3 Thomas Mayr-Harting is Head of the EU Delegation in New York since August 2011.
general UNGA debate and to make interventions. The Union has also earned the right to reply concerning EU positions, as well as obtained the ability to present proposals and amendments. However, it cannot vote or challenge resolutions and decisions (UN General Assembly 2011). This resolution indicates that the EU has achieved an enhanced observer status at the UN, which will undoubtedly help EU representatives to present and promote its positions (Ashton 2011).

In sum, the reforms inherent in the ToL have incorporated the former fragmented external representation into a single position of the HR, who acts as the leading representative. This could strengthen the ‘agent’, but also allow it to have more discretion. In other words, contract design may be strengthened, but there may also be some more incentives for ‘slippage’, notably when the EU consists of a large number of member states with different priorities and foreign policy preferences. Similarly, due to the ToL, the Union and its member states have gained more power in agent selection: the appointment of the HR requires the consent of both the EP and the Commission’s President. The European Council can end his or her term of office by QMV only in case of serious misconduct. Speaking on behalf of the EU is no longer an option, but is in fact the primary obligation of the HR. Unlike the rotating Presidency, the HR is less affected by particular national interests, and thereby may overcome the problem of deliberate shirking. Supported by the EEAS, the HR is able to pool multifarious political resources at his or her disposal, and possibly somewhat alleviate the heavy workload. Furthermore, the ToL narrows down the gap of information resources among member states, by requiring those who sit on the UNSC to keep the others and the HR fully informed, and to invite the HR to present the Union’s common position once the EU has managed to define one (article 34 TEU).

In spite of some criticism, Catherine Ashton may be able to benefit from her previous experience as a Trade Commissioner, possibly bringing in a working style with greater consideration of the European idea and interests (Koehler 2010). Longer tenure of the HR in office also puts an end to the non-continuity of capacity that resulted from the previous construct of a rotating Presidency, and enhances the powers of the ‘agent’.

However, shortcomings remain in respect to both leadership and patterns of decision-making due to slippage. The ToL continues to divide EU external representation over different actors, leaving potential competition and conflicts notably between the President, the HR, and the President of the
Commission. Agent effectiveness relies on how successfully these leaders cooperate with each other and coordinate with member states. In other words, their specific personality-related resources matter a great deal (Blockmans and Wessel 2009). However, the FAC remains the core decision-making organ over CFSP matters, which are still mainly subject to unanimity rather than QMV. The rare exceptions in which the Council decides by QMV must be based on a proposal submitted by the HR on the basis of a request of the European Council, where member states continue to hold decisive power. Facts like this will certainly confine the HR’s ability to represent the EU independently based on his or her own discretion. According to these uncertainties, it is unclear whether the ToL will substantially increase the EU’s capacity to ‘speak with one voice’ or, partially due to the fragmentation of competencies, lead to the reverse. In this sense, it is interesting to see whether the implementation of the provisions of the ToL has already led to changes in coordination, and more specifically, voting cohesion of EU states in an organization such as the UNGA. Given the theoretical framework outlined above and combined with the fact that EU action in external policy matters is now delegated in different terms, there may instead be an increased risk of ‘shirking’ and as a consequence -- in spite of increased efforts to harmonize EU positions -- that member states will tend to resort to the defence of their own national policy positions within the UNGA, instead of adhering to the more collective stance. These effects may be alleviated once the provisions of the ToL really ‘bite’, and the EEAS truly takes effect as an actor in the international realm.

4. Empirical Analysis: Data, Methodology and Findings

This manuscript explores the development of voting cohesion among EU member states at the UNGA between 1993 and 2011 (i.e., it focuses on the 48th to 65th sessions). A long-term investigation of the roll-call voting records portrays a line of EU voting patterns over time and allows us to discern whether institutional changes such as the provisions of the ToL make a difference in practice. The General Assembly is interesting to focus on in this context not only because it deals with a wide range of issues, but also because EU representation on the level of the UNGA is fairly well developed (Degrand-
UNGA voting data are relatively well-documented and make the establishment of compiled datasets over a long time span possible.

This study focuses on three types of vote choices: ‘yes’, ‘no’ and ‘abstain’. However, scholars disagree as to how to code ‘abstain’ (e.g., see Hosli et al. 2010). Some treat abstentions as a softer form of voting ‘no’ and code both choices as contributing to a resolution not reaching the required threshold (Voeten 2000). Others regard abstaining as “half the weight of a complete agreement” (Lijphart 1963; Luif 2003). A third group of researchers weighs all vote alternatives equally, arguing that each vote deviating from the consensus undermines overall voting cohesion (Hix et al. 2005; Rasch 2008). In light of such different coding practices, we use three indices to calculate voting cohesion: $C_I$, $C_{II}$ and $AI$. The first two are computed by the same formula. Pro and con votes are coded as 1 and 0 respectively, but abstentions are coded as 0.5 for $C_I$, but 0 for $C_{II}$. Accordingly, for these indices the cohesion of votes on resolution $x$ in percentage term, is given by

$$C = \left| \frac{AV_x - 0.5}{2} \right| \times 100 \quad (1),$$

where $AV_x$ stands for the average vote of a group on resolution $x$. If all members of this group vote ‘yes’ or ‘no’ in identical ways, coherence ($C$) is 100. When the number of pro votes is equivalent to con votes, however, $C = 0$. If all members of the group abstain, in $C_I$, voting cohesion is 0; the higher the number of abstentions, ceteris paribus, the lower is the cohesion. For $C_{II}$, however, cohesion ($C$) is 100.

By comparison, the index AI will denote the Agreement Index, as applied by Hix and collaborators in a study assessing the cohesion of political groups in the European Parliament (Hix et al. 2005). Giving equal weight to the vote choices ‘yes’, ‘no’ and ‘abstain’, the AI expressed in percentage terms, is given by

$$AI = \frac{\max\{Y, N, A\} - 0.5 \left[ (Y + N + A) - \max\{Y, N, A\} \right]}{Y + N + A} \times 100 \quad (2)$$

---

$^4$ The current study does not explicitly take the option of ‘absence’ into account.
where Y, N and A stand for the count of each vote choice, respectively. Perfect cohesion is represented by $\text{AI} = 100$. Only when the number of all possible vote choices is exactly equal, $\text{AI} = 0$, which represents radical non-cohesion. When there are no abstentions, $\text{AI} \leq 100$ (since at least, everyone agrees not to abstain). By comparison, when the numbers of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ votes is exactly equal, $\text{AI} = 25$.

Data for our analysis are derived from the dataset provided by Eric Voeten (Voeten and Merdjanovic 2009), which contains data on all votes of every UNGA member state on each adopted resolution between 1946 and 2008 (i.e., from the 1st to the 63rd session). From this compilation, we will only derive the information since 1993, but extend the data collection by additional information from the 64th and the 65th session (i.e, the years 2009 to 2011), retrieved from the official meeting records provided by the UN Bibliographic Information Centre (UNBISnet) and the Official Document System of the United Nations (ODS). In addition to this, we have double-checked the entries and corrected some discrepancies and incompatibilities that we had found between the voting records from UNBISnet and parts of the data in Voeten’s collection. Our analysis only takes into account votes cast on entire resolutions. Votes on paragraphs were filtered out from the datasets, since it has been demonstrated that they merely make slight differences in final results (Luif 1995; Rasch 2008). Absences are excluded from the subsequent analysis, as are the votes by non-members of the UNGA.

First, we explore variation in voting cohesion among UNGA sessions. There is a roughly even distribution of cases in each interval (70 cases on average per session). For the detection of the effect of the ToL, it is interesting to compare a time span before the implementation of the Treaty and the time phase since then. In an analysis focusing on a short time span (approximately two years) before and after ToL ratification, we will have 122 and 135 cases, respectively. Next, it is interesting to see what kinds of issue areas the UNGA has focused on in practice. For this purpose, our analysis first classifies all 1279 resolutions (for the 1993 to 2011 time span) into five categories. This categorization is primarily based on an identification of the Main Committee that prepares the respective UNGA

---

5 Given that it would be a considerable effort to conduct a thorough reading of the texts of all relevant records, an evaluation of parts of resolutions was beyond the scope of our investigation.

6 Considering the large size of the dataset, this filtering was conducted by the technique VBA.
resolution, since in practice most resolutions are based on the report of a Main Committee (81 percent of the total in our analysis). Subsequently, the results have been checked by a set of keywords developed to further distinguish relevant issue areas. These findings are shown in table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

We have classified plenary resolutions by their topics. For topics having multifaceted dimensions, the UN Yearbooks have been consulted. As a result, resolutions regarding topics like nuclear weapons, proliferation and disarmament, the reports of the IAEA, the security situations of states, or cooperation between the UN and the OSCE, fall into the category ‘International Security’. By comparison, the category ‘Middle East’ includes all resolutions that are specifically relevant to the Middle East (also if they focus on ‘international security’ in one way or another). ‘Human Rights’ notably encompasses issues related to human rights and social development. Resolutions regarding the restitution of cultural property to countries also fall into this group. In the category ‘Decolonization’ are cases dealing with decolonization and self-determination, and those regarding economic or political coercion against developing countries.7 Others that did not fall into any of these groups have been classified as ‘Other Issues’.

[Table 2 about here]

Given the extended data compilation of UNGA voting records as described above, we can now assess vote choices of the EU member states in the UNGA over time – accounting for different constellations and sizes of membership – and compare them with voting behaviour of the entire UNGA.

[Figure 1 about here]

7 Resolutions on the embargo imposed by the US against Cuba are also included.
The analysis is for the time span 1993 to May 2011 (with the last resolution accounted for being the one on the participation of the EU in the work of the UN of 3 May 2011). As figure 1 shows, the share of pro votes of UNGA member states (82 percent on average for the entire time span) is clearly higher than that of the EU (with 64 percent on average). The share of affirmative votes of the EU has grown steadily since 1993, with the introduction of the CFSP in the framework of the Maastricht Treaty, up until the UNGA’s 52nd session. Thereafter, it remained at about 65 percent between the 53rd and the 57th session, but dropped to 59 percent for the 58th session, coinciding approximately with the 2004 enlargement. Thereafter, the analysis shows a modest return of the share of affirmative votes back to its previous level, with another decline to below 60 percent in the 64th session (2010) and slightly increasing in 2011. In general terms, the share of affirmative votes is quite low in the UNGA as an average (less than 10 percent), compared with that of the EU (about 15 percent on average). Another trend transpiring from figure 1 is that the casting of abstentions by EU member states has dropped quite drastically from a high level of 33 percent in the 48th session to only about 20 percent currently. This may reflect efforts to arrive at more harmonized positions over time and avoid member state deviation from negotiated common stances. For the UNGA as a whole, the share of abstentions ranged from between about 14 to 16 percent in general, but decreased to as little as two percent at the 52nd session (1996), and remained just above 10 percent since then.

Table 2 shows assessments of EU voting cohesion over time, from the 48th session (1993/1994) to the 65th (2010/2011).

Average voting cohesion, as assessed by \( C_{II} \) and AI, were 94 and 93 percent, with both reaching a maximum of 96 percent at the 61st session. By comparison, calculations for \( C_1 \) have varied between 65 and 82 percent, with an average for the entire time span analyzed here of 77 percent. This shows that the EU is judged to be more cohesive when abstentions are coded as ‘no’ votes. Unlike the rest of UNGA membership, EU member states have cast abstentions more frequently, most likely as a milder way to express disagreement. For the last two sessions during which the ToL just started to take effect,
somewhat mixed results can be observed: whereas assessments on the basis of \( C_1 \) have gone up by 2 percentage points, both \( C_{II} \) and AI show a small decline in EU voting cohesion, which makes the overall effect of the Lisbon Treaty difficult to determine so far. But clearly, enlargement did not reduce EU cohesion, as effects after 1995 and 2004 demonstrate. On the contrary, all the indices rather seem to show a slight increase in voting cohesion. In the most recent round of EU enlargement in 2007, a drop by almost two percentage points can be seen for assessments on the basis of \( C_{II} \) and AI, compared to an increase by 4.5 points based on the \( C_1 \).

The values for the indices as shown in table 2 are correlated. A simple bivariate Pearson correlation assessment of the total of 1279 resolutions in the time span analysed here shows a correlation coefficient (\( r \)) of 0.922 for \( C_1 \) and \( C_2 \), of 0.944 for \( C_1 \) and AI, of 0.987 for \( C_2 \) and AI. The means for the indices differ, with the \( C_1 \) showing for the time phase analysed here, a mean of 75.8 (and a standard deviation of 23.9), the AI a mean value of 72.9 (standard deviation 24.9), but the \( C_2 \) having a mean of 64.8 (standard deviation of 31.4). In other words, while the \( C_2 \) generates the lowest assessment of voting cohesion for the EU overall, the assessments also show the highest variation (standard deviation) of values, compared to the \( C_1 \) and the AI.

On the basis of the indices given above, figures 2 and 3 show coherence over time among the EU member states (figure 2) and among the UNGA members as a whole (figure 3), again by UNGA session.

The lines in figure 2 represent EU voting cohesion for the 48\(^{th}\) to the 65\(^{th}\) UNGA sessions, as measured by the three indexes \( C_i \), \( C_{II} \) and AI, respectively. Clearly, each line appears to be based on a modestly positive slope, indicating that the overall trend of EU voting cohesion in the UNGA has been slowly increasing over time (on this, also see e.g., Hosli et al. 2010), though not all that extensively. In fact, the lines representing \( C_{II} \) and AI are almost identical and are at a clearly higher level than measurements for \( C_1 \).

Compared with the cohesion of the entire UNGA membership, shown in figure 3, EU cohesion is
higher than at the global level. The trends of the three indicators look similar: all indices reach the minimum at the 50\textsuperscript{th} session (1995/1996) and remain quite stable thereafter until the 64\textsuperscript{th} session (2009/2010), when all three indices show a drop by 3 to 4 percentage points. Whereas in the case of the EU, $C_1$ shows the lowest extent of cohesion, for the UNGA as a whole, it reflects the highest level, with an average score of 76 percent. Treating abstentions as ‘no’ votes seems to increase assessments of EU cohesion, whereas for the entire UNGA membership, it decreases them.

How does EU voting cohesion compare to cohesion by other regional organizations and institutions? The following analysis will make assessments for the League of Arab States (Arab League),\textsuperscript{8} the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),\textsuperscript{9} the African Union (AU),\textsuperscript{10} the Caribbean Community (CARICOM),\textsuperscript{11} the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),\textsuperscript{12} and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).\textsuperscript{13} Guided by the selection standards used in Rasch’s work (Rasch 2008), these organizations are chosen based on the following considerations: first,\textsuperscript{8}

\textsuperscript{8} The Arab League currently encompasses 22 member states. Palestine is not included in this analysis since it is not a UN member. Comoros is considered in the analysis after 20 November 1993 when it became a member of the Arab League.

\textsuperscript{9} The ASEAN has ten members, of which Vietnam, Myanmar and Cambodia obtained membership on 28 July 1995, 23 July 1997 and 30 April 1999, respectively. These three countries are analyzed only after their dates of accession.

\textsuperscript{10} The AU, as the successor of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), was founded in 2002 and currently has 54 member states. Within our observation period, neither the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic nor South Sudan were members of the UN (South Sudan joined the UN on 14 July 2011 and the AU on 28 July 2011), therefore they are not included into the analysis. South Africa became a member of the OAU on 23 May 1994 and is taken into account in the analysis since this date.

\textsuperscript{11} The CARICOM has 15 full members. Montserrat is not a UN member and is not considered in the analysis. Suriname and Haiti joined the community respectively on 4 July 1995 and 2 July 2002. They are calculated as CARICOM members only after their dates of accession.

\textsuperscript{12} The CIS originally had ten member states. But Turkmenistan changed its status to associate member on 26 August 2005, therefore, it is not included in the analysis from this date onwards.

\textsuperscript{13} ECOWAS currently has 15 member states. Mauritania withdrew from ECOWAS on 1 January 2002 and therefore, is not considered in the analysis from this date onwards.
they have a level of integration that somewhat compares to the one of the EU in economic, institutional and political terms; second, they cover a wide range of geographical diversity; and finally, they could offer insights in terms of group size effects on variations in voting cohesion. Figure 4 captures respective developments for these organizations and for the EU over time, as assessed by the index A1, again for the time span between 1993 and 2011.

[Figure 4 about here]

The AI has been selected for this purpose as it treats the three types of votes equally and codes abstentions in straightforward ways; in addition, it seems to give an assessment that ranges somewhere between the two other indicators, giving a ‘middle’ assessment (see figures 2 and 3). As figure 4 shows, voting cohesion for the various groups assessed here is between about 85 percent and 100 percent, with the exception of the members of the CIS, which was and is marked by a lower level of cohesion (between about 70 and 85 percent). In fact, in terms of overall voting cohesion, three organizations appear to outperform the EU, namely the Arab League, CARICOM and ECOWAS. The average voting cohesion of these groups, as assessed on the basis of the A1, is 94.1 percent, 94.1 percent and 93.8, respectively. With an average voting cohesion of 92.83, ASEAN, in spite of often being perceived as a more diverse group of countries than the EU, has a similar, but slightly higher level of cohesion than the EU (with the average of the EU over the years being 92.76). The other two groups, the AU and CIS, voted less coherently than the EU. By comparison, whereas the AU has a fairly high average cohesion (91.3 percent), the CIS reaches 78.2 percent. These observations seem to reject the assumption that group size and assessments of voting cohesion might be correlated: smaller groups, such as the CIS, do not seem to vote more coherently than others, whereas the AU, as the biggest regional group in this comparison, does not display the lowest level of cohesion. In contrast, these findings seem to suggest that it is primarily preference homogeneity that matters for the voting cohesion of a group. Clearly, heterogeneity may be mitigated by adapting institutional structures. The overview given in figure 4 also suggests that the changes introduced by the ToL do not make the EU the most cohesive actor in international organizations. It is interesting to notice that regional organizations like the Arab League,
CARICOM and ECOWAS, which do not share the same extensive degree of integration as the EU does, actually score higher in terms of assessments of voting cohesion. A reason for this might be that they are less concerned about the subjects of some UNGA discussions than EU member states are, but also that prior coordination and negotiations to arrive at common positions may be fairly elaborate. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the causes for these phenomena in more detail, but would certainly deserve more attention in future research.

[Figure 5 about here]

Does voting cohesion of EU member states vary across different subject areas? A classification of the 1279 resolutions into five categories (see table 1) shows the following distribution: ‘International Security’ had the largest number, with a total of 422 resolutions (approximately 33 percent). This was followed by resolutions on the (partially related) category ‘Middle East’ (355 resolutions, or 28 percent). The share of resolutions in the category ‘Human Rights’ was 23 percent (294 cases). The category ‘Decolonization’ had a total of 139 cases (11 percent of the total). Finally, the category ‘Other Issues’ is not shown in figure 5, as it only encompassed 69 resolutions (5 percent of the total).

Consistent with results of some earlier studies (Luif 2003; Rasch 2008; Hosli et al. 2010), in figure 5, the category ‘Middle East’ shows the highest cohesion score for the EU, with an average of 98.4 percent (thus almost 7 percentage points above overall average EU cohesion, which was 92.8 percent). By comparison, ‘Decolonization’ showed least voting cohesion among EU member states, whereas ‘Human Rights’, with a score of 93.4, displayed the second highest cohesion rate for the EU. Scores for the area ‘International Security’, however, were lower, with an average voting cohesion of 90.4 for the 1993 to 2011 time frame.

As expected, the trend line for the category ‘Middle East’ is on the top, clearly above the average line; it continues to rise from the 48th session onwards and reaches the level of full consensus at the 51st session of the UNGA. After staying around 100 for a while, the EU voting cohesion in this category starts to decrease gradually from the 58th session (2003/2004) onwards. It appears that EU cohesion on issues concerning the ‘Middle East’ remains at a level of above 90 percent in cases in which there is no
serious split among the member states. The line reflecting cohesion assessments for the category ‘Human Rights’ is mostly above the average level, essentially being stable around 90 to 95 percent, up to the 56th session of the UNGA. By comparison, the EU was quite divided during the UNGA’s 57th and 58th sessions (2002/2003 and 2003/2004). Possible explanations for this could be conflicts among member states on the Iraq war and terrorism. It seems that the EU managed to coordinate the positions of its member states thereafter, as cohesion increased again, achieving a maximum at the UNGA’s 61st session (2006/2007).

This strong cohesion did not last for long though, as EU voting cohesion plunged to 87 percent at the 64th session. The lines for ‘Decolonization’ and for ‘International Security’ were below the overall average. Its underlying voting patterns appear to have fluctuated from session to session, showing frictions among member states on this issue. The low coherence figures for ‘International Security’ are mainly responsible for the lower assessment of overall EU voting coherence, as this category encompasses the largest share of the recorded votes as assessed here. The trend line for this category shows increases and decreases from the 48th to the 53rd session, at which it achieved a maximum of 94 percent. Since then, EU voting cohesion in this area dropped visibly and reached a minimum in the 58th session. Although cohesion in this category appears to increase slowly in recent sessions, it is unlikely that cohesion in this area will get close to the level of ‘Middle East’ or ‘Human Rights’, as there are large differences in member state preferences on issues in this category, including nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation. France and the UK as nuclear powers appear to prefer to maintain their nuclear prominence, whereas Austria,14 Sweden and Ireland,15 as middle or smaller powers and neutral states, for example, prefer to build a nuclear-free world. It seems impossible for these two poles of countries to come up with an agreement on such issues in the near future. The line for the area ‘Decolonization’ seems even less steady, staying under 75 percent in the first three UNGA sessions, and surprisingly reaching full cohesion in the 51st session (on the resolution regarding the embargo imposed by the US

---

14 Austria is a nuclear-free zone and the country favours an anti-nuclear policy.
15 Both Sweden and Ireland are members of the New Agenda Coalition, which seeks to facilitate nuclear disarmament.
against Cuba). Thereafter, cohesion increases and decreases around 80 percent, and reaches over 90 percent in the UNGA’s 62nd, 63rd and 64th sessions.

From these assessments, it is somewhat difficult to evaluate the effect of EU enlargement on voting cohesion. In the three rounds of enlargement within the time period assessed in this paper, mixed results can be seen in terms of the variation of cohesion for different issue areas. For instance, in the last round of enlargement, cohesion for the category ‘Middle East’ has slightly decreased; declining cohesion rates for the categories ‘Human Rights’ and ‘International Security’ is visible, whereas the figures for ‘Decolonization’ clearly increase. Overall coherence dropped to a small extent. The impact of the ToL is equally difficult to discern. In the last UNGA session assessed here (65th), when the ToL had taken effect, EU cohesion levels for the categories ‘Middle East’ and ‘Human Rights’ increased. For ‘International Security’ and for ‘Decolonization’, by comparison, opposite results can be discerned. The overall effect appears to be a slight decrease in EU cohesion within the UNGA.

Finally, to assess differences between cohesion levels before and after the ToL, it is also an option to conduct t-tests, comparing the means of different groups. In the following, a t-test compares first cohesion levels before a cut-off point of 2007 with those thereafter (assuming that in the years leading up to the ratification of the ToL, effects could already have materialized). Then, cohesion levels before 2009 are compared with those for 2010 and 2011. For the first assessment, test statistics are as follows (assuming non-equal variances within the groups): \( t = -1.155 \) and \( p \) (t-tailed) = 0.249 for C1, \( t = 0.399 \) and \( p \) (t-tailed) = 0.690 for C2 and finally, \( t = 0.254 \) and \( p \) (t-tailed) = 0.799. In other words, the test statistics do not find a statistically significant difference for the pre-2007 as compared to the post-2007 time span. Splitting the data into phases prior to 2009 and post-2009 generates similar results: the test for difference of means shows that there are no significant differences when comparing the mean cohesion values for these time spans.

In a statistical evaluation, it is also interesting to explore EU voting cohesion in a time span just before the ToL and between the ratification of the ToL and the present. It is conceivable that there are differences, for example, between the time in which the ToL has been signed (13 December 2007) and the ratification of the Treaty (1 December 2009). The total number of resolutions falling into these brackets is 122 votes on resolutions for the time span between signature and ratification of the ToL, and
135 votes for the period thereafter (up to May 2011). Average rates for these groups, based on the AI, are 95.4 for the time span after signature, and 92.8 for the phase after ratification of the ToL. This appears to demonstrate a slight decline in voting cohesion – in contrast to more general expectations of increasing voting cohesion for the EU -- but in agreement with selected insights generated by the principal-agent framework as outlined above. If coherence is seen as a precondition for the efficacy of foreign policy making (Koehler 2010), these recent developments may reflect a somewhat problematic trend.

5. Conclusions

The commitment to multilateral solutions remains a central stand of the EU’s general external strategy. The ToL has confirmed the Union’s support for effective multilateralism, also in the framework of the UN system. This paper has explored whether the institutional innovations introduced by the ToL have helped to unify EU outward representation at the level of the UN. Inspired by theoretical propositions of the principal-agent model, we hypothesized that the Lisbon Treaty does not necessarily generate an increase in the cohesion of EU representation at the UNGA. This was explored empirically on the basis of roll call votes in the UNGA. The empirical analysis relied on existing data compilations on voting in the UN, but extended them by recent information on voting records for UNGA sessions in the recent years. The study shows that whereas between 1993 and 2011 voting cohesion for the EU increased slightly, there are clear variations across time, and notably across different subject categories.

The enlargement of the EU has brought its total membership to 27 states. This is likely to strengthen the Union’s position and voting leverage in the UN, yet it also generates new challenges. The coordination between member states will probably be more time-consuming, and the potential of splitting over sensitive issues may in fact increase rather than decrease. The empirical analysis conducted for this paper shows, however, that so far enlargement has not caused lower cohesion levels in the EU, at least as far as voting in the UNGA is concerned.

It has to be kept in mind, however, that analyzing voting records of EU member states in the UNGA has some potential drawbacks. First, voting only reflects the last stage of a process of
coordination and does not reveal what happened in the phases before. Nonetheless, the analysis of these records provides an assessment of how ‘unified’ the EU is in the international realm, assessed here in terms of voting in the context of the UNGA. Second, the analysis conducted here cannot account for the moderating effect of UN reform on the influence of the ToL system as far as foreign relations of the EU are concerned. Further efforts should be devoted to the analysis of the presence of the EU in UN programmes, specialized agencies, and other international organizations.

We predicted, on the basis of principal-agent assessments, that the ToL may not necessarily lead to increased levels of EU cohesion, but this model has some limitations. First, it is not generally possible to specify the causality of delegation and the conditions under which agents enjoy autonomy. There may also be a problem of ‘over-determination’ since it is difficult to assess the relative importance among various factors (Pollack 2007). Third, it may still be necessary to incorporate the external institutional context as a factor determining the degree to which the agent enjoys freedom (Billiet 2009); such considerations are also applicable to the case analysed here. Nonetheless, the analysis of patterns of principal-agent relations, combined with descriptions of the evolving institutional structure for EU representation in international organizations, coupled with testing on the basis of recent voting records (in the UNGA), hopefully help to realistically assess the EU’s evolving ‘actorness’ in international organizations.
References


Figure 2: EU Voting Cohesion in the UNGA (48th–65th Session)
Figure 3: Voting Cohesion of the Entire UNGA Membership (48th - 65th Session)
Figure 4: EU Voting Cohesion Compared with Arab League, ASEAN, AU, CARICOM, CIS and ECOWAS
Figure 5: EU Voting Cohesion by Issue Areas over Time

UNGA Session

- International Security
- Middle East
- Human Rights
- Decolonization
- All Votes
Table 1: Keywords for Issue Area Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue Area</th>
<th>Selected Keywords</th>
<th>Main Committee</th>
<th>Cases (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. International security</td>
<td>Nuclear, proliferation, disarmament</td>
<td>Disarmament and International Security Committee</td>
<td>422 (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Middle East</td>
<td>Israel, Palestine, Palestinian, Lebanon, Syria, Middle East Jerusalem.</td>
<td></td>
<td>355 (28%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Human Rights</td>
<td>Human rights, cultural</td>
<td>Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee</td>
<td>294 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Decolonization</td>
<td>Decolonization, colonial, coercion, Cuba</td>
<td>Special Political and Decolonization Committee</td>
<td>139 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Other issues</td>
<td>Climate, economic, development, environment law.</td>
<td>Economic and Financial Committee Administrative and Budgetary Committee Legal Committee</td>
<td>69 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNGA Session (year)</td>
<td>CI</td>
<td>CII</td>
<td>AI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48 (1993/1994)</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>90.5</td>
<td>88.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49 (1994/1995)</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>90.0</td>
<td>89.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 (1995/1996)</td>
<td>76.9</td>
<td>91.2</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 (1996/1997)</td>
<td>77.9</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>92.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52 (1997/1998)</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>93.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53 (1998/1999)</td>
<td>81.7</td>
<td>95.2</td>
<td>94.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54 (1999/2000)</td>
<td>75.7</td>
<td>95.4</td>
<td>93.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 (2000/2001)</td>
<td>79.5</td>
<td>94.2</td>
<td>93.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 (2001/2002)</td>
<td>77.7</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57 (2002/2003)</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>91.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58 (2003/2004)</td>
<td>73.9</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>90.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 (2004/2005)</td>
<td>79.4</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>93.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60 (2005/2006)</td>
<td>78.6</td>
<td>94.5</td>
<td>94.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 (2006/2007)</td>
<td>76.7</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>96.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62 (2007/2008)</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>94.3</td>
<td>94.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63 (2008/2009)</td>
<td>78.4</td>
<td>94.4</td>
<td>95.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>64 (2009/2010)</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>94.6</td>
<td>92.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 (2010/2011)</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>93.2</td>
<td>91.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>