Country or Leader?

Political Change and UN General Assembly Voting

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Abstract:

In this project we explore the relationship between leader change and relations between states. Voting in the United Nation's General Assembly is often used as a measure of political proximity between countries. We use UN voting coincidence to examine how changes in leadership affect relations. Specifically, we examine how political change affects a country's voting with the United States. Individual leaders develop reputations, where the United States (or other countries) can play leader-specific punishment strategies. In this paper we explore how leadership change affects UNGA voting. Using a novel feature of UN Voting, differences between "key" and "non-key" UN votes to the United States, we explore if political change is driven by preference change or by a changing external position. We find that while political change has little impact on voting on non-key issues (state preferences) we find that after leadership change, countries are more likely to vote in line with the United States on key UN votes.

Keywords: United Nations General Assembly voting, key votes

JEL codes: F51, F53, D78

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1. Introduction

Recent advances in international relation scholarship have focused on the role of leaders in shaping state behavior. Scholars have built rich theoretical models and detailed empirical tests of both what affects leadership survival and the impact of leadership survival on international relations. These works have provided important insights into how political institutions and leader-specific characteristics affect international relations.

Many of these studies have focused on how domestic politics shape the incentives facing leaders, shifting the pendulum from the international system dominating leader choices, to domestic politics having a substantial influence over foreign policy. A number of recent studies have integrated domestic and international factors that shape the policy choices of individual leaders. In this paper we complement this literature by evaluating how both domestic and international factors affect foreign policy. Specifically, we explore how leadership change influences voting in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

While the UNGA is generally considered a weak institution, it is a relatively unique environment where we can easily observe the relative policy positions of essentially every nation in the world in the same institutional setting.[1] Debates in the UN General Assembly can be the center of high politics or can also be used for politicians grandstanding, such as Chavez's infamous speech calling President Bush the devil.[2]

These UN General Assembly activities are more than amusing stories for academic research papers. Numerous scholars have pointed out that countries that are allied with the United States consistently vote with the United States in the General Assembly, while non-allied countries consistently find themselves at odds with the U.S. during Assembly votes.[3] This isn't simply a matter of similar preferences. As has been pointed out by the U.S. Department of State (1985), examining UNGA votes makes it possible "to make judgments about whose values and views are harmonious with our own, whose policies are consistently opposed to ours, and whose practices fall in between." A report from the same department in 2000 states "a country's behavior at the United Nations is always relevant to its bilateral relationship with the United States, a point the Secretary of State regularly makes in letters of instruction to new U.S. ambassadors" (quoted in Andersen, Harr and Tarp 2006). A recent paper from the Heritage Foundation argues that "A country's record in General Assembly non-consensus votes is a means of measuring its support for U.S. diplomatic priorities" and

[1] See Dixon (1981).
[2] "Chávez Calls Bush ,the Devil' in U.N. Speech." David Stout. *New York Times* Sept 20, 2006.
[3] See Kilby (2008) for a critical discussion.

goes on to discuss strategies of influencing UNGA votes (Schaefer and Kim 2008). As we highlight in the next few sections, the US often conditions foreign aid on UNGA voting.

Our key point is that that while many of the patterns in UN voting are quite clear, such as the obvious East-West divide in UN voting during the Cold War, the value of this measure is that a country's voting in the General Assembly is a comparable, cross-national measure of foreign policy alignment with the United States. In the data section of this paper we illustrate the utility of using this measure.

The UN General Assembly is an ideal environment for exploring how leadership change affects foreign policy positions. UN General Assembly voting consists of high profile votes and low profile votes. Numerous scholars have argued that the United States uses carrots (foreign aid) and sticks (threats) to influence voting on key General Assembly votes. While classifying key votes may seem subjective, we can utilize a classification from the US government. Since 1983 the U.S. State Department has classified votes as "key" votes for the United States.

Differentiating between these key and non-key votes allows for an identification of the impact of U.S. influence on a country's foreign policy. One set of votes are not subject to U.S. influence (non-key votes) while another set of votes can lead to repercussions for not voting in line with the United States.[4] Our expectation is that while non-key votes are sincere statements of preferences,[5] key-votes are the votes where we would expect countries to deviate from their own preferences in order to obtain or maintain U.S. support. Comparing movements in key and non-key votes allows us to account for changes of foreign polity preferences in both the absence and presence of U.S. pressure.

Our results point to the importance of individual leaders and international relations. We find that nations become more "friendly" with the United States in the wake of leadership change. This result provides evidence of the importance of leadership change, and is consistent with existing models of individual leader punishment strategies by McGillivray and Smith (2004).

2. Leaders and International Relations

While much of international relations scholarship has focused on the nation-state as the level of analysis, there is a resurgent interest in the role of individual leaders in international relations. One rich area of research is how international conflict affects the ability of leaders

[4] Anderson et al. (2006) argue that the non-key votes in the General Assembly are a measure of a country's "bliss point," or a similarity in preferences with the United States.

[5] Or at the very least, these are policy positions taken by politicians for domestic reasons, absent U.S. political pressure.

to survive in power. For example, Chiozza and Goemans (2004) challenge the theory that war is inefficient for states.[6] Chiozza and Goemans find that international conflict can actually increase leadership tenure under some conditions, making conflict a good option for leadership survival.[7] Bueno de Mesquita et al. (2003) provide a number of theoretical models of what affects leadership survival, and test how institutions that affect leadership survival affect policy decisions.[8]

Another area of research close to the topic of this paper is on the strategies used by leaders.[9] For example, McGillivray and Smith (2004) construct a model of leader specific punishment, where the leader of a country (say the United States) imposes sanctions on another country (e.g., Yugoslavia).[10] McGillivray and Smith argue that this punishment, while targeting a country, can be imposed until the leader is removed from power. Once a new leader emerges, sanctions are lifted. This leader-specific punishment gives citizens the incentives to replace leaders with tarnished international reputations, thus providing incentives for leaders to maintain good reputations in order to survive in office.[11]

Finally, a number of scholars have examined how leadership changes affect economic policy and macroeconomic outcomes. Using assassinations as a source of random leadership change, Jones and Olken (Forthcoming) find that leadership change can affect democratization and conflict. Jones and Olken (2005) estimate the impact of leader deaths on economic policy and outcomes. Leadership death is associated with shifts in growth rates and monetary policy. McGillivray and Smith (2004) find that leadership change in authoritarian regimes leads to a major decline in trade while leadership change in democratic regimes has little impact on trade.

[6] This theory claims that leaders in both states would have been better off with a negotiated agreement rather than a conflict.

[7] They argue that political institutions mediate the impact of international conflict on leadership survival. Chiozza and Choi (2003) argue that leaders form reputations, and these reputations affect the probability of future conflict. Wolford (2007) builds a model showing that individual leaders have private information on their level of resolve and how these leader-leader interactions affects international conflict.

[8] As one example, Smith and Vreeland (2003) find that IMF programs can help leaders stay in power.

[9] In this paper we do not focus on what individual attributes of leaders lead to differing behavior. See Horowitz et al. (2005) for a discussion of how leader age affects international conflict.

[10] McGillivray and Smith (2006) show that leader-specific punishment improves the credibly of threats. See also Guisinger and Smith (2002) for a model of individual reputations and international crisis.

[11] Even if citizens would prefer for the leader to renege on an international agreement, violate an international law, there is no way for the citizens to credibly promise to keep the leader in power. Once the leader has tarnished his or her own reputation by reneging on an agreement, citizens have the incentive to remove that leader.

One reason for these major policy changes is that individual leaders matter for policy.[12] Capabilities of leaders, such as the level of education of leaders, affect policy choices.[13] In the literature on central banking and monetary policy, leader attributes such as education (Göhlmann and Vaubel 2007), career ambitions (Adolph 2004), and cognitive complexity (Thies 2004) have been linked to better performance. This can be expanded beyond technocratic roles to more general political leadership. For example, Besley et al. (2005), using household survey data from India, find that the education of politicians is systematically linked to performance, specifically in limiting individual opportunism. In another example, Dreher at al. (Forthcoming) find that the educational and professional background of a head of government matters for the implementation of market-liberalizing reforms. They show that former entrepreneurs are significantly more reform oriented. Entrepreneurs belonging to a left-wing party are more successful in inducing reforms than a member of a right-wing party with the same previous profession. Former professional scientists also foster reforms, the more so, the longer they stay in office. Similarly, Mikosch and Somogyi (2008) find that political leaders with education in economics generate significantly lower budget deficits than those with education in law, e.g. This evidence leads a corresponding World Bank (2005: v) report to conclude "that more educated politicians are better" adding to "a growing appreciation among economists that education [of politicians] may be important because of its role in inculcating civic values."

In this paper we explain how leaders alter relations between states, focusing on how U.S. influence affects a country's foreign policy position focusing on voting behavior in the United Nations General Assembly. UNGA voting is often utilized as a measure for a country's proximity to the United States. Countries voting consistently with the U.S. in the General Assembly are considered strong allies, while countries voting against the U.S. are adversaries. In the next section we discuss using UNGA voting as a measure of political proximity, yet it is important to note that numerous influential studies have used UNGA voting.

A number of scholars have examined the costs and benefits of voting in line with the United States in the General Assembly. Numerous studies find that foreign aid flows influence UNGA voting (Kato 1969; Kegley and Hook 1991; Sexton and Decker 1992; Dreher, Nunnenkamp and Thiele 2008), where higher allocations of US foreign aid lead to

[12] This can also be due to different leaders representing different groups in society. For example, Pande (2003) shows that the reservation of political mandates for members of disadvantaged castes and tribes in India has increased targeted transfers to these groups.

[13] Other attributes can also affect performance. Washington (2006) finds that congressmen with daughters are substantially more likely to vote in-line with feminist views.

voting in line with the US in the General Assembly.[14] Another literature has explored how political relationships affect IMF and World Bank Support. Thacker (1999) was the first to test the hypothesis that conclusion of IMF programs depends on countries' voting behavior in the UN General Assembly. He employs two variables – one indicating a country's political agreement with the US, the other reflecting movement in political alignment. According to his results for the period 1985-94, political proximity has no statistically significant impact when serial correlation is taken into account. However, a movement to the US significantly increases the probability of receiving an IMF program. The results also show that the impact of a movement towards the US on the probability of obtaining IMF programs does not depend on the initial position. Other scholars have found that UN General Assembly voting is a significant predictor of IMF support (Oatley and Yackee 2004; Stone 2004; Barro and Lee 2005; Dreher and Jensen 2007) and World Bank funds (Andersen, Hansen and Markussen 2006).

3. Theory

These existing studies of UNGA voting have yet to explore how changes in leadership affect voting. We begin our analysis as a test of two broad competing theories. Realist theories of international relations focus on how states focus on national security within an anarchic international system.[15] Individual leaders are largely constrained within this system, where the structure of the international system largely determines the behavior of states. While this literature is too vast to review in this section, the core of most realist theories is that nation-states respond to changes in the structure of the international system, and individual leaders have very limited leeway to make policy.[16] Leadership changes, unless accompanied with changes in the structure of the international system, should have little impact on the foreign policy position of states.

Hypothesis 1: Leadership change will have no impact on UNGA key voting.

Alternatively, we focus on how leadership changes affects behavior of states. As outlined above, according to McGillivray and Smith (2004, 2008), individual leaders develop

[14] Although another set of papers finds no relationship between UN Voting and aid (Bernstein and Alpert 1971; Rai 1972; Wittkopf 1973; Lundborg 1998; and Wang 1999).
[15] See Gilpin (1981).
[16] Voeten (2000) discusses three hypotheses derived from realist scholarship, the stability hypothesis, structuralist hypothesis, and counterhegemonic bloc hypothesis. All three theories make predictions on the behavior of UNGA voting based on international factors.

reputations, where the United States (or other countries) can play leader specific punishment strategies. Their theory posits that the United States will play a cooperative strategy with a leader until the leader defects. After defection, the United States will punish the leader.

Thus, leadership change is related to the reputation of a leader. Leaders can choose to defect from agreements, renege on contracts, or otherwise take actions that will tarnish the reputation of the leader. McGillivray and Smith argue that a country, say the United States, can enact a strategy of punishing a country until this leader is removed from office. Leaders will be wary of harming their own reputations, limiting their activities, and forcing their removal from office if their reputation becomes tarnished.

McGillivray and Smith's theory provides a number of provocative insights into international relations. They find that individual leaders, even when facing popular pressures in society, will often choose to uphold international agreements. For example, a populist leader may choose to nationalize an investment, even thought this nationalization breaks a bilateral investment treaty. By engaging in this popular nationalization, the leader balances the domestic benefits of this nationalization against the reputation costs of reneging on an international agreement. While a popular nationalization is a way to boost domestic popularity, the leader also understands that the citizenry has the incentive to replace leaders with tarnished international reputations. Thus the leader pays some personal costs for developing a bad reputation, which can lead to leaders shunning popular policies that will have a reputation cost. As stated by McGillivray and Smith (2008, 11), " It is interesting to note that the leader, as agent of the citizens, can commit to cooperate under conditions that the principals themselves could not commit to cooperate under."

McGillvray and Smith's empirical work then focuses on how institutional features that affect leader replacement (such as some components of democratic institutions) affect international cooperation. While we find both the theory and empirics compelling, what is missing is a focus on actual leadership change, rather than the conditions that affect leadership change.

We argue that there are a number of observable implications from McGillivray and Smith. People leaders, in equilibrium, should protect their own reputations, specifically in systems where leaders can be easily replaced. Yet, we know that in reality leaders are often replaced and new leaders take the reins of foreign policy. This leadership change can be random, such as death of a leader, related to purely domestic factors (such as corruption scandals) or be directly related to the reputation of the leader.

The key insight from their model is that leaders removed from office are more likely to have tarnished reputations. In this context, leaders that are removed from office are likely to have voted against U.S. interests. New leaders have the incentives to protect their own reputations, in our context by cultivating a positive relationship with the United States. Thus we predict that successors are more likely to vote in line with the United States. The key observable implication is that we hypothesize an increase in voting coincidence with the United States after leadership change.

Hypothesis 2: Leadership change will lead to higher levels of voting coincidence on key votes with the US in the UNGA.

4. Data

In this paper we explore how leadership change affects voting in the United Nations General Assembly. In analyzing this question, we face several problems. First, we need to establish how to measure voting coincidence in the UNGA. There are several possibilities. Thacker (1999), among others, codes votes in agreement with the US as 1, votes in disagreement as 0, and abstentions or absences as 0.5.[17] Wittkopf (1973), Sexton and Decker (1992) and Barro and Lee (2005) employed the fraction of times a country votes the same as the country of interest (either both voting yes, both voting no, both voting abstentions, or both being absent); Kegley and Hoock (1991) simply discarded abstentions or absences.[18] In any case, the resulting numbers are then divided by the total number of votes in each year. We concentrate on the method proposed by Thacker (1999) for both theoretical and statistical reasons. The difference between the three approaches lies in the way they weigh abstentions or absences, giving it a weight of 0, 0.5 or 1 in case the reference country does vote. Of course, any of these weights is arbitrary, but we prefer not opting for a corner solution and hence stick to the definition of Thacker (1999) in which a weight of 0.5 is used. Furthermore, from a statistical point of view this produces a dependent variable with a nicely bell-shaped distribution (as opposed to the other two definitions where the tails of the distribution do become rather fat). Hence, it is less likely that our results will be driven by extreme observations.

[17] Similarly, Gartzke and Jo (2002) and Morey and Lai (2003) code voting coincidence between -1 and 1, with abstentions being in between compliance and non-compliance. Russett (1967) and Rai (1972) code each country either 2 (yes), 1 (abstain or absent), or 0 (negative). Focusing on abstentions might be important as donors might bribe governments not only to comply, but also to avoid non-compliance (Zimmermann 1993, Palmer et al. 2002).

[18] Yet an alternative method has been suggested by Brams and O'Leary (1970) and employed, e.g., by Wittkopf (1973). They subtract the expected agreement from actual agreement and divide by the former. Expected agreement is based on the actual distribution of votes on each General Assembly roll call vote.

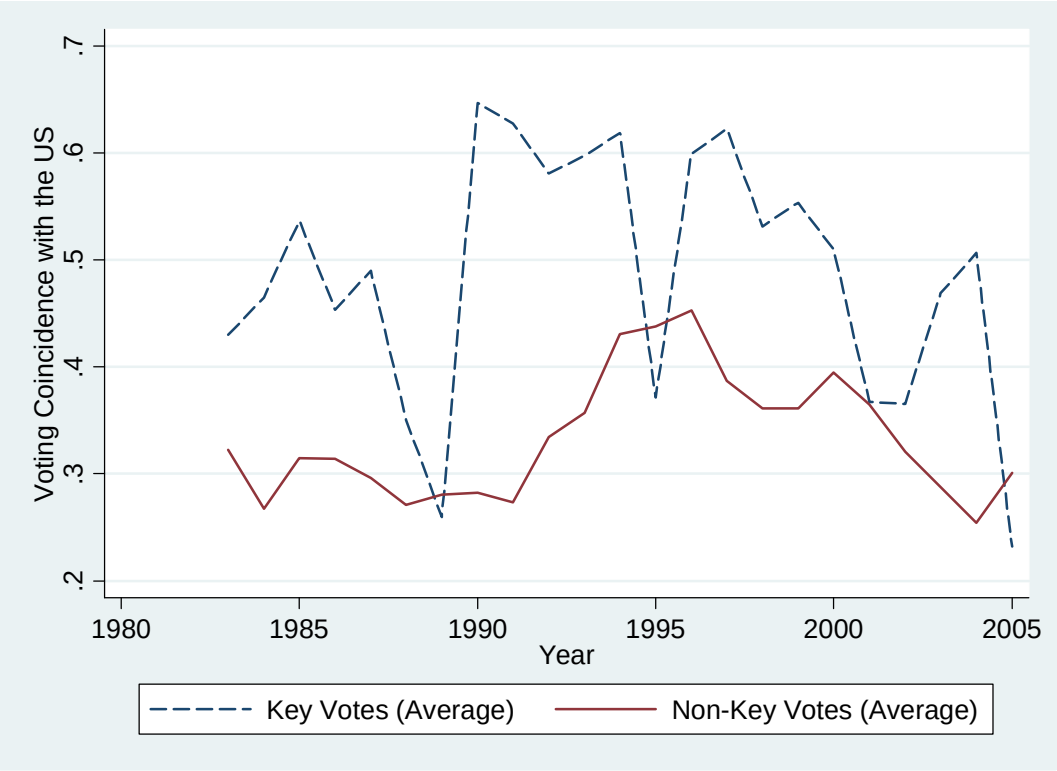
An important issue in previous studies has been the question which UNGA votes to include in either definition of voting coincidence. While the majority of the literature simply includes all votes, some researchers focus on "important" votes only. Clearly, the amount of effort a country puts on influencing others will depend on the importance of a vote. It has been pointed out in the introduction that not all votes in the General Assembly are likely to be equally important. Focusing the analysis on a sub-set of votes might thus be superior. However, inclusion of all votes has also been defended. Wittkopf (1973) states that none of the alternatives focusing on "important" votes only is preferable to the general approach. Wittkopf replicates his overall results including only those votes on which the US and the Soviet Union disagreed, finding that the results do not differ substantially from the analysis including all votes. Similarly, he replicates the previous analysis of Russett (1967), and also finds no substantial differences between "important" votes and all votes. In this study we explore both the relationship between key and non key votes, and how leadership change affects both types of voting.

What do patterns of UN voting look like across countries and over time? Rai (1972) and, more recently, Dreher and Sturm (2006) report of generally low coincidence between US and African as well as Middle Eastern or South Asian votes; coincidence between US and Latin American votes is much higher. Russett (1967), employing factor analysis, shows that regional clusters are most important for voting alignment. According to Kim and Russett (1996), today the North-South divide explains a huge share of variation in voting behavior, while it had been the East-West divide during the Cold War.[19]

These regional variations mask both important differences across countries, and more importantly, fail to capture the stability or change in UN Voting over time.[20] In the next set of figures we present data on UN voting for key and non-key votes and compare this to the average votes of the n-1 other countries. What is especially striking is that although our measure of voting with the U.S. varies within a country over time, most countries stay either consistently above or below the world average.

[19] To the contrary, Voeten (2000) finds that the position of countries still corresponds more closely to their Cold War East-West dimension than to the North-South dimension.
[20] Voeten (2000) finds that post 1996 the United States became increasingly isolated in the UNGA over time.

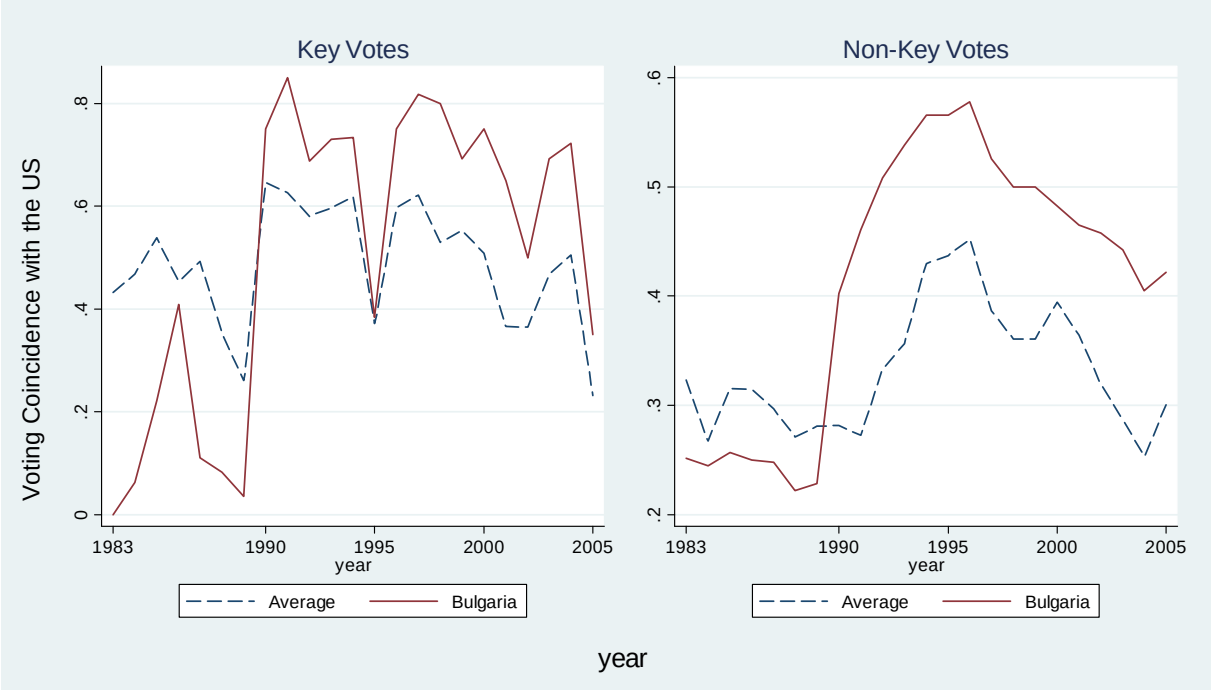
Figure 1: Average Voting with the US on Key and Non-Key UNGA Votes



In Figure 1 we present world averages on voting with the United States on key votes and non-key votes. While there is considerable volatility over time, it is interesting to note that countries are on average more likely to vote with the US on key votes than non-key votes. This could be evidence for coercion or simply that issues important to the United States are more likely to have shared positions across countries.

In the next set of figures we present a few representative countries to illustrate the usefulness of examining changes in UN voting. The first set of figures presents a representative former Warsaw Pact country, Bulgaria. The left panel presents the world average of UNGA voting coincidence on key votes with the U.S. (excluding Bulgaria), and Bulgaria's coincidence with the U.S. As one might expect, Bulgaria consistently voted against the US on key votes prior to the end of the Cold War, and then flipped into one of the strongest supporters of US interests in the UNGA. This is the typical pattern for many of the countries in Eastern and Central Europe, while the countries of the Former Soviet Union display a much more complex pattern.

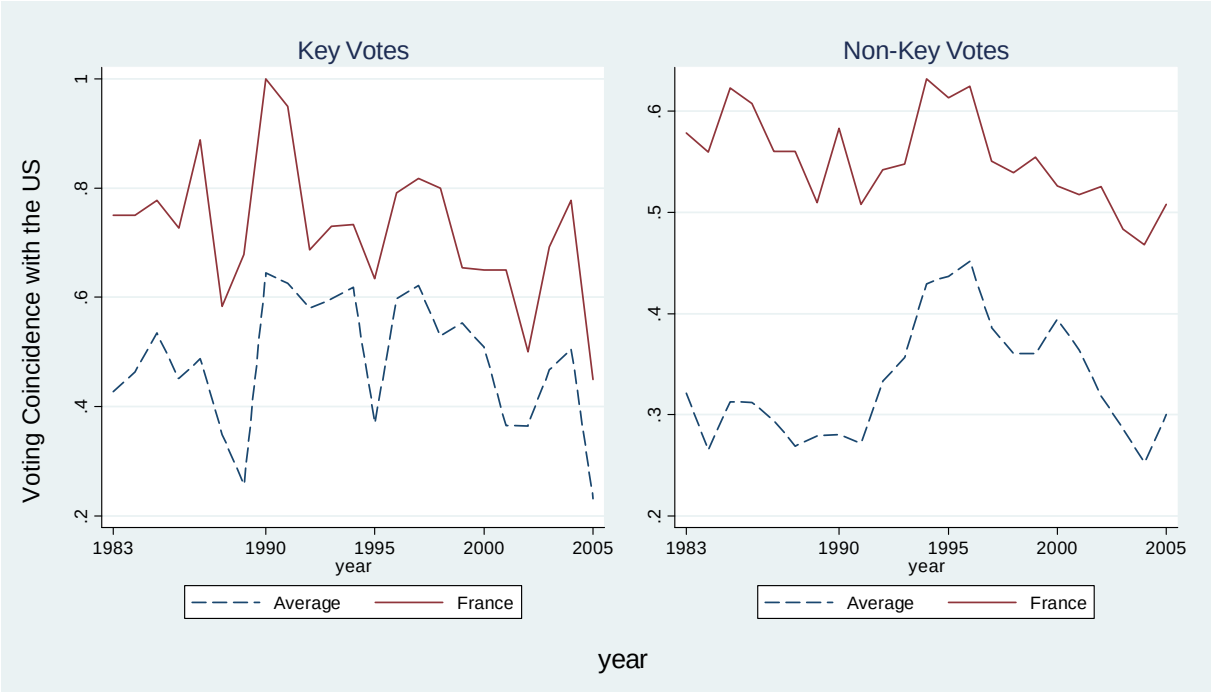
Figure 2: UNGA Voting with the U.S., Bulgaria vs. World Average



The right panel of figure 2 presents a similar graph focusing on non-key votes. While Bulgaria has shifted in both key and non-key votes, it is clear that the difference between these positions has changed markedly since the Cold War.

The countries that are less susceptible to US influence, yet share many of the same preferences are the countries in Western Europe. One clear example is that of France. In Figure 3 we present France's UN voting pattern on key and, respectively, non-key issues relative to the world average.

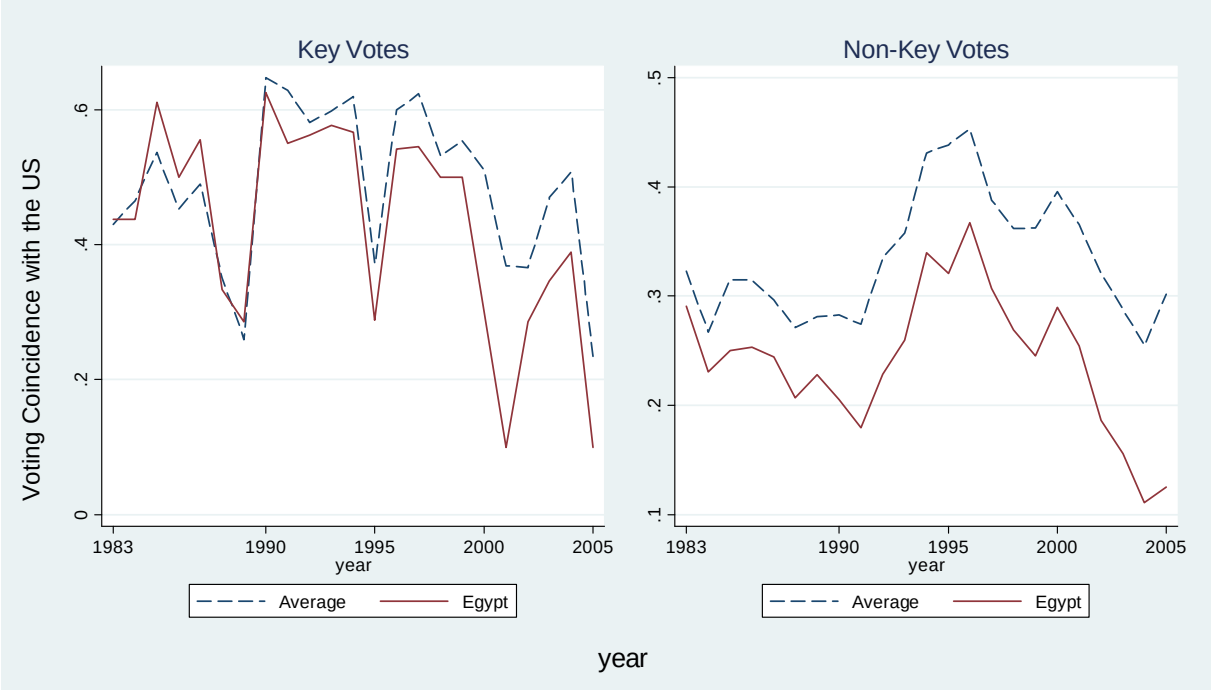
Figure 3: UNGA Voting with the U.S., France vs. World Average



As evidenced in Figure 3, while voting coincidence with the US has declined over time, France remains a consistent ally of the U.S., consistently voting with the U.S. on key issues more than the world average. France's position on non-key issues is generally more supportive than the world average either, although the levels of support are below that of voting on key issues.

In the final figure we present Egypt's UNGA voting (Figure 4). Egypt presents an interesting case, where post Camp David Accord Egypt has become a major recipient of US foreign aid in exchange for foreign policy concessions, specifically on Israel. While Egypt is only slightly below the world average on UNGA voting coincidence with the US on key votes, voting clearly differs from the US on non-key votes. This is an illustrative example of how US pressure can affect a country's foreign policy position.

Figure 4: UNGA Voting with the U.S., Egypt vs. World Average



These graphs illustrate how the UNGA tracks foreign policy positions of countries. The next section tests our hypotheses. Specifically, we address whether leadership change affects UNGA voting.

5. Analysis

One of the main challenges in empirical analysis when there is no established benchmark is coming up with a reliable model. We therefore opted to follow the robustness analysis in Dreher and Sturm (2006). Dreher and Sturm test for the influence of a substantial number of variables broadly related to four dimensions of influence on UNGA voting: (1) Cultural and political proximity between donor and recipient country, (2) foreign support, (3) trade flows and foreign direct investment (FDI), and (4) foreign aid. As they argue, cultural and political proximity likely increases voting coincidence, while countries depending on foreign support should be more likely to vote in line with the G7 countries. Trade flows and FDI might either increase or decrease the probability that a country votes in line with its partner country, as these flows might represent economic links, on the positive side, or be perceived as foreign intrusion, on the negative side. Bilateral foreign aid, or changes in aid, arguably increases the probability that a recipient country votes in line with the donor.

Dreher and Sturm (2006) test for the robustness of these variables employing various methods, including Extreme Bounds Analysis. According to their results for the U.S., UN

General Assembly voting in line with the U.S. is higher, when the respective country's government has the same political color (i.e., both left or both right), at the one percent level of significance. Voting coincidence decreases with corruption, national capability, GDP per capita, GDP growth and higher imports from the U.S. to the respective country (in percent of recipient GDP), all at the one percent level of significance. We do omit the indicator of national capability, as it reduces our sample by more than two thirds.[21]

The resulting regression is a pooled time-series cross-section analysis (with yearly data). The analysis covers the time period 1983-2005 and extends to a maximum of 189 countries, limited by the availability of data on key votes. Since some of the data are not available for all countries or years, the panel data are unbalanced and the number of observations depends on the choice of explanatory variables. The hausman test clearly rejects a random effects specification, thus we include a dummy for each country. We estimated all models with robust standard errors and country cluster. We also add the lagged dependent variable (which is highly significant in all regressions).

Insert Table 1

Column 1 of Table 1 replicates the results of Dreher and Sturm (2006), including the lagged dependent variable. As can be seen, UN General Assembly voting with the U.S. rises with the absence of corruption and lower GDP per capita, in line with Dreher and Sturm. However, the government's political color, GDP growth and US imports have no significant effect on General Assembly voting. As Dreher and Sturm focus on all votes rather than key votes, the difference in results is not surprising.

Column 2 adds our main variable of interest, a dummy variable for leadership changes taken from the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions. Our findings suggest that leadership change is indeed associated with an increase in voting with the United States on key UN votes, thus rejecting Hypothesis 1 and is consistent with Hypothesis 2.

Column 3 tests for the robustness of this result to the exclusion of variables that are not significant at the ten percent level at least. While the t-statistic of the coefficient of leader

[21] GDP per capita and GDP growth are taken from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (2007); political leaning is taken from Beck et al. (2001); the index of corruption is provided by the International Country Risk Guide (ICRG); US imports are derived from the OECD's Statistical Compendium. The composite indicator of national capability employed in Dreher and Sturm (2006) is a measure of power based upon six indicators (based on Singer et al. 1972): military expenditure, military personnel, energy consumption, iron and steel production, urban population, and total population. Note that the indicator is not significant at conventional levels when included to our regressions.

changes declines somewhat (and the number of observations increases by more than 200), it is still significant at the ten percent level.

In column 4 we restrict the sample to the post-Cold War period. Arguably, and in line with the descriptive evidence for selected countries above, our results might be driven by Cold War politics. However, according to the results, UNGA voting in line with the U.S. remains significantly more likely following leader changes in the post-Cold War period, at the five percent level of significance.

A potential problem with these results is that the within groups estimator is biased and inconsistent in the presence of a lagged dependent variable in a short panel (Nickell 1981). In column 5 we take account of this potential bias and employ the system GMM estimator as suggested by Arellano and Bond (1991), Arellano and Bover (1995) and Blundell and Bond (1998). The dynamic panel GMM estimator exploits an assumption about the initial conditions to obtain moment conditions that remain informative even for persistent data. Results are based on the two-step estimator implemented by Roodman (2005) in Stata, including Windmeijer's (2005) finite sample correction. We apply the Sargan-Hansen test on the validity of the instruments used (amounting to a test for the exogeneity of the covariates) and the Arellano-Bond test of second order autocorrelation, which must be absent from the data in order for the estimator to be consistent. We follow Roodman (2006) and include time dummies in the regression. In order to minimize the number of instruments in the regressions we do not use lags beyond lag length four.[22]

Column 5 shows that our results are not affected by the choice of estimator. While the Sargan-Hansen test and the Arellano-Bond do clearly not reject the specification at conventional levels of significance, the impact of leader changes remains significant at the ten percent level, with a positive coefficient. Surprisingly, voting coincidence becomes more, rather then less likely with higher per capita GDP, according to the GMM specification.

Insert Table 2

In Table 2 we present the same set of regressions, yet this time we focus on voting on non-key votes. As outlined in the introduction, we expect UNGA voting on non-key votes to reflect domestic policy preferences. While these might arguably shift with leadership changes, such shifts will not be related to the punishment mechanism outlined above. As is evident, from the table while our models are good predictors of non-key votes, leadership change has

[22] It is necessary to limit the number of instruments because the power of the Sargan-Hansen test is low when many instruments are used (see Bowsher 2002).

no impact on voting with the United States on non-key votes according to any of these specifications.

Insert Table 3

In our final set of regressions we examine the robustness of leadership change on UN voting on key-votes, focusing on the consistent GMM estimator. In column 1 we include the average UN voting for the n-1 other countries. While the average level of voting for the US influences an individual country's UN voting, leadership changes still increases a country's voting with the US. In column 2 we include a country's voting on non-key issues as an independent variable, thus proxying for a country's preferences. We omit the lagged dependent variable from this specification, in order to avoid the complex dynamics associated with past correlations between these variables. The dummy for leadership change is significant at the one percent level according to these estimates. Note, however, that the Arellano-Bond test rejects the hypothesis of no second-order autocorrelation, casting doubts on the reliability of the estimates.

In columns 3 and 4 we test for changes in the partisanship and the level of democracy. Partisanship is coded from the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions where changes from right or center executives to leftist executives is coded as a 1, changes from left government to right or center government as -1, and all other changes (or lack of leader changes) as zero. The level of democracy is the one year change in the Polity regime score. Liberal scholarship focuses on the role of domestic politics on international relations. One specific contribution is the democratic peace literature where the form of government, specifically democracy, can lead to higher levels of cooperation across governments through the absence of war or increased commerce.[23] Whether this is due to democracies having similar interests, or institutional features that affect state behavior, we hypothesize that democratic regimes are more likely to vote in line with the US.

In Model 11 we show that leftist regimes are associated with decreases in voting with the US on key UN votes and that increases in democracy are associated with increases in voting with the United States. In both cases, our overall measure of leadership change is again associated with increases in voting with the US.

The final column of Table 3 replaces the dummy for leadership with the number of years a country's chief executive has been in power in a particular year, again taken from the World Bank's Database of Political Institutions. As we argue above, we expect leaders with tarnished reputations will be replaced by new leaders with untarnished reputations. We

[23] See Oneal and Russett (1999) for an examination of democracy and peace. See Gartzke (2000) for an overview and an alternative explanation for the democratic peace that focuses on shared preferences.

expect that leaders that have already reneged (voted against the US) have little incentive to vote in line with the US, while new leaders have the incentive to vote in line with the US. Thus while some "old" leaders may continue to cooperate with the United States, all new leaders have the incentive to protect their reputation. Our results show that UNGA voting coincidence decreases with the number of years a politician stays in office, at the one percent level of significance.

6. Conclusion

In this paper we examine the relationship between leadership changes and voting in the UN General Assembly. Our empirical analysis focuses on how voting with the United States on key issues is influenced by changes in individual leaders. We find that a host of factors influence UN voting, yet we find that new leaders vote more consistently with the United States than existing leaders. These findings have important implications for how individual leaders affect relations between states.

Our results build on recent work on the role of leaders in international relations. Individual leaders, attempting to survive in office, have incentives to cater to domestic interest groups and to protect their own international reputations. While all leaders share these incentives, we argue that leadership change is likely to lead to closer alignment with the United States. We use voting in the United Nations General Assembly on key votes as a proxy for this relationship, but we believe that these are generalizable to other arenas.

In future work we will address the mechanisms that influence UNGA voting, most prominently foreign aid. While the existing literature has found a strong relationship between UNGA voting coincidence with the US and US foreign aid, we believe that by bringing in leader specific theories and empirics we can contribute to this literature. Specifically, we expect that US foreign aid allocations will be conditioned on the reputation of the individual leaders. Thus leaders that deviate from the US in the UNGA will be punished by the US until the leader is replaced. New leaders then will received generous allocations of foreign aid until the leader deviates from the US UNGA position. Thus rather than US aid being conditional on a *country's* voting record in the UNGA, we believe that US aid should be conditional on a *leader's* voting record in the UNGA. We leave this for future research.

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Table 1: Leadership Change and UN Key Votes, 1984-2005

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
UN vote (t-1)	0.322	0.320	0.304	-0.188	0.674
	(10.90)***	(10.97)***	(10.81)***	(5.73)***	(24.02)***
Political color inline	0.005	0.005			
	(0.73)	(0.74)			
Abscence of Corruption	0.008	0.008	0.014	0.003	0.005
	(3.10)***	(3.10)***	(5.32)***	(0.32)	(2.41)**
GDP p.c. (t-1)	-0.038	-0.036	-0.095	-0.092	0.012
	(1.96)*	(1.86)*	(3.59)***	(1.10)	(3.36)***
GDP growth	-0.000	-0.000			
	(0.64)	(0.58)			
US imports	0.000	0.000			
	(1.05)	(0.85)			
Leader Change		0.015	0.014	0.043	0.009
		(1.92)*	(1.70)*	(2.16)**	(1.73)*
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	GMM
Sample	all	all	all	>1989	all
Number of countries	126	126	131	111	131
Number of observations	2291	2291	2536	718	2536
R-squared	0.13	0.13	0.13	0.03	
Arellano-Bond-Test (p-level)					0.25
Sargan-Hansen Test (p-level)					0.99

Note: Dummy for each country included; robust (clustered) t statistics in parentheses; * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 2: Leadership Change and UN Non-Key Votes, 1984-2005

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
UN vote (t-1)	0.684	0.684	0.686	0.036	0.951
	(27.29)***	(27.27)***	(31.57)***	(0.44)	(29.60)***
Political color inline	0.005	0.005			
	(1.53)	(1.54)			
Abscence of Corruption	0.006	0.006	0.007	0.004	-0.000
	(6.68)***	(6.69)***	(7.11)***	(1.23)	(0.04)
GDP p.c. (t-1)	-0.027	-0.027	-0.020	-0.038	0.002
	(4.19)***	(4.18)***	(3.69)***	(2.15)**	(1.42)
GDP growth	-0.001	-0.001			
	(3.19)***	(3.16)***			
US imports	0.000	0.000			
	(1.98)*	(1.91)*			
Leader Change		0.003	0.002	0.009	-0.001
		(1.10)	(0.78)	(1.51)	(0.23)
Method	OLS	OLS	OLS	OLS	GMM
Sample	all	all	all	>1989	all
Number of countries	126	126	131	111	131
Number of observations	2301	2301	2547	718	2547
R-squared	0.50	0.50	0.52	0.02	
Arellano-Bond-Test (p-level)					0.07
Sargan-Hansen Test (p-level)					0.96

Note: Dummy for each country included; robust (clustered) t statistics in parentheses; * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%

Table 3: Leadership Change and UN Key Votes, tests for robustness, 1984-2005, GMM

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
UN vote (t-1)	0.631		0.672	0.708	0.650
	(22.07)***		(21.48)***	(20.75)***	(18.45)***
Abscence of Corruption	0.007	0.007	0.006	0.002	0.004
	(3.06)***	(1.87)*	(2.85)***	(1.17)	(1.83)*
GDP p.c. (t-1)	0.013	0.018	0.012	0.013	0.014
	(3.29)***	(4.36)***	(3.43)***	(3.84)***	(3.93)***
Leader Change	0.010	0.012	0.009	0.011	
	(1.81)*	(2.79)***	(1.76)*	(1.75)*	
Years in Office					-0.002
					(3.10)***
Average UN vote	-0.040				
	(0.84)				
Non-Key Voting		0.782			
		(10.40)***			
Change to left government			-0.003		
			(0.39)		
Polity Change				0.002	
				(1.32)	
Number of countries	131	131	131	123	130
Number of observations	2536	2548	2536	2350	2526
Arellano-Bond-Test (p-level)	0.31	0.00	0.25	0.11	0.28
Sargan-Hansen Test (p-level)	1.00	0.99	0.98	1.00	0.99

Note: Dummy for each year included; t statistics in parentheses; * significant at 10%; ** significant at 5%; *** significant at 1%