

**International Political
Alignment during the Trump
Presidency: Voting at the
UN General Assembly**

Martin Mosler, Niklas Potrafke

Impressum:

CESifo Working Papers

ISSN 2364-1428 (electronic version)

Publisher and distributor: Munich Society for the Promotion of Economic Research - CESifo GmbH

The international platform of Ludwigs-Maximilians University's Center for Economic Studies and the ifo Institute

Poschingerstr. 5, 81679 Munich, Germany

Telephone +49 (0)89 2180-2740, Telefax +49 (0)89 2180-17845, email office@cesifo.de

Editor: Clemens Fuest

www.cesifo-group.org/wp

An electronic version of the paper may be downloaded

- from the SSRN website: www.SSRN.com
- from the RePEc website: www.RePEc.org
- from the CESifo website: www.CESifo-group.org/wp

International Political Alignment During the Trump Presidency: Voting at the UN General Assembly

Abstract

We examine voting behavior of Western allied countries in line with the United States over the period 1949 until 2019. Descriptive statistics show that voting in line with the United States on resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) was on average 7.2 percentage points lower under Donald Trump than under the preceding United States presidents. The policy shift is especially pronounced for resolutions dealing with the Middle East. The decline in common UNGA voting behavior is significant for the resolution agreement rate and the absolute difference of ideal points. The results suggest that the alienation of Western allies is not driven by ideological distance based on a classical leftwing-rightwing government ideology scale.

JEL-Codes: F510, F530, D720, D780, C230.

Keywords: Donald Trump, voting alignment, UNGA, political alliances.

Martin Mosler
ifo Institute – Leibniz Institute for
Economic Research
at the University of Munich
Poschingerstrasse 5
Germany – 81679 Munich
mosler@ifo.de

Niklas Potrafke
ifo Institute – Leibniz Institute for
Economic Research
at the University of Munich
Poschingerstrasse 5
Germany – 81679 Munich
potrafke@ifo.de

January 2020

This paper has been accepted for publication in *International Interactions*.

We would like to thank Arye Hillman, Jeff Pickering and three anonymous referees for their helpful comments.

1. Introduction

Prime examples of political alliances have long been the Western World and countries that belonged to the Warsaw Pact. Since the end of the Cold War, such alliances seemed to enjoy less importance. The relationship between Western countries and the United States deteriorated, however, since early-2017. The president of the United States Donald Trump has intimidated allied countries. For example, Trump called the Canadian prime minister “very dishonest and weak” when he left the G7-meeting in 2018 (Trump 2018a) and criticized European NATO members for spending too little on military expenditure (Trump 2018b; 2018c). The strategic US foreign policy relative to Western partners, however, has also drastically shifted since Donald Trump took office.² The United States initiated a trade war putting tariffs on goods traded with other OECD countries (WTO 2019), backed out of the Iran nuclear deal prompting harsh criticism by other G7 member states (*The Economist* on July 22, 2019), or moved its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem (Hirschfeld-Davis 2018) against the condemnation of most of the UN WEOG voting group. We examine the extent to which political alignment between the United States and allied Western countries is affected by changes of the substance of the United States foreign policy.³

A measure for political alignment is voting behavior in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), where countries are politically aligned through common voting patterns on resolutions. Previous studies measured political alignment by the share of (dis)agreeing on resolutions in the UNGA, that is two countries voting with either yes, no or abstain (see, e.g., Dreher and Jensen [2013]), or by estimating dynamic state preferences based on UNGA voting data (Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten 2017; Bailey and Voeten 2018). Determinants and

² Domestic policy in the United States has also changed since Donald Trump took office. For example, Donald Trump influenced the domestic electoral environment with his polarizing focus on national-, partisan- and president-centered topics (Jacobson 2019), and high-ranking public servants have less experience in government and policy drafting under Trump than under previous presidents of the United States (King and Riddlesperger 2018).

³ On how national economic conditions influence foreign policy rhetoric of presidents of the United States see Carter (2019).

consequences of voting in line with United States at the UNGA are a well-discussed topic in political economy studies. For example, scholars show that the United States used foreign aid to buy votes in the UNGA (Kegley and Hook 1991; Kim and Russett 1996; Dreher, Nunnenkamp, and Thiele 2008; Allen and Flynn 2018; Woo and Chung 2018; Adhikari 2019a, 2019b)⁴ and had a higher cooperation in intelligence service operations with countries that voted more in line with the United States on human rights issues (Cordell 2019). Developing countries were also more likely to vote in line with the United States in the UNGA when they received loans from United States-led regional development banks (Obydenkova and Vieira 2019). Countries got a more positive review from the UN's Committee against Torture when they voted in line with the United States in the UNGA (Kahn-Nisser 2019).

We examine the voting behavior of Western countries on resolutions in the United Nations General Assembly in line with the United States. The data set includes resolutions over the period 1949 until 2019. Descriptive statistics show that voting in line with the United States was on average 7.2 percentage points lower under Donald Trump than under previous presidents of the United States. The results suggest that the declining voting alignment between the United States and Western allies was not driven by the ideological distance based on a classical leftwing-rightwing government ideology scale. Rather, the United States has changed foreign policy, especially on topics related to the Middle East.

2. Empirical analysis

We use UNGA voting data prepared by Voeten (2019) for the period 1949 until 2018. Because Voeten's database does not yet include data on UNGA voting later than 2018, we self-compile UNGA vote outcomes at the delegation-resolution-level until August 2019 using the United Nations Digital Library (2019). To measure political affinity, we follow related empirical

⁴ On how aid is used to win a temporary seat in the UN Security Council see, for example, Reinsberg (2019).

studies (Thacker 1999; Dreher and Sturm 2012) and use the vote agreement rate between a country and the United States, with one if both countries vote the same, weak deviations⁵ with 0.5, and strong deviations⁶ with zero. Our extended sample includes all 4911 resolutions in the UNGA since 1949 on which the United States voted.⁷ The vote agreement rate serves well for descriptive purposes. It is sensitive, however, to the agenda of resolution topics and may pick up the “noise of the zeitgeist” rather than actual shifts in foreign policy preferences. To address this issue, we also consider the absolute difference in ideal points between the United States and allied countries until 2018 according to Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten (2017) in our empirical model. Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten (2017) use UNGA resolutions that were identical across years to approximate dynamic state preferences relative to a US-led liberal order. Ideal points are thus well-suited for intertemporal comparisons.

2.1 Vote agreement rates under presidents of the United States

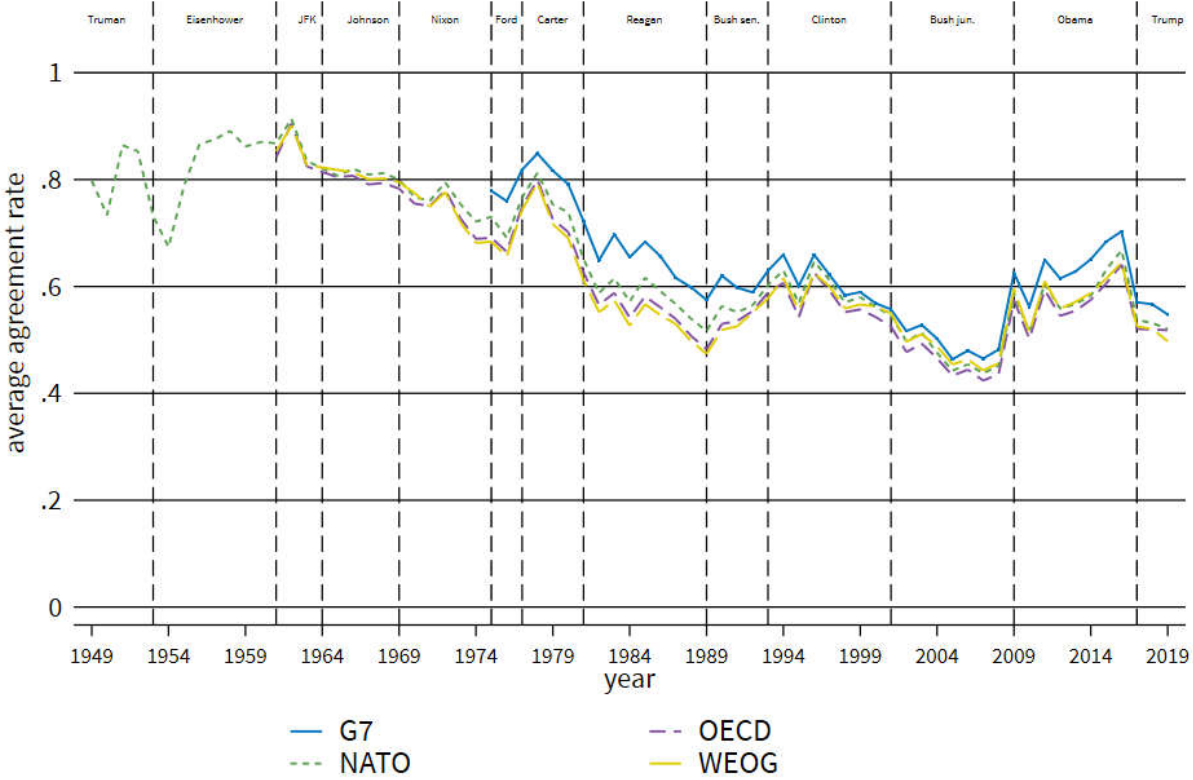
Figure 1 shows how often the G7, NATO, OECD and UN WEOG country groups voted in line with the United States in the UNGA. Concordant voting between the United States and its partners in the UNGA decreased over the last decades. In the 1960s during the presidencies of John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson, the agreement rate was on average above eighty-five percent. The UNGA voting agreement rates of Western country groups decreased on average by around ten percentage points during the 1970s and another twenty percentage points by 1990.

⁵ We define weak deviations as votes in which one nation voted "yes" or "no", while the other nation to be compared to voted "abstain".

⁶ Under strong deviations, we define votes in which one nation voted "yes" or "no", while the other nation to be compared to voted "no" or "yes".

⁷ We do not consider votes on either paragraphs or amendments.

Figure 1. Average agreement rate per year between the United States and Western countries during votes in the United Nations General Assembly, all resolutions



Note: The unweighted average for UNGA resolutions per year across all countries of each country group without the United States is displayed. Source: Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019), own calculations

The UNGA voting agreement rate has decreased since Donald Trump became president of the United States (see Table 1). Since Donald Trump took office in January 2017 until August 2019, the United States has voted on 197 resolutions. Overall, the voting agreement rate of Western countries in the UNGA with the United States since January 2017 was only between 52.0 percent (OECD member states) and 56.8 percent (G7 countries). Compared with the average of all votes before Trump took office, the consensus rate between Western countries and the United States decreased by 7.2 percentage points. The weakest decline is observed among the OECD countries (-6.7 percentage points), while the agreement rate with NATO member states had the strongest decrease (-7.9 percentage points).

We examine votes in the UNGA that took place only in the first two years of a United States presidency to determine whether the declined UNGA voting agreement rates under Donald Trump are based on becoming acquainted with each other or whether the United States and Western allies have politically steered away from each other (Table 1).

Table 1. Average agreement rate between the United States and Western countries during votes in the United Nations General Assembly, all resolutions and resolutions during first two years of a United States presidency between April 1949 and December 2016 before Trump and between January 2017 and August 2019 since Trump

	all UNGA resolutions before Trump's presidency	all UNGA resolutions during the 1 st and 2 nd year of a United States presidency before Trump	all UNGA resolutions since Trump's presidency
G7	64.0 percent N = 22,728	66.6 percent N = 6,840	56.8 percent N = 1,179
OECD	58.7 percent N = 106,546	61.3 percent N = 31,505	52.0 percent N = 6,763
NATO	61.3 percent N = 78,832	63.5 percent N = 22,178	53.4 percent N = 5,489
WEOG	59.2 percent N = 104,767	61.9 percent N = 32,006	52.2 percent N = 5,481

Note: The unweighted average for UNGA resolutions per year across all countries of each country group without the United States is displayed.
Source: Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019), own calculations

The differences between Trump and other presidents of the United States are even more pronounced for the first two years of a presidency. Newly elected presidents of the United States enjoyed much higher agreement rates with Western partners than Trump. On average, the agreement rate of all Western countries during Trump's first two years of presidency was 9.5

percentage points lower than the average agreement rate in the first two years of the preceding presidents of the United States for all resolutions. The agreement rates were lower by 9.3 percentage points (OECD countries) and up to 10.1 percentage points (NATO member states) for the first two years of an United States presidency.

Politicians are often election-motivated. Donald Trump may therefore want to gratify his constituency rather than the international community. If this is true, lower vote agreement rates since Trump took office would be based on re-election considerations during the president’s first term. Previous agreement rates in the first and second presidential terms do not suggest, however, that presidents of the United States enjoyed higher political alignment in their second than their first presidential term (Table 2).

Table 2. Average agreement rate between the United States and Western countries during votes in the United Nations General Assembly, resolutions during the first and second term of presidents of the United States before Trump and all resolutions since Trump

	all UNGA resolutions during the first term of a president of the United States before Trump’s presidency	<i>difference to Donald Trump</i>	all UNGA resolutions during the second term of a president of the United States before Trump’s presidency
G7	66.5 percent N = 13,926	+ 9.7 percentage points	60.0 percent N = 8,802
OECD	60.8 percent N = 63,566	+ 8.8 percentage points	55.6 percent N = 42,980
NATO	63.0 percent N = 44,904	+ 9.6 percentage points	59.0 percent N = 33,928
WEOG	61.2 percent N = 63,614	+ 9.0 percentage points	56.2 percent N = 41,153

Note: The unweighted average for UNGA resolutions per year across all countries of each country group without the United States is displayed. Source: Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019), own calculations

Vote agreement rates between the United States and Western allies were higher during the first than the second presidential term before Donald Trump took office. The largest decrease between presidential terms is observed among G7 partners (6.5 percentage points), while the difference for NATO member countries is 4.0 percentage points. Former presidents of the United States have seemed to seek recognition abroad during their first term, but became less restrained by international vote alignments in their second term. Overall, agreement rates during Donald Trump’s first term as president of the United States are even lower than the average of all preceding presidents of the United States in their first or second term.

Since the 2000s, an intriguing observation is that the differences in the UNGA voting between the United States and Western countries were smaller during Barack Obama’s presidency, but greater during the George W. Bush administration (Table 3).

Table 3. Average agreement rate between the United States and Western countries during votes in the United Nations General Assembly, all resolutions for selected presidents of the United States

	George W. Bush	<i>difference to Donald Trump</i>	Barack Obama	<i>difference to Donald Trump</i>
G7	49.8 percent N = 3,686	- 7.0 percentage points	64.2 percent N = 3,398	+ 7.4 percentage points
OECD	46.1 percent N = 17,710	- 5.9 percentage points	57.6 percent N = 18,428	+ 5.6 percentage points
NATO	47.1 percent N = 13,789	- 6.3 percentage points	59.1 percent N = 15,253	+ 5.7 percentage points
WEOG	48.1 percent N = 17,041	- 4.1 percentage points	58.8 percent N = 15,805	+ 6.6 percentage points

Note: The unweighted average for UNGA resolutions per year across all countries of each country group without the United States is displayed. Source: Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019), own calculations

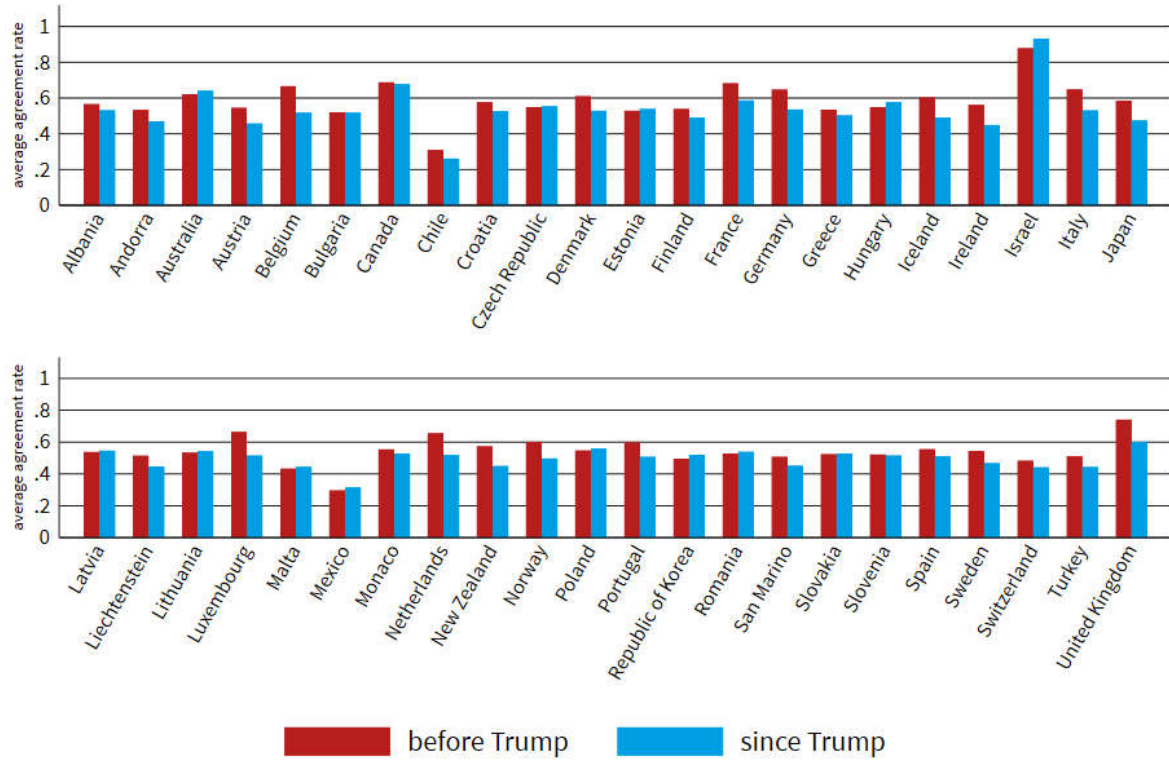
The voting agreement rate with the Western partners in the UNGA under Donald Trump is 4.1 (WEOG country group) to 7.0 percentage points (G7 countries) higher than under George W.

Bush. It is conceivable that the lower agreement rate under President George W. Bush is based on his controversial foreign policy decisions. For example, George W. Bush did not implement the Kyoto Protocol (Drozdiak and Pianin 2001), withdrew from the Antiballistic Missile Treaty (King 2002) and prioritized the United States' hegemonic supremacy over multilateral agreements within the framework of the National Security Strategy (Jervis 2003). Most importantly, however, George W. Bush declared the War on Terror, which included inter alia a large-scale military engagement in Iraq. Johnstone (2004) proposes that the United States-led Iraq War was perceived as a major breach of the prevailing normative and institutional framework at the United Nations with which most member states did not acquiesce, and thus damaged foreign relations between the United States and other UN members.

The voting agreement rate in the UNGA during the Trump administration is smaller than under former president of the United States Barack Obama. Voting alignments between the United States and its Western allies have changed since 2017. The agreement rates since Donald Trump took office compared to Obama's presidency decreased by 5.6 (OECD) to 7.4 percentage points (G7). Under President Obama, the National Security Strategy was reframed to emphasize multilateralism and global engagement. Examples of cooperation with Western partners include international sanctions together with OECD member countries following the Crimean crisis (Roberts and Traynor 2014) and a joint NATO mission to enforce a no-fly zone over Libya (NATO 2015). However, vote agreement rates during the presidency of Barack Obama still just reached the previous average under president of the United States Bill Clinton, but were lower than the agreement rates before the 1980s.

We examine voting alignment between the United States and individual Western countries. The results suggest some heterogeneity in average agreement rates across countries (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Average agreement rate between the United States and Western countries during votes in the United Nations General Assembly, average across all resolutions by country



Note: The unweighted average for UNGA resolutions by country since they became part of the G7, NATO, OECD and/or WEOG group before and since Donald Trump took office is displayed.
 Source: Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019), own calculations

Overall, the average agreement rate increased in thirteen Western allied countries since Donald Trump became president of the United States. The largest increases are observed in Israel, Hungary and the Republic of Korea. For the remaining thirty-one countries, average agreement rates decreased under Donald Trump’s presidency. Especially close allied countries such as the United Kingdom, France or Germany voted less in line with the United States since Trump is in office.

2.2 Vote agreement rates by topics

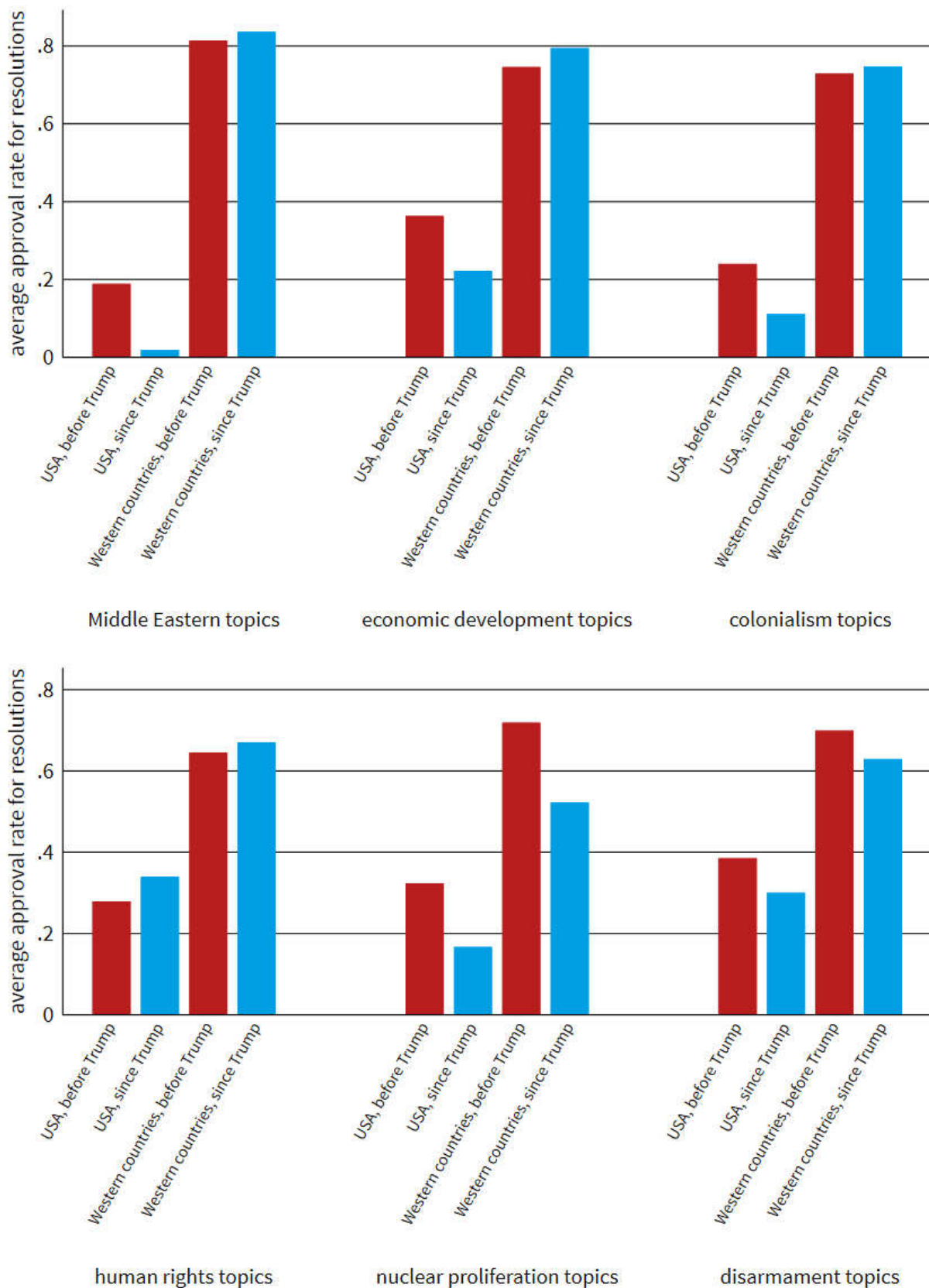
We examine the voting behavior for UNGA resolutions on six repeated issues in more detail. Compared to all previous presidents of the United States, resolutions on human rights and economic development were more frequent by 7.2 and 6.1 percentage points since Donald Trump took office. The share of UNGA resolutions dealing with colonialism decreased by 7

percentage points. For Middle Eastern, disarmament and nuclear proliferation issues, the share of resolutions hardly changed since Donald Trump became president.

The decline in voting alignment between the United States and Western allies can be based on three dynamics: (1) the United States voted since 2017 as it has always done and the Western partners have changed their foreign policy course, (2) vice versa, or (3) the United States and its allies have both changed their foreign policy positions. We consider topic-related resolutions to examine such voting dynamics. Individual resolutions differ from vote to vote. If resolutions on repeated issues differ on average, however, we would expect to observe the same shift of approval rates among the United States and Western partners if their foreign policy stance did not change. Figure 3 shows the percentage of resolutions on the Israel-Palestine conflict, economic development and colonialism on which the United States and the other Western countries voted with "yes". The results for the specific country groups (G7, OECD, NATO and WEOG countries) are qualitatively and quantitatively comparable.

The approval rate of the United States has changed regarding resolutions covering Middle Eastern topics, precisely the Israel-Palestine conflict. Israel has been discriminated against in the UNGA for decades (Becker et al. 2015; Hillman and Potrafke 2015). The United States has, however, mostly voted against resolutions criticizing Israel for the last decades. This trend has strengthened under Donald Trump: while the other Western countries slightly increased their approval rate on resolutions on the Israel-Palestine conflict, the approval rate of the United States on resolutions dealing with the Middle East drastically declined from 16.7 percent before Trump's presidency to 2.9 percent since Trump has been in office. The relocation of the United States embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem and the recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights are prime examples of the changing foreign policy of the United States regarding Middle Eastern topics.

Figure 3. Average approval rate of the United States and Western countries during votes in the United Nations General Assembly, all resolutions for individual topics before and since president Donald Trump



Notes: A country's vote as 'yes' is coded as 1, 'abstain' is coded as 0.5 and 'no' is coded as 0. The unweighted averages for UNGA resolutions for the United States and across all Western countries without the United States are displayed.
 Source: Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019), own calculations

Second, under Donald Trump the United States agreed to only 21.6 percent of all resolutions regarding economic development worldwide, whereas its approval rate before the Trump presidency was about 33.9 percent. This voting pattern of the United States contrasts with the voting behavior of the other Western partner countries, which have voted "yes" to almost eighty percent of the economic development resolutions since the Trump administration began, increasing their approval rate by about 5.5 percentage points.

Third, under the current administration of the United States, approval of resolutions by the United States on colonialism decreased by almost 12.9 percentage points from about a quarter to slightly above eleven percent of all votes. The voting approval rate of the other Western countries slightly increased by 1.8 percentage points, however, to almost seventy-five percent.

On human rights issues, the resolution approval rate of the United States increased by some 6.0 percentage points, while the approval rate of the Western countries only increased by 2.5 percentage points. Regarding resolutions on nuclear weapons proliferation, the average approval rate of both the United States and Western countries decreased by about the same order of magnitude since Donald Trump took office (-11.5 and -13.2 percentage points). The resolution approval rate for resolutions on disarmament decreased by about 8.5 percentage points for the United States and by 7.0 percentage points for Western countries.

A concern is that the general content of resolutions has changed since Donald Trump took office, although resolutions are still classified into the same topic category. For example, more human rights resolutions dealt with individual countries, especially Israel, rather than general human rights issues, and the United States under Donald Trump put forward new topics such as condemning Hamas for using own-population human shields and firing rockets at civilian targets in Israel (Hillman 2019; Jelnov 2019). We examine two repeated issues in the UNGA: resolutions about the status of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. The United States did

not vote “yes” on a single resolution dealing with the status of Jerusalem since 2017, down from an approval rate of about a third before Trump’s presidency. In contrast, the approval rate of Western countries for resolutions about Jerusalem remained almost unchanged at ninety-five percent before and ninety-two percent after Donald Trump took office. Similarly, the United States decreased its approval rate for Golan Heights resolutions from twenty-eight percent to thirteen percent after the Trump presidency, while Western countries maintained an approval rate of seventy-seven percent and seventy-two percent before and after the Trump presidency. Overall, the results suggest that the United States stance on foreign policy, especially on Middle Eastern topics, has changed under Donald Trump.

2.3 Did especially leftwing Western governments turn away?

Previous studies have shown that political alignment between the United States and other countries was pronounced when government ideology in the United States and other countries were aligned. For example, leftwing governments in OECD countries were more likely to vote in line with the United States in the UNGA when the president of the United States was a Democrat than a Republican (Potrafke 2009).⁸ We examine whether leftwing governments in Western countries were less likely to vote in line with the United States since Donald Trump took office than rightwing governments.

We estimate the following baseline panel model:

$$Y_{itm} = \alpha * Trump_t + \beta * ideological\ distance_{it} + \gamma * Trump_t * ideological\ distance_{it} + \sum_l \gamma_l X_{ilt} + Y_{it-1m} + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{itm}$$

where *Y* are *m* dependent variables measuring the political alignment between the United States and country *i* in year *t*, namely the yearly average of the resolution agreement rate in the UNGA with the vote of the United States and the yearly absolute difference of ideal points between the

⁸ On ideology-induced policies in OECD countries see, for example, Potrafke (2017 and 2018).

United States and Western partners in the UNGA. *Trump* is a dummy variable that takes on the value one if Donald Trump was president of the United States in year t and zero otherwise⁹. *Ideological distance* measures the distance in the political ideology between a country i 's executive leader and a president of the United States in year t . It assumes the value one if a country's leader is leftwing and the president of the United States is a Republican or if a country's leader is right-wing and a president of the United States is a Democrat, 0.5 if a country's leader is moderate-center, and zero otherwise. We measure the political ideology of country i 's chief executive with the data of Cruz, Keefer, and Scartascini (2018) and self-compile data for the years 2018 and 2019. We expect the correlation between the ideological distance of Western chief executives and the president of the United States and voting in line with the United States to be negative. \mathbf{X}_{it} contains $l = 1, \dots, 10$ control variables. Following related studies (Dreher and Jensen 2013; Smith 2016), we include real GDP per capita in logarithmic terms, real GDP per capita growth and population in logarithmic terms. We consider data provided by the IMF (2019) that starts in the year 1980 and is available till the year 2019 as an estimate. We include a dummy variable taking the value one if a Western country was a military ally with the United States in an armed conflict according to Pettersson, Högladh, and Öberg (2019), and zero otherwise.¹⁰ We also include the shares of resolutions a country voted on in year t that dealt with six individual topics: the Middle East, economic development, disarmament, human rights, nuclear proliferation and colonialism. We include the first lag of the dependent variable to account for serial correlation. μ are country-fixed effects. ε is the error term. Table A1 includes descriptive statistics of the individual variables.

⁹ There was no roll-call vote in the UNGA between January 1st 2017 and Donald Trump's inauguration as US president on January 20th 2017.

¹⁰ No Western country was a military opponent of the United States in an armed conflict according to Pettersson, Högladh, and Öberg (2019).

Table 4. Yearly average agreement rate between the United States and Western countries during votes in the United Nations General Assembly, all resolutions between 1980 and 2019

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
US president Donald Trump	0.0122 (0.0195)	-0.0491*** (0.0128)	-0.0515*** (0.0132)	-0.0563*** (0.0112)	-0.0440*** (0.0127)
Ideological distance	0.0021 (0.0038)	0.0028 (0.0018)	0.0023 (0.0018)	0.0020 (0.0018)	0.0020 (0.0018)
US president Donald Trump * ideological distance	-0.0271** (0.0121)	-0.0041 (0.0085)	-0.0041 (0.0078)	0.0006 (0.0074)	0.0002 (0.0071)
Log of real GDP per capita		0.0103** (0.0043)	0.0077* (0.0044)	-0.0108 (0.0124)	-0.0171 (0.0152)
Growth of real GDP		-0.0036*** (0.0008)	-0.0038*** (0.0008)	-0.0037*** (0.0007)	-0.0035*** (0.0007)
Log of population		0.0004 (0.0010)	0.0002 (0.0010)	0.1392*** (0.0327)	0.1205*** (0.0331)
Allied with the United States in conflict		0.0024 (0.0035)	-0.0020 (0.0039)	-0.0150*** (0.0042)	-0.0125*** (0.0044)
1 st lag of UNGA vote agreement rate		0.8562*** (0.0161)	0.8596*** (0.0161)	0.6908*** (0.0246)	0.6735*** (0.0258)
Constant	0.5432*** (0.0050)	-0.0240 (0.0446)	-0.0726 (0.0507)	-0.1506 (0.0931)	-0.0857 (0.1419)
Country-fixed effects included?	x	x	x	✓	✓
Topic-share variables included?	x	x	✓	x	✓
Observations	1,059	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020
Countries	38	38	38	38	38
Adjusted R squared	0.0024	0.7788	0.7844	0.8000	0.8042
Conditional marginal effect of ideological distance ^a .	-0.0251** (0.0114)	-0.0013 (0.0083)	-0.0018 (0.0077)	0.0026 (0.0071)	0.0021 (0.0068)

Note a.: Conditional marginal effects evaluated at president Trump dummy variable taking value of 1, and control variables at means. Robust standard errors are in brackets.

, **, * indicate statistical significance at 10, 5, 1percent level.*

Only countries that have been either G7, NATO, OECD and/or WEOG members without the United States are included.

Table 4 shows the regression results for the yearly average agreement rate on resolutions between 1980 and 2019. Since Donald Trump took office as president of the United States, the

voting agreement rate of Western countries with the United States on UNGA resolutions has significantly decreased compared to the voting behavior of all previous presidents. When control variables are included, the coefficient estimates of the Trump dummy variable are negative and statistically significant at the one percent-level in columns (2) to (5). When the country-fixed effects and topic-share variables are not included [column (2)], the coefficient estimate suggests that the decrease in vote agreement rates since Donald Trump took office is 4.9 percentage points. Once the topic-share variables and country-fixed effects are included, the point estimate increases to around -4.4 percentage points [column (5)]. The point estimates of the ideological difference variable do not turn out to be statistically significant. The coefficient estimate of the interaction term is negative and statistically significant in column (1), but lacks statistical significance in all other columns. The marginal effect of the ideological distance during the Donald Trump administration in column (1) without control variables is statistically significant at the five percent-level and suggests that the agreement rate was around 2.5 percentage points lower when the ideological distance increased by one point. Once control variables are included in columns (2) to (5), the marginal effects of the ideological distance lack statistical significance.

Table 5 shows the results if the dependent variable is replaced by the absolute difference of ideal points between the United States and Western countries in the UNGA for the period 1980 until 2018.

Table 5. Yearly absolute difference of ideal points between the United States and Western countries during votes in the United Nations General Assembly, all resolutions between 1980 and 2018

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
US president Donald Trump	-0.0794 (0.0906)	0.0954*** (0.0226)	0.1155*** (0.0276)	0.1168*** (0.0222)	0.1411*** (0.0276)
Ideological distance	0.0072 (0.0160)	-0.0053 (0.0056)	-0.0034 (0.0056)	-0.0007 (0.0055)	0.0001 (0.0053)
US president Donald Trump * ideological distance	0.1013 (0.0622)	0.0146 (0.0153)	0.0116 (0.0149)	-0.0004 (0.0147)	0.0000 (0.0145)
Log of real GDP per capita		-0.0284** (0.0123)	-0.0152 (0.0120)	0.0379 (0.0394)	0.1040** (0.0450)
Growth of real GDP		0.0032 (0.0026)	0.0019 (0.0027)	0.0037 (0.0023)	-0.0010 (0.0023)
Log of population		-0.0037 (0.0033)	-0.0029 (0.0033)	-0.3431*** (0.0885)	-0.3060*** (0.0904)
Allied with United States in conflict		-0.0250*** (0.0095)	0.0044 (0.0105)	0.0121 (0.0119)	0.0411*** (0.0124)
1 st lag of absolute ideal points difference		0.9131*** (0.0132)	0.9243*** (0.0133)	0.7493*** (0.0270)	0.7171*** (0.0288)
Constant	1.6361*** (0.0216)	0.4590*** (0.1339)	0.6767*** (0.1541)	1.0876*** (0.3033)	0.7655* (0.4161)
Country-fixed effects included?	x	x	x	✓	✓
Topic-share variables included?	x	x	✓	x	✓
Observations	1,031	1,020	1,020	1,020	1,020
Countries	38	38	38	38	38
Adjusted R squared	-0.0002	0.8984	0.9029	0.9094	0.9145
Conditional marginal effect of ideological distance ^a .	0.1086* (0.0601)	0.0093 (0.0142)	0.0083 (0.0137)	-0.0011 (0.0135)	0.0001 (0.0134)

Note a.: Conditional marginal effects evaluated at president Trump dummy variable taking value of 1, and control variables at means.

Robust standard errors in brackets.

, **, * indicate statistical significance at 10, 5, 1percent level.*

Only countries that have been either G7, NATO, OECD and/or WEOG members without the United States are included.

The point estimates of the Donald Trump dummy variable are positive and statistically significant at the one percent-level in columns (2) to (5). The coefficient estimates range

between 0.10 in column (2) and 0.14 in column (5), or about a quarter of a standard deviation, with fixed country effects and the topic-share variables included. The point estimates of the ideological distance variable and of its interaction with the Donald Trump dummy variable do not turn out to be statistically significant. The marginal effect of the ideological distance under Donald Trump is positive and statistically significant at the ten percent-level in column (1), but lacks statistical significance once control variables are included.

As a robustness check, we exclude individual countries from the Western countries group. Inferences for both political alignment variables do not change. Inferences also do not change if only G7, OECD, NATO or WEOG country groups are considered.

We also do not find evidence that Donald Trump's cabinet members have obstructed the president's policy decisions at the UNGA. The longest-serving ambassadors of the United States to the United Nations under Donald Trump, Nikki Haley, publicly supported the president's agenda (Tamborrino 2017; United States Mission to the United Nations 2017) and did not state dissent as a reason for her resignation (Haley 2018). Acting ambassador of the United States to the United Nations Jonathan Cohen, a career diplomat who followed Haley in February 2019, defended the United States policy shift at the United Nations on topics such as the Iranian nuclear deal (United States Mission to the United Nations 2019a) and the Golan Heights (United States Mission to the United Nations 2019b).

3. Conclusion

Voting in line with the United States of G7, NATO, OECD and UN WEOG member countries at the United Nations General Assembly declined since Donald Trump's presidency. Compared to the preceding presidents of the United States, the UNGA agreement rate of Western countries decreased on average by 7.2 percentage points. The decrease is especially pronounced for NATO member countries and topics regarding the Middle East. Econometric evidence suggests that the UNGA agreement rate of Western countries under Donald Trump decreased by 4.4

percentage points and that absolute ideal point differences increased by a quarter of a standard deviation. One may well conjecture that leftwing governments in Western allied countries are especially inclined to vote against the United States since Donald Trump became president. Our results, however, do not suggest that the declining political alignment between the United States and Western allies was driven by the ideological distance based on a classical leftwing-rightwing government ideology scale.

References

- Adhikari, Bimal. 2019a. "United Nations general assembly voting and foreign aid bypass." *International Politics* 56: 514-35
- Adhikari, Bimal. 2019b. "Power politics and foreign aid delivery tactics." *Social Science Quarterly*, forthcoming
- Allen, Susan Hannah, and Michael Flynn. 2018. "Donor government ideology and aid bypass." *Foreign Policy Analysis* 14: 449-68
- Bailey, Michael, Anton Strezhnev, and Erik Voeten. 2017. "Estimating dynamic state preferences from United Nations voting data." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 61: 430-56
- Bailey, Michael, and Erik Voeten. 2018. "A two-dimensional analysis of seventy years of United Nations voting." *Public Choice* 176: 33-55
- Becker, Raphael, Arye Hillman, Niklas Potrafke, and Alexander Schwemmer. 2015. "The preoccupation of the United Nations with Israel: Evidence and theory." *Review of International Organizations* 10: 413-37
- Carter, Eric Baggott. 2019. "Diversionary cheap talk: economic conditions and US foreign policy rhetoric, 1945-2010." *International Interactions*, forthcoming
- Cordell, Rebecca. 2019. "Security civil-liberties trade-offs: International cooperation in extraordinary rendition." *International Interactions* 45: 369-400
- Cruz, Cesi, Philip Keefer, and Carlos Scartascini. 2018. "Database of Political Institutions 2017." *Inter-American Development Bank*, April 3.
<https://mydata.iadb.org/Reform-Modernization-of-the-State/Database-of-Political-Institutions-2017/938i-s2bw>
- Dreher, Axel, Peter Nunnenkamp, and Rainer Thiele. 2008. "Does US aid buy UN general assembly votes? A disaggregated analysis." *Public Choice* 136: 139-64

- Dreher, Axel and Jan-Egbert Sturm. 2012. "Do the IMF and the World Bank influence voting in the UN General Assembly?" *Public Choice* 151: 363-97
- Dreher, Axel, and Nathan Jensen. 2013. "Country or leader? Political change and UN General Assembly voting." *European Journal of Political Economy* 29: 183-96
- Drozdiak, William and Eric Pianin. 2001. "U.S. Angers Allies over Climate Pact." *Washington Post*, March 29.
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/2001/03/29/us-angers-allies-over-climate-pact/5b58e498-94ec-46c9-806c-8268f9f3c779/>
- Haley, Nikki. 2018. "Resignation Letter." *UN Watch*, October 3.
<https://unwatch.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Read-Nikki-Haley-s-resignation-letter.pdf>
- Hillman, Arye. 2019. "Harming a favored side: an anomaly with supreme values and good intentions." *Public Choice*, forthcoming
- Hillman, Arye, and Niklas Potrafke. 2015. "The UN Goldstone Report and retraction: An empirical investigation." *Public Choice* 163: 247-66
- Hirschfeld-Davis, Julie. 2018. "Jerusalem Embassy Is a Victory for Trump, and a Complication for Middle East Peace." *New York Times*, May 14.
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/14/us/politics/trump-jerusalem-embassy-middle-east-peace.html>
- IMF (International Monetary Fund). 2019. *World Economic Outlook, April 2019: Growth Slowdown, Precarious Recovery*. Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund Press.
- Jacobson, Gary. 2019. "Extreme Referendum: Donald Trump and the 2018 Midterm Elections." *Political Science Quarterly* 134 (1): 9-38
- Jelnov, Artyom. 2019. "Third-party intervention in the presence of supreme values." *Public Choice*, forthcoming

- Jervis, Robert. 2003. "Understanding the Bush doctrine." *Political Science Quarterly* 118 (3): 354-88
- Johnstone, Ian. 2004. "US-UN relations after Iraq: the end of the world (order) as we know it?" *European Journal of International Law* 15 (4): 813-38
- Kahn-Nisser, Sara. 2019. "When the targets are members and donors: Analyzing inter-governmental organizations' human rights shaming." *Review of International Organizations* 14: 431-451.
- Kegley Jr., Charles, and Steven Hook. 1991. "U.S. foreign aid and UN voting: Did Reagan's linkage strategy buy deference or defiance?" *International Studies Quarterly* 35 (3): 295-312
- Kim, Soo Yeon, and Bruce Russett. 1996. "The new politics of voting alignments in the United Nations General Assembly." *International Organization* 50 (4): 629-52
- King, John. 2002. "Bush rolls out missile defense system." *CNN*, December 8.
<http://edition.cnn.com/2002/US/12/17/bush.missile/index.html>
- King, James, and James Riddlesperger Jr. 2018. "The Trump transition: Beginning a distinctive presidency." *Social Science Quarterly* 99 (5): 1821-1836
- NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization). 2015. "NATO and Libya." November 9.
https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_71652.htm
- Obydenkova, Anastassia, and Vincius G. Rodrigues Vieira. 2019. "The limits of collective financial statecraft: Regional development banks and voting alignment with the United States at the United Nations General Assembly." *International Studies Quarterly*, forthcoming
- Pettersson, Therese, Stina Högladh, and Magnus Öberg. 2019. "Organized violence, 1989-2018 and peace agreements." *Journal of Peace Research* 56 (4): 589-603

- Potrafke, Niklas. 2009. "Does government ideology influence political alignment with the US? An empirical analysis of UN General Assembly voting." *Review of International Organizations* 4: 245-68
- Potrafke, N. 2017. "Partisan politics: The empirical evidence from OECD panel studies." *Journal of Comparative Economics* 45: 712–750
- Potrafke, N. 2018. "Government ideology and economic policy-making in the United States – A survey." *Public Choice* 174: 145–207
- Reinsberg, Bernhard. 2019. "Do countries use foreign aid to buy geopolitical influence? Evidence from donor campaigns for temporary UN Security Council seats." *Politics and Governance* 7: 127-54
- Roberts, Dan and Ian Traynor. 2014. "US and EU impose sanctions and warn Russia to relent in Ukraine standoff." *The Guardian*, March 6.
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/06/us-eu-sanctions-obama-russia-ukraine-crimea>
- Smith, Alastair. 2016. "Leader turnover, institutions, and voting at the UN General Assembly." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 60: 143-63
- Tamborrini, Kelsey. 2017. "Haley: Trump saved 'many innocent' lives with Syria statement." *Politico*, June 28.
<https://www.politico.com/story/2017/06/28/nikki-haley-trump-syria-warning-240041>
- Thacker, Strom. 1999. "The high politics of IMF lending." *World Politics* 52: 38-75
- Trump, Donald. 2018a. Twitter message by @realDonaldTrump, June 9.
<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1005586562959093760?lang=de>
- Trump, Donald. 2018b. Twitter message by @realDonaldTrump, July 11.
<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1017288317342224384?lang=de>
- Trump, Donald. 2018c. Twitter message by @realDonaldTrump, July 11.
<https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/1017290478839050240>

United Nations Digital Library. 2019. "Voting data." United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library. Accessed December 13 2019.

<https://digitallibrary.un.org/>

United States Mission to the United Nations. 2017. "Ambassador Nikki Haley Delivers Remarks to the UN Security Council on Conflicts in Europe." February 21.

<https://usun.usmission.gov/ambassador-nikki-haley-delivers-remarks-to-the-un-security-council-on-conflicts-in-europe/>

United States Mission to the United Nations. 2019a. "Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on Non-Proliferation (Iran)." June 26.

<https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-non-proliferation-iran/>

United States Mission to the United Nations. 2019b. "Remarks at a UN Security Council Briefing on the Middle East." March 26.

<https://usun.usmission.gov/remarks-at-a-un-security-council-briefing-on-the-middle-east-3/>

Voeten, Erik, ed. 2019. *Data and Analyses of Voting in the UN General Assembly*. Handbook of International Organization: Routledge.

Woo, Byungwon, and Eunbin Chung. 2018. "Aid for Vote? United Nations General Assembly Voting and American Aid Allocation." *Political Studies* 66: 1002-1026

WTO (World Trade Organization). 2019. "Tariff Download Facility." WTO Statistics Library. Accessed December 13 2019.

<http://tariffdata.wto.org/Default.aspx?culture=en-US>

Appendix Table A1: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Obs.	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min.	Max.	Source
Yearly average agreement rate	1,336	0.54	0.103	0.2	0.95	Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019)
Yearly absolute difference of ideal points	1,291	1.67	0.446	0.11	3.6	Bailey, Strezhnev, and Voeten (2017)
US president Donald Trump	1,340	0.1	0.3	0	1	own calculations
Ideological distance	1,059	0.99	0.924	0	2	Cruz, Keefer, and Scartascini (2018) and own calculations
Log of real GDP per capita	1,230	10.31	0.407	8.99	11.5	IMF (2019)
Growth of real GDP	1,239	2.6	2.983	-14.81	25.01	IMF (2019)
Log of population	1,230	2.26	1.669	-3.51	4.85	IMF (2019)
Allied with USA in conflict	1,295	0.36	0.479	0	1	Pettersson, Höglbladh, and Öberg (2019)
Share of Middle Eastern resolutions	1,340	0.23	0.069	0	0.38	Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019)
Share of economic development resolutions	1,340	0.11	0.042	0	0.33	Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019)
Share of disarmament resolutions	1,340	0.23	0.059	0	0.35	Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019)
Share of nuclear proliferation resolutions	1,340	0.16	0.044	0	0.24	Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019)
Share of colonialism resolutions	1,340	0.15	0.049	0	0.22	Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019)
Share of human rights resolutions	1,340	0.24	0.081	0	0.67	Voeten (2019), United Nations Digital Library (2019)

Only countries that have been either G7, NATO, OECD and/or WEOG members since 1980 are included (excluding the United States).