

The Socialization Effect of EU Membership on Foreign Policy: Evidence from the UN General Debate *

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Abstract

Does membership of intergovernmental organizations lead to more similar foreign policy preferences through a socialization effect? This question has received much attention in IR. Empirical studies focusing on the EU, claim EU membership leads to foreign policy convergence based on analyzing UN voting patterns. We argue the significant coordination between EU member states when voting means voting cohesion demonstrates effective coordination, not a socialization effect. To examine whether EU membership has a socialization effect on member states, we use a new dataset of UN General Debate (GD) statements. Every year, UN member states discuss their perspectives on major international issues in the GD. The lack of coordination and external constraints in delivering GD statements makes them ideal for testing socialization effects on preferences. Interviews with UN representatives of EU members support our argument that there is significant coordination between EU delegations on UN votes, but not in formulating GD statements. We derive estimates of states' foreign policy preferences from GD statements using text analytic techniques, and examine the effect of EU membership and engagement on preferences using these new measures.

Key Words: Socialization, European Union, United Nations, text analysis

*Authors' names are listed in alphabetical order. Authors have contributed equally to all work.

Introduction

A fundamental issue in the study of International Relations (IR) is the extent to which intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) influence the behavior of member states. In particular, there has been much attention to whether there is a process of socialization that occurs with membership of IGOs, which leads to a convergence in the interests and preferences of member states (see e.g. [Wendt, 1994](#); [Checkel, 2005](#); [Bearce and Bondanella, 2007](#)). Studies that have sought to systematically analyze whether there is a socialization effect of IGO membership on state preference convergence have focused on voting alignment in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) (e.g. [Bearce and Bondanella, 2007](#)). There are, however, limitations of using UNGA voting to examine socialization.

In this paper, we use a new measure of state preferences based on the application of text analysis to countries' annual statements in the UN General Debate. The General Debate takes place every year at the start of each new session of the UNGA, and provides member states with the opportunity to address the Assembly. Governments use these speeches to discuss major events that have occurred in the past year, as well as underlying issues in world politics, and to put on record their position on these issue. As such, it provides us with an ideal source of data on state preferences.

Focusing on the case of the EU, we examine whether engagement and membership of the EU leads to more similar foreign policy preferences based on estimates derived from GD statements. We argue that estimations of similarity derived from GD speeches provide a more accurate reflection of whether foreign policy convergence occurs as there is very little coordination between EU member states with General Debate statements; in contrast, voting on resolutions in the UNGA involves a high degree of coordination among EU member states. We provide support for this argument using interviews conducted with representatives from the national delegations of EU member states to the UN. Based on an initial analysis of the effects of EU membership (and association) on preference similarity, we find some evidence to support the view that membership of the EU leads to foreign policy convergence through a socialization process.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we discuss the existing literature on socialization and international organizations. The second section focuses on the

EU and socialization, explaining in more detail why the EU provides us with an ideal case to examine whether IGOs have a socialization effect on foreign policy preferences. We then discuss in more detail our use of GD statements to measure state preferences, using qualitative evidence in the form of interviews with the representative of EU member state delegations to the UN to support our argument. The fourth section discusses the data and methodology used in the study. We then present the findings of our analysis, before offering concluding remarks.

Socialization and International Organizations

Since the rise of constructivism in late 1980s and early 1990s as the main competitor to rationalism in IR (Katzenstein, Keohane and Krasner, 1998), one of the main dividing lines of the rationalist-constructivist debate has been the nature of state interests. At the core of the constructivist programme lies the idea that international interactions between states can not only change the behaviour but also the identities and interests of states (Checkel, 1999; Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998; Weldes, 1996; Wendt, 1992, 1994, 1999). Rationalism on the other hand considers state interests exogenous to inter-state processes: interests are formulated within the national boundaries and then eventually bargained in international interactions (e.g. Legro, 1996; Moravcsik, 2013). The origins and evolution of state interests is central to so many debates in international politics that it represents “perhaps the most fundamental issue” in the discipline (Johnston, 2005, 1040).

Ultimately, as Alexander Wendt suggested years ago, this controversy is empirical. Researchers would need to “assess the causal relationship between practice and interaction (as independent variable) and the cognitive structures at the level of individual states and of systems of states which constitute identities and interests (as dependent variable)” (Wendt, 1992, 423). Within this research agenda, one of the most fertile lines of inquiry has investigated the effects of practices and interactions developed by and within international institutions on the behaviour and attributes of states (e.g. Bearce and Bondanella, 2007; Beyers, 2005; Taninchev, 2015; Checkel, 2005; Greenhill, 2010; Johnston, 2001, 2005; Lewis, 2005). Here, international institutions shape state interests through exchanges and “conditions that are unique to social groups qua social groups, namely,

socialization processes” (Johnston, 2001, 487). If this literature has convincingly demonstrated that international socialization is a significant component of international relations (although its effects are sometimes complementary with or secondary to other factors), it has nonetheless struggled to test, let alone validate, the endogenising capacity of international institutions.

On the one hand, the concept of socialization has often been used to denote processes of social influence and peer pressure which operate within international institutions and stimulate pro-norm behaviour (Johnston, 2001). In these situations, states change their behaviour through the distribution of social rewards and punishments, such as social liking, public praise and recognition, naming and shaming, shunning or demeaning. These processes, however, do not require a transformation of state interests (Gilardi and Wasserfallen, 2016). The change in state behaviour may be induced by a consequentialist choice (Zürn and Checkel, 2005, 1052), since the social environment can increase the costs of non-compliance and/or the benefits of group conformity. Yet, this does not tell us whether the underlying state preferences have changed. In other words, state interests remain exogenous to the social interaction: actors might not have switched from a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness (Checkel, 2005, 805). It is “public conformity without private acceptance” (Johnston, 2001, 499).

On the other hand, similar problems are encountered even by those who more explicitly aim to explore the endogenous nature of state interests through socialization. In this regard, the use of voting similarity in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) has been a popular choice (e.g. Bearce and Bondanella, 2007; Taninchev, 2015). Although the study of UNGA voting offers an excellent contribution to understanding state behaviour in IR, it has some potential disadvantages if one wants to uncover the endogeneity of state interests. UNGA roll call votes go indeed through rather extensive coordination processes among regional blocs – be it within the European Union (EU) (Burmester and Jankowski, 2014; Smith, 2004) or other groups such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference (Hug and Lukács, 2014, 100). UNGA voting is therefore likely to indicate the quality and strength of regional blocs’ coordination efforts on politicised resolutions (Jin and Hosli, 2013, 1275) more than a genuine convergence among state interests. The problem with coordination is that it brings with it a number of other factors, which are

only partially related to socialization. Successful coordination can be linked to social incentives, peer pressure and the mechanisms of social influence mentioned above. Significantly, material incentives such as issue-linkages and side-payments can also elicit group conformity. In all these cases, coordination effectively leads to a high voting cohesion but only the deeds, and not the properties, of the actor are affected. Once again, state interests would remain exogenous to the social exchanges while only the behaviour would be altered.

Specifying socialization

The aim of this paper is to examine whether international socialization leads to an endogenous convergence of state interests. The idea to be tested is whether inter-state contacts within international institutions trigger a redefinition of the preferences of their members along common lines, in the absence of both material and social incentives. This “purest type of socialization” (Johnston, 2001, 494) can help us to dissect the exogenous/endogenous nature of state interests. In this regard, we understand socialization as a set of processes through which actors acquire new beliefs and interests “through regular and sustained interactions within broader social contexts and structures” (Bearce and Bondanella, 2007, 706). These new beliefs/interests become part of the self and constitute the foreign policy positions of the state.

Four clarifications on our understanding of socialization follow from the discussion so far. First, our main interest in this paper is on the outcomes, rather than on the process, of socialization. If there is an inherent ambiguity between products and processes in the concept of socialization itself (Beyers, 2010, 911), we are interested in showing the demonstrable modification in state interests over time – e.g., the adoption of eventual pro-norm behaviour. Second, we consider socialization an ongoing and moving phenomenon. In this way, we intend to analyse the introduction of novices (e.g., new members of an international organization) into the values, practices, thinking of a given community – as many students of socialization do and consider as the most direct mark of the concept (e.g. Checkel, 2005; Johnston, 2001). Yet, our aim is to go beyond this and to also include what happens to the old members and to the community once the novices have become a

“conventional” part of it (Taninchev, 2015, 135). Convergence is not something that is set once and for all. It is instead a dynamic process that require constant adaptations, and not only from novices, but from old members as well. International institutions evolve over time and all the members are subject to new ideas, policy interpretations and priorities. As Wendt (1994, 386) put it, “social identities and interests are always in process during interaction”.

Third, in order to differentiate between strategic and socialised convergence, actors should internalise the (new) interests. Internalization implies that the interests should become part of the actors’ properties and not simply represent behavioural adaptation. States adopt and sustain over time group norms in the absence of external incentives. Once internalised, the interest “no longer needs active enforcement and that norm-consistent behaviour gains a status of taken-for-grantedness” (Beyers, 2010, 913). We are instead inclusive as to the mechanisms that can lead to internalization. There is indeed “more than one way in which agents may” internalise community practices (Checkel, 2005, 804).

First, internalization can follow non-reflective role-playing where actors perceive certain courses of action as appropriate and well-suited to their role. For instance, participation in international institutions can endow states with new identities (e.g. a regional identity in the case of ASEAN or the EU; or a thematic identity in the case of human rights organizations). These new identities bring with them a new series of interests which are then performed by the state as integral part of the self. Second, internalization may result from an active process of persuasion. States assume new policy positions because they are convinced of the quality of the arguments proposed by and within socialising institutions. Persuasion involves truth-seeking discourses, through which states non-coercively change their opinions, interests and attitudes (Risse, 2000). Persuasion can again be linked to the development of new identities, since positive affect triggered by common identities is more likely to foster a deliberative approach (Johnston 2001: 494). Yet, persuasion is not necessarily related to a shift in state identity; interest convergence can be produced by the diffusion of convincing ideas from one or more states as a result of social interaction within international institutions (Taninchev, 2015, 137). Finally, internalization can follow strategic calculation. Material and/or social incentives

might induce a change in the behaviour but not in the views and preferences of a state. However, over time the behavioural conformance can eventually lead to internalization. If specific incentives were crucial in determining the behavioural change at first, they cease to be necessary to prompt pro-norm behaviour once/if the state internalises the new norms. This can occur through routinization or rationalization (Schimmelfennig, 2005, 831). This internalization through successful reinforcement indicates a switch from a logic of consequences to a logic of appropriateness, although it can be disputed to what extent this mechanism truly represents socialization (Bearce and Bondanella, 2007, 707).

In this paper, we are interested in the macro-results of socialization; our design is not finalised to distinguish between these different mechanisms of socialization. Indeed, as Bearce and Bondanella (2007, 705) maintain, if the macro-effect “could not be demonstrated, it would arguably make little sense to debate its underlying micro-foundations”. Nonetheless, we will include some tests to inspect the demarcations between strategic adaptation and internalisation. Fourth, our study is not equally designed to investigate the different micro-processes of socialization – that is, the specific channels through which participation in international institutions might transform the interests of a state. The literature has largely assumed or emphasised the role played by individual policy-makers in linking the national and international level. Socialised within international bodies, they would transmit the new attitudes, beliefs and norms into the national foreign policy of their countries, leading to a long-term convergence of member state interests.

We agree that government officials are likely to be at the forefront of the socialization processes (Taninchev, 2015; Schimmelfennig, 2005); but we do not speculate further than this. Again, our purpose is to verify and test the potential endogenous effects of socialization, at the macro/state level. A number of scholars has instead applied the socialization hypotheses to the level of individual state agents (e.g. Beyers, 2005; Beyers and Trondal, 2004; Egeberg, Schäfer and Trondal, 2003). They have, however, largely failed to show whether/how the eventual socialization of participating individuals generates lasting behavioural changes in states’ interests (Zürn and Checkel, 2005, 1054). In other words, “socialization becomes interesting for IR theory inasmuch as these individual effects can also be demonstrated on a more aggregate level” (Bearce and Bondanella, 2007, 707).

The EU and Socialization

We test the impact of socialization on the convergence of state interests to the case of European Union. There are several reasons we have chosen to focus on the EU. First, the EU has been chosen for reasons similar to those expressed by Jeffrey Checkel (2005, 817-818) and the special issue of *International Organization* he edited in 2005. The EU is by far the most institutionalised organization in international politics, where the interaction among states and policy-makers is the most dense, far-reaching and frequent. In this respect, we use the EU as a most likely case for a deep transformation of state interests. Indeed, demonstrating the potential endogenous transformation of state interests via international institutions and in absence of external incentives remains a hard case for socialization and IR (Johnston, 2001).

The literature, however, has found mixed evidence of the effects of socialization in Europe. In particular, it has emphasised that these effects are uneven and often weak; EU socialization has not replaced, while remaining complementary and secondary to, national allegiances (e.g. Beyers, 2005; Hooghe, 2005; Zürn and Checkel, 2005). However, expecting the socialising effects of the EU to result in the substitution of national bonds with a new, post-national, European identity is an extremely high benchmark for EU socialization (Johnston, 2005, 1035). Achieving pure collective identities is indeed a quite unlikely occurrence in international relations: the force of inter-state egoistic identities will hardly be eliminated in the international arena (Wendt, 1994, 386). Once we relax this expectation, the evidence that socialization permeates, to a smaller or larger degree, EU institutions and politics, is certainly solid and unambiguous (Egeberg, Schäfer and Trondal, 2003; Lewis, 2005).

In the EU's highly institutionalised political system (Hix and Høyland, 2011), the endogenous transformation of state interests can occur through processes situated at and produced by multiple levels. At the macro level, the EU redefines the boundaries of the European polity, leading to a convergent restructuring of the interests of the previous separate national polities. The European political space has been constantly reorganised as a result, for instance, of the enlargement process (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2005). At the meso level, EU rules and regulations have Europeanised a high number of

policy sectors, from telecommunications policy to agriculture, from environmental policy to the asylum regime, etc. (cf., among others [Cowles, Caporaso and Risse-Kappen, 2001](#); [Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003](#); [Graziano and Vink, 2006](#)). At the micro level, national policy-makers (Heads of state/government, ministers, diplomats, bureaucrats) interact every day in and around EU settings in an iterative manner. This has been producing an increasingly integrated European administrative system and executive order ([Trondal, 2010](#)).

These patterns also apply to EU foreign policy, which is the focus of this study. EU member states started to cooperate in foreign policy since 1970, under the then-called European political Cooperation (EPC). This regime has been progressively institutionalised ([Smith, 2004](#)) and upgraded into the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) in 1993. The CFSP – together with its defence component, the Common Defence and Security Policy (CSDP) – is a potentially thick socialising environment. In 2016, the EU's Foreign Affairs ministers met 30 times, more than any other ministerial configuration in the EU Council. Similarly, several meetings of the around 35 groups/committees that populate the CFSP/CSDP are programmed each day in Brussels. Some of them gather on average twice per week. On a whole, the cumulative number of these meetings is higher in the CFSP/CSDP than in any other EU policy area ([Chelotti, 2016](#)). Constructivist scholars have long considered this environment conducive to socialization processes: member states start by consulting and exchanging views (coordination reflex), then develop trust and feelings of solidarity which might lead to common views, interests and actions ([Howorth, 2012](#); [Meyer, 2005](#); [Nuttall, 1992](#); [Smith, 2000](#); [Tonra, 2001](#)). From this perspective, the CFSP/CSDP is understood as a foreign policy society within which member states' identities, values and interests develop and endogenously change ([Tonra, 2003](#)).

The second, and most important, reason for focussing on the EU is that this organization allows us to test different aspects of socialization. The EU is a differentiated political system, in terms of institutionalisation, membership and policy integration. With regard to institutionalisation, the EU has been changing considerably since its creation or since the early days of the EPC. Over the years, it has added a considerable number of policies to its remit ([Hix and Høyland, 2011](#)), including areas close to state sovereignty ([Genschel](#)

and Jachtenfuchs, 2013). The depth of institutionalisation has also intensified, with an increasingly bigger role for the European Parliament, a gradual waning of unanimity as a decision-making rule in the Council, a higher number of bodies created and empowered, such as the European Central Bank, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs or the External Action Service (EEAS), etc. This means that the EU of 1975 is a very different “beast” from that of 1994 or 2017: it is thus possible to analyse socialization at different stages of institutionalization.

In relation to membership, the EU has gone through different rounds of enlargements, growing from 6 (still in 1972) to 28 (in 2017). In addition, a number of countries are currently negotiating their accession to the EU (e.g., Serbia) and/or have already been granted an official candidate status (e.g., Albania). This allows us to monitor candidate countries before filing the application, during the negotiating period and after becoming members. Socialization as well as incentives vary at different stages of the enlargement process. Finally, the EU is internally differentiated and has variable policy geometry. For instance, some countries are more integrated than others and have embarked on wide-ranging projects such as an Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the Banking Union or the Schengen borderless area (Leruth and Lord, 2015; Schimmelfennig, Leuffen and Rittberger, 2015). In this way, we can control for the quantity and quality of the social interaction.

The EU’s differentiated integration creates different kinds of social environments, which should generate differences in the degree of socialization outcomes among the member states. The EU is therefore an excellent laboratory if we want to test specific and fine-grained hypotheses on socialization.

Coordination vs Socialization: UN Votes and Speeches

With the aim of investigating the endogenising potential of intergovernmental organizations, our dependent variable is the convergence of (EU member) state interests. The obvious challenge is to construct reliable measures of state interests “capable of sustaining inferences about change” (Wendt, 1994, 391). The challenge is further complicated by the fact that these measures should represent tangible manifestations of interest inter-

nationalization (Beyers, 2010, 913). Indicators of state interests are to be found in behavioural actions, outside cognition, which makes potentially intermingled with strategic motivations. Some have concluded, as a result, that systematically analysing state interests is an impossible empirical endeavour. As Bearce and Bondanella (2007, 704-5) put it, “[o]n this point we simply disagree ... [F]ew, if any, operational measures [w]ould meet such a [high] standard”. Given “the theoretical importance of the question it seems premature to give up trying to observe [interest] change” (Johnston, 2001, 492).

Bearce and Bondanella (2007) and Taninchev (2015) measure interests using dyadic voting patterns, derived from roll-call votes within the UNGA. As discussed above, UNGA resolutions are highly coordinated among regional blocs. Coordination includes social (e.g., shaming) and material (e.g., side-payments) incentives, so that it might indicate only a superficial change in state behaviour. Along with consensus reflexes, diplomats indicate classical rationalist reasons for coordination (e.g., provision of high-quality information; coordination as an influence multiplier) (Smith 2006). The underlying preferences of the state might instead remain unaffected. UNGA votes are therefore problematic if we want to test the sincere transformation of state interests. As these authors admit, despite being an improvement in capturing state interest convergence, UNGA voting similarity “is not a perfect measure of interests” (Taninchev, 2015, 142)¹. New empirical tests on socialization and interest convergence “can and should be conducted” once “scholars create improved operational measures for state interests and [international institutions] with socialization potential” (Bearce and Bondanella, 2007, 729).

We use countries’ annual statements in the UN General Debate (GD) as a more appropriate operational indicator for measuring the potential endogeneity of state interests. The General Debate takes place every September in New York, and marks the start of each new session of the UNGA. It provides all UN member states with the opportunity to address the Assembly and to present their perspective on key issues in world politics (see Baturo, Dasandi and Mikhaylov, 2017). Governments use their GD statements to put on the record their position on events that have occurred during the past year and on longer-term underlying issues in international politics, related to issues such as conflict, terrorism, development, democracy, human rights, and climate change.

¹Cf. See also (Bearce and Bondanella, 2007, 711)

A key difference between General Debate speeches and UNGA voting is that GD statements are not institutionally connected to decision-making in the UN. As a result governments face far fewer external constraints when delivering GD statements in comparison to voting in the UNGA (see [Baturu, Dasandi and Mikhaylov, 2017](#)). For example, UNGA voting only takes place on the limited number of issues that reach the formal agenda of the UNGA (see [Häge and Hug, 2016](#)). In contrast, as [Smith \(2006, 155\)](#) notes, the General Debate acts “as a barometer of international opinion on important issues, even those not on the agenda for that particular session”. Furthermore, voting alignment in the UNGA is widely recognized to be heavily influenced by strategic voting blocs or by aid flows from richer and poorer nations (see e.g. [Russett, 1966](#); [Dreher and Sturm, 2012](#); [Alesina and Dollar, 2000](#); [Voeten, 2013](#)). As a result of GD speeches not being institutionally connected to decision-making in the UN, such factors have little influence on the content of GD speeches. Indeed, it has long been recognized that the General Debate is one of the few international venues where smaller states can have their voices heard (see [Nicholas, 1959](#); [Baturu, Dasandi and Mikhaylov, 2017](#)).

It is important to note that GD speeches do not occur in a vacuum, but rather in a social context consisting of other states. However, all the components of social influence are here kept at a minimum. Cooperation among states is not expected: there is no group line to follow. In this context, social processes such as cognitive (dis)comfort, shaming, social liking, etc., which are directed to generate pressure for group conformity and which apply to UNGA voting coordination – only marginally (if at all) influence the production of UNGA national speeches. Material incentives or threats are even less likely to operate.

In the context of the EU, the difference in coordination efforts between UNGA voting and UNGA speeches is remarkable. EU states committed to coordinate their actions in international institutions since the 1970s; the Maastricht treaty (1993) reinforced this pledge, by stating that “Member States shall co-ordinate their action in international organizations and at international conferences”. The pressure to coordinate EU voting is massive and well-documented. Various actors are involved, in the national capitals, in Brussels (EEAS, High Representative, Council working groups), in New York (European Union Delegation to the United Nations, and until recently, the Council Presidency). Around 1,500 EU coordinating meetings are organised every year on UN issues

(Degrand-Guillaud 2009). EU member states' diplomats are extremely dedicated to the process and take these meetings seriously (Smith 2006). It therefore comes as no surprise that the EU is the only regional organization able to consolidate or increase its voting cohesion on contested resolutions (Burmester and Jankowski 2014).

Our argument here is that while there is a high degree of coordination among EU member states in voting on resolutions in the UNGA, there is little or no coordination when it comes to General Debate speeches. This perspective is supported by interviews we have conducted with representatives from the national delegations of EU member states to the UN.² All of the representatives we spoke to indicated that there was virtually no coordination between EU member states when it came to General Debate statements. A representative from the German Mission to the UN, explained, "coordination for the General Debate is not happening... These speeches are the most sovereign thing that a country does as a member state of the UN."³ A representative from the Finnish Mission to the UN stated, "speeches at the General Debate are interesting because they flesh out national policies... what states think... The speeches are one of the least coordinated parts [among EU member states] of the UN activities."⁴ Similarly, a representative from the Portuguese mission explained that with the GD statements, "each country does it its own way... this is a national speech... there is no coordination with other countries."⁵

In contrast the representatives we interviewed indicated there there was a high degree of coordination among EU members when it came to voting in the UNGA. The process of coordinating voting alignment was described by a representative from the Austrian mission to the EU who explained how once a draft of the UN resolution was received, a debate took place among the EU member states, which included experts of the EU delegation. Following the debate, representatives reported back to their capitals, before meeting again with other delegations in order to agree on the stance EU countries should take on the issue.⁶ The representative from the German mission explained that with

²To date we have conducted interviews with five national delegations of EU member states to the UN. We will carry out more interviews in the coming months.

³Interview with representative from German Mission to the UN, 16 June 2015.

⁴Interview with representative from the Permanent Mission of Finland to the EU, 9 June 2015

⁵Interview with representative from Foreign Ministry of Portugal, 24 May 2016.

⁶Interview with representative from Austrian Permanent Mission to the UN, 18 June, 2015.

UNGA voting, “we [EU member states] try to avoid being divided.”⁷ Efforts to avoid divisions included lobbying countries to vote the same way as other EU member states. This coordination on voting alignment also includes EU accession countries. All of the representatives we spoke to felt that the EU was largely successful in coordinating on UNGA voting, and that it was rare for the member states not to come to an agreement on how to vote.

Therefore, we argue that given the high levels of coordination on UNGA voting, and the absence of this coordination with speeches in the UN General Debate; similarity in GD speeches can more accurately identify whether there is a socialization process within the EU that leads to the alignment of state preferences. Significantly, GD speeches embody very well the characteristics of national interests, as conceptualised by Jutta Weldes (1996). They “emerge out of the representations – through which state officials and others make sense of the world around them” (Weldes, 1996, 280). First, speeches are produced by foreign policy-makers. Second, they indicate how state officials represent the international system, the actors that populate it (including their own state) and the meaning they attach to each of them. They signal what is important to them in a given year and the position of that state vis-a-vis a variety of objects and situations, defining the state relationship with them “in a quasi-causal way” (Weldes, 1996, 281). Speeches make clear to national policy-makers themselves as well to the external world “who and what ‘we’ are, who and what are ‘our enemies’ are, who and what, in what ways ‘we’ are threatened by ‘them’, and how ‘we’ might best deal with those ‘threats’” (Weldes, 1996, 283). Third, speeches change every year: like the representations of national interests, they are always in flux, can be challenged and are never fixed once and for all. The images that national officials produce to make sense of international politics constantly evolve – which makes them an excellent indicator to observe change. To sum up: “in providing a vision of the world of international relations”, UNGA speeches/representations “have already defined the national interest” (Weldes, 1996, 281).

⁷Interview with representative from German Mission to the UN, 16 June 2015.

Data and Methodology

To test whether EU membership leads to the socialization of member states' foreign policy position, we assess whether incorporation in the EU leads to more similar foreign policy positions based on country statements in the UN General Debate. In other words, we look to assess the degree of convergence in foreign policy positions of EU member states. Our time period of analysis is 1970-2014. In this section, we discuss the data and methodology we use to examine the effects of EU membership on member states' foreign policy positions.

Outcome variables: Foreign policy positions from UN General Debate statements

The outcome variables we employ in the analysis are derived from countries' annual statements to the UNGA in the General Debate. To do this we use a new dataset of the GD statements, *the UN General Debate Corpus* (Baturu, Dasandi and Mikhaylov, 2017). As we have explained, UN member states use their GD statements to discuss major events over the past year as well as underlying issues in world politics, and to put on record their perspective on these issues.

One possibility to assess positions of EU member states with text data is to scale them on a key foreign policy dimension. This can be easily done with the Wordscore – a methodology familiar to political scientists. Here, we assume that one dimension that structures foreign policy preferences of EU member states since 1970 to 2014 is the relationship between USA and Russia. We take this dimension to be the main conflictual dimension of international politics. Another alternative is an emergent dimension of the relationship between China and the USA. The salience of this dimension increased relatively recently, and, in line, potential divergence of preferences on this dimension should be a relatively recent thing.

We operationalize convergence of foreign policy positions of EU member states by tapping into the relevant literature on EU economic growth and regional development. In that literature convergence (or “sigma-convergence”) is the central element of EU cohesion policy and is formulated as a reduction in the standard deviation of income

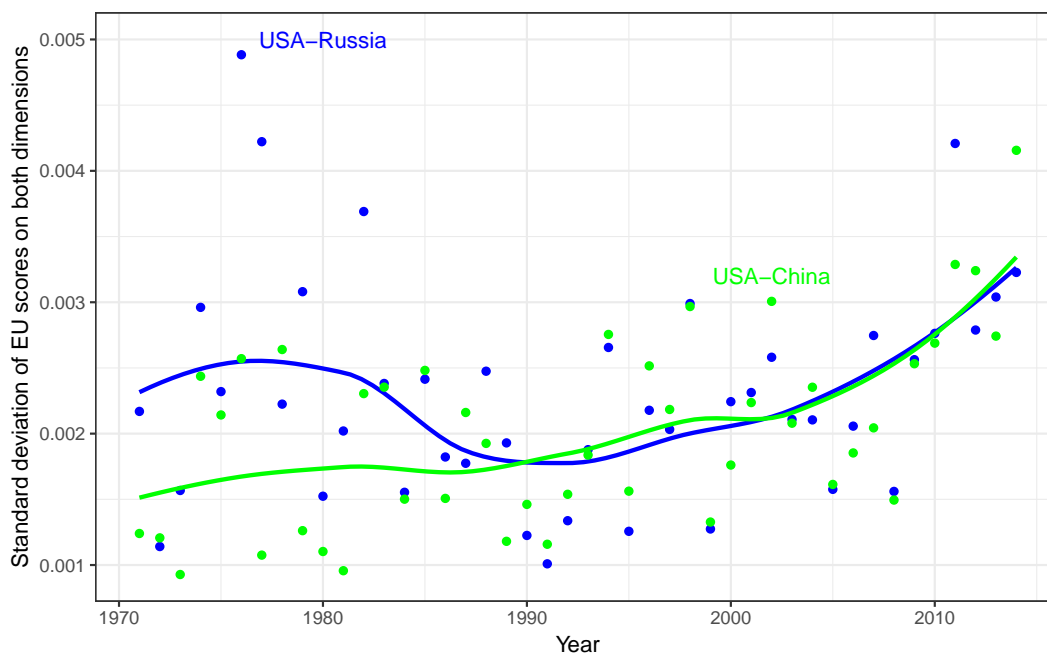


Figure 1: *Standard deviation of position for EU*. Plot of standard deviation of positions on two dimension for EU member states. Loess line fitted on top.

levels across economies. We adopt this measure here and operationalize foreign policy convergence as a reduction in the standard deviation of positions on key dimensions of international politics.

We estimate positions of all EU member states on both dimensions of international contestation (USA and Russia, and USA and China) using Wordscores algorithm implemented in the `quanteda` package. We then calculate standard deviation of EU member states' positions for each year. Figure 1 presents the results.

We observe convergence of foreign policy positions on the USA-Russia dimension towards the end of the Cold War, but with the subsequent enlargement waves the divergences increased on both dimensions.

One limitation of the above measures of foreign policy convergence is our assumption that the two key dimensions of international contestation are structured by the relationships between the USA on the one hand and Russia and China on the other hand. While this is a reasonable assumption, in our opinion, we also assess alternative measures. Here we exploit the fact that EU member states hold rotational presidency of the Council of the European Union, where the presiding member state is responsible for the functioning of the Council of the European Union. In addition, since 2011 the President of the European

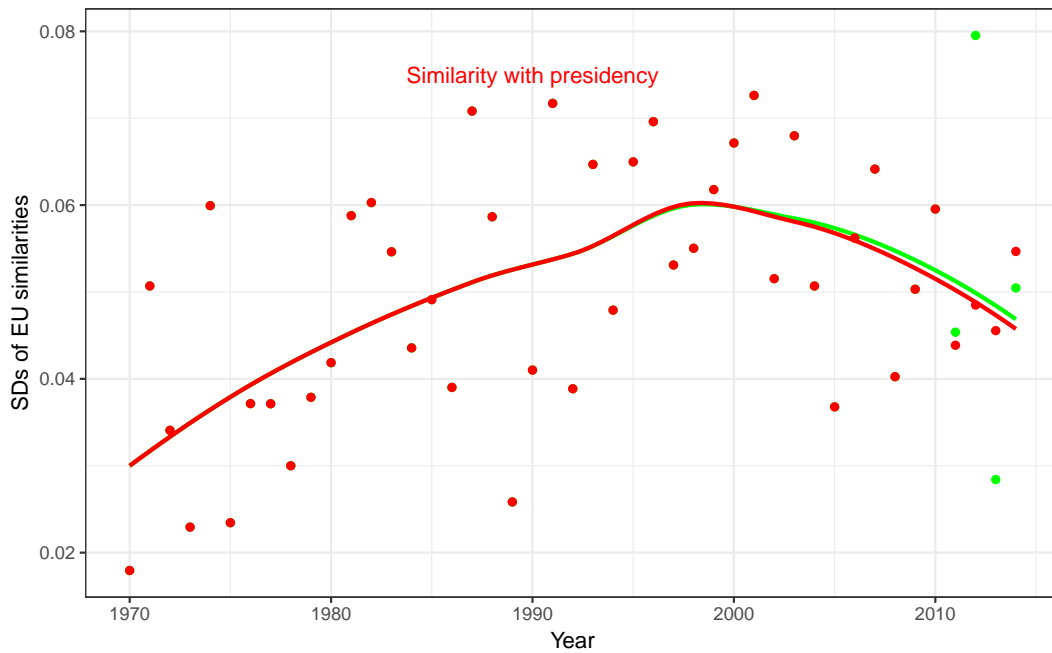


Figure 2: *Standard deviation of similarity for EU*. Plot of standard deviation of similarities. Loess line fitted on top.

Council delivers a statement during UNGD on behalf of the EU. We use that statement as an alternative text for the last several years.

We calculate similarity between each UNGD statement and the statement of the country holding rotational presidency. As a measure of similarity we use a standard cosine similarity measure that is frequently used to assess the similarity between two vectors of words (where each vector is a UNGD statement). We then calculate the standard deviation of cosine similarities for the EU for each year in the sample. Figure 2 shows our convergence estimates based on cosine similarity measures.

We observe that divergencies from texts of EU presiding country steadily increased until late 1990s, and then sharply decreased from about 2000.

Explanatory Variables

In our research, we (will) unpack socialization in a number of different aspects. We will attempt to test the quantity of interaction, to measure time as an indicator of socialization and to shed light on the potential internalization of state interests. For this paper, however, our principal explanatory variable is whether a country is a member of the EU in a given

year or not. EU membership offers a number of venues in which state officials interact and can be socialised. It can also re-orientate the domestic politics and policies more in line with EU common positions. National leaders can then incorporate these changes in domestic priorities and sensitives into their September speeches.

However, the process of socialization may begin prior to a country becoming a formal member of the EU, when the formal process of EU accession occurs. As such, we include two additional variables: whether a country is an official applicant for EU membership, and whether a country has EU candidate status. On the one hand, candidate states start to interact with the existing member states and EU institutions during the enlargement process, well before the day they officially join the EU. During this period, they also are required to adopt the *acquis communautaire* (e.g., all accumulated legislative outputs that the EU has produced since its beginning) and the *acquis politique* (all the activities and shared principles of EU foreign policy). Socialization may well happen during this period. On the other hand, membership vs official applicant vs official candidate offer a state different incentives to shape its foreign policy and identify its interests. This might help us to investigate the possible strategic adaptation (instead of a genuine socialised convergence) of the state. In developing this analysis going forward, we aim to include additional explanatory variables, which not only look at EU association, but also consider the types of associations countries have with the EU.

Other Control Variables

We also include additional variables in our model to control for other factors that may influence countries' foreign policy positions. This consists of a standard set of political and economic variables, such as countries' *polity* scores (Marshall and Jaggers, 2002); GDP per capita levels; and trade as a proportion of GDP. The data for GDP per capita and trade/ GDP are taken from the World Bank's World Development Indicators (WDI).

We also include a dummy variable of whether a country is a member of the UN Security Council in a given year, to control for any effects of UNSC membership on foreign policy positions, and include a control for the post-Cold War period.

Model Specification

We examine the effects of EU membership (and other association) on state preferences using a linear regression model with twoway fixed effects. This allows us to account for country-specific unobserved factors that are constant over time, and address the issue of omitted variable bias. The inclusion of year-dummies also allows us to address time trends that may influence levels of socialization (as we have explained). The time period of our analysis is 1971-2014, and our sample includes 161 countries.

Analysis

Institutional evolution of the EU

As a first test of the quality of socialization, we look at different stages of the EU foreign policy institutionalization (see [Smith, 2004](#)). We identify 5 periods. The assumption is that the strength of EU socialization increases as institutionalization deepens: the quantity and quality of the interaction increase, thus leading to a more effective convergence of state interests ([Bearce and Bondanella, 2007](#); [Beyers, 2005](#); [Taninchev, 2015](#); [Lewis, 2005](#)). EU voting cohesion in the UNGA has improved considerably alongside the various developments in EU foreign policy ([Burmester and Jankowski, 2014](#); [Jin and Hosli, 2013](#)).

The five periods are incremental, in the sense that institutionalization in each subsequent period is stronger. We may also expect that countries that join in 2004 (our fourth identified period) will go through a quicker (and stronger) process of socialization, compared to the countries that joined the EU in 1973 (first time period). In the following sections we capture this effect through a cumulative time trend. However, here we compare the periods themselves using a simple natural spline model where our outcome variables are measures of convergence discussed above modeled as a function of foreign policy time periods (splines).

Our five time periods are as follows: (1) 1970-1986; (2) 1987-1993; (3) 1994-1999; (4) 2000-2009; and (5) 2010- present day.⁸ Therefore, we estimate natural splines with

⁸The first period starts with the establishment of the EPC and terminates with the entry into force of

	Convergence on Russia-USA dim	Convergence on China-USA dim	Convergence on similarity with EU Pres	Convergence on similarity with Pres (EC)
1970-1986	− 0.001 *	−0.000	0.022 *	0.021 *
	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.009)	(0.008)
1987-1993	0.001	0.001 *	0.040 **	0.042 **
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.014)	(0.012)
1994-1999	−0.001	−0.000	0.013	0.009
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.012)	(0.011)
2000-2009	0.001	0.002 **	0.040 *	0.040 *
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.019)	(0.017)
2010 - present day	0.001	0.002 ***	0.008	0.008
	(0.001)	(0.000)	(0.010)	(0.009)
Intercept	0.002 ***	0.001 ***	0.030 ***	0.029 ***
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.007)	(0.006)
R ²	0.267	0.463	0.314	0.365
Adj. R ²	0.171	0.393	0.226	0.283
Num. obs.	44	44	45	45
RMSE	0.001	0.001	0.013	0.012

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 1: Results of spline analysis

knots placed at 1986,1993,1999, and 2009. The results of spline analysis are presented in Table 1. The coefficients here are essentially slopes of lines for each segment.

Another, and possibly better, way to look at the results of the analysis with natural splines is to plot predictions from our models. Figure 3 shows the results for models with standard deviations of positions on Russia-USA and China-USA dimension. The evidence suggests that levels of foreign policy alignment do indeed vary across the different time periods. In particular, we find that the 2000-2009 period has a statistically significant and positive effect on the different measures of foreign policy similarity (except the USA-Russia dimension).

Using estimates convergence with the statements of rotating EU presidency and EU president statements in UNGD, Figure 4 shows predictions from the natural spline anal-

the Single European Act, which, among other things, for the first time recognises EU foreign policy in the context of the EU treaties and establishes a permanent secretariat in the EU council. The second period covers the cooperation until the Maastricht treaty became law. The third period monitors the first years of the CFSP, which was created at Maastricht and considerably upgraded EU foreign policy. The fourth period takes into consideration the cooperation in defence: from 2000 onwards, a number of bodies were created to deal with civilian missions and military operations – which the EU started to launch since 2003. Finally, the last period covers the post-Lisbon treaty, where, among other things, the position of the HR was expanded and the EEAS was created.

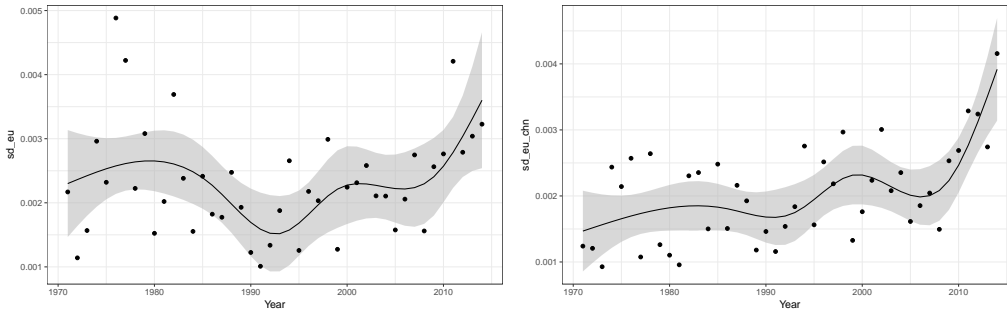


Figure 3: *Standard deviation of scores for EU*. Plot of predictions from a spline model with standard deviation of scores on Russia-USA and China-USA dimensions and time period segments.

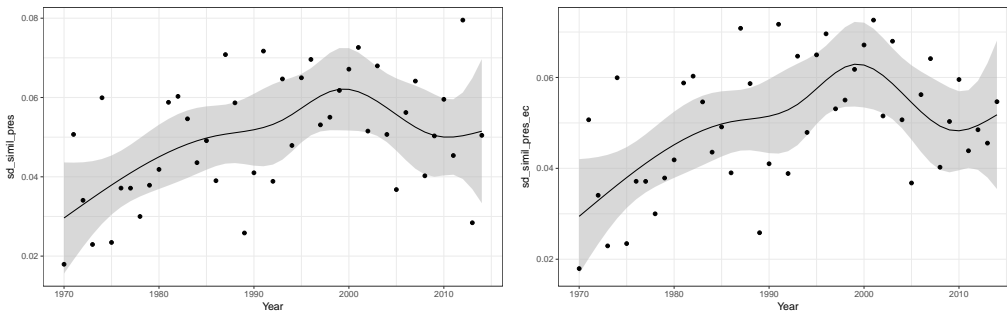


Figure 4: *Standard deviation of similarity for EU*. Plot of predictions from a spline model with standard deviation of similarities with EU presidency and EU president statements and time period segments.

ysis.

Regression analysis

Having established that there are trends in foreign policy positions of EU member states according to the evolution of the EU as an intergovernment organization, we now turn our attention to the country level. We consider whether different associations with the EU – specifically if a country becomes an *official applicant* of the EU, attains *candidate status*, or becomes a full *member state* – leads to foreign policy convergence. In order to address omitted variable bias, we use a two-way fixed effects regression model to examine whether we see different phases of the EU accession process impact foreign policy convergence.

We first consider whether association with the EU impacts foreign policy convergence on the US-Russia dimension and the USA-China dimension as we have previously

	USA-Russia Wordscore	USA-Russia Wordscore	USA-Russia Wordscore	USA-China Wordscore	USA-China Wordscore	USA-China Wordscore
EU official applicant	0.000 (0.000)			-0.000 (0.000)		
EU candidate status		0.000 (0.000)			-0.000 (0.000)	
EU member state			-0.000 (0.000)			-0.000 (0.000)
polity2	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
logGDPpc	-0.000** (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
tradeopen	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
UNSC	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
postcoldwar	-0.021*** (0.001)	-0.021*** (0.001)	-0.021*** (0.001)	-0.018*** (0.001)	-0.018*** (0.001)	-0.018*** (0.001)
Constant	0.010*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.001)	0.010*** (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Adj. R^2	0.956	0.956	0.956	0.940	0.940	0.940
Overall R^2	0.830	0.830	0.830	0.755	0.755	0.755
Num. obs	5682	5682	5682	5682	5682	5682
Num. countries	161	161	161	161	161	161
RMSE	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003	0.003

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 2: Results of association with EU on USA-Russia and USA-China dimensions

explained. We use these dimensions as these can be seen as two of the main conflictual dimensions of international politics. We present the results of this analysis in Table 2.

The results in Table 2 suggest that countries' association with the EU has no effect on convergence on either the USA-Russia or USA-China dimensions. This applies to become an EU official applicant, having EU candidate status, and attaining full EU membership. While this may indicate that the EU has no socialization effect on foreign policy preferences, there are other possible explanations. For example, it may indicate that while these dimensions, particularly USA-Russia, are seen as the most salient for world politics, they are not the most relevant for EU foreign policy. The lack of significant effect may also be due to changes in the relationship between USA and Russia, and USA and China. Further analysis is required here to better understanding these results.

We next turn to what is perhaps a more direct measure of whether association with the EU leads to foreign policy convergence – namely, whether the three types of association (official applicant, candidate status, member state) lead to foreign policy convergence

	Similarity with EU Pres	Similarity with EU Pres	Similarity with EU Pres	Similarity with Pres (EC)	Similarity with Pres (EC)	Similarity with Pres (EC)
EU official applicant	0.014** (0.006)			0.018** (0.006)		
EU candidate status		0.014** (0.006)			0.017** (0.006)	
EU member state			0.008 (0.007)			0.013 ⁺ (0.007)
polity2	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
logGDPpc	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)	0.006** (0.002)
tradeopen	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
UNSC	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)
postcoldwar	-0.095*** (0.008)	-0.095*** (0.008)	-0.096*** (0.008)	-0.080*** (0.008)	-0.080*** (0.008)	-0.081*** (0.008)
Constant	0.120*** (0.013)	0.120*** (0.013)	0.120*** (0.013)	0.126*** (0.013)	0.127*** (0.013)	0.127*** (0.013)
Adj. R ²	0.322	0.322	0.321	0.249	0.249	0.248
Overall R ²	0.343	0.341	0.325	0.303	0.299	0.282
Num. obs.	5697	5697	5697	5697	5697	5697
Num. countries	161	161	161	161	161	161
RMSE	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.034	0.035

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 3: Results of association with EU on preference similarity with Presidency

with the EU Presidency. As we have indicated previously, we use two measures of similarity with the EU Presidency. The first is based on the GD statement of the country holding the EU Presidency (and therefore speaking on behalf of the EU), and the second uses the the GD statement by the President of the European Council from 2007 onwards. The results of the analysis are presented in Table 3.

The results suggest that EU membership has no effect on similarity with the EU Presidency. However, we find that a country becoming an official applicant of EU membership and a country having EU candidate status both have a statistically significant effect on foreign policy similarity with the EU Presidency – for both measures of similarity with EU Presidency. It is worth highlighting again that our measures of association with the EU are such that all EU member states are considered to be EU official applicants and candidate status countries, and that all countries with candidate status are considered to be official applicants as well.

There are two possible explanations of these results. First, the results could suggest

that the process of socialization begins prior to countries formally joining the EU. In other words, once the formal process of EU accession begins, we see socialization effects. By the time a country formally joins the EU as a member state, its socialization into the EU has already occurred, and as such we see no additional effects of EU membership on countries' foreign policy positions. A second explanation is that rather than seeing a socialization process what we actually see is a short-term incentives for countries to align themselves with the EU while they are in the process of achieving EU membership. However, these incentives no longer apply once a country has officially joined the EU. As such we see no effects of EU membership on foreign policy similarity with the EU Presidency, however, we do see an effect of becoming an official applicant and a candidate state on foreign policy similarity with the EU Presidency.

To understand which of these two alternative explanations holds, we conduct additional tests. We first again consider the effects of official applicant status and becoming an EU candidate state on foreign policy similarity with the EU Presidency. However, rather than treating official applicant status and candidate status as a country property that remains even after the country has graduated to the next stage of EU accession (i.e. moved from official applicant to candidate state to member state), we treat it as these as temporary stages in the EU accession process. In other words, a county is considered to be an official applicant only for those years between becoming an official applicant and attaining candidate status. Similarly, a country is considered a candidate state only for the years between becoming a candidate state and achieving full EU membership. This will enable us to assess whether the effects we observe in Table 3 are short-term in nature linked to the periods prior to full membership. If this is the case it would indicate that it is short-term incentives driving this foreign policy convergence rather than a socialization process. The results are presented in Table 4.

The results show no statistically significant relationship between official applicant or candidate status on foreign policy similarity with the EU Presidency. This would suggest that it is not short-term incentives driving the relationship between EU association and foreign policy similarity with the EU Presidency. We next examine the relationship by creating an ordinal measure of EU association in which EU association is conceived as a progression from official applicant to candidate status to member state. We consider

	Similarity with EU Pres	Similarity with EU Pres	Similarity with Pres (EC)	Similarity with Pres (EC)
EU official applicant (only)	-0.004 (0.008)		-0.004 (0.008)	
EU candidate status (only)		0.007 (0.005)		0.006 (0.005)
polity2	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
logGDPpc	0.007*** (0.002)	0.007*** (0.002)	0.006** (0.002)	0.007** (0.002)
tradeopen	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
UNSC	0.000 (0.002)	-0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)
postcoldwar	-0.097*** (0.008)	-0.097*** (0.008)	-0.082*** (0.008)	-0.082*** (0.008)
Constant	0.117*** (0.013)	0.116*** (0.013)	0.122*** (0.013)	0.122*** (0.013)
Adj. R ²	0.320	0.320	0.245	0.246
Overall R ²	0.304	0.307	0.243	0.247
N	5697	5697	5697	5697
NCountries	161	161	161	161
RMSE	0.035	0.035	0.035	0.035

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 4: Results of EU official applicant and candidate status (only) on preference similarity

	Similarity with EU Pres	Similarity with Pres (EC)
EU association		
–official applicant	0.006 (0.008)	0.009 (0.009)
–candidate status	0.016** (0.006)	0.018** (0.007)
–member state	0.016** (0.007)	0.022** (0.008)
polity2	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
logGDPpc	0.006** (0.002)	0.005** (0.002)
tradeopen	-0.000 (0.000)	-0.000 (0.000)
UNSC	0.000 (0.002)	0.000 (0.002)
postcoldwar	-0.095*** (0.008)	-0.080*** (0.008)
Constant	0.121*** (0.013)	0.128*** (0.013)
Adj. R ²	0.322	0.250
Overall R ²	0.346	0.311
N	5697	5697
NCountries	161	161
RMSE	0.035	0.034

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Table 5: Results of EU association on preference similarity

the effects of this measure of EU association on foreign policy similarity with the EU Presidency. The results are presented in Table 5.

The result suggest that there is no effect of countries moving from no association to becoming an official application on foreign policy similarity with the EU Presidency. However, both the transition from official applicant to candidate status, and from candidate status to full membership have a statistically significant positive effect on similarity with the EU Presidency. While further analysis is required, the preliminary findings appear to support the argument that the EU has a socialization effect on state preferences. This socialization effect seems to take a particular form, namely bringing new members into the EU leads to these new actors internalising group preferences, which generates a

lasting change in state preferences. It is worth noting that the length of time a country spends as an EU member state has no effect on foreign policy similarity with the EU Presidency (results not presented here). This, we argue, provides further support that the EU leads to the socialization of new (and/or potential) members.

Conclusion

This paper has considered whether intergovernmental organizations have a socialization effect that leads to converged on member state interests and preferences. The analysis has focused on the EU and employs a new measure of state preferences based on annual country statements in the UN General Debate. As we have explained, the lack of coordination between EU member states on the GD statements – particularly in comparison to UNGA voting – combined with the detailed information on state preferences contained in the speeches, make GD statements ideal for seeking to better understanding whether IGOs have a socialization effect on member states' interests. Our measures of similarity of foreign policy positions here is based on the application text analytics to GD statements.

We have presented some preliminary findings in this paper. Based on an analysis of the effects of EU association on similarity of foreign policy preferences. Our results provide some evidence to support the argument that IGO membership – in this case EU membership – leads to foreign policy convergence, and that this is most likely through a socialization effect. In particular, our analysis indicates that the process of EU accession – beginning with the official application – leads to new actors internalising group preferences, and that this generates a lasting change in states' interests. In developing this research going forward, we aim to consider more carefully the explanatory variables linked to EU membership and socialization. Specifically, we will look to go beyond focusing exclusively on the EU association variables presented here, and consider additional variables linked to the type/quality of a country's interactions with the EU. In doing so, we aim to shed further light on IGO socialization processes that result in member state preference convergence.

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