Levels of Linkage: Across-Agreement versus Within-Agreement Explanations of Consensus Formation among States

The formation of super-majorities characterizes decision-making in many important international institutions, including the UN Security Council, UN General Assembly, and European Union (EU). In many cases, these super-majorities are even characterized by *consensus* among all states involved in the bargaining process. For example, decisions in the EU's intergovernmental institutions are often characterized by consensus support from the member states, even when the decision-rule requires only a qualified majority[i] of states to reach an agreement (e.g., Mattila and Lane 2001; Mattila 2004; Heisenberg 2005). This empirical trend is so strong, some scholars have even argued that a "norm of consensus" exists in the EU (e.g., Lewis 1998), and it has continued even through the multiple EU enlargements (Hayes-Renshaw, Van Aken, and Wallace 2006) – even the expansion of the EU from fifteen to twenty-five (and twenty-seven) member states, with the accession of the East European states. Consensus also extends to other international organizations, such as within the UN Security Council where, despite conflicting interests, consensus is the rule. In 2011, for instance, all Security Council decisions were made by consensus and in all but three cases decisions were made unanimously.

This behavior is particularly puzzling because states have diverse preferences that should seemingly make reaching an agreement satisfying more than the necessary number of states prohibitively costly. These trends, however, are not absolute – states can, and do, vote against international agreements, even in the EU.[ii] Two questions therefore arise for scholars of international institutions: (1) why do we see consensus support for agreements when a smaller coalition of states is needed for a decision to be reached? And (2) what explains the variation in whether consensus is reached?

The standard explanation for the formation of super-majorities (and variation in consensus behavior) in international bargaining builds on the arguments of the domestic institutions literature, focusing on *logrolling* – i.e., trades of support across different agreements – as a bargaining strategy (e.g., König and Junge 2009). According to this logic, super-majorities occur because one party supports policy *X* (that it otherwise would not have supported) in order to gain support from other parties on policy *Y*, while those other parties do the reverse – support policy *Y* in order to gain support on *X*. By doing so, the parties are able to build up a greater degree of support for both policies than would have otherwise been reached (Fenno 1973; Mahew 1974; Weingast and Marshall 1988). Logrolls can take place across international agreements within the same policy area, as well as across agreements in different policy areas, but that are considered around the same time period. These exchanges arguably build up support for these different international agreements in the same way vote-trading builds up support for policy proposals in domestic decision-making processes (König and Junge 2009).

We argue that this logrolling argument faces several problems, decreasing its ability to supply a satisfactory explanation for trends of cooperation and consensus formation in international bargaining. These problems stem from: (1) issues associated with the enforcement of international agreements and (2) issues associated with the actual implementation of a logrolling strategy. In some institutionalized bargaining interactions, such as those in the EU, the

enforcement problem can be overcome. However, solidifying cooperation with the bargaining agreements that are reached is likely to make the problem associated with the implementation of logrolling more acute. Logrolling is therefore not likely to be frequently used in international bargaining, and is thus unlikely to hold as an explanation for the empirical reality of consensus behavior in international bargaining – even in institutions such as the EU, where enforcement problems are mitigated.

Given the problems associated with logrolling as a bargaining strategy, what can explain consensus formation (and variation in consensus behavior) in international institutions? Even if logrolling suffers from problems of implementation and enforcement, the literature shows that tit-for-tat exchanges are a central element of international decision-making processes, and a key source of cooperation in those processes (e.g., Tollison and Willett 1979; Sebenius 1983; Aksoy 2012; Poast 2012; Poast forthcoming). We argue that the explanation for such cooperation, however, lies in the fact that there exists more than one type of tit-for-tat exchange. States can not only trade votes *across* agreements (i.e., engage in "logrolling"), but they can also trade concessions across specific issues *within* a single agreement. This "within-agreement" tit-for-tat exchange does not suffer from the implementation or enforcement problems associated with logrolling across agreements, and is the strategy driving international bargaining and leading to the consensus behavior we observe in international institutions.

We test this argument statistically to evaluate the conditions that lead to consensus in the EU decision-making process. We focus on the EU case because it is an institutional setting in which enforcement problems are largely addressed. It is thus an international institution whose decision-making process largely parallels domestic decision-making, and is thus a setting where logrolling arguments would be expected to hold. Across 70 different EU agreements, we code the degree to which within-agreement trade-offs were present in each agreement, as well as opportunities for across-agreement exchanges. Analyzing these data, we show that the patterns in consensus behavior across these agreements are driven by within-agreement, rather than across-agreement, linkages. We back up this statistical analysis with evidence from elite interviews conducted with EU state negotiators, who consistently highlight the importance of trade-offs within agreements, rather than across agreements, as the key factor driving states' willingness to support EU proposals. We conclude by discussing the implications that stem from the distinction between these two bargaining strategies for the study of international institutions.

ACROSS-AGREEMENT V. WITHIN-AGREEMENT LINKAGE

The standard explanation the formation of super-majorities and variation in consensus formation focuses on the logic of logrolling. However, we argue that the use of a logrolling strategy in international bargaining suffers from enforcement and implementation problems. Logrolling is therefore not likely to be frequently used in international bargaining, and unlikely to explain the overall trend of consensus in international institutions such as the EU. Instead, we argue that tit-for-tat exchange at the within agreement-level provides a better explanation of this trend.

Across-Agreement Linkage Problem 1: Enforcement

The application of logrolling argument to international bargaining faces a standard critique from the International Relations literature: unlike domestic legislative processes, where institutions such as political parties and committee systems exist to enforce the agreements that legislators make, enforcement problems plague cooperation in international agreements. In the anarchic international system, no authority exists to make a state comply with an agreement that it supported simply as part of a logroll. What will make a state's agreement to policy *X*, if policy *X* does not reflect its interests, and it only supported that proposed agreement in order to win support on policy *Y*. It has no incentive to comply with the agreement on policy *X*, after the fact. This raises one of the central problems of "cooperation under anarchy" – if states are likely to defect from their agreements, then what sustains bargaining and agreement?

The existence of international institutions helps to address this question. In addition to other important effects, institutions provide information and lengthen the shadow of the future (Keohane 1984; Axelrod and Keohane 1985), creating a setting where reciprocity can be used by states – both over time (Axelrod 1984) and across agreements (Axelrod and Keohane 1985) – to secure cooperation from other states. Some international institutions even have their own enforcement mechanisms. When these institutional dynamics exist, providing decentralized and/or centralized enforcement mechanisms, states can expect that they (and other states) will be forced to comply with their agreements. This makes the bargaining process and the resulting agreements meaningful.

Across-Agreement Linkage Problem 2: Implementation

International institutions can mitigate the enforcement problem, helping to ensure that states comply with agreements they have made as part of trade of support across agreements. However, this raises another problem associated with the use of logrolling as a bargaining strategy. This new problem arises from a conflict that exists between the role state negotiators play in international decision-making and the inherent logic of across-agreement linkage (i.e., logrolling).

The role of a state negotiator is to protect her government's interests, first and foremost, while at the same time trying to reach a cooperative agreement with negotiators who represent interests that conflict with those she represents. For such diplomatic representatives, the prioritization of the specific national interests they represent above all else has been shown to be a central norm across all states (Müller 2004).[iii] This concern is likely to be especially acute in bargaining processes where the enforcement problem is mitigated. As Fearon (1998) argues, it is precisely when an agreement is expected to be enforceable that parties will be most concerned with protecting the interests they represent.

The incentive state negotiators have to defend those interests becomes even more important to consider when one takes into account the fact that they are also protected through domestic audience costs (Stasavage 2004), and through domestic ratification processes (Putnam 1988).

Key, however, is the fact that the governments they represent are not unitary actors, but instead, are composed of different ministries with different policy interests. In the EU, each government ministry has its own "checks" built into the international negotiation process which, as individuals within each government ministry tasked with a particular policy area write the instructions for proposals negotiators must deal with in that policy area, and the Ministers themselves take the final vote in favor of each individual agreement within their policy competence. While this is often simply a "rubber stamp" procedure (see Lewis 1998), the possibility always exists for a minister to open up an agreement reached by negotiators at a lower level, providing a domestic-level protection for the national interest in each policy area.[iv]

Significant barriers are thus created to hinder negotiators' ability to adopt both temporal and policy-related logrolling strategies. Vote-trading across different policy areas is not likely to help build consensus. Even if the same negotiators are involved in the different negotiations, and thus in the position to make such a trade-off across different policy areas, the exchange is not likely to be supported by the specific domestic group(s), legislator(s), and/or government ministry whose policy area is the "losing" policy in the trade-off. In coalition governments, where different ministries represent the interests of different parties, logrolls across the policies under the competence of those different ministries are not likely to be upheld. More importantly, even in unitary governments, policy coordination does not often occur across the different ministries, which represent different domestic groups and interests. Instructions and positions often come directly from the ministry in charge of the policy at hand, and each dossier is treated as a separate file (Interviews 2005-2010). If the agricultural interests his ministry represents are not reflected in the specific agreement on which he is voting, the minister of agriculture therefore has little to no incentive to support that agreement, even if it was part of a lower-level logroll designed to win in another (unrelated issue area). Indeed, the asymmetric distribution of the costs and benefits of logrolls across different domestic groups is precisely the type of problem that Friman (1993) argues causes problems for tit-for-tat exchanges, limiting their effectiveness.

Even if a trade-off takes place across agreements within the same policy area, a logroll is still not likely to effectively lead to consensus behavior because these agreements are not voted on as package deals. This raises a commitment problem – one that plagues logrolling even in domestic legislative institutions (Weingast and Marshall 1988). Because agreements are voted on separately, once the first agreement has been adopted, what is to stop the negotiator (or minister) that already achieved her government's interests by gaining support for that first agreement from reneging on her promise and voting against the next agreement, which does not reflect her government's interests?

Some scholars might highlight the logic of diffuse reciprocity (Keohane 1982) as a possible explanation – i.e., that concessions made now by one state are not paid back immediately, but in some future agreement that arises which is important to that state. However, as the interview evidence below demonstrates, diffuse reciprocity is clearly secondary when compared to immediate concerns for the national interest – even in the EU. As one representative explicitly stated in addressing this issue, "[Political support] is a currency which is easily devalued" (Interview with member state representative, May 2010). Promises of future concessions, while sometimes carried out (Lewis 1998), are not necessarily reliable or meaningful.

In general, state negotiators are not very likely to accept individual agreements that do not reflect the specific ministerial interest reflected in the instructions they receive. This is especially true in potential super-majority situations, where the agreement would pass even without a particular negotiator's vote, and where voting against the agreement could signal to the negotiator's government (or other relevant domestic audience) that she did not support the policy because it was not in her government's interest.

However, the logic that makes vote-trading an effective bargaining strategy requires that negotiators do precisely this – agree to policies that do not reflect the national interest. Indeed, the *key* to vote-trading is that a negotiator would not have supported proposal *Y* absent an exchange of votes with proposal *X*. If proposal *Y* was in the interests of the government (or ministry) a negotiator is representing, she would already have an incentive to vote for the proposal. Other supporters of proposal *Y* would have no incentive to seek her support for proposal *Y* by pledging their support to help her get proposal *X* passed, because it would be unnecessary to do so. And the same goes for the other state(s) on proposal *X*. The implicit logic of vote-trading therefore requires, at the very least, that the proposal on which states exchange support *do not reflect the government's interests on that particular policy* (or in the extreme, go against its interests). Otherwise, they would have an incentive to support the proposal anyway, and thus could not credibly "sell" their vote as leverage to gain support on other proposals.

Logrolling is therefore not likely to explain the empirical trend of consensus formation in institutions such as the EU. Even if the enforcement problem is overcome, as it likely is in the EU, the inherent logic of this strategy requires negotiators to support agreements that are not in the interest of the government and ministries they represent – something they are not often likely to be willing (or able) to do, even for logrolls within the same policy area.

Within-Agreement Linkage

We argue that focusing on tit-for-tat exchange across issues *within* a single agreement, rather than across different agreements, is likely to best explain the consensus trend in international institutions such as the EU.[v] In other words, we argue that there are two distinct processes of tit-for-tat exchange that can exist in bargaining interactions. The first refers to the standard idea of logrolling, capturing a trade of votes of support across different international agreements. The second refers to a more micro-level trade-off across the specific issues at stake within a single agreement. We argue that *variation in the opportunity for trade-offs across these micro-level issues between states with differing interests can help to explain the variation in consensus behavior in the EU*. The potential for within-agreement trade-offs are not only more widely available than is the potential for across-agreement logrolls (see Moravcsik 1998: 65), but within-agreement trade-offs do not suffer from the implementation and enforcement problems that plague the latter.

The "puzzle" of consensus ceases to be a puzzle when one focuses on within- rather than across-agreement exchange. First, agreements are voted up or down as "package deals" of micro-level issues at the end of the bargaining process, helping to overcome the commitment problem that

plagues across-agreement logrolling at both the domestic and international level.[vi] At the end of a bargaining process, the reality of international decision-making requires state negotiators to either support or reject an overall agreement, which is made up of multiple outcomes across multiple issues. Illustrating this, the most robust large-N dataset on EU decision-making, the "DEU dataset" (Thomson and Stokman 2003), shows that the negotiation over the temporary protection of refugees (COM00/303) dealt with three key issues: (1) the decision rule that must be used in order to be able to interrupt the protection of refugees, (2) the duration of the protection offered to refugees, and (3) the way in which the asylum seekers would be distributed among the EU member states. Additionally, the interviews conducted for this study highlighted several key issues which were at stake in the negotiations of a directive designed to liberalize trade in services across the borders of the EU member states (the "Services Directive," COD 2004/0001). These issues included: (1) the underlying principle that would govern how liberalization would be administered, (2) the scope of services that would be covered (and not covered) by the directive, and (3) whether the EU institutions would have the power to screen national legislation for compliance with the directive (Interviews 2005-2007). Each agreement that is negotiated is thus a package of these micro-level types of issues, which negotiators must support or reject, at the end of the day.

Second, and most importantly, when within-agreement trade-offs take place across these micro-level issues, instead of voting for an agreement that does not reflect her state's interests (as she would have to do when logrolling), a negotiator ends up voting for an agreement that includes issues that reflect both her own government's interests *and* the interests of other states' governments. The implementation problem is therefore also overcome. If a negotiation can "win" on an issue that is important to her government's interests, it is in the *overall* interest of her government for her to support that agreement – even if the proposed outcome on some other, less important, issues do not reflect (or even go against) its interests. If states with *opposing* interests place most importance in winning on *different* issues in the proposed agreement, the possibility exists for a mutually beneficial trade-off, resulting in an overall agreement that is in both sides' interests.[vii]

For example, in the negotiations over the proposed "Services Directive" (2004-2006), a trade of concessions between the coalition of states focused on liberalizing trade in services among the EU states and a coalition of more protectionist states led to a consensus in support of the directive, despite the fact that it was one of the most controversial and highly politicized pieces of legislation in EU history.[viii] The liberal states conceded and accepted a change in the legal principle that would underpin the liberalization of trade in services. In exchange, the protectionist states accepted that the Commission would have the power to screen national legislation to ensure that it did not inhibit the free flow of trade in services. As a representative from one of the more protectionist states explicitly stated, "The screening clause was 'the price to pay' to get an agreement."[ix] It was this exchange of concessions across these two issues that made consensus possible. "[We gave] a little bit in some parts of the directive that [were] not that important to us, but which were important to the other countries. And they did the same. ... And that is how we reached an agreement."[x]

Consensus is thus driven by negotiators' drive to achieve their governments' key interests within each agreement. The vote on any given proposal is not an anomaly, characterized by a

negotiator acting in a way that does not reflect her own state's interests, as the logic of vote-trading implies. If opposing states place value in winning on different micro-level issues, they can each have their interests represented in one single proposal for agreement by trading concessions across those micro-level issues. The result is an agreement that each side has an incentive to support.

It is important to note, however, that it is not enough that a proposal simply consists of multiple issues. It is the *configuration of states' interests* across those micro-level issues that determines whether or not a mutually beneficial exchange of concessions is possible. Only issues that are "differently valued" by states with opposing interests create the conditions in which a mutually beneficial trade is possible – i.e., when states with opposing interests place value in winning on different issues. This possibility creates *behavioral incentives* for states to exchange concessions across those issues (McKibben 2010; forthcoming), and results in an overall agreement that will reflect all states' interests to at least some degree. We argue that this within-agreement exchange of concessions among states with diverging interests builds larger coalitions in support of an agreement, and is the mechanism behind consensus formation.

Observable Implications

The importance of within-agreement exchange means that the *content* of proposed agreements is important. The ability for consensus support to be built depends on the set of micro-level issues on the bargaining agenda, and the constellation of states' interests across those issues. If states with divergent interests place most importance in winning on the *same* key issue, a bargaining impasse is created. One side will inevitably "lose" on that issue, and will not be able to offset that loss. A negotiator that faces domestic-level checks on agreement acceptance, such as those built into the EU decision-making process, will be hard-pressed to support that agreement, even if s/he tries to link it to another agreement on which it can win. However, if the agenda-setter[xi] constructs a proposed agreement that includes that are "differently valued" by states with opposing interests, the opportunity for consensus is created – even in bargaining settings where additional agreements are not available for macro-level vote trading.

Such consensus support can be built up, even in multilateral settings where states do not fall into two neat coalitions divided on two micro-level issues. For example, the EU's "REACH Directive" – a directive designed for the regulation, evaluation, and authorization of chemicals (REACH) used in industrial processes – was an extremely complex directive, consisting of many highly technical, as well as political, issues that cross-cut the various coalitions. Even in this negotiation, a consensus was built up because different states placed most importance on different issues, and compromises were made by states across those issues. The overall interests of the United Kingdom and Hungary were satisfied by other states' agreement to a proposal that industries could work together to "jointly register" chemicals if they chose to do so. France was able to win support for a centralized agency to oversee the implementation of the directive by being flexible on other key issues, and Slovenia and Malta achieved their interests by pushing for special exceptions for chemicals used in extremely small quantities and being highly flexible on other issues. Moreover, the central divide that existed between states over whether industries would be required to find substitutes for dangerous chemicals or whether they could take

measures to "adequately control," and thus still use, these chemicals (the "substitution versus adequate control" debate) was overcome by strategic action by the Council Presidency[xii] to break this issue down into multiple issues, allowing each coalition to achieve a victory on different aspects of the problem. States concerned with protecting their industries from being overly burdened were able to "win" by achieving an agreement that focused on adequate control, rather than substitution. On the other side, the more environmentally-oriented states that were pushing to require substitution were able to get through a list of the most *highly* toxic chemicals for which "adequate control" would be considered impossible, for which substitution would be required. The different states were therefore able to win on different issues, building up consensus support for the agreement.

Applying the logic of the issue linkage literature to the logic of coalition-building and consensus formation, proposals characterized by issues that are "differently valued" by states with opposing interests in the EU are therefore more likely to lead to the creation of a consensus. In contrast, proposals composed of issues that are not differently valued will likely lead to a failure to find consensus, because at least some states will not have their interests fulfilled on the main issue, and therefore be unlikely to be willing to support the proposal. This argument leads to the following testable hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: The more differently valued is the issue linkage structure of a draft proposal for agreement, the more likely that agreement is to be adopted by consensus, all else constant.

Before testing this argument, it is important to reiterate that we do not argue that across-agreement exchange will *never* matter. There are clearly some cases where such vote-trading can (and does) occur. For example, Schneider (2011) shows how votes of support for EU enlargement from economically weak states are traded for support from more economically powerful states for policies that provide the weaker states with significant financial benefits. However, we argue that this type of exchange is the *exception*, rather than the rule.[xiii] The overall variation in state support for EU agreements should be driven by negotiators acting in their governments' interests – and thus by variation in the characteristics of the micro-level issues included within a given proposal for agreement. Logrolling might be the bargaining strategy states adopt in some key cases, but it is unlikely to explain overarching patterns of behavior in EU decision-making. When set against measures capturing the variation in the potential for within-agreement linkage, the variation in opportunities for logrolling should therefore not exert a significant effect on the likelihood of consensus formation.

This argument leads to a second testable hypothesis, which predicts bargaining behavior in the EU contrary to that proposed in the current literature (e.g., König and Junge 2009):

Hypothesis 2: When controlling for potential within-agreement exchanges, an increase in the opportunities for across-agreement logrolling should not affect the likelihood that consensus will be reached in the negotiation.

EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

To evaluate this theoretical argument, we first draw on extensive primary interview evidence to highlight general, overarching patterns regarding the use of tit-for-tat exchange in everyday EU decision-making processes. We then supplement this anecdotal evidence with a statistical analysis, showing robust empirical support for the patterns highlighted here across a wide variety of different EU negotiations.

Illustrative Interview Evidence

In this section, we draw on 146 semi-structured interviews to highlight patterns in the EU decision-making process which follow the predictions laid out in hypotheses 1 and 2. These interviews were conducted from 2005 to 2010 with member state representatives from twenty-five of the twenty-seven EU member states,[xiv] and cover member state representatives involved with the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER) I and II, as well as state representatives in the Political and Security Committee (PSC). These interviews provide illustrative evidence of the prevalence of within-agreement trade-offs in the EU, and the role these micro-level trade-offs play in helping to bring about bargaining agreements.

The first key point that arises from these interviews is that trade-offs of both types are present in negotiations among the EU states. However, while both types of tit-for-tat exchange exist, and are used to forge agreements and create coalitions, there are clear differences in the *degree* to which these two types of exchange characterize everyday decision-making among the EU member states. Across-agreement logrolling is a tactic that is used relatively infrequently. Moreover, when it is used, across-agreement exchange is most often used to *block* agreements, rather than to build up support for agreements – a logic which goes against the argument that logrolling builds consensus in the EU. Logrolling therefore does not provide an adequate explanation of the pattern of consensus behavior in EU decision-making. In contrast, the exchange of concessions across issues within a given proposal for agreement is an every-day phenomenon. Moreover, EU negotiators consistently attributed this latter type of exchange to their ability to build consensus and reach bargaining agreements – especially on difficult decisions.

Across-Agreement Logrolling: A Rare Strategy:

While trade-offs across agreements (i.e., "logrolling") clearly do occur in the EU, it is not a *common* bargaining tactic used by the member states. In a large majority of the interviews in which this type of exchange was mentioned,this strategy was described as quite rare.[xv] As one state representative described, "You can trade votes, but it's not a daily procedure. It's normally when you have big issues at stake" (Interview with Mertens Counselor, May 2005). This sentiment was corroborated in another interview. "[Logrolling] happens sometimes. But this is very clearly when you have legislation that is very important and has quite a big effect" (Interview with Mertens Counselor, June 2005). Moreover, this sentiment was explicitly expressed by representatives in COREPER – an institution where negotiators deal with dossiers across a wide variety of issue areas, and thus are in a prime position to identify and engage in

logrolling across these different agreements. "Vote-trading does happen, but it does not happen very often. That is not the main dynamic of COREPER" (Interview with Deputy Permanent Representative, May 2005).

Several reasons were given to explain why logrolling is rarely used as a bargaining tactic. Most importantly, state negotiators consistently argued that state interests must take priority – even over reciprocity which might be "owed" to other member states. A member state representative in the EU's Political and Security Committee (PSC) described this phenomenon quite clearly: "[Political support] is a currency which is easily devalued. ... I don't see that they gave me something by having them on [our] side. And therefore I'm not willing to give them something on another agreement [down the road]. In the end, national interests are not negotiable" (Interview with Deputy PSC Representative, May 2010).

Overall, the interview evidence points to the fact that logrolling does occur, but that it is quite rare. This interview evidence, on its face, however, should be taken with a grain of salt. Given that these trade-offs might occur at a higher level, the individuals interviewed may not always be aware of the frequency with which they are taking place, and the frequency of logrolling may therefore be under-represented in the interviews conducted for this study. Moreover, given that across-agreement exchange is a strategy requiring negotiators to vote for agreements that do not reflect their governments' interests, they might have an incentive to downplay the extent to which they use this strategy. However, together with the statistical analysis that follows, the evidence does cut against the predictions of the argument that logrolling is the central mechanism through which the consensus decisions are forged in EU decision-making.

A second important empirical point related to logrolling weakens the ability of this argument to explain this consensus trend: when vote-trading *is* used as a bargaining tactic, the exchanges that take place are often exchanges to block proposals, rather than exchanges to build support for proposals. "Vote trading does happen – not always in order to achieve certain aims, but rather to prevent certain things. ... If you have two dossiers, and one is a big problem for one big member state and the other big member state is not particularly interested either positively or negatively, then that member state may offer its vote as reinforcing the blocking votes of the other member state" (Interview with Deputy Permanent Representative, May 2005).

Germany's participation in blocking the directive on temporary workers was an oft-cited case to illustrate this type of trading to "reinforce a block" at work. Germany was a part of the blocking minority on the directive on temporary workers in 2005, not because it was very important for Germany, but because Britain was very much against this directive. Germany lent its support to Britain to help block the proposal in exchange for support it received on another dossier (Interviews, May and June 2005).

Many of the interviewees described logrolling in this way – as a tactic used to build blocking minorities, rather than to build coalitions in support for proposals. This goes directly against the type of across-agreement exchange necessary to empirically support the argument that vote-trading is used to build consensus.

Overall, this interview evidence provides empirical support for our argument that across-agreement exchange is not likely to be an effective tactic, and is thus not the driving force behind the formation of consensus in the EU. While logrolling does occur, it is fairly rare. Moreover, when logrolling is used, it is often used to build blocking coalitions, rather than to build support for agreements. It is therefore unlikely that logrolling explains the vast amount of consensus that occurs in the EU decision-making process.

Within-Agreement Exchange: An Everyday Strategy

In contrast to the rarity of across-agreement trades, the exchange of concessions across issues within a given proposal is not only a tactic that is adopted by member state representatives in the EU decision-making process, but it is a very common one. Moreover, the benefits of within-agreement trade-offs are cited by negotiators as a central mechanism that helps them to forge agreements, form coalitions, and reach consensus in the decision-making process. "Linkages occur within proposals a lot. For example, 'I'll support you in Article IV because that article is in your interest and I'm neutral, but please support me in Article VI because you're neutral and it is in my interest.' This is important for forging consensus" (Interview with Deputy Permanent Representative, May 2005).

There are several reasons why trading concessions within proposals occurs so often. First, it is a central form of compromise designed to bring about *mutually beneficial* agreements as it helps states to achieve their interests within those agreements. "What is taking place in decision-making in the Council is compromise. It's the key word: 'compromise.' And in compromise, you always give something up" (Interview with Deputy Permanent Representative, May 2005). This spirit of "compromise" captures what some state representatives refer to as the "ethos" of COREPER and Council decision-making (Lewis 1998). This "ethos," however, is backed by a strong desire to achieve the national interest. "[Especially] in settings governed by qualified majority voting, if you have a very strong position and want to win on everything, it would be very difficult for you to gain the support of other member states or to create some goodwill with the Presidency to take aboard your point of view in the compromise. It's much more [effective] to accept, sometimes, the positions of other member states, which you would not necessarily want to have in the text, in order have the Presidency take your position on the issues you care most about" (Interview with Mertens Counselor, June 2005).

In other words, trading across issues is not only important for forging agreements, but it is an important tactic for a negotiator to ensure that she can achieve an outcome that reflects her government's interests on the issues in the proposal that it considers most salient. This creates incentives for all negotiators to engage in this type of within-agreement exchange, and helps to explain why this tactic is adopted so often.[xvi]

Another reason that within-agreement trade-offs are frequently adopted by negotiators in the EU is because they are easy to implement. The fact that issues are being considered simultaneously allows for linkages and trade-offs between them to be easily identified and drawn. Second, and most importantly, the instructions that EU negotiators receive from their governments often include a prioritization regarding the importance of winning on the various issues included in

each proposal to their government's (or relevant ministry's) interests. The instructions negotiators receive are therefore written in a way that facilitates the creation of these types of trade-offs. "For instance, if [there is] a proposal with ten points, and we maybe have very important interests on two of the ten, then of course we will be more flexible on the other eight because on the two important ones, we really need to have something decided there that is reflecting our position. So this has an impact. We prioritize our efforts to reach our most important objectives" (Interview with Deputy Permanent Representative, May 2005). If such prioritization is not built into their instructions, COREPER representatives often work with their capitals to design such prioritizations before beginning negotiations, in order to ensure that they can negotiate effectively and achieve the most for their government/ministry.

This type prioritization is made across issues within a particular agreement, but not across different agreements. Different ministries in the government deal with the proposals for agreement across different issue areas. Different individuals in the government are therefore responsible for writing the instructions for proposed agreements across the EU's various policy areas. Even if these instructions are coordinated before being sent, the government's ministries are not likely to support the prioritization of other issue areas over their own, and cross-ministry political battles were often cited by negotiators in cases where agreements spanned multiple issue areas and coordination was thus necessary (Interviews 2005-2010). *Within* a given agreement, however, there are certain issues that are more important for a particular ministry to achieve than others, and this prioritization is reflected in the instructions sent to negotiators.

Together, these interviews therefore provide first-hand evidence of the important role that *within-agreement*, rather than across-agreement, trade-offs play in member state bargaining in the EU. To further support this argument, we supplement this anecdotal evidence with a statistical analysis of EU negotiations in the next section.

Statistical Analysis

As illustrated above, we argue that variation in the opportunity for trade-offs across issues linked together within a given proposal for agreement, is responsible for the variation in the degree of consensus that we observe. To test this argument statistically, we draw on data from the decision-making in the European Union (DEU) dataset (Thomson and Stokman 2003). These data code 70 different legislative proposals in the EU, the position of all the EU member states on the main issues for each proposal, the salience of each issue to the interests of the EU member states, and various characteristics of each proposal. Where these data do not provide the empirical information necessary to test the argument presented here, we code original data capturing additional key factors to supplement this DEU dataset. The overall result of the analysis is statistical support for both hypotheses 1 and 2.

DV: Consensus

The dependent variable in our analysis is Consensus. It is a dichotomous variable coded 1 if no state in the Council of Ministers explicitly voted against a given proposal in the adoption of the Council's common position,[xvii] and 0 otherwise.[xviii] Consensus was reached by the EU states in 58 of the 70 cases that we analyze, despite the fact that the decision-rule required consensus in only twenty-five of them. The "norm" of consensus therefore clearly stands out in EU bargaining, but does not hold across the board. Consensus was not reached in almost 20% of the cases, leaving significant variation to explain.

Within-Agreement Linkage

To code the potential for trade-offs across issues within a given proposal for agreement, we draw on the data provided by the DEU dataset (Thomson and Stokman 2003) and the measurement rules provided by McKibben (forthcoming). These measurement rules build on the argument, which has been shown, formally, that the greater is the potential for trade-offs among the issues linked together in a proposal for agreement, the larger the zone of agreement will be (Tollison and Willett 1979; Sebenius 1983). Drawing on this argument, McKibben (forthcoming) proposes that the zone of agreement that exists between each pair of states on each issue in the negotiation can be measured by coding each state's bargaining position and flexibility on each issue, and aggregated to produce an overall proxy for the potential for trade-offs across the set of issues on the bargaining agenda.

To calculate the zone of agreement for each pair of states on each issue, we first plot state's bargaining position in one-dimensional issue space on the interval [0,1], as coded by the DEU data. We then code each state's flexibility on an issue as the inverse of the salience of that issue to its interests, assuming that a state is likely to be less flexible in giving on issues that are more salient to its interests, all else constant. The data on salience also come from the DEU dataset. Using these two pieces of information, the zone of agreement for each pair of states on each issue can then be calculated. The size of the zone of agreement is then averaged across all issue-pairs in a negotiation, to calculate the average size of the zone of agreement created by the set of issues linked together.

When carrying out these coding steps, missing data on position and salience for the EU states were imputed using Amelia (King, et al. 2001).[xix] This was done in several different ways, due to the fact that there might be different reasons for the data to be missing: (1) the issue may not have been salient enough for a country to have taken a position, and so the data do not exist, or (2) the position and/or salience may not have been observed – i.e., the data really are missing. For our central measure of issue linkage, we assume that if both the position and salience for a particular state are missing, it is likely that the issue was not salient enough for a country to have taken a position, and therefore the data do not exist.[xx] We therefore do not impute this data point, leaving no observation for that state on that issue. If only a state's position or only its salience on an issue is missing, we treat that as missing data, and impute values for the missing observation using Amelia, following the recommendation of Honaker, King and Blackwell (2012).

The overall result of this coding process is a continuous variable ranging on a potential scale from -1 to 1.[xxi] Larger values indicate the linkage of issues that are "more differently valued" by the bargaining states, and thus are a set of issues with a greater potential for a mutually beneficial exchange of concessions, than a set of issues with a smaller value, all else constant (McKibben forthcoming). Following the prediction of hypothesis 1, we therefore expect this variable to exert a positive and statistically significant effect on the likelihood the EU states reached consensus on a given proposal for agreement.

Across-Agreement Linkage

Drawing on the definition provided by König and Junge (2009), we code three alternative measures of the opportunities for logrolling that exist – due either to their temporal or policy proximity to the agreement at hand. The first measure captures the potential for temporal linkages across agreements. To do so, this measure is a count of all proposals adopted *in the same month* in which the proposal being examined was considered. The second measure captures the potential for linkages across agreements *in related policy areas*. To do so, this measure is a count of all proposals that share common policy traits with the proposal under consideration in a given month. For instance, if the agreement deals with trade in honey, we would count the number of proposals dealing with agriculture and the internal market. For both of these measures, if the data is not available for the month in question, we count the proposals from the following month. Our final measure captures both temporal and policy-related aspects of potential across-agreement linkage. This measure counts all proposals considered *in the same Council* meeting in which the proposal under consideration was adopted. While these Councils typically deal with similar policy proposals, this is not always the case.[xxii] To account for skewness in these variables, we log all three measures.

The data for coding these three variables come from the "Monthly Summary of Council Acts" of the Council of Ministers meetings. Following hypothesis 2, we predict that when set against the potential for within-agreement trade-offs, the potential for across-agreement linkages should exert a statistically insignificant effect on the consensus behavior of the EU member states. We use all three measures of across-agreement linkage (and perform multiple robustness checks, which are reported in the Web Appendix) to ensure that our results are not sensitive to the way that the potential across-agreement linkage is operationalized.

Controls

We control for three other factors which may influence the likelihood of observing a consensus decision. *Codecision* is a binary variable which is coded 1 for decisions in which the Council of Ministers and European Parliament share legislative powers and 0 for dossiers in which Council must only consult the Parliament. *Consensus* is coded 1 when the decision is subject to a consensus decision rule. Finally, we also control for decisions that are *Regulations* (as opposed to directives or amendments). The data for these control variables all come from the DEU dataset (Thomson and Stokman 2003).

Statistical Models

We test our argument using Bayesian inference to weigh the importance of within-agreement versus across-agreement linkages in explaining consensus behavior in bargaining among the EU member states. The primary benefit of Bayesian inference is that it allows us to gain greater traction on this analysis due to its small-sample properties. While the DEU dataset is the largest dataset available on EU negotiations, it still only covers 70 negotiations. This "small *n*" is a problem for classical statistical analyses such as the more standard logit model (Long 1997), but not for Bayesian statistics. Bayesian statistics use a finite sampling process (Lynch 2007; Greenberg 2008; Kruschke 2011). To derive inferences under the Bayesian approach, we must simply assume the data, as well as theoretical priors about the model in order to make inferences. Because it uses a finite sampling process, we can be confident that our results are statistically unbiased, even with an *n* of 70.[xxiii]

Bayesian techniques require that we specify our theoretical priors. One of the central critiques of the Bayesian approach is that the choice of priors can influence the inferences drawn from the model. We use "skeptical audience priors," which speculate a prior of zero (no overall effect) and a large variance (Lynch 2007; Kruschke 2011). In other words, we put as little information as possible into our priors so that they affect the results in the smallest way possible.[xxiv]

We estimated a logit model using *MCMCpack* (Martin, Quinn, and Park 2011). The algorithm did not reach convergence quickly, which is not unusual for cases with small *n* and weakly informative priors. Taking a conservative approach, we ran three independent chains. With a burn in period of 10,000,000, we ran three chains of 20,000,000 and saved only every 10,000th iteration. This yielded a total sample size of 60,000 draws from the conditional probability distribution, from which we derived our results.

We ran four different specifications to test our argument that the linkage of issues that are more differently valued within an agreement should increase the likelihood of a consensus vote, while variation in the potential for temporal or policy linkages across agreements should not impact the likelihood of consensus.[xxv] Model 1 includes all three measures of across-agreement linkage:

$$Consensus_i = \alpha + Within_i\beta_1 + AcrossPolicy_i\beta_2 + AcrossMonth_i\beta_3 + AcrossCouncil_i\beta_4 + Controls_i\beta_5 + \varepsilon \quad (1)$$

Model 2 isolates the policy across-agreement linkage variable:

$$Consensus_i = \alpha + Within_i\beta_1 + AcrossPolicy_i\beta_2 + Controls_i\beta_3 + \varepsilon \quad (2)$$

Model 3 isolates the temporal across-agreement linkage variable:

$$Consensus_i = \alpha + Within_i\beta_1 + AcrossMonth_i\beta_2 + Controls_i\beta_3 + \varepsilon \quad (3)$$

Model 4 isolates the Council across-agreement linkage variable,:

$$Consensus_i = \alpha + Within_i \beta_1 + AcrossCouncil_i \beta_2 + Controls_i \beta_3 + \varepsilon \quad (4)$$

Discussion of Statistical Results

Overall, the results across all four models indicate that variation in the potential for within-agreement linkage make it more likely that we will observe consensus behavior. In contrast, variation in the potential for across-agreement linkages, regardless of type, do not. We find that over 95% of the time, the draws that we took from the posterior distribution of estimates associated with within-agreement linkage indicated a positive relationship between this measure and the likelihood of consensus. Table 1 presents the main results of the four models. Across these models, we find consistent support for our within-agreement measure. We therefore conclude there is a positive relationship between the potential for trade-offs across issues within a proposal for agreement, likelihood of consensus support for that agreement.

Table 1

To illustrate this effect, Figure 1 plots the predicted probability for each value of within-agreement linkage within the 90% credible interval range alongside the average within-agreement linkage score. If we look across the range of values of this measure – ranging from proposals characterized by within-agreement linkage of issues that are not differently valued to proposals characterized by within-agreement linkage of issues that are very differently valued – we find that moving from the first to the third quantile of this measure,[xxvi] a proposal is 2.5 times as likely to receive a consensus vote.[xxvii] Overall, our results indicate that a strong relationship between the potential for within-agreement trade-offs and consensus behavior, even when the potential for across-agreement linkage is taken into account.

Figure 1

In contrast, the estimates for the across-agreement measures do not provide as clear of a picture. The means of both the policy and temporal distributions are very close to zero, and the distribution includes draws that indicate both negative and positive effects. The strongest measure, which captures across-agreement linkage in the Council in which a particular agreement is adopted, is positive, but in less than 90% of draws. This indicates that, given the data at hand, we cannot determine whether across-agreement linkage makes consensus more or less likely. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of the posterior distributions from Model 1 alongside the 90% credible interval of the posterior distribution. We can see from this figure that the effect of within-agreement linkage is positive, indicating that when there are more opportunities for trade-offs within a proposal for agreement, it is more likely that proposal will receive consensus support. The 90% credible interval for the across-agreement measures, however, crosses zero.[xxviii] These findings indicate a positive relationship between within-, rather than across-agreement opportunities for linkages, and the adoption of an agreement by consensus.

Figure 2

IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

In this paper, we argued that understanding the linkage of issues *within* proposals for agreement is crucial to understanding when and why states will reach consensus. The phenomenon of consensus behavior becomes less puzzling. Each state (or coalition) is able to win on the specific micro-level issues most important to its interests while giving on the issues of lesser importance. The empirical evidence supports this theoretical argument: opportunities for tit-for-tat exchange that exist *within*, rather than across, proposals are what drive consensus formation in the EU.

This distinction between across-agreement and within-agreement linkages may, at first, appear be simply a matter of semantics. Whether one is talking about an exchange of support for different agreements, or an exchange of support across different issues within a single agreement, the exchange can be modeled, theoretically, by analyzing two "issues" – *X* and *Y* – and the exchange of support across those abstract "issues." However, the distinction is *empirically* relevant. It tells us "where to look" when analyzing the exchanges that characterize decision-making processes, as well as what the outcomes of those processes are likely to look like.

This distinction also has potentially significant implications for our understanding of international bargaining, more generally, where consensus support for agreements is the *rule*, rather than the norm. Indeed, in more general cases of international bargaining, the enforcement problem is likely to be an issue, in addition to the requirement of consensus to reach agreement. In such cases, across-agreement exchange is not likely to explain how agreements are reached, as it requires negotiators to vote for agreements that do not reflect the state interest. This paper shows that the links that build consensus should be found *within* each individual agreement. By using within-agreement trade-offs to reach an agreement, negotiators can ensure that each state's interests will be reflected in the agreement. This helps to ensure that their own state, as well as their bargaining opponents, have a stake in the success of the agreement, and thus an individual interest to comply in the later enforcement phase (if relevant enforcement mechanisms are at work). The analysis of within-agreement linkage therefore has much potential to contribute to the study of international bargaining and cooperation.

Finally, understanding the level at which tit-for-tat exchanges take place has important implications for future research on issue linkage. Specifically, if most tit-for-tat exchange takes place within individual agreements, comparing final votes on international agreements may not be the best approach for understanding the process driving bargaining outcomes. Instead, scholars should focus on tracking amendments and changes to the set of issues being negotiated in a single piece of legislation *over time*, as suggested by McKibben (forthcoming). These over time exchanges within an agreement and the resulting changest, rather than cross-sectional across-agreement exchanges, are the key facet of the process driving cooperative agreements, and thus worthy of further investigation.

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Table 1. Within-Agreement v. Across-Agreement Linkage and Consensus in the EU

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Within-Agreement Linkage:				
…within-agreement	3.15 (1.39)	3.16 (1.76)	3.02 (1.89)	3.19 (1.73)
Across-Agreement Linkage:				
…in related policies	-.44 (.72)	-.28 (.59)		
…in month	.15 (.67)		.01 (.83)	
…in Council	.63 (.53)			.33 (.47)
Controls:				
Codecision	2.51 (1.27)	2.09 (1.13)	1.92 (1.43)	1.94 (1.08)
Consensus rule	5.03 (2.04)	5.01 (1.78)	5.13 (2.24)	5.04 (1.74)
Regulation	3.53 (1.46)	3.29 (1.28)	3.89 (1.85)	3.14 (1.19)
Constant	-1.63 (1.50)	-0.89 (1.06)	-1.42 (1.38)	-1.15 (1.27)

Coefficients are averaged across the five different Amelia datasets. Standard deviations are given parentheses.

[i] A "qualified majority" refers to a majority of countries, covering at least 74% majority of the voting weight assigned to the states and at least 62% of the EU population. This definition is provided by the Treaty of Nice which entered into force in 2003 and governs EU decision-making through 2014.

[ii] For example, in the Decision-Making in the European Union (DEU) dataset (Thomson and Stokman 2003), 71% of the cases were reached by consensus, only 50% of which were governed by a consensus decision-rule. However, 29% of the time, consensus was not reached in this sample of cases.

[iii] This norm thus exists even in institutional settings such as the EU, which are argued to be characterized by interactions that are largely "cooperative" in nature. The interviews conducted for this study provide strong support for this claim across all EU member states. As one representative stated, "As I see myself and as I see my role, what I'm doing is to maximize the influence of [my member state's] interests here in Brussels" (Interview, May 2005).

[iv] It is important to note that this policy-specific voting is sometimes side-stepped, when ministers in one area are asked to "rubber stamp" a proposal from another policy area, adopting it as a "A-point", when it was agreed at a lower level. To ensure that this type of action does not dilute our argument, we take into account several of these types of votes in the empirical analysis, and our findings regarding the ineffectiveness of logrolling hold despite this.

[v] This parallels the argument of Shepsle and Weingast (1981) who analyze decision-making at the domestic level in the U.S. Congress, expanding it to apply to the international level.

[vi] For more on this commitment problem, see Weingast and Marshall (1988).

[vii] This is a key argument of the issue linkage literature. For examples, see Tollison and Willett (1979); Sebenius (1983); Morgan (1990).

[viii] It should be noted that Belgium and Lithuania did abstain from the common position in the Council. However, by definition, abstentions do not violate consensus.

[ix] Interview with Deputy Permanent Representative, June 2006.

[x] Interview with state representative, May 2006.

[xi] Proposals for potential agreement are almost always presented by the European Commission. The set of issues on the agenda are thus decided by the political process taking place within this bureaucratic institution. During the negotiation process, the Council Presidency can also make compromise proposals for agreement based on its observations of the negotiations. These proposals sometimes alter the set of issues on the bargaining agenda.

[xii] In the Council decision-making structure, the country holding the Presidency plays a mediating (and agenda-setting) role, overseeing the negotiations among the member states, and presenting draft proposals for agreement that take into account the various interests of those states.

[xiii] Even Schneider (2011) argues that the type of logrolling that she highlights only occurs under "extraordinary" bargaining conditions.

[xiv] The distribution of the 146 interviews across the member states is laid out in the Web Appendix.

[xv] When asked about across-agreement linkage as a potential negotiating strategy, 77% of interviewees added that this strategy was rarely used, without being prompted regarding the frequency of usage. Moreover, only 16% of interviewees described any type of connection across agreements when asked about the bargaining process that took place for a wide variety of specific dossiers.

[xvi] Note that this will only occur if the issues linked in the proposal are "differently valued" by opposing states. This cannot be tested in the interview evidence, but is directly analyzed, and supported, in the statistical analysis.

[xvii] We focus on voting on the common position because that is the outcome most closely associated with the intergovernmental bargaining process among the EU member states -- the process of interest in this paper.

[xviii] Our results also hold when consensus is defined more strictly as "unanimity," requiring that all states vote positively for a proposal.

[xix] Overall the imputed data are a small component of our main independent variable. We are only missing data for 8% of the data on states' positions on the various within-agreement issues, and only 7% of the data on the salience of those issues. Moreover, the missing data tends to occur in the same observation. Indeed, in 6.6% of cases we are missing both position and salience. The missing data for the Within-agreement linkage measure, overall, is therefore not a significant proportion of the data needed to create our Within-agreement linkage measure.

[xx] Given this strong assumption about the nature of missingness, we also tested alternative schemes for missingness: (1) imputing all values, and (2) setting salience to 0 and imputing the state's position when both position and salience were missing. The inferences that we make about the independent variables are consistent across measurements. We chose to use Amelia rather than to control for missingness in a Bayesian context so that we could

better control for the types of missingness that may occur and because it makes the calculation of micro linkage more straightforward.

[xxi] Note that McKibben's (forthcoming) measure utilizes a [0,10] bargaining range, resulting in a measure spanning -10 to 10. We normalize this to the more standard [0,1] bargaining range, resulting in the -1 to 1 measure. In the data, the proposals range from a minimum value of -.69 to a maximum value of .66, with a mean of -.006 and a standard deviation of .27. These scores were calculated across all five of the Amelia datasets.

[xxii] To capture the potential for more diffuse temporal linkages, we also created Council linkage measures that included the number of proposals in that Council ± one month, ± ¼ year, and ± ½ year. The results from these additional models are presented in the Web Appendix.

[xxiii] We not only have an n of 70, but conduct additional robustness checks on data with an even smaller n of 34. While it is frequently done, using a frequentist model with such a small n sample is statistically inappropriate, and can result in biased coefficients. However, using Bayesian assumptions we can be confident in the claims that we can make, with an n of 70, and even 34.

[xxiv] Specifically, we specify our priors using a mean of zero and variance of 10,000.

[xxv] For each specification we run five separate models for each of the microlinkage datasets.

[xxvi] The value of within-agreement linkage at the lower quartile is -.10 and the value at the third quartile is .17.

[xxvii] This effect is calculated holding the across-agreement linkage measures at their means and QMV, regulation, and codecision at 0, commensurate with the figure. The exact odds ratio is 2.61.

[xxviii] These null findings hold even if we subject these macro-linkage measures to the more lenient, one-tailed test.