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An evaluation of the efficiency of Turkic cooperation in the United Nations General Assembly

Abstract

This study investigates the dynamics of voting cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) by conducting a comparative analysis of the European Union (EU), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS). The research aims to assess the external voting cohesion of OTS member states in relation to the EU and CIS, utilizing the benchmark of collective voting in the UNGA as an indicator. The historical context underscores the significance of regional organizations in fostering collaboration among member countries, particularly in the realms of economics, security, and socioeconomic growth. The focus of this study on the OTS arises from the unique geopolitical and historical circumstances of Turkic-speaking nations dispersed globally. The methodology employs a comprehensive analysis of UNGA roll-call votes, utilizing data spanning from 1992 to 2019. The study employs the voting cohesion measurement proposed by Hosli et al. (2010), incorporating a scoring system to quantify cohesion. Results indicate that, compared to the CIS, the OTS demonstrates slightly higher voting cohesion, with a discernible increasing trend over the years. The EU, exhibiting the highest level of cohesion, provides a reference point for potential advancements in the OTS's institutional structures and collaborative efforts. The findings suggest that the OTS has the potential to achieve EU-level cohesion with continued improvements in institutional frameworks and enhanced cooperation among member states. In

conclusion, this study contributes to the understanding of international cooperation dynamics, emphasizing the evolving role of regional organizations in shaping voting behaviour at the global stage. The findings underscore the potential for increased cohesion within the OTS, positioning it as a significant player in international diplomacy.

Keywords: *United Nations General Assembly; Organization of Turkic States; Voting Cohesion*

Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu'nda Türk iş birliğinin etkinliğine ilişkin bir değerlendirme

Öz

Bu çalışma, Avrupa Birliği (AB), Bağımsız Devletler Topluluğu (BDT) ve Türk Devletleri Örgütü'nün (OTS) karşılaştırmalı bir analizini yaparak Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu'ndaki (UNGA) oy birliği dinamiklerini araştırmaktadır. Araştırma, UNGA'daki toplu oylama kriterini bir gösterge olarak kullanarak OTS üye devletlerinin AB ve BDT ile ilgili dış oy uyumunu değerlendirmeyi amaçlıyor. Tarihsel bağlam, bölgesel kuruluşların, özellikle ekonomi, güvenlik ve sosyo ekonomik büyüme alanlarında üye ülkeler arasındaki işbirliğini geliştirmedeki önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın OTS'ye odaklanması, küresel olarak dağılmış Türk dili konuşan ulusların benzersiz jeopolitik ve tarihi koşullarından kaynaklanmaktadır. Metodoloji, 1992'den 2019'a kadar olan verileri kullanarak UNGA yoklama oylarının kapsamlı bir analizini kullanıyor. Çalışma, Hosli ve diğerleri tarafından önerilen oylama uyumu ölçümünü kullanıyor. (2010), uyumu ölçmek için bir puanlama sistemi içermektedir. Sonuçlar, BDT ile karşılaştırıldığında OTS'nin yıllar içinde gözle görülür bir artış eğilimi göstererek biraz daha yüksek oy birliği gösterdiğini göstermektedir. En yüksek düzeyde uyum sergileyen AB, OTS'nin kurumsal yapılarındaki ve işbirlikçi çabalarındaki potansiyel ilerlemeler için bir referans noktası sağlıyor. Bulgular, OTS'nin, kurumsal çerçevelerde sürekli iyileştirmeler ve üye devletler arasında artan işbirliği ile AB düzeyinde uyum sağlama potansiyeline sahip olduğunu göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak bu çalışma, küresel aşamada oy verme davranışını şekillendirmede bölgesel örgütlerin gelişen rolünü vurgulayarak uluslararası işbirliği dinamiklerinin anlaşılmasına katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bulgular, OTS içindeki artan uyum potansiyelinin altını çiziyor ve onu uluslararası diplomaside önemli bir oyuncu olarak konumlandırıyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Birleşmiş Milletler Genel Kurulu, Türk Devletleri Teşkilatı, Oylamada Uyum*

Introduction

Regional organizations have grown in importance in today's globalized world because they enable countries to collaborate to accomplish shared objectives and manage common difficulties. These organizations provide a forum for member countries to collaborate and coordinate policy, especially in areas like as economics, security, and socioeconomic growth. One such regional organization is the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), which serves as a platform for collaboration among Turkic-speaking countries.

Turkic-speaking nations can be found all over the world, from the Balkans in the west

to China's borders in the east. Turks are one of the few nations that have established more than one state in the world and ruled in areas where the world's attention is focused. The main reason for this is that it has an immigrant structure as a society and has changed geographical location, particularly during certain periods in their history. These nations have historically been cut off from one another despite sharing a common linguistic and cultural history for a variety of political and historical reasons. Only the Republic of Türkiye managed to secure its independence in the whole Turkic world during the beginning of twentieth century. Meanwhile, the majority of Turkic people fell under the governance and influence of the Soviet Union. The fall of the USSR gave Türkiye completely new opportunities to rapidly increase its political, economic, and cultural influence in Azerbaijan and other Turkic states in Central Asia. The necessity for greater cooperation and collaboration among Turkic nations has, however, come to light more recently. The creation of a regional organisation to promote collaboration among these governments is one example of this tendency.

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) plays a crucial role in establishing global policies and decisions and fostering international collaboration and dialogue. This is the exclusive forum in which all states can participate in the summits. The UNGA offers the Turkic states a unique opportunity to engage in international diplomacy, advocate for their interests, and collaborate with other member states to address global concerns. To assess the OTS's effectiveness, this study will use the benchmark of collective voting in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). To comprehend the dynamics of international cooperation and diplomacy, it is vital to analyse the voting coherence of the European Union and the Commonwealth of Independent States at the United Nations General Assembly. The EU and CIS, as two large regional organisations with different member states, have a variety of common and divergent interests that might influence their voting patterns at the UNGA. Membership overlap between the CIS and the OTS (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) can influence the voting behaviour of Turkic states within both organisations. In addition, the EU's well-established institutional structures and policies that contribute to its voting cohesion make it an excellent comparative model. Examining the voting coherence of the EU and CIS at the UNGA can therefore give a framework for assessing the voting behaviour of Turkic states and other regional entities, as well as emphasising the tactics and challenges of regional cooperation on the international stage.

Although the amount of integration and collaboration among OTS member states has been increasing, we do not know to what extent Turkic countries have policy convergences on

foreign policy concerns. Consequently this study will analyse the voting pattern of EU CIS, compare the results to the vote coherence of OTS member states on all themes, and answer the following research questions.

•As comparison to the average of the European Union (EU) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), do OTS countries have a better or lower degree of voting agreement in the United Nations General Assembly?

•From the early 1990s, has the voting coherence of OTS member states increased, decreased, or remained roughly the same?

1-Analyses of Voting Behaviour in the UNGA

Since its foundation in 1945, the membership of the United Nations and, by extension, the General Assembly, has grown substantially. In addition, the UN's regional composition has altered through time, from a 51-member organisation whose membership was primarily drawn from Europe and Latin America to its current 193-member body (Petersen, 2006) whose membership is primarily drawn from Africa and Asia. Roll-call votes are the only sort of vote in which each UN member state's vote choice is recorded. Alternative means of approving UNGA resolutions include "by consensus," "by acclamation," "without objection," and "without a vote." A vote may be taken as a last option, but only the total number of votes cast is tallied. This study focuses on contested elections, and it is useful to determine the degree to which Turkic states have coordinated their voting behaviour.

The great majority of OTS member nations and observers have only recently joined the UNGA, but they have already made their presence felt in a number of discussions and debates. As previously stated, UN member nations are also members of the UN General Assembly. Turkey, one of the 51 founding members, is the first OTS member to simultaneously join the UN and UNGA. The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is a de-facto state that is neither a UN nor UNGA member. Hungary joined the United Nations in 1955, ten years after Turkey. The Soviet Union represented Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan at the United Nations until 1992. Regional organizations can request for observer status with the UNGA, and dozens of regional organizations have been granted observer status thus far. As the Cooperation Council of Turkic-speaking States, the Permanent Representatives of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey to the United Nations petitioned for UNGA observer status in 2011. The decision on the OTS's request for observer status at the UNGA has not yet been made. Despite not having observer status, Turkic states continue to participate in the UNGA as independent nations. They have, for instance, utilized the UNGA forum to express their

concerns over regional security, human rights, and sustainable development.

Assessing the degree of vote coherence among Turkic governments within the United Nations General Assembly, various studies tend to focus on varying time periods and employ a variety of methodologies. Hence, it is challenging to compare the insights provided by various investigations. The section that follows describes methods for measuring cohesiveness and the methodology that will be employed for the empirical study in this thesis.

2.Measuring Vote Cohesion

To measure the amount of OTS vote coherence, it is required to disaggregate OTS voting trends and comparing them to trends within the wider General Assembly and the EU and CIS. Otherwise, variations in OTS cohesion may just reflect variations in body-wide cohesion. Vote alternatives of 'yes,' 'no,' 'abstain,' and 'absence' have been encoded using a variety of approaches. Coding "abstain" votes has been especially controversial. Thomas Volgy et al. (2003) and Eric Voeten (2000) view abstentions as a gentler form of voting 'no'; hence, in their study, they combine these two voting options, allocating the same code to 'no'- votes and abstentions. As stated by the authors, placing abstentions on a scale between 'yes' and 'no' is problematic. They assert that it has become regular practice at the General Assembly for an abstaining to have the same impact as voting 'no' on a resolution, since both vote options contributed to a resolution falling short of the required number of votes. Others, however (such as Luif, 2003) employ scale measurements of vote choices in their empirical analyses. A 'yes' vote, for instance, is coded as 1, a 'no' vote with 0, and an abstaining as 0.5 according to this method (Ismayilov, 2022). This paper's empirical research will utilize Erik Voeten's "United Nations General Assembly Voting" (Voeten, 2009) data set, which provides information on all votes taken in the UNGA between 1946 and 2019, as well as the individual vote options of each Assembly member on each resolution. The data set incorporates other data collections compiled by other academics over the years. It includes a unique identity for each resolution, the date of the vote, codes for the categories of votes, the UN resolution number, the vote-tally, short and long summaries of the content of the votes, and the actual votes cast by all UNGA-representative states (Ismayilov ve Khalafova, 2022). This analysis will cover the years 1992 to 2019, as 1992 marked the year of independence for the Central Asian Turkic countries and Azerbaijan, and 2019 is the final year included in Voeten's 2019 data set. A UN member state may indicate its preference for voting on a UNGA resolution in one of four ways: "yes," "no," "abstain," or "absent." The study defines "yes" votes as 1, "no" votes as 0, "abstentions" as 0.5, and "absences" as "missing" for quantifying UNGA votes (Hosli et al., 2010). Abstention is

assigned a value of 0.5 (between "yes" and "no") because, it is regarded a "softer" alternative to "no" in the literature. This study follows Hosli et al. (2010), who calculate cohesions using the following formula in their study on EU cohesion in the UNGA, when measuring the cohesion of OTS member states: $C = |AV_x - 0.5| \times 2 \times 100$ where C is the cohesiveness score and AV_x is the averaged vote on a resolution, which is derived by summing states' votes on a resolution ("yes" is recorded as 1, "no" is coded as 0, and "abstaining" is coded as 0.5) and divided by the overall number of resolutions. A cohesiveness score is 100% when all members vote the same way, and 0 if votes are split evenly (equally between "yes" and "no," for example) (Ismayilov ve Khalafova, 2022). Hosli et al. (2010) use graphical representations to compare the voting coherence of EU states to that of the UNGA. This study similarly employs a similar methodology, comparing the 1992-2019 UNGA voting cohesiveness of OTS member states to that of the broader EU, and CIS nations using graphical representations. In this study, UNGA cohesion, EU cohesion, and CIS cohesion are used as a starting point category for comparing the voting cohesion of OTS members. Such a reference category is important for comparing purposes in empirical analysis. While different cohesion assessment methodologies generate varying cohesion scores, what matters most is whether the amount of cohesion is increasing or decreasing over time relative to the reference category (EU and CIS cohesion) (Ismayilov ve Khalafova, The role of digital marketing in the management of library information resources, 2022).

3. Analysis: The UNGA Voting Cohesion of the CIS, EU, and OTS member states

It must be remembered that the empirical data assessed in this research only span the years 1992 to 2019. The Turkic countries of the former Soviet Union were admitted to the UN in 1992, and the dataset compiled by Voeten concludes in 2019. Since 2019, therefore, the research will not include an analysis of vote cohesiveness. Using R, a software platform for graphics and statistical computing, and RStudio, an integrated development framework for R, the empirical study was conducted (Ismayilov ve Bayramova, 2022).

4. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)

The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional intergovernmental organization that was established in December 1991, following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The major objective of the CIS is to foster cooperation among its member countries in economic, social, and security problems, among others. There are now nine member states in the organization, including Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. However, this analysis will also include Ukraine, which officially withdrew from CIS statutory entities in 2018. Moldova has stopped its participation due to the

Ukraine conflict and its strained relationship with Russia. There are four countries that are members of both the CIS and the OTS, namely Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. This membership overlap gives potential for improved collaboration as well as coordination between the two groups, especially in areas where their objectives and aims coincide. For instance, the shared member nations might collaborate to advance economic integration and collaboration, as well as to boost security and defense connections in the region (Ismayilov, Mahammadli ve Khudiyeva, 2022). In terms of their participation UNGA, all nine CIS member nations are also UN members and regularly attend UNGA sessions. As UN members, they have the ability to participate in the organization's decision-making process, including voting on crucial issues such as security and stability, civil rights, and sustainability. As a regional organization, the CIS is not a member of the United Nations, but on December 22, 1993, it was awarded observer status at the UN General Assembly. The CIS can attend and participate in UNGA meetings as an observer, but it does not have voting rights (Ismayilov, Gasimli, 2022). This study follows Hosli's methodology by assigning "abstention" a value of 0.5, and the identical vote cohesion rate is applicable to this study as well. Figure 2 linear cohesion demonstrates that the cohesion between CIS member countries has gradually increased over the years. Several factors at the 71st UNGA Summit in 2016 contributed to a lack of cohesion between many CIS member states. These factors can be grouped into four categories in Figure 1, which is applicable to OTS's 2016 lower vote cohesion (Ismayilov, Khalafova, The role of digital marketing in the management of library information resources, 2022).

Figure 1 Factors that contributed to a lack of cohesion in 2016



*Political polarization: During this time period, domestic and international political polarization increased in a number of nations. This could have made it more challenging to reach consensus on issues requiring collective action, such as climate change and migration.

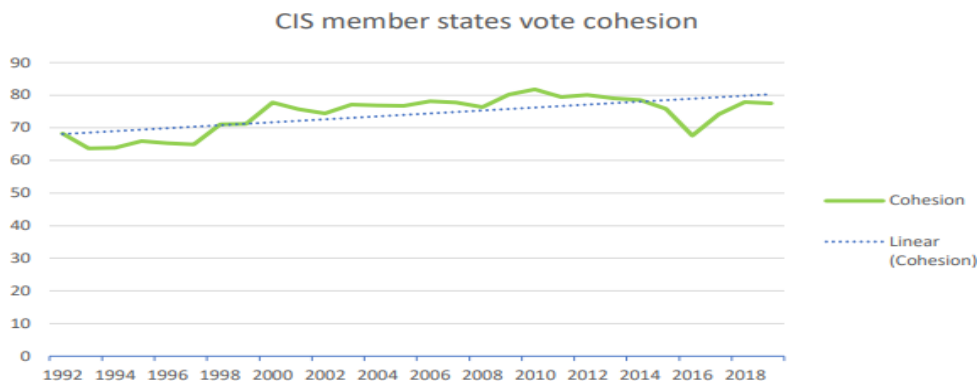
*Conflicting national interests: Each member country has a unique set of national priorities and interests, which might not always coincide with the interests of other nations.

These divergent interests can impede cooperation and collaboration, especially on issues requiring concessions or compromises.

*Geopolitical tensions: The General Assembly was held against the backdrop of several ongoing geopolitical conflicts and tensions, such as the civil war in Syria and the crisis in Ukraine in 2016. These conflicts may have contributed to a more polarizing and contentious environment, making it more difficult to achieve agreement on other issues.

*Leadership transitions: 2016 was a year of important leadership transitions, with several key member states experiencing government or leadership transitions (Ismayilov, Sadigova, 2022)

Figure 2 CIS member states vote cohesion



The vote cohesion of the CIS has fluctuated considerably over time, ranging from 63.7% to 81.2%. Early in the 1990s, the cohesion rate was between 64 and 68 percent, indicating a moderate degree of agreement among member states. In contrast, the cohesion rate increased during the late 1990s and early 2000s, reaching an all-time high of 81.8% in 2010. Since then, the cohesion rate has gone up and down but remained relatively stable, fluctuating between 75.7 and 80.0 percent. This indicates that approximately seven out of ten UNGA member states vote identically. The evolution of vote cohesion in the Commonwealth of Independent States reflects the complex dynamic behaviour of regional politics and the numerous variables that impact the relationships between member countries (Ismayilov, Khudiyeva, 2022).

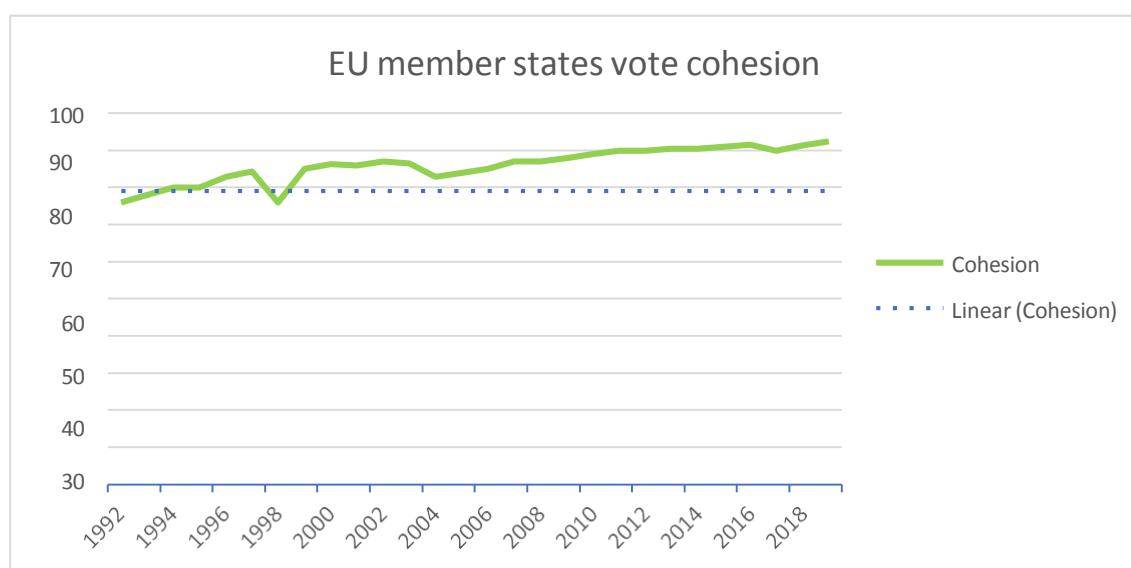
4. European Union (EU)

The European Union (EU) is a supranational organization consisting of 27 European member states. The European Union (EU) is heavily involved in the UN, and EU member states are also active UN participants. All 27 countries that make up the EU are also members of the United Nations, and they collaborate within the UN to advance their shared values and positions. There is a long history of EU member states consulting in New York, at the traditional location

of the General Assembly. Since the EU as a whole lacks legal identity, the European Community (EC), the economic component of EU cooperation, is a "observer" in the General Assembly. The European Union (EU) and its member states participate in the UNGA in a number of ways. EC has observer status at the UNGA. This means that the EU can take part in the work of the General Assembly, but it cannot vote (Ismayilov, Guliyev, 2022).

The range of EU countries' vote cohesion in the UNGA over the past few decades has been between 76% and 92.4%. Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, the EU member states have exhibited a remarkable level of agreement in their voting decisions, with cohesion rates consistently exceeding 85 percent. The high level of cohesion can be explained by an array of factors, including the EU member states' shared values, principles, and interests, as well as their organized efforts at advancing common positions on a variety of global issues. EU member states have frequently voted in concert on topics like human rights, global warming, and global security. The high cohesion rate also reflects the EU's position as a major player in international affairs and its dedication to promoting internationalism and global collaboration. Notably, the EU's vote cohesion has fallen slightly over the past decade, from a low of 83% in 2004 to 90% in 2017. However, the general trend remained resilient, with cohesion steadily increasing over time and reaching a peak of 92.4% in 2019. The high level of cohesion among European states at the UNGA demonstrates the EU's dedication to a coordinated and uniting approach to global affairs, which promotes peace, stability, and prosperity globally (Ismayilov, Mammadov, 2023).

Figure 3 EU member States vote cohesion

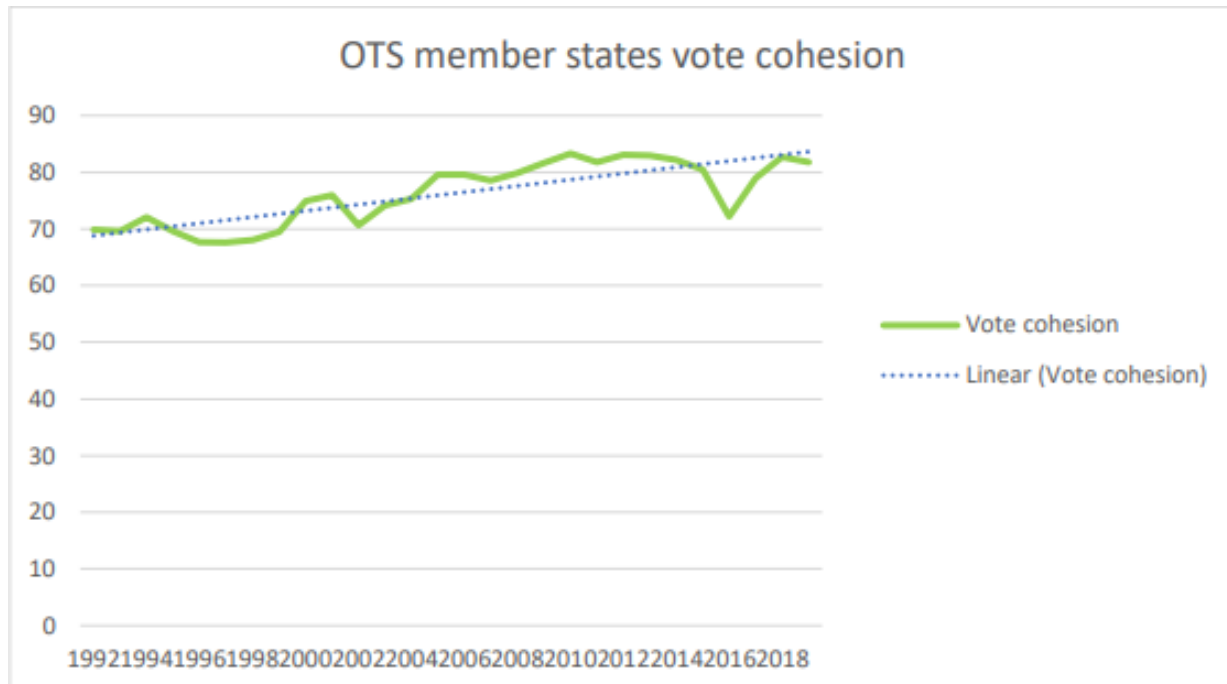


5.Organisation of Turkic States (OTS)

As members of the United Nations General Assembly, Turkic states have utilized the forum to bring attention to issues of significance to them and to promote for their objectives on the international stage. In recent years, for instance, Azerbaijan has actively advocated for a peaceful settlement of the dispute with Armenia over Nagorno-Karabakh, while Turkey has vocally supported the rights of the Rohingya population in Myanmar. In addition to their personal effort, Turkic states have collaborated to advance their shared interests and strengthen their UNGA cooperation. For instance, the Turkic Council, an intergovernmental organization comprised of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, and Uzbekistan, has been active in promoting greater collaboration among Turkic states and bringing attention to Turkic-world issues (Ismayilov, Mahammadli, Gasimli, 2023). As depicted in Figure 4, the vote cohesion between Turkic states in the United Nations General Assembly has fluctuated over time. Early in the 1990s, the cohesion rate was approximately 69%, indicating that Turkic states had a moderate degree of agreement in their voting choices. In 1994, however, the cohesion rate risen to 72.1%, indicating that Turkic states had found common ground on a variety of issues. In the years that followed, the cohesion rate fluctuated between 67% and 76%, reflecting the varying degrees of consensus among the member states. Notably, the cohesion rate reached an all-time high of 83.3% in 2010, indicating a high level of unity among Turkic states. This could be attributed to the 2009 establishment of the Turkic Council, an intergovernmental regional organization of Turkic-speaking countries that provides a forum for the member states to strengthen their cooperation and coordination (Ismayilov, Khalafova, 2023). This period of high cohesion is attributable to a number of factors, including the expansion of economic and strategic cooperation among member states and the growing influence of the Turkic Council in the region. In addition, the historical and cultural ties shared by the Turkic states have had an important part in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation. In 2016, however, the cohesion rate plummeted to the 72.2%. It might be explained by rising geopolitical instability in the region, including the Syria and Ukraine conflicts, which have caused divisions among the member countries. Despite this shortfall, the cohesion rate has recovered and reached 82.7% in 2018, indicating a strong dedication to collaboration as well as coordination between many Turkic states (Ismayilov, Aliyeva, 2023). Overall, the evolution of vote cohesion among Turkic states reflects the intricate dynamics of regional politics and the various variables that influence the relationships among member states. Nonetheless, the establishment of the Turkic Council has provided a crucial platform for member states to advance their cooperation and strengthen their unity, thereby contributing to

the stability and prosperity of the region (Afandiyev, İsmayilov, Yusifova, 2023).

Figure 4 OTS member states vote cohesion



Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has explored the concept of vote cohesion at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) and its significance in understanding the dynamics of regional and international cooperation. By analysing the voting behaviour of the European Union (EU), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Organization of Turkic States (OTS), this study has highlighted the varying degrees of vote cohesion among these entities. Assuming that UNGA votes are reflective of states' preferences on foreign policy issues, this analysis examines the degree to which OTS member states display external voting cohesion in the UNGA. The final analysis finds the EU has demonstrated the highest level of vote cohesion, thanks to its well-established institutional structures and policies that promote cooperation among its member states. Meanwhile, the OTS has slightly better vote cohesion than the CIS, and there is a clear increasing trend in the voting behaviour of the Turkic states within this entity. This trend suggest that the OTS has the potential to reach the level of vote cohesion demonstrated by the EU if it continues to improve its institutional structures and foster greater cooperation among its member states.

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