Voting in the UN General Assembly: Will It Affect the Aid from the United States?

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Abstract

The aim of this article is to test the theory that the United States considers the policies of countries in need of international aid when deciding whether to provide economic or military aid to those countries . To test this hypothesis, this study statistically analyzes the votes cast in the UN General Assembly for the period of 2005 to 2014. On the basis of this analysis, some conclusions are drawn regarding the Ukraine's attempt to receive assistance and probable causes as to why the theory may not hold for short time periods.

Keywords US foreign policy, the United Nations, foreign aid, voting index, Ukraine crisis, US foreign policy in Europe

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political influence of the United States in the new world order has not always ensured security in former Soviet countries. In 2013, a prolonged crisis would begin in the region, as Ukraine's preparations for an agreement with the EU were suspended by then-president Viktor Yanukovych. In 2014, a series of protests and violent encounters between protesters and riot police culminated in a revolution and wide-scale unrest, including, ultimately, the ousting of the Ukrainian president and government and a Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory.[1] These events called into question the legal framework of European security and underscored existing political tensions regarding the regional balance of power. Both the EU and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)[2] looked the other way as Russia invaded Ukrainian territory, violating the Helsinki Accords[3] (which were drafted in 1975 and which proclaimed the inviolability of borders). Also violated was the 1994 Budapest Memorandum—signed by the US, the UK, and the Russian Federation, providing security assurances against the use of force against Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan. Thus, 2014 saw a series of threats to the international security system and, in particular, a series of threats to Ukrainian sovereignty and security.

The roots of the Ukrainian crisis go back to the historical struggle for Ukraine's political and cultural independence between Ukraine and Russia, as the latter had been occupying most of the territory of modern Ukraine for several centuries. Thus, the current conflict, started by the Russian occupation of Crimea, is based on centuries-old identity issues that have been re-invoked by Russia's actions, with potentially long-reaching consequences for both sides. Despite several years of Ukrainian pleas for American assistance against Russia, it was not until 2018 that the US provided such aid. Before that, the White House carefully sidestepped Ukrainian entreaties for aid, citing a concern that the US not be drawn into the Ukrainian crisis.

The purpose of this article is to explain why the US did not provide military aid to Ukraine for such a long time, even in the face of Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and invasion of Ukraine's borders—in violation of international agreements that the US presumably purports to uphold. For this purpose, a statistical analysis was used for quantitative assessment and objective interpretation of the calculations of the voting similarities between the US and Ukraine in the UN General Assembly (UNGA). For a more complete examination, in the first part of the essay, we look into the history of the method; in the second part we describe our model, and finally, we discuss the results, comparing them with other studies on this topic.

Theoretical Framework

Studies of the dependence between the conduct of a country and its receiving of foreign aid from other countries have a long history. The issues of influence of state behavior on its receiving of aid were investigated in such works as Richardson (2014) and Signorino and Ritter (1999), while the issues of military assistance were investigated in such works as T. Schelling (2008) and J. Sislin (1994). The findings of these works were controversial and sometimes mutually exclusive. In this paper, we present another model that tests the relationship between voting in the UNGA and military aid from the US over a ten-year time span.

The idea that the granting of international aid is grounded in politics gained popularity among scholars in the 1960s. The political theory of neorealism argues that states choose models of bilateral relations that are based on the previous conduct of the other states

(Keohane, 1965). For example, state A may support state B based on state B's previous political support or assistance of state A. Likewise, state A may deny aid to state C if state C previously stymied or blocked the political agenda or efforts of state A. A series of studies was conducted to test this hypothesis.

The work of Wittkopf (1973) deserves primary attention. In 1973, Wittkopf sought to verify the assumption that the United States used foreign aid as a political tool. To do this, he compared the results of voting patterns in the United Nations General Assembly from 1962 to 1967 to the allocation of foreign aid. According to his logic, the more often developing states voted identically to the world's leaders, the greater the amount of aid developing countries received. For his purposes, Wittkopf used indexes to determine whether there was a common link between the distribution of aid from donor states and the voting patterns of recipient states. Wittkopf concluded that the hypothetical link between aid and voting was found only in the case of the United States. At the time, it remained unclear whether a close voting relationship between the US and a recipient nation was the cause or the consequence of receiving aid. And the question remained whether the nature of such aid was meant to be a reward, bribery, or stimulation of some sort.

The answers to these questions were given in the work of Kul B. Rai (1980). In his article, Rai demonstrated a model that confirmed the use of foreign economic assistance as a tool of political influence for promotion of national interests. Rai used the data of polls for the period of 1967 to 1976 in an attempt to determine the nature of foreign aid: was it an inducement, reward or punishment? In his work, Rai came to the conclusion that economic aid was used more as an incentive than as a punishment. However, Rai's study[4] did not explain the causal relationship between foreign economic assistance and the voting of the General Assembly.

The tradition of studying the effect of voting on the aid obtained was continued by Armstrong (1981), who tried to explore the possibility of one country inducing other countries to pursue a certain line of policy in order to gain economic and military assistance. She focused on the attitudes of the USSR and the USA toward 24 countries on the basis of economic exchanges. The author assumed that a country with limited economic resources would be more vulnerable to pressure than other countries. To test this hypothesis, the voting patterns for 16 years were taken and divided into four time periods. The researcher came to the conclusion that US military aid did have a major impact on the pattern of political compliance, particularly between 1954 and 1970, while economic aid had a negative effect on compliance. Thus, Armstrong concluded that there was a positive correlation between military aid and compliance and that there was no clear link between economic aid and voting.

The study of P. G. Roeder (1985) used the same logic; after examining 62 states, Roeder revealed a complex relationship between Soviet assistance and political compliance during the period of 1960 to 1981. By continuously supplying developing nations with industrial equipment and highly qualified personnel, the USSR developed great influence in the foreign policy of developing nations. It is interesting to note, however, that the USSR's political leverage within developing countries did not lead to an increase in the degree of collaborative efforts among those countries.

All of these findings share one fact: They described relationships between states set against the backdrop of the Cold War. During that period, all countries took into account the influence of the competing efforts of other Great Powers on issues of aiding, trade preferences, and organization of political influence. This logic of competition is typical to any sphere of the Cold War period. The results of studies undertaken after the conclusion of the Cold War, however, have proved to be less straightforward. For example, the results of the study of Menkhaus and Kegley (1988) were inconclusive. In their 1988 research, they

attempted to take into account the effects of the competing efforts of the USSR and the US on Somalia. They created indexes to determine the dependence of Somalia on foreign aid from 1976 to1980 and came to the conclusion that the analysis of interstate dependencies required modification.

In 1998, another work was published (Meernik, Krueger, & Poe, 1998) that tried to use the systematic distribution of aid to explain how US policy is determined at the state level. Having investigated the distribution of foreign aid from 1977 to 1994, the authors concluded that the variable of the US military presence had a negative correlation with the provision of assistance. They also showed that the influence of the US military presence upon the amount of funding decreased over time.

A new approach was revealed in the study of T. Wang (1999). In it, Wang assumed that the US government was likely to put pressure on recipient nations only on vitally important issues. To test his hypothesis, he used data collected in sixty-five developing countries from 1984 to1993. The results of this study indicated that the US government successfully used foreign aid to exert pressure on countries during voting in the UN on issues important to the US administration.

Finally, the last major work is Derouen and Uk Heo (2004). As a basis, they assumed that if the US was indeed a global hegemon, there should be a link between external assistance and the US ability to influence the behavior of other states. To test this hypothesis, data were collected on 76 developing countries for a minimum of a 30-year span for each country. Their research resulted in the conclusion that similarities in foreign policy between the US and the developing countries led to the provision of greater economic and military aid.

From these studies, we can conclude that over the course of 40 years, the research of the relationship between countries' policies and the granting of aid has provided different outcomes describing the same phenomenon from different angles. The works reviewed here serve as the foundation for current research in this area. However, this article's approach differs from previous works. We examine a shorter period of time, ten years, which, in our opinion, constitutes a sufficient period of time since it allows for two US election cycles to have taken place, decreasing the impact of any differences related to the peculiarities of the composition of any one presidential administration. We deliberately do not examine a longer period of time since practice shows that policymaking is a process in which the future does not depend on the past.[5] We also intentionally do not consider the votes made during the Cold War or those of recorded during the other 90 years of the twentieth century. With the demise of the USSR in the latter half of the twentieth century, both the global political environment and the behavior of states have changed.[6] Since there are no examples of direct tests of the original hypotheses suggested by dependency theory in modern conditions, this study seeks to ascertain this relationship on the basis of data on voting in the UNGA.

Model and Results

In the United States, politics are dominated by a realistic world view, which implies a rational model of international relations. According to this model, in order to survive, each state constructs its defense so that no other state can harm its essential interests. All countries have limited resources and must correlate their priorities with reality. If a country spends its resources in vain, the country stands to lose its international leadership. Thus, a country needs a good reason to enter into armed conflict.

According to the research of Karl DeRouen and Uk Heo (2004), there is one main important factor in qualifying for US aid, namely, the past behavior of the country in need of aid. Since 1980, the United States has been formally monitoring the voting at the UN. A country's voting record serves as a sort of a marker, measuring the level of "acceptable

votes" (as determined by American standards of behavior), which can be exchanged for help. Matching voting patterns between the US and another country is interpreted to reflect a certain degree of matching national interests, which, in practice, has far-reaching consequences.

Every country must weigh the political benefits of providing military aid against the potential costs of doing so, which will be unpredictable and potentially grave. In order to maintain its place of political power and leverage, the US is especially hesitant to offer international aid (particularly military aid) to countries in which the potential for military entanglement is high. The US is more likely to grant aid to nations that at a minimum, share some political alignment with US interests, as demonstrated through its UNGA voting record. The greater the divergence of views between the US and the countries requesting aid, the less likely it is that the US will provide weapons to those countries. It is assumed that countries whose voting patterns are farther from US national interests have national interests far from those of the United States. The approach undertaken in this study will allow us to determine whether the United States uses aid as an incentive, a punishment, or a reward for their political goals.

If a certain interval of votes is stable, it is possible to determine the likelihood of the US providing aid within a certain period of time or at a certain point in the future. Moreover, it can be assumed that the cause-effect relations between aid and voting policy will be retraced. A side result of the hypothesis testing will be an answer to the question whether it is possible to determine an algorithm for predicting the foreign policy of the US. In other words, it will show whether there are any indications of the future result of diplomats' efforts behind the concrete facts of voting.

When there is a conflict of national interests of the members of the UNGA, the voting index will reflect the lowest common denominator among the different views of member states. Therefore, the greater the divergence of views among the member states, the lower the probability that these states will agree upon a common policy. Moreover, the states whose preferences in voting are further away from the common average of the region, will, most likely, be against taking any action. Finally, the index results specify details that may be useful in describing and explaining the outcomes of political processes in the United Nations. The counting of votes may show a certain political logic in the vote.

In order to check whether or not the national interests of Ukraine and the US are likely to coincide, we studied their voting patterns in the UN General Assembly from the 59th to the 68th sessions (UN, n.d.). In this article, we will use the index, which is expressed by the following formula:

$$I_{year}^{AB} = 1 - \frac{1}{N_{year}} \sum_{n=1}^{N_{year}} \left| v_{n\,year}^{A} - v_{n\,year}^{B} \right|,$$

Formula 1. Index of consistency of votes in the UNGA of countries

Where I_{year}^{AB} is an index of consistency of votes in the UNGA of countries A and B for $year$; N_{year} is a total number of votes for the year; $v_{n\,year}^{A}$ is a value of the n vote of the country A for $year$. This quantity takes value of 1 in the case of a positive vote, 0 for a negative vote, and 0.5 for non-participation in voting or abstinence from voting. When the

value of index constitutes $I_{year}^{AB} = 1$, we get identical results of voting in two countries during the year, while with $I_{year}^{AB} = 0$ we see their absence.

In this paper, to compare the obtained values of the indexes of conformity of policy of different regions of the world with the policy of the US, we will use the arithmetic mean value for the region, as well as the standard deviation. The average value gives an indication of the politics of the regions on the whole, and the standard deviation shows the extent to which this policy is consolidated. The use of sophisticated methods of time series is not applicable in the case of a small sample (ten years). Therefore, to evaluate the relationship between the index of conformity of voting with the provision of US military aid, we have used a linear regression analysis. To assess the linear relationship between aid and the index of voting, we used the coefficient of determination R^2 and F statistics. When assessing the coefficient of determination R^2, we used the Chaddock correlations: $0.9 < R^2 < 0.99$, showing a very close relationship; $0.7 < R^2 < 0.9$, showing a close relationship; $0.5 < R^2 < 0.7$, showing an evident relationship; $0.3 < R^2 < 0.5$, showing a moderate relationship; and $0.1 < R^2 < 0.3$, showing a weak relationship. This index, to a certain extent, can quantify the mutual coherence of foreign policy of two countries. It should be noted that this figure takes into account neither the consistency of voting on specific issues nor the relative importance of these issues for the foreign policy of the countries. Also, according to this criterion, one cannot determine the degree of commitment displayed by Kyiv to specific values important to the United States.

Mutual policy coherence reflects the similarity of national interests. The higher the coherence in voting between countries, the higher the chance for overlapping interpretations of national interests. Matching interpretations of national interests allows for the developing of cooperation between states without the danger of unexpected strategic differences emerging. In this way, the White House can analyze the voting behavior of other countries, which is critical for understanding the moods of those countries. Within the frame of common national interests, political relationships can be conducted more meaningfully. This reduces or eliminates the cost of interaction and maintaining relationships, helping policymakers to convey the content of their ideas, thereby creating and maintaining a common vision, which would be impossible without shared views. With fewer barriers, there is more space for the organization of mutual aid. Thus, the common interests act like scaffolds of buildings, providing support for separate units of foreign policy. Another comparison would be the template used for drawing the lines of political behavior. In practice, this can lead to a more accurate selection of the countries with which to cooperate.

Calculations

In order to trace the degree of coherence, we have built index ranks. We used the voting data in the UN General Assembly from the 59th to the 68th session. First, we built index ranks of voting coherence between Washington and Kyiv (see Table 1). Based on the votes, we can see a clear trend of gradual convergence of views between the two countries on international issues. In 2005, the index was around 0.20. After that time, with the 2008 global financial crisis approaching, along with a change of government in both countries, as well as increased dependence on IMF loans, mutual coherence between the US and Ukraine began to grow. After the parliamentary elections in Ukraine in 2012 and the change of the composition of the Cabinet of Ministers, the level of synchronicity fell slightly, but it still comprised over

a third of votes. We note that for some years, the level of coherence was almost double that of 2005 (see data for 2012).

Country 1	Ukraine		
Country 2	United States		
Start with date	2005		
Year	Count	Matches	Index
2005	67	14	0.208955
2006	75	15	0.2
2007	82	23	0.280488
2008	76	22	0.289474
2009	76	22	0.289474
2010	66	28	0.424242
2011	71	25	0.352113
2012	69	29	0.42029
2013	74	25	0.337838
2014	63	23	0.365079

Table 1. The index of voting coherence in the UN General Assembly between Ukraine and United States.

In order to understand the significance of our results, we calculated the index for another country that received assistance. In 2011, Egypt began to receive substantial military aid from the United States, including 12 F-16 fighter jets, replacement kits for 125 Abrams tanks, 20 Harpoon missiles, and $ 1.3 billion in annual military funding (McLeary, 2015). While the results of our voting analysis showed a lesser degree of voting coherence between Egypt and the US than between Ukraine and the US, Cairo received assistance before Ukraine did. In the case of Egypt, we can see the point at which the number of matching votes with the US more than doubled (comparing 2005-2006 with 2012-2013). In both 2005 and 2006, there were five votes on which the countries matched. In contrast, in 2012 and 2013, there were 11 and 13 matching votes, respectively. After 2013, however, the US temporarily cut off aid to Egypt after the overthrow of the country's first elected president, which led to the plummeting of the number of common views. Full details are given in Table 2.

Country 1	Egypt		
Country 2	United States		
Start with date	2005		
Year	Count	Matches	Index
2005	67	5	0.074627
2006	75	5	0.066667
2007	82	8	0.097561
2008	76	5	0.065789
2009	76	6	0.078947
2010	66	7	0.106061
2011	71	9	0.126761
2012	69	11	0.15942
2013	74	13	0.175676
2014	63	7	0.111111

Table 2. The index of voting coherence in the UN General Assembly between Egypt and United States.

From these results, we can assume that there is threshold dependence for assistance that exists region-wide. For countries of the Middle East, for example, it is hard to consistently vote in alignment with the US because doing so may entail political consequences. To test this argument, we also constructed indexes for other countries. We tracked the voting of both European countries and the countries of Middle East. The results are as follows.
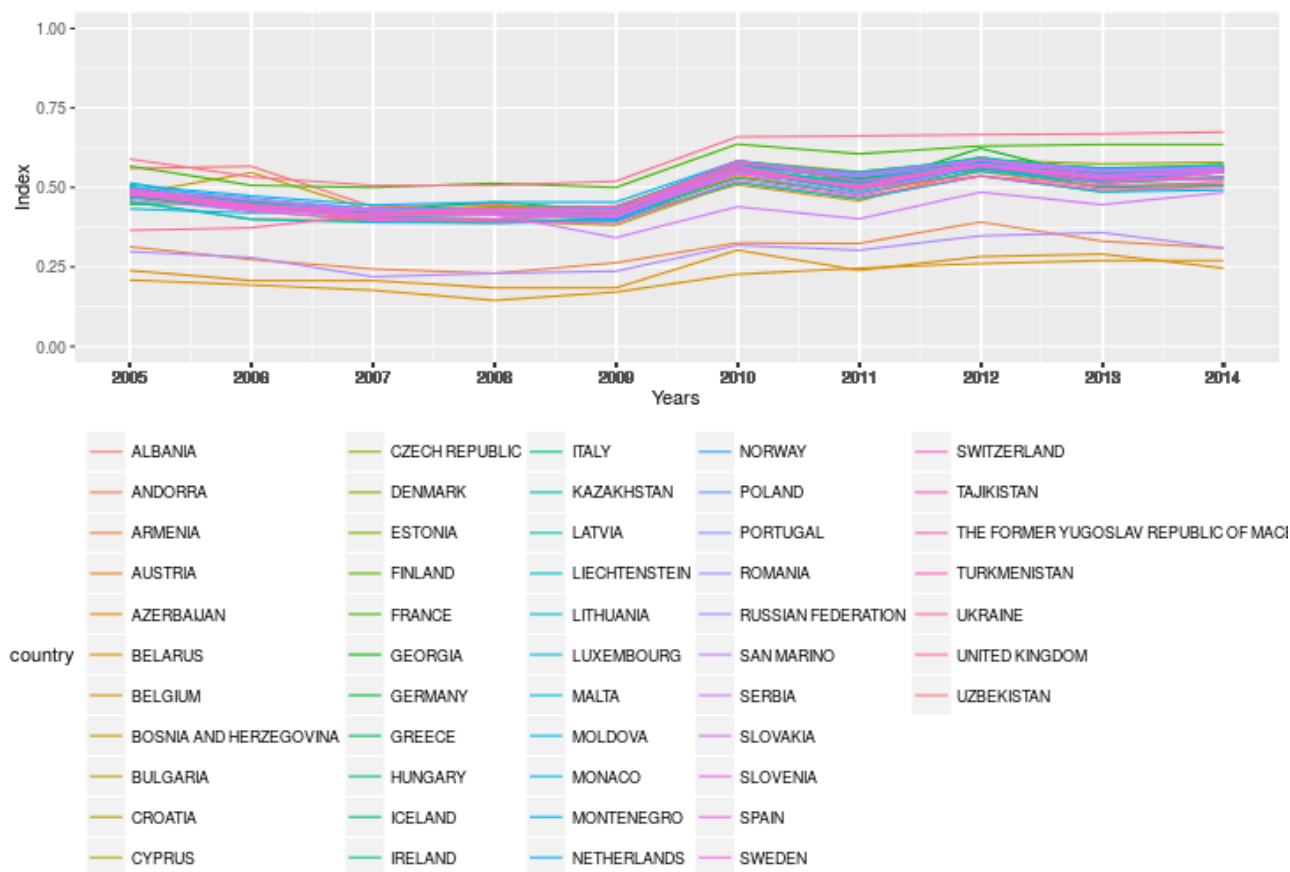

Figure 1. The index of voting coherency in the UN General Assembly between European countries and United States.

Western European countries such as France, Spain, and England have a high level of matching votes with the United States. Thus, we can say that the Western EU countries are the United States' most consistently faithful allies.[7] Overall, Europe as a whole has a neutral position toward the US (the average index for the region for the entire period is 0.45). If we talk about the European Union (EU), the countries of the EU have a consolidated neutral position. The United Kingdom and Germany have a slightly higher consistency index (0.6). If we talk about the rest of Europe, excluding the countries of the former USSR, their position is approximately the same as that of the EU. Regarding the countries of the former USSR, the position on voting is divided into two groups: (1) members of the EU (including the Baltic States) and the countries whose policies are consistent with the EU (Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia); and (2) the countries where Russia's influence exceeds that of the EU. In the countries of the second group, the index of voting similarity to the US is much lower than in the rest of Europe.

Concerning the provision of US military assistance to European countries, it should be noted that US aid has been provided to almost all European countries except the countries of Western Europe as well as Russia and Belarus. Linear regression analysis of the dependence of military assistance on the index of voting in Europe showed that only three countries (Croatia, Montenegro, Georgia) out of 26 receiving assistance have a significant relationship ($R^2 > 0.5$).
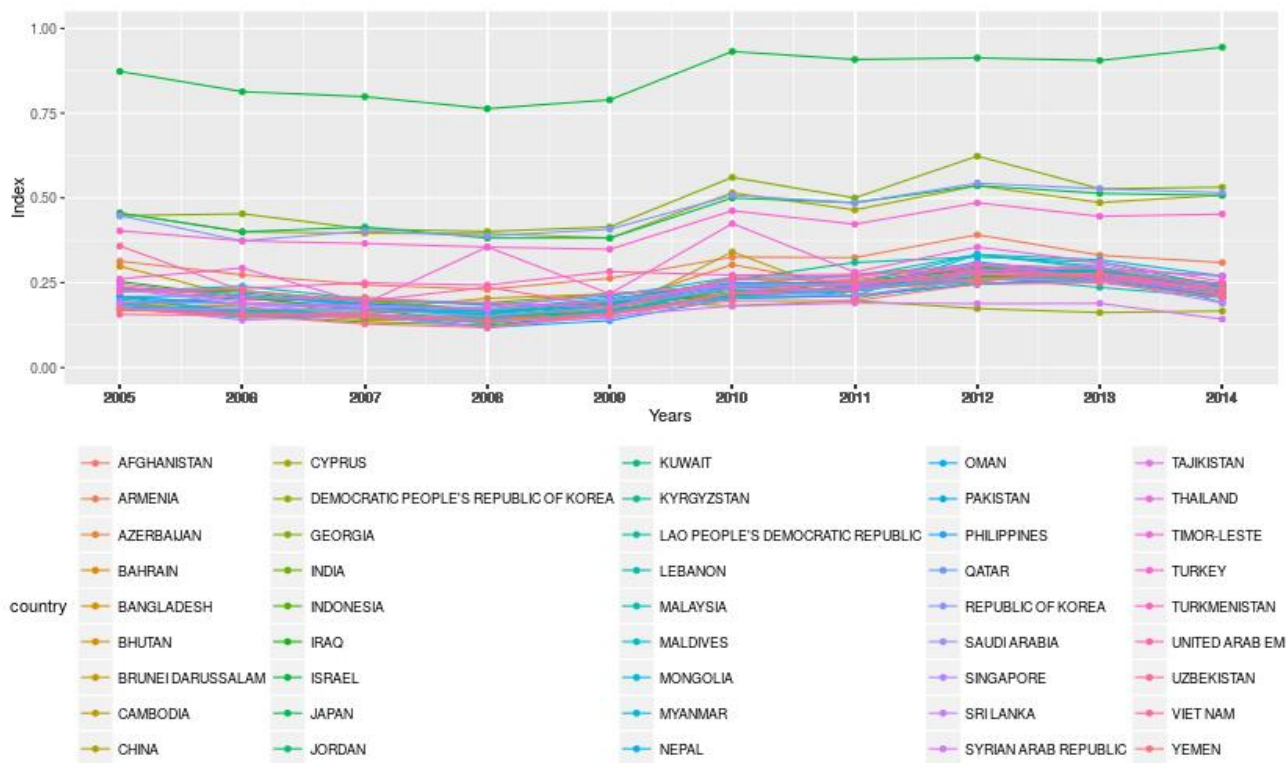

Figure 2. The index of voting coherency in the UN General Assembly between Asian countries and United States.

Asian countries have a fairly consolidated negative index (the average index by region for the entire period constitutes 0.26), the exceptions being some countries in the middle East (Israel, Cyprus, Turkey) and East Asia (Korea, Japan), which have allied relations with either the US or the EU. Excluding these countries, the standard deviation for Asia does not exceed 0.05. For the countries of Central, South, and South-East Asia, the regression analysis shows that 6 countries out of 27 have a significant linear relationship between military aid and the index of voting.
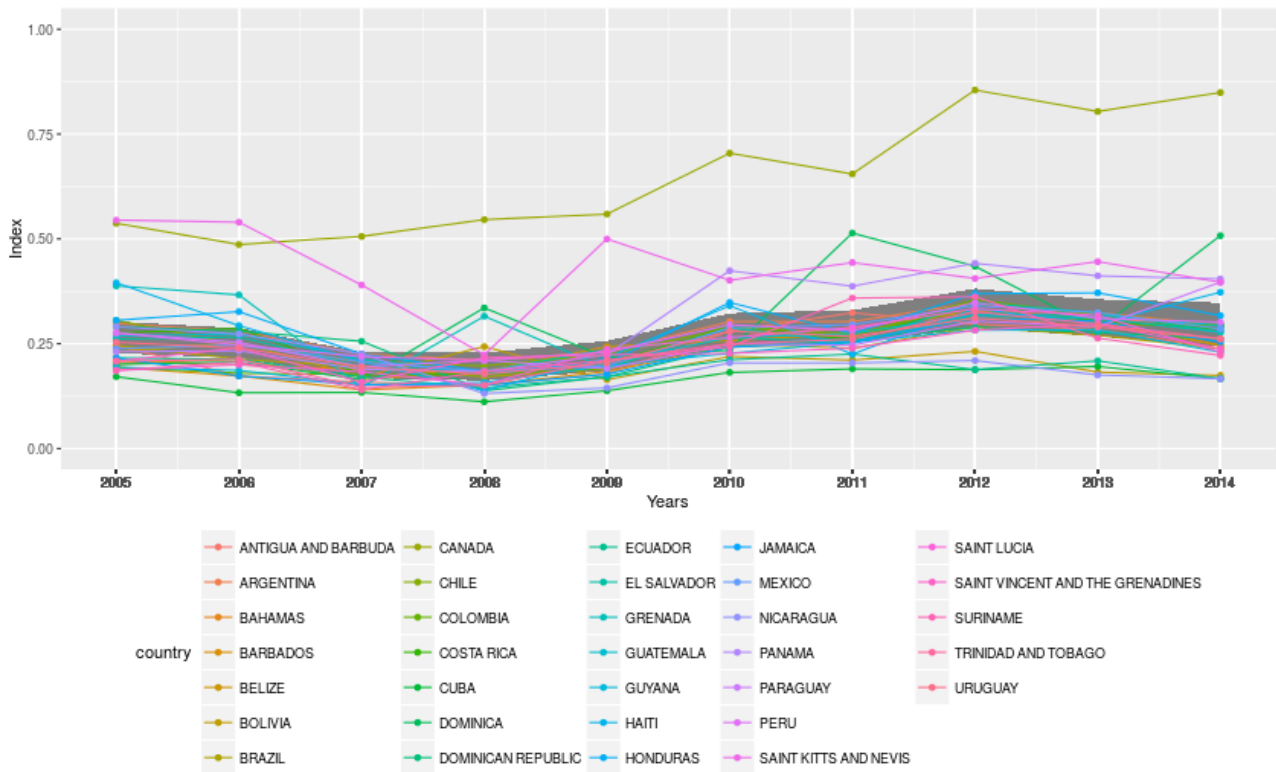
Figure 3. The index of voting coherency in the UN General Assembly between Asian countries and United States

Like Asia, Latin American countries generally do not support the policy of the US. The average index for Latin America for the entire period constitutes 0.265. Central and South America are fairly consolidated in this regard. For these regions, the standard deviation of the index does not exceed 0.05. Only Colombia has a moderate dependence on the index of voting conformity on provided military aid. The Caribbean region has a strong dispersion of index values from 0.5 to 0.125.

The countries in Africa do not have a clear policy of voting: The voting index ranges from neutral ~0.5 to negative >0.2. The average standard deviation for the region for the entire period constitutes 0.095. Only 3 out of 30 countries receiving aid show a moderate correlation between military aid and the index of voting.
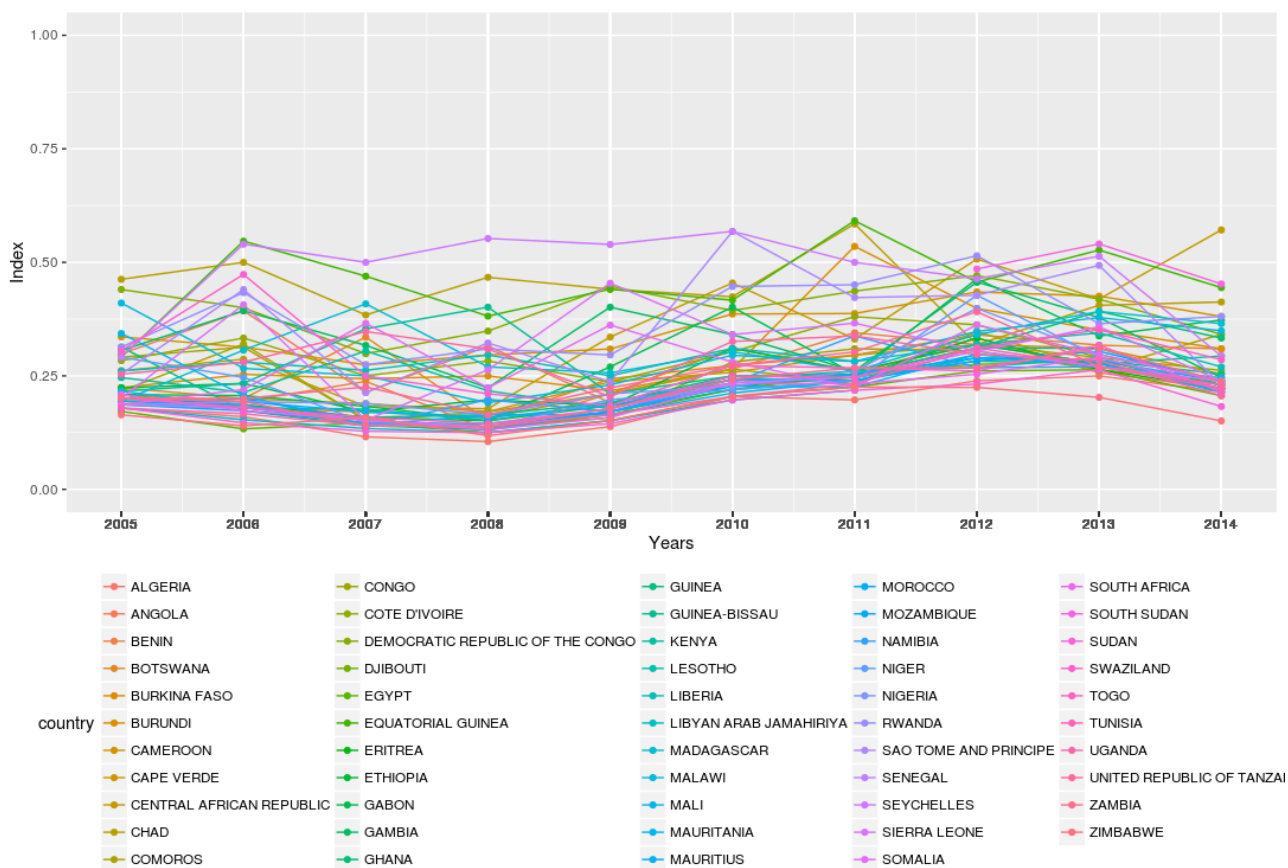
Figure 4. The index of voting coherency in the UN General Assembly between African countries and United States

If we take a look at Egypt or Ukraine, both of which fall within the general trends of voting for their respective regions, the influence of voting on the provision of aid by the US to these countries is insignificant and unimportant (*i.e.,* when providing aid, some other factors seem to be principal). On the basis of the indexes, approximately the same can be said about Vietnam and Thailand. Such states as Zimbabwe and Burkina Faso constitute a different case. We believe that it is necessary to consider their relationships with the United States separately.

Overall, we are left with an interesting picture of voting in general. There are very few countries (including Israel, Japan, Korea, Turkey, and Cyprus) that universally support the US during UN voting. The majority of European countries maintain a neutral vote with respect to the US (*i.e*., with votes matching that of the US approximately 50% of the time). All other regions have approximately the same range of voting conformity—ranging from 5% to 20%. The main conclusion is that the dynamics of voting and the general level of coherence with the US are approximately the same for the most countries, regardless of region.

Based on this, it could be concluded that for cases such as Egypt and Ukraine, the factor of voting coherence in the UN is useless. If the original hypothesis (that coherence in voting determines the likelihood of receiving US aid) were true, then Egypt would not have received more aid than Ukraine, as Egypt in fact voted more like Syria than it did the US. The only thing we can say is that the CIS countries probably have an obvious inclination to vote with the European Union and not necessarily with the US. When taken as a whole, the conclusions

drawn from this analysis are as follows: There is the voting of the US, and along with it, the relatively neutral policy of Europe and the consistent support of some countries such as Japan and Australia. The rest of the countries are, in fact, generally found to be in opposition to the US and vote approximately identically to each other. This means that the United States' determination whether or not to grant aid to other nations must be based on other critical factors.

As a final conclusion, we will point out the shortcomings of our model. Our model has the same drawbacks as any statistical model, namely that when no correlation is found between variables, it does not mean that the variables are necessarily independent. It simply means that the connection between variables may be non-linear. For example, not all UN votes are of equal importance. Some questions are more important for the US State Department than others, and it is on the basis of State Department interests that decisions regarding the granting of US aid are made. Thus, the model is poorly suited for the analysis of discrete events and needs further improvement, though this does not negate its predictive abilities.

It follows that the US probably uses the granting of aid situationally. It is impossible to trace cause-effect relations in regard to the United States on the basis of statistics alone. We conclude that in modern conditions, the stable interval of votes is unimportant for the US. Accordingly, using voting conformity alone is not conducive to determining the possibility of whether or not the US is likely to provide aid to a given nation at a certain point in the future. Finally, it is hard to identify the common denominator among different views of member states.

Discussion

Empirical testing shows that the US provides military assistance in the twenty-first century not only on the basis of voting in the UNGA but also on the basis of other factors. It is worth discussing what may lie behind these results. Since the quantitative method of research has a number of disadvantages, such as the tendency to ignore alternative explanations, give vague predictions, and generate only proven or unproven results, it makes sense to consider other non-quantitative factors that have been identified in other studies, which will close the gaps in this study. By comparing the results of different methods, we get a clearer understanding of the limitations of our approach.[8]

We cannot use threshold models in our analysis when the agent's decision depends on the actions (or inaction) of the surrounding agents, (*i.e.*, on the political factor, or group pressure). Additionally, the decision whether or not to grant aid may depend on individual preferences, (*i.e.*, the individual factor, or autonomy agent) (Granovetter, 1978), as specific characteristics of each region force the US to consider each case individually. Our research on the voting patterns of many countries of various geographic regions allows us to conclude that the United States' decision to provide military aid to Ukraine does not solely depend on Ukraine's voting patterns in the UNGA. In fact, most countries of the same region vote the same way, and as such, voting cannot be used as a single predictor for military aid.

Some authors (Carter & Stone, 2015) have attempted to prove that since the mid-1980s, US law has required the State Department to report how countries vote in the UN on issues that are regarded as important to US interests and has required USAID to use countries' voting records on these issues as a criterion for disbursing aid.[9] Such authors point out that while their results indicate that US policy influences other countries' votes, they also acknowledge the limits of that influence. While the important resolutions that the United States supports generally pass, these represent a small minority of important votes, and resolutions that the United States opposes almost always pass as well.

The fact that before 2018 the US did not provide military assistance to Ukraine is, most likely, not accidental. Our empirical test indirectly confirms the conclusions of Krause (1991) that the US uses military aid to prevent regional shifts in power in a direction that would bear negative consequences for the US. We also believe that in the current environment, the US' calculated use of military aid is by far not an encouragement, and it is clearly not a punishment. In addition, our calculations have confirmed the findings that US aid stabilizes countries (Gray, 2014; Jones & Tarp, 2016).

A number of scientists (Chin & Quadir, 2012; Rist, 2002) have documented changes in the mode of providing aid, which can indicate, first and foremost, changes in the approaches of states providing aid. For example, while the US previously supplied weapons for geopolitical reasons (Lebovic, 1988; Poe & Meernik, 1995), now, as Bachmann's study (2014) shows, use of military force is applied more rationally at the international level. Collier and Hoeffler (2007) and De Ree (De Ree & Nillesen, 2009) have also shown that financial aid can be presented as latent military assistance, as this type of assistance may be used on military spending.

We can assume that the current American administration, which finally provided aid to Ukraine four years after the revolution began, was motivated to do so in part by the notion that events in Ukraine would no longer immediately jeopardize US national-security interests: "National security does not exist in a vacuum," writes international security expert D. Kaufman. "It is rather defined in terms of international and domestic situation" (Kaufman, McKitrick, & Leney, 1985). Prior to 2018, the context in terms of sending weapons to Ukraine was not very favorable. From 2014 to the 2018, the administration of White House was more concerned with the situation in countries that were of more significant international concern. In 2014, public opinion polls in the United States indicated that the problem of the threat of an Islamic state (ISIS) prevailed by significant margin (84% vs. 44%)(Swift, Art, & Dugan, 2015).

Changing US public opinion further complicates the decision of White House foreign policy. For example, in 2014, less than one-third of Americans (32%) supported sending weapons to Ukraine—though there were not many of those who were against, either—37% (McCarthy, 2015), indicating that the crisis in Ukraine was low on the public's radar. The research demonstrates that intervention is more attractive if the potential costs to the reputation of the president are low. If voters understand American foreign diplomacy and peacekeeping efforts to have been a failure, that may lead to a lower approval rating of the incumbent party (Albornoz & Hauk, 2014; Salehyan, Gleditsch, & Cunningham, 2011; Salehyan, 2010). This indirectly coincides with the conclusions of David Brul and Alex Mintz, who argued that American presidents tend to refrain from using force when public support for doing so is less than 50 % (Brulé & Mintz, 2006).[10],[11]

According to Bachmann (2014), the use of military aid sometimes becomes more rationalized at the international level. For example, the US may change its position and ship arms to any nation if there is a long history of assistance programs in that nation, as was the case in Egypt (Berger, 2012). Egypt is also an important ally in the fight against terrorism, and other countries (*e.g.*, Pakistan) also received aid exactly on the basis of safety issues (Boutton, 2014; Steinwand, 2014).[12] In addition, countries typically only provide aid if they are sure that it will be used effectively (Chong & Gradstein, 2008; Dietrich, 2013; Winters & Martinez, 2015).

Another important factor affecting the dilemma whether or not to supply weapons is the nature of the news media vis-à-vis the conflict in question. In the summer of 1993, Bill Clinton granted aid to Somalia. A great number of people asked why the United States assisted in Somalia and did not do the same thing in many other parts of the world, such as Sudan, where there was a similar situation. Aronson believes that the news media played a

key role (Pratkanis, Pratkanis, & Aronson, 2001). Numerous pictures of starving Somalis were shown so often on American television that it caused a massive public outcry for assistance, which was subsequently transformed into political decision. Thus, the selective signposting of the news media implies that communications media not only inform citizens about what is happening, they also affect policy.

There was no clear-cut picture of the situation in Ukraine in the global mass media. An analysis conducted by Weflive on the basis of the Twitter messages of the president of Ukraine during the Davos meeting showed that the audiences actually seeing the Ukraine president's texts included 56% of Ukrainians but only 13% of Russians, 7% of Americans, 2% of Germans, 1% of Canadians, 1% of Poles, 1% of the French, and 1% of the British (Weflive, 2015). It is this small-scale news media focus and very low coverage of the situation in Ukraine among foreign audiences that reduced the responsiveness of foreign nations. Such a context hurt the chances for a timely organization and disbursement of weapons to Ukraine.

Thus, neither the internal nor external circumstances were helpful for the White House to organize the weapons supply to Ukraine. In addition, historical experience shows that it is difficult for the US to confront a country with which it has close political and military ties (Russett, 1963). In this case, US co-operation with Russia in antiterrorism efforts was an important factor in Washington's hesitation to involve itself in the conflict in Ukraine. The US continued to hesitate despite the fact that Russia continued to supply weapons and/or military aid to nations against which the US was fighting. For example, in the summer of 2014, Russia agreed to supply Iraq with military weapons including Mi-28N Night Hunter attack helicopters, Carapace-C1 anti-aircraft missile systems, and Su-25 attack aircraft consignment, few artillery and mortar divisions. The total amount of the contract was more than $1 billion (Kornilov, 2015). Similarly, in 2015, under agreements with Afghanistan and Russia, Russia delivered 45 versatile helicopters to Afghanistan, where American forces were combatting the Taliban.

Dual solutions in Washington provide evidence of the possibility of a disunified government, for which it is difficult to adopt a consistent line, leading to a decrease in international cooperation. This leads political decision-making to a deadlock, which, in fact, causes the paralysis of foreign policy on a particular issue, because the US government cannot fully control its efforts to solve international problems.

An additional difficulty for the US administration is that the problem of needing to contain the threat posed by ISIS conflicts with the negative consequences resulting from trying to ease tensions between Ukraine and Russia. In other words, easing the situation in one direction will cause it to deteriorate in the other. The White House can either balance the controversial issues, settling for a compromise (for example, by supplying only ballistic-proof jackets but not weapons), or it may refuse outright to solve one problem in favor of another.

Any country might understandably be hesitant to provide assistance if the price of such interference is high (Alesina & Dollar, 2000; Lai, 2003). When providing aid, countries take into account not only the costs of doing so but also the potential benefits it may bring (Dreher, Sturm, & Vreeland, 2009a, 2009b; Faye & Niehaus, 2012). In the case of Ukraine, while the benefits may have been unclear, one of the potential costs to the US was Ukraine's inability to repay its loans. Owing to an ailing economy, Ukraine would not be able to repay the steep debts incurred to such influential international corporations as Boeing, Airbus, Embraer, Goodrich, SNECMA, Rolls Royce, or Pratt & Whitney.[13],[14] But by this logic, Egypt will be remain an important market for US goods and is likely to remain a close supporter of the US (Berger, 2012).

Some external circumstances have also not worked in favor of a quick supply of weapons to Ukraine, one of which is Russia's global financial power. Russia is the largest player in the market of weapons. Every seventh company from the hundred listed in the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) military expenditure database is of Russian origin, and their sales are increasing every year. At the disposal of Moscow is a full range of modern weapons, which may be provided to those who will accept its conditions. According to Moscow's strategy, in protracted conflicts, the one more likely to gain the upper hand is the one who has less expensive means of suppressing the enemy's means of attack. And Russia is a world leader in this issue.

Another important factor that delayed US aid to Ukraine had more to do with US interests themselves than with Ukraine itself. This factor, which is reflected in the work of Doug Bandow, the senior scientific employee of the US Cato Institute, is the attitude of the current officials to their obligations and the interests of the states for which they work. As he asserts, "Alliances should strengthen the security of the United States, rather than forcing charity in other countries. US foreign policy should be based on the interests of America and not other countries" (Bandow, 2015). According to this expert, because the conflict between Ukraine and Russia bears no relation to Washington, the weakening or threatening of Moscow will not be in the United States' best interest. In other words, the US recognizes the dangers of supplying weapons to a conflict in which the arms provided may be used in unexpected ways at unexpected times for unexpected purposes.

For the country that is the supplier of weapons, there is always a political risk of retaliation. This risk may be justified in two cases: (1) if the benefits of relationships fermenting in one area are successfully balanced in another region, or and (2) if the country where the weapons are to be supplied has a high position in the global division of labor. Studies of the bureaucratic dimensions of American decision-making on the organization and disbursement of aid results in the drawing of contradictory conclusions (Yanguas & Hulme, 2015). On the one hand, the importance of the US legislative bodies is emphasized (Fleck & Kilby, 2006; Milner & Tingley, 2010); on the other hand, there are studies that prove the importance and influence of the media and lobbying groups (Lieberman, 2009; Marrar, 2008; Mearsheimer & Walt, 2006). A number of studies have also shown that Congress is more inclined to vote for the provision of aid if it has more left-wing senators (Brech & Potrafke, 2014)—and is further inclined to do so if the assistance to be provided is multilateral (Fleck & Kilby, 2010). In short, the reality is that the US line of providing aid has never been consistent (Masaki, 2016) and as such, cannot be accurately predicted.

To the extent that the United States' political interests and allies are relevant, we should also emphasize the dependence of the US on its European allies concerning the issue of weapons supply to Ukraine. The European Union uses its own system of requirements for the provision of aid (Crawford, 2001), consisting of economic measures and political demands related to the respect for human rights (Stokke, 2013). This strategy is aimed at changing the behavior of other states through the calculations of costs and benefits (Lehne, 2012). Analogies with the question of the withdrawal of tactical nuclear weapons show that in cases of split opinions among the allies, Washington adopts a wait-and-see attitude that can last for years.

Conclusion

Statistical predictions in politics are instruments that are rarely able to predict crucial events in the international arena for more than a few months. Statistics in international processes are incredibly inconsistent. It is very difficult for experts to identify causal relationships solely by analyzing voting statistics. Since political scientists are responsible for the data they provide and the conclusions they draw, they are well aware of the difficulty and

the danger of using a poorly understood set of relationships and processes to isolate a single element of interest. Secondly, political policy is constantly changing, so any interpretation of national interests suitable for one election cycle may be inapplicable to another. And thirdly, statistics alone do not reflect the entire picture. The variables that are leading indicators in one case may wane in importance in another. Finally, the fact that the variables have some statistical correlation between them does not mean that one variable necessarily influences the other. In total, these factors, which no one is able to control and which distort the possible results, can become a source of blindness.

As an interim conclusion, from the results of the study undertaken here, we can assert that the theories that claim it is possible to determine who will provide aid to whom at a certain point in the future on the basis of the interval of voting are fundamentally incorrect. It may be that the theory of vote-matching works poorly for short periods of time and works better in the long term, when national interests are the same for 20 years or more, which makes them *a priori* obvious and proven factors. However, US foreign interests do not generally remain unchanged for that length of time. We assert further that we cannot trace any precise cause-effect relations between voting and the granting of aid. In addition, we are unlikely to find any algorithm to predict US foreign policy on the basis of voting dynamics. In any UN vote, the US most probably goes by situational considerations concerning the content of a particular document. As such, theories attempting to predict US foreign policy are misguided.

Notes

[1] Opposition to the revolution in some eastern and southern Russophone regions escalated into the Russian invasion and annexation of the then-autonomous Ukrainian region of Crimea.

[2] The Commonwealth of Independent states, formed in 1991, includes Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine.

[3] The tenets of the Helsinki Accords called for the mutual acknowledgment of sovereign equality and the respect of the rights inherent to sovereignty. The accords also called for the refraining from the use of force or threat of force and proclaimed the inviolability of borders and territorial integrity of states and encouraged peaceful settlement of disputes, non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, and respect for human rights. All of these principles were violated in the Ukrainian revolution.

[4] One methodological detail: Rai's study was conducted at the time of the Cold War, when there was tough competition between states with different ideologies and different economic models. In addition, Rai's work only dealt with the economic assistance; countries that did not receive any American aid in a given year were excluded from the study.

[5] Otherwise, we would have seen a succession of administrations implementing the same policies and an absence of any irregularities in the evolution of foreign policy.

[6] We would like to point out that the studies cited here did not take into account the degree of tension surrounding certain issues or the importance of certain votes, since for implementation of the method of scales, one would need to know exactly how a specific administration evaluates a particular vote, which is an impossible task. As such, our study also does not take into account the factor of tension.

[7] Yet on some votes, many of these countries had lower levels of matching votes with the US than Ukraine did, which had the highest number.

[8] We exclude some components from the discussion of the research presented by James Meernik (2008) because there are no US military bases in Ukraine. In addition, given that all countries vote almost identically, we will waive the bargaining model (Armstrong, 1981; Dippel, 2015; Goldstein, 1995; Keohane & Nye, 1977; Lee & Heo, 2001; Palmer, 1990; Ray, 1981; Richardson, 2014; Roeder, 1985; Sislin, 1994) because it is not effective in practical terms.

[9] The United States disproportionately uses changes in aid disbursements to manipulate the voting behavior of poor democracies. Further, to the degree that the legitimacy of UN decisions depends on the democratic legitimacy of its members, it is unfortunate that US foreign policy systematically coerces the votes of democracies (Carter & Stone, 2015).

[10] US administrations are particularly risk-averse before elections. Public opinion is very sensitive to failures in the military sphere, and politicians will tend not to create additional grounds for criticism during pre-election campaigns.

[11] Compounding the typical hesitancy of US presidents to get involved in foreign conflicts, the Ukrainians have no consolidated ethnic community in the United States and therefore wield little to no political leverage, unlike, for example, the Cubans, who can lobby on their own behalf (Rubenzer, 2011).

[12] It is interesting to note, however, that Sullivan, Tessman, and Li (2011) find that higher levels of US military aid are actually associated with less cooperation from the recipient.

[13] Ukraine will likely not be able to buy foreign-made weapons for some time. The world's annual weapon sales volume in 2013 totaled more than 402 billion dollars (Blenckner, 2014). However, Fitch Ratings, the international rating agency, has cut the Ukrainian rating in foreign currency to CC, and for this reason, Kyiv cannot afford to buy foreign weapons in sufficient volume.

[14] One option Ukraine might utilize to increase the possibility of receiving aid, including weapon supply, is to make an attempt to strengthen strategic ties with the donor state. In this case, Ukraine could make itself look quite attractive to donor states, as it has a number of natural resources. For example, Ukraine has the world's largest known reserves of iron ore, which it could potentially supply to the world markets.

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