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## The Voting Practice of the Fifteen in the UN General Assembly: Convergence and Divergence

Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués\*

Investigadora del IUEE

### Abstract

The EU has, since the early days of the Community, had the ambition to speak with 'a single voice' in international fora, in particular in the United Nations' General Assembly. This aspiration, which has become more pronounced since the inauguration of the CFSP, has not always been easy to achieve due to domestic or international level factors affecting the EU member states. However, in the last decade there has been a dramatic increase in convergence in the Fifteen's voting record. This paper contemplates the underlying reasons for such a convergence.

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Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona  
Edifici E-1  
08193 Bellaterra  
Barcelona (Espanya)

The Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) of the European Union has just turned a decade old (coming into force in 1993). For analysts and practitioners alike, the anniversary has provided a good opportunity for stocktaking, to look back and examine the development of the EU's external actuation during these years. As the Maastricht Treaty took form in the early 1990s, the main goal for EU's member states was to overcome the eternal challenge of coordinating their national foreign policy positions to such degree that it could be affirmed that the EU is 'speaking with one voice' in the international arena. The policy harmonization during the era of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) in the two decades which preceded the CFSP had left many unsatisfied, and the end of the Cold War was seen as an unprecedented occasion to finally consolidate a 'common' foreign policy. However, in this respect, the past decade has been a disappointment to some, in that the evolution of the CFSP has been wrought with 'fits and starts,' and the motor seems to have stalled so many times in the starting up phase that the Fifteen have not yet been able test the real capacity of their coordinated foreign policy.

However, although a true CFSP is far from being achieved, some headway has admittedly been made. The member states of the European Union have in the last decade made a visible effort to increasingly coordinate themselves on a host of international issues, and one of the venues where this has been notable is the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. The purpose of this Working Paper is to review the actuation of the Fifteen in the General Assembly since the inception of the EPC and examine closer the EU member states' voting behavior. The Working Paper will consider whether or not the EU has become a fairly homogeneous regional bloc in the past decade and able to influence the international political environment. This reflection is especially relevant in the context of the grand-scale ambitions of the EU and its current member states to make the European Union into a significant force in international politics, regionally as well as globally, and the key role that the Union is assigning the greater coordination between EU and the United Nations as a means to consolidate that goal.<sup>1</sup> The EU-UN relations have consequently intensified during the past few years, and several new formalized cooperation agreements have been signed between the two international entities, the latest in 2001, under the guidance of the Swedish EU Presidency (first semester 2001).

## I. EPC AND THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The desire of the EU to 'speak with a single voice' in international organizations, is not new. Already in the early days of the European Coal and Steel Community, the Six would in some ways seek to influence the visions and objectives of the United Nations as a block. However, differentiated postwar agendas among the Six in the UN context, would not allow the effective coordination of their foreign policy views. Thus, in practice, until the European Political Cooperation (EPC) in the 1970s required a greater harmonization of member states, the joint policy influence of the EC was scarce.

The launching of the EPC signified that the Six now were ready to take the first steps towards the deepening of their cooperation in terms of foreign policy and security matters. The EPC was envisioned to take place among the Nine on issues involving European interests "whether in Europe itself *or elsewhere* where the adoption of a common position is necessary or desirable (italics added)."<sup>2</sup> A first attempt towards harmonization of positions in an international forum appeared in 1971 when the Six proclaimed that they would act as a group in the Conference on Security and Cooperation (CSCE, now OSCE).

In terms of the United Nations, one of the first measures taken to strengthen the presence of the EC members in the General Assembly was the transformation of the European Commission's information office in New York to become an official EC delegation to the United Nations in 1974 — a year after the Federal Republic of Germany (FDR) became member of the UN. The opening of the delegation was a direct response to the need for the Nine to formulate a common position on a General Assembly agenda, which, as a consequence of the increasing numbers of assertive Third World countries and the consequent introduction of many new divisive issues on

the Assembly floor, such as decolonization and economic development issues. That is to say: "[t]he Nine were faced with the challenge of formulating a collective response to a broad 'global' agenda beyond their control and sometimes to initiatives that they would rather have avoided."<sup>3</sup> The policy coordination in the General Assembly thus became vital for the Nine and the cohesiveness of their group would thus early on become an indicator for the state of the health of the EPC, clearly healthier on issues of economic or developmental character than where security issues were at stake.

The cohesiveness of the EC member states was not only sourly tested by the Third World agenda, but also, and more dominantly so, by the bipolar tension between U.S. and the USSR, the security dependence on the Nine on NATO which did not permit to much divergence with the U.S. vote, and the fact that two member states held permanent seats in the Security Council did not facilitate the harmonization process of the different foreign policies in the framework of the EPC.

However, there are some evidence for that gradually the EPC and the Nine as a group became a recognized feature in the UN system, as the following anecdote demonstrates: "rumor has it that in November 1973, when a joint EEC declaration on the Middle East was circulated for the first time in the UN, the Soviet ambassador Yakov Malik asked 'Who are these nine?' Two years later, however, the cooperation among the EEC members had been widely acknowledged, and the same Ambassador Malik addressed the EEC ambassadors as 'the Mighty Nine' when informing them, as a group, of a Soviet initiative on disarmament."<sup>4</sup> Moreover, from 1975 and onward the internal coordination between the EC member countries would improve, largely thanks to the initiatives of (the then) West Germany. In 1975 the EPC Political Committee began to hold regular preparation sessions before General Assembly meetings and a working group to provide coherence and guidance for matters discussed at the UN was created. In 1977 an 'early warning' system was established so that contentious issues could be identified at an early stage.<sup>5</sup> In 1986 the Single European Act (SEA) codified, among its 'Provisions on European co-operation in the sphere of foreign policy:' the ongoing harmonization of adoption of common positions in international fora and that "the High Contracting Parties shall *endeavor* to adopt common positions" in international institutions and at international conferences which they attend.<sup>6</sup>

The perhaps most interesting feature of the EPC's interaction with the UN system has been that very often, in the early years of EPC, the decisions taken in the General Assembly would take on the role of the cohesive or the 'glue' between the member states at the time of formulating a common position or declaration in the seat of the EC. Resolutions adopted in the Assembly served as a policy basis (least common denominator) around which the EPC policy was later developed and adopted. The UN thus provided notable influence over the development of the EPC during the 1970s and 1980s, this was, for example, the case on many issues related to the Middle East. Conversely, on issues where the UN kept out (e.g. the global security regime), so did very often the EPC as well.<sup>7</sup> The General Assembly was thus a vital vehicle for the EPC agenda setting and coagulation of EPC measures, helping to further develop the EPC.

## II. CFSP AND THE EU FIFTEEN IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In 1992 Treaty on the European Union created a separate 'pillar' for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), but the essential features of the EPC were conserved and the objective of maintaining a common position in international fora remained the same, with the seemingly significant difference that rather than to '*endeavor* to adopt common positions' the member states '*shall* coordinate their action' in international organizations and at international conferences and uphold the common position in such fora.<sup>8</sup> The imperative of supporting a common position is thus, in the language of the Treaty on European Union (1993), visibly strengthened. However, even according to the stricter wording of the Treaty on European Union, the member states are not required to fix one common position previously, nor is it foreseen that there should be common positions on all matters.<sup>9</sup> One might infer that this translates into that a common position adopted by the EU must be upheld by all its member

states in any international fora, however, in all cases where no common position has been adopted, only 'coordination' is required. What entails by 'coordination' is not very clear, neither from the Treaty text, nor from the *acquis politique* accumulated during the years of the EU.

In practice, it is the European Community, the first of the three pillars of the Union, embodied in the European Commission, which fulfills the main function to watch out for the coherence of EU as a group in many United Nations bodies.<sup>10</sup> In 1971 the General Assembly granted the Commission observer status, which for all purposes means that it may make its views known to the Assembly, however, it does not have the right to vote. The observer status for the Commission also applies to the Economic and Social Council and in other UN organs and subsidiary bodies, however, not to the Security Council. The European Community is represented by the permanent representative of the EU member state holding the Presidency of the European Union and by a representative from the European Commission. Moreover, the European Commission has the exclusive responsibility to represent the Community in areas of pillar one, such as trade, agriculture and fisheries<sup>11</sup> and it has obtained a special 'full participant' status in a number of important UN conferences, as well as for example in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and in the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests (IFF). In 1991, the European Community was accepted as a member in its own right of the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with full voting privileges.

The European contribution to the UN organization is perhaps most visible in economic terms. The Union and its member states are the largest financial contributor to the UN system, estimating during the time period 2001-03 to provide approximately 37 % of the UN's regular budget, 40 % of UN peacekeeping operations and 50 % of all UN member states' contributions to UN funds and programs. The EU is through its Humanitarian Office (ECHO) the second largest single contributor to and operational partner in the work of the High Commissioner for Refugees. In addition, the EC is the second largest donor to the World Food Program. The Union represents more than half of the world's trade is subject to preferential treatment for most lesser developed countries and the European Union and its member states give over half of the world's total official development assistance (ODA). Moreover, the Union contributes substantially to UN preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping, peacemaking and post-conflict peace building measures around the globe. The Treaty of Amsterdam has further emphasized these tasks and the Treaty of Nice laying before the member states the challenge of progressively framing a common defense policy. This included a rapid reaction force, civilian crisis management capabilities and the creation of permanent political and military crisis management organs, which will, if successful, contribute further to UN's peacekeeping programs.

### III. EU VOTING AND ISSUES IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The EU member state holding the EU Presidency represents the Union's common position in all other areas and, supposedly, provides the 'single voice' of the European Union in the Assembly, a fact that makes the EU voice a very mighty one when the Fifteen all align behind a common position – and even more so when the EU's thirteen candidate countries and a few other associates (such as Iceland, Norway, Switzerland etc.) follow suit. However, one cannot say that this until today has been the norm, rather, the EU members often pursue individual policies, especially on sensitive issues. "In such cases national interests prevail and the Union disappears as a political entity in the world arena, giving its place once again to its constituent member states."<sup>12</sup>

To provide an indicator of the cohesiveness of a group of states in terms of voting behavior there are several methods. The method chosen here is the widely used classification of the cast votes into three categories — unanimous, two-way split and three-way split. A two-way split refers to when at least one of the member states abstains while the rest vote either 'yes' or 'no.' A three-way split, on the other hand, stands for a situation where at least one member states in the group voted 'no' while the rest voted 'yes', or a situation where at least one member state voted 'no' while the rest vote 'yes' and/or abstained. All cases where one or several EU member states have been absent, and thus not participated in the vote in question, are not included in

this survey.<sup>13</sup> One exception has been made to this rule — in the 51<sup>st</sup> session Greece was absent during more than 75% of the votes, thus that would have skewed the results.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, the 51<sup>st</sup> session has been calculated in two ways, showing the voting record when Greece is included and excluded (i.e. the latter shows the voting record of only 14 EU members) (see Figure 1 below).

It is important to note that not all resolutions taken by the General Assembly go to vote, the vast majority are adopted without a vote (see Table 1). During the Cold War era, the share of resolutions adopted by a vote was approximately about half of the total number of UN resolutions, with reveals the political contentions inherent in the Assembly during those years.<sup>15</sup> The share of resolutions adopted by a vote in the General Assembly dropped in the early years of the 1990s to about a quarter of total resolutions, and in the past decade this ratio has oscillated between a 20-25%, currently finding a plateau at roughly 20% of all the resolutions adopted by vote.

This paper will only focus on the resolution adopted by vote in order to determine general trends in the EU voting patterns, while keeping this in mind the picture of consensus in the UN is always much higher than can be shown in a study of these characteristics, granted that, for example, in the 55<sup>th</sup> session almost 80% of total number of UN resolutions were adopted without a vote. However, by concentrating on the actual votes taken over a longer period of time and across different issue areas, the voting pattern reveals important indicators for how convergent or divergent a certain cluster of countries in the General Assembly are, and how constant their voting alignments are in their voting behavior in UN etc. These indicators help us to understand the underlying dynamics of foreign policy interests and loyalties in general and, as in this paper, the EU foreign affairs actuation in particular.

Table 1. *Resolutions adopted in the General Assembly (1990-2002)*

General Assembly session (years)	Total number of Resolutions adopted	Resolutions adopted submitted to a vote	Percentage of Resolutions adopted with a vote
<b>45</b> (1990-91)	345	86	25.9 %
<b>46</b> (1991-92)	309	75	24.3 %
<b>47</b> (1992-93)	306	75	24.5 %
<b>48</b> (1993-94)	328	65	19.8 %
<b>49</b> (1994-95)	332	68	20.5 %
<b>50</b> (1995-96)	327	71	21.7 %
<b>51</b> (1996-97)	311	76	24.4 %
<b>52</b> (1997-98)	304	69	22.7 %
<b>53</b> (1998-99)	312	61	19.6%
<b>54</b> (1999-00)	341	69	20.2%
<b>55</b> (2000-01)	330	67	20.3%
<b>56</b> (2001-02)	360	67	18.6%

*Source: UN Bibliographic Information System (UN BIS).*

The difficulty in converging on international matters has been patent in terms of the EC/EU voting pattern in the General Assembly over the decades. Four distinct periods can be traced in the years spanning 1970 to 2000. During the first decade of the EPC the tendency of the Nine was one of growing convergence, reaching an initial 47% of the total number of General Assembly roll-calls in 1973, a number which two years later would correspond to 57%. The

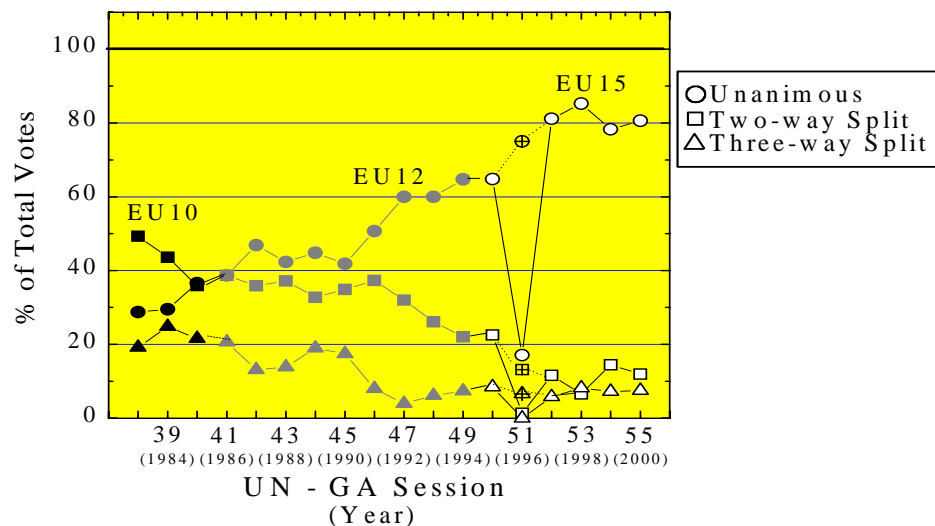
positive trend of convergence and regularity in votes would continue during the following years, reaching a climax during this period in 1978 when 63% of total votes cast by the Nine were unanimous.

The following five-year period (1979-1984) would not be able to show such a solid record. 1983 would be an especially bad year for the cohesiveness of the EC votes where the now Ten voted divergently in two out of every three resolutions voted on in the Assembly. This five-years period would also see a rise in the number of three way split votes, indicating that the divergence among the EC members was increasing. The Ten — with the incorporation of Greece into the EC — would find themselves increasingly divided over issues related to the Middle East, decolonization and nuclear arms.

However, things became better in the ensuing five-year period, which first years were to be marked by an increasing convergence among the EC members. In the years between 1985 and 1987 the number of unanimous votes taken by the EC in the Assembly increased to the levels of the early years of EPC — almost 50% and the three-way split votes dropped during this period to approximately 12%. The positive increase in homogeneous votes can largely be attributed to a joint EC stance on South Africa and the convergence in opinions on the nature and scope of the UN organization. Notwithstanding, this trend would experiment a stagnation in the years which brought the Cold War to a close (spanning 1987-1990), where the only notable aspect was that the consensus on Middle East issues continued to rise, while global security issues and the stance on apartheid would deteriorate towards the end of this period.<sup>16</sup>

The last of these four periods — the current (1990- ) — has been characterized by a generalized and quite dramatic increase in convergence among the EU member states. The percentage of unanimous votes rose from 41,9 % in 1990 to an all-time high of 85,2% in the 53<sup>rd</sup> session (1998) (with the exception of session 51 as already noted above), where the trend has since dropped slightly, but on average the convergence is still notable (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 Percentage Agreement among EC/EU member states (1983-2000).



Source: UN Bibliographic Information System (UN BIS).

This upward, positive trend in convergence among the EU member states apparently did not experience any negative impact by the 1995 joining of the three neutral countries Austria, Finland and Sweden, something that was initially feared by some analysts. Rather in the years following 1995, the initial tendency for convergent vote of the Fifteen increased, indicating both the already existing high degree of complementarity between the European foreign policy and of the national foreign policies of the newcomers, as well as, one might infer, a certain willingness, at least initially, of the new member states to adjust themselves to mainstream EU's positions.

Although this positive upward trend has dropped slightly in the past few years, the average EU convergence rate in terms of those UN resolutions voted on still remains remarkably high. The greater convergence in EU member states' voting behavior during the period 1992-1998 could perhaps, in part, be explained by the greater coordination in the foreign policy ambit of the European Union after the Treaty on European Union was signed and the CFSP was created. However, and more likely, one has also to take into account that the tendency in general in the General Assembly is towards greater convergence among all represented states, a fact that is illustrated by the sinking number of resolutions which are adopted by vote in the Assembly. Moreover, the issues addressed by the General Assembly have also changed markedly in the decade after the end of the Cold War. The Assembly's agenda is no longer so preoccupied by nuclear arms (where there is now a majority in favor of disarmament and non-proliferation), South Africa or decolonialization (issues which have now been replaced with human rights issues in general, and as regards to some countries ex. Serbia, East Timor etc. in particular), although some issues remain constant on the UN agenda, such as economic development, Middle East and UN as an organization. The shift in the UN's issue agenda toward less polemic and sensitive issues, has also favored a greater coherence in the General Assembly, in general, and, in particular, among the EU member states. In this context it is worth noting, for example, that the total number of votes which draw a two- or three-way split vote among EU member states have in recent years has dropped and stabilized. Notwithstanding, some issues (nuclear, disarmament and decolonialization) continue to remain controversial for some of the Union's member states, thus resisting the full convergence of the EU Fifteen in the General Assembly. These particular issues often draw a three-way split vote, while among the two-way split votes are issues related to national self-determination, the Middle East, declaration of nuclear-free zones, the Law of the Sea, economic and social issues regarding North-South relations and, until recently, the repeated UN condemnation of the situation in the former Yugoslavia.<sup>17</sup>

Many two- and three-way splits are caused by the divergent votes by Great Britain and France, which during the 1990s were the two EU member states which most frequently voted divergently from its fellow EU members on the mentioned issues. Great Britain and France have a historical past of being great powers, which is reflected in their membership of the UN Security Council and with a long tradition of independent foreign policy actuation, perhaps making it extra difficult for these two countries to fit into a framework where the policies and decisions are taken in common. A detailed review of the voting records shows that these two European countries are the ones most sensitive regarding issues such as decolonialization, nuclear weapons and disarmament. France is especially sensitive on nuclear weapon issues, while UK has a soft spot for issues related to its colonial past (apartheid), its status as a great power (nuclear weapons) and its special relationship with the U.S. often cause it to vote differently from its EU partners. However, it is worth noting that in recent years France and Great Britain are coming closer to the EU voting 'mean.'

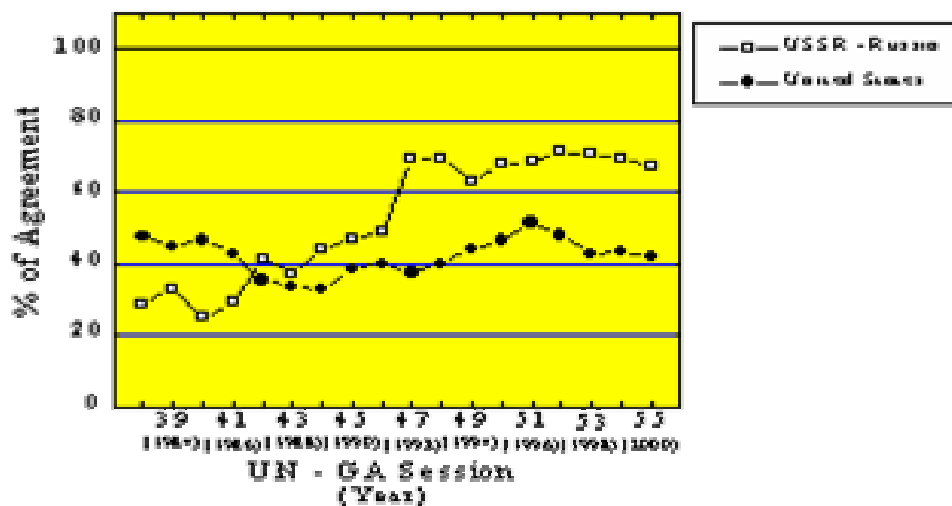
Another look at the Fifteen's voting record in the General Assembly shows, as Kostakos and Bourantonis have found, that there is a 'hard core' of EU member states around which other member states group themselves — the Benelux countries and Germany. As these two authors express it, Belgium, Germany, Holland and Luxembourg "seem to be the guardians of EU orthodoxy and they are almost always in the majority group among the EU states."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, voting records reveal that there are groups of EU states which frequently tend to vote identically even on controversial and divisive issues, such as, for example, the southern European EU member states (Greece, Spain and to a lesser degree Portugal) in terms of, for example, the Middle East and Palestinian issues, or the neutral EU countries (Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden) on issues related to the lesser developed world, such as disarmament, the transfer of technology, and economic and humanitarian assistance etc.

Another notable shift in General Assembly voting alignments is the fact that the EU members are increasingly voting with the majority of UN General Assembly countries, i.e. the Union's members are becoming more sensitive on issues of the underdeveloped world, and that this trend has strengthened in past years is not to wonder due to the EU accession of Sweden and Finland with long record and strong policy positions on these issues. This has translated into that the EU is, from time to time, seen as the 'spokes-block' for the lesser developed countries in the General Assembly, and this newfound political backing could be used to sway the international regime in favor of these. If the Union manages to coordinate the voices of all

Fifteen, and in the future more member states, the Union may be able to shape the global regime on a host of issues more efficiently.

This is in sharp contrast to both Russia and United States (see Figure 2), especially the latter which increasingly is finding itself in minority in the General Assembly, due to its in general negative attitude towards this international organization and its particular global agenda as the world's only remaining superpower. The figure shows that while the EU has increasingly more policy positions in common with Russia, the EU convergence with the United States in the UN General Assembly is in overall declining.<sup>19</sup> The greater convergence with the Russian Federation must be attributed to the shift in Russia's foreign policy as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union/communism, the loss of its bipolar status as a superpower as well as the adoption of a Western-style democracy and market oriented economy. There has thus been a certain 'normalization' of the stance of Moscow in the UN General Assembly vote, making its policy position by default edge closer to that of the European Union. In terms of the decline in the U.S.-EU convergence this should be attributed both to the European's firm belief in multilateralism and support of the UN as a central institution to their vision of the international system, as well as Washington's converse hesitancy to both. This trend has been especially acute since the coming into power of the George W. Bush administration, which is one of the most notoriously reluctant U.S. administrations towards the United Nations since the Reagan administrations in the 1980s.

Figure 2 Percentage agreement between U.S. or USSR/Russia with the EU majority vote (EU=100%).



Source: UN Bibliographic Information System (UN BIS).

As we have seen, the successive enlargements of the EU has not noticeably affected the EU's overall voting record in the General Assembly. This is a bit unusual, in that according to the logic of game theory, the accession to the European Union to become first Nine, then Ten, Twelve and Fifteen (and soon to be Twenty-Five), translates into an increase in the number of states (players) that will want to influence the foreign policy direction of the Union. The game theorist would thus predict that as the number of players swells, the more difficult it will be to identify common interests in that the number of potential opinions of what that common interest consists of augments. Moreover, there is the problem with 'free-riders' and the temptation for one or more player to defect from the common decision which also increases as new players are added. Thus, according such a *ceteris paribus* model, game theory would predict that each time the EU enlarges it will experience greater difficulties in acting coherently and producing common positions in the framework of the General Assembly, as well as in terms of the European foreign policy in particular. However, the empirical research undertaken for this article does not, at this time, corroborate this prediction.



Rather, one would have to turn to other theories to obtain a logical explanation for the voting behavior of the EU member states in the General Assembly. It is necessary to consider both structural and domestic level changes. During the Cold War and the bipolar order, world politics was predominantly characterized by a East-West split, which according to Voeten can be described schematically as "a bipolar continuum that roughly divided the world into three parts: the 'Eastern' and 'Western' blocs formed the extreme poles of the continuum and a group of 'nonaligned countries' formed the center."<sup>20</sup> With the end of the Cold War the voting alignments of the Assembly as a whole has changed and become more flexible, as the bipolar antagonisms has disappeared and the loyalties, incentives and/or threat of sanctions which had held each block and client states together for over forty years have been removed. The breakdown of the bipolar order has thus led to a situation in which states vote in a way that is less constrained by voting alliances (dealignment), however, at the same time one might infer that new voting loyalties and alignments are emerging (realignment). The disappearance of the bipolar confrontation has also allowed the General Assembly to take on some issues which were taboo during the superpower conflict (e.g. international security, global court of justice), the Assembly agenda has in other words experienced a growingly new dynamic and greater flexibility in the past decade. In this scenario it is possible to see the European Union as a more assertive and independent actor in the General Assembly, showing interest for social, economic and environmental issues related to underdevelopment of the Third World.

Thus, in Realist theoretical terms we can describe the collapse of the Soviet block as a basic shift in power arrangements — a systemic change —, in the sense that the end of the Cold War has affected the international distribution of power and the global hierarchy of prestige. According to systemic theory states respond to such a shift by adjusting their objectives, expectations and interaction with other states.<sup>21</sup> This, according to the Realists, explains the shift in the alignments of states' voting preferences in the UN General Assembly in the post-Cold War era, such as for example, that the European Union and the U.S. which during the chilliest part of the Cold War voted more homogeneously, now seem to be distancing themselves from one another and the European Union appears to have an independent policy agenda, even promoting issues which do not please the U.S. (environmental protection, family planning etc.). Moreover, Realist theory also points to that new, upcoming powers (ex. EU), which gain access to a power position in the international system as a consequence of the end of the bipolar order, will try to balance existing powers (U.S., China, Russia), expressed in a differentiated voting record in comparison to these great powers. According to this notion the UN may serve as a multiplier effect for the interests of the EU and may predict a more conflictive situation between EU and its former wartime ally the United States.

Liberal theory, in contrast, argues that changes in the international politics are predominantly a result of a shift in the domestic regime. They point to that as a consequence of the end of the Cold War and the removal of the bipolar overlay focused of nuclear arms etc. 'new' low-policy issues (economic, social etc.) are taking a greater role in domestic politics and, hence, in foreign policy. The convergence of positions among EU member states on policy-issues voted on in the UN General Assembly is thus a reflection the prominence of these socioeconomic issues, the latter which EC/EU members have, in general, always, even during the Cold War, been in agreement on. The convergence is thus due to the shift in the UN agenda away from controversial, divisive issues towards low-policy issues where the EU member states have an easier time to find a common position on.

## **CONCLUSION**

The member states of the European Union have in the last decade made a visible effort to increasingly coordinate themselves on international issues, and one of the venues where this has been notable is the UN General Assembly. This Working Paper has examined the actuation of the Fifteen in the General Assembly, and provided some indication of EU member states' capacity for coordination in an international forum. The end of the Cold War ushered in a noticeable increase in convergence in EU member states' voting behavior in the General Assembly. The greater cohesiveness between the EU member states can potentially be explained by the greater coordination in terms of the CFSP. However, factors such as that there

is a greater overall convergence in the General Assembly (illustrated by the decrease in number of resolutions adopted by vote) and the shift in UN agenda, away from nuclear arms or decolonization and towards issues of socioeconomic nature has also helped to increase the policy convergence of the Fifteen. The shift in the UN's issue agenda toward less polemic and sensitive issues, favoring a greater coherence among the EU member states, has especially been notable where Great Britain and France are concerned. These former great powers and source of the greatest number of disagreeing votes in the General Assembly, are thus increasingly falling in line with the EU voting 'mean.'

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\* **Elisabeth Johansson-Nogués** is a full-time researcher at the Institut Universitari d'Estudis Europeus and web-editor of the Observatory of Mediterranean Politics.

<sup>1</sup> "A Secure Europe in a Better World – the European Security Strategy", Brussels European Council, 12 December 2003

<sup>2</sup> Second Report on European Political Co-operation on Foreign Policy ("The Copenhagen Report") 23 July 1973.

<sup>3</sup> Patrick Keatinge "The Twelve, the United Nations, and Somalia: The Mirage of Global Intervention," in Regelsberger et. al. (ed.) *Foreign Policy of the European Union: From EPC to CFSP and Beyond*. London: Lynne Rienner, 1997: 276.

<sup>4</sup> Lindemann 1976; de Schoutheete 1986:210, as quoted in Maria Strömviik, "Fifteen Votes and One Voice? The CFSP and Changing Voting Alignments in the UN" *Stadsvetenskaplig Tidskrift* 101 (2) (1998): 182.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*, 183

<sup>6</sup> Single European Act, Title III.

<sup>7</sup> Keatinge, 277.

<sup>8</sup> Treaty on the European Union, Title V.

<sup>9</sup> Georgios Kostakos and Dimitri Bourantonis. "Testing CFSP at the UN: EU Voting at the General Assembly 1990-1997." *Peace and Security* 31 (June, 1999): 21

<sup>10</sup> The European Union does not, as of date, enjoy legal personality and can thus not be represented in an international organization. The comunitarian pillar (EC) perform in this case the official representation.

<sup>11</sup> For example, the Community is party to the Law of the Sea Convention and a member of the International Seabed Authority, the Community is a negotiator and a contracting party to international commodity agreements, the Commission is also a contracting party to many environmental conventions. Finally the EC has signed numerous cooperation agreements with a number of UN bodies such as the High Commission for Refugees and the World Food Program. <http://europa.eu.int/dg1a/un/index.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> Kostakos and Bourantonis, 22.

<sup>13</sup> However, this fact does not significantly skew the final results in that, for example, of the total votes in the period 1997-2002 (Sessions 52-56) approximately only 1.5% of these votes were affected by one or more EU countries' non-participation.

<sup>14</sup> The absence was reportedly due to a protracted strike by Greek diplomats in December 1996. Kostakos and Bourantonis, 24

<sup>15</sup> Miguel Marín-Bosch, "How nations vote in the General Assembly of the United Nations" *International Organization* 41 (4) (1987): 709.

<sup>16</sup> Strömviik, 185.

<sup>17</sup> Kostakos and Bourantonis, 23.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, 25.

<sup>19</sup> The EU majority vote here represents 100%, and thus the voting pattern of USSR-Russia and the United States are plotted as relative to the EU majority vote.

<sup>20</sup> Voeten, Erik, "Clashes in the Assembly," *International Organization* 54 (2) (Spring, 2000): 187.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*, 188.