

Abstract

This thesis concerns itself with the analysis of bargaining or voting power of the Benelux region in the Council of the European Union. For Benelux' voting power there has been a significant research gap regarding modern Council compositions and the objectives of the research focus on determining the current bargaining power of the region and finding out whether Benelux is able to leverage it in the voting process of the Council. Furthermore, it contrasts the findings with those of comparable alliances and member states within the EU. As Benelux is the only formalized coalition in the EU Council, institutionalist theories suggest that there may be a high degree of collaboration between the three member states and the thesis seeks to answer that. To determine the influence of Benelux on voting outcomes, algorithmic calculations such as the Shapley-Shubik Index (SSI) and the Banzhaf Power Index (BPI) are used to calculate the region's theoretical voting power. These calculations are then contrasted with real-world data from the VoteWatch data set for all Qualified Majority Votes (QMV) in the Council from 2009-2022. The results equate the current voting power of the region to that of Spain, but they also show a gradual loss in power throughout all Treaty changes. The results also reveal key policy areas in which the region either frequently allies or disagrees on. Finally, it concludes that there is a mismatch between the calculated voting power and the voting outcomes due to consensus-building practices. Especially, the loss of weighted votes under Lisbon rules lowers the opportunities for pivotal votes for all actors, yet despite having fewer opportunities to cast pivotal votes, compared to larger actors the region manages to put up a united front.