

Explaining Chief Executive Empowerment: European Union Summitry and Domestic Institutional Change

Karl Magnus Johansson
Södertörn University College
karl.magnus.johansson@sh.se

Jonas Tallberg
Stockholm University
jonas.tallberg@statsvet.su.se

One of the most prominent trends in the organization of European parliamentary democracies is the empowerment of chief executives. This paper submits that an important contributing reason for this development is summit decision-making in the European Union (EU), which requires states to confer additional authority, discretion, and resources on chief executives. The effects are long-term shifts in the domestic institutional balance of power between the executive and the legislature, as well as within the executive branch. The explanatory power of this argument is tested through an in-depth case study of chief executive empowerment in Sweden, as well as comparative qualitative evidence from a broader set of European states. The findings carry implications for research on the presidentialization of politics, the domestic implications of international cooperation, and the Europeanization of domestic institutions in EU member countries.

Paper prepared for presentation at the Fourth Pan-European Conference on EU Politics, Riga, September 25-27, 2008.

Introduction

One of the most prominent trends in the organization of modern democratic systems is the empowerment of chief executives. Regardless of whether they operate in presidential, semi-presidential, and parliamentary systems, national chief executives tend to have become politically more powerful and autonomous – vis-à-vis legislatures, parties, and other ministers within the executive (Peters et al., 2000a). This pattern is particularly notable among the advanced parliamentary democracies in Europe, where constitutional provisions bias against a centralization of authority in the chief executive. Yet, as concluded in a comparative volume, there is strong evidence in favor of a “presidentialization” of politics in West European parliamentary systems (Poguntke and Webb, 2005a). How may we explain this development? Why is it that chief executives have gained in power, resources, and autonomy – especially in European parliamentary democracies, and especially at a time when state authority commonly is regarded as eroded, hollowed-out or undermined by globalization?

In this paper, we claim that an important, but neglected, explanation of the domestic empowerment of European chief executives is the institutionalization of summit decision-making in the European Union (EU) over the past three decades. While originally established as a forum for informal talks between heads of state and government, the European Council has evolved into the supreme political body in the EU. This development has benefitted national chief executives – not only by offering access to an exclusive political arena beyond the immediate control of domestic constituencies (Moravcsik, 1994), but also by generating domestic institutional change in their favor. More specifically, we suggest that the growth in prominence of the European Council has presented EU member states with functional pressures for the conferral of authority, discretion, and resources on chief executives. Each causal mechanism involves rational adaptation of domestic procedures and practices to the functional prerequisites of summitry, with implications for the balance of power between

executives and legislatures, as well as within the executive. Authority for chief executives to represent the member state across the full range of issues addressed in the European Council constitutes a precondition for participation, but shifts power away from the executive and legislative actors that otherwise enjoy prerogatives in these areas. Discretion is required for chief executives to negotiate effectively in the European Council, but comes at the expense of traditional legislative oversight. Resources are necessary for chief executives to coordinate national positions on European issues, but strengthen the prime ministers' offices relative to specialized ministries.

We explore this hypothesis empirically through a two-fold strategy. First, we provide an in-depth case study of the effects of European Council decision-making on chief executive empowerment in one member state, Sweden. The primary advantage of the case study format is the possibility of tracing causal mechanisms at work. Sweden was selected because of two methodological advantages. Since Sweden joined the EU first in 1995, when decision-making in the European Council was already well institutionalized, the transformative pressures of summitry on domestic institutional structures should be particularly intense and observable, compared to in states that are long-term members of the EU. But, in addition, Sweden presents a least-likely case for chief executive empowerment, partly because it was ruled from 1995 to 2006 by minority governments, which typically are more constrained than majority governments in relation to parliament, and partly because its executive by tradition operates according to the norms of cabinet government, with more limited room for independent action by the chief executive than under prime ministerial government. Second, we then proceed to put the Swedish experience in a comparative European perspective, surveying evidence on chief executive empowerment in a broad range of EU member states.

We find extensive support for the hypothesis that European-level summitry contributes to domestic institutional change empowering chief executives at the expense of

legislatures and other actors within the executive. Despite structural political conditions that worked against chief executive empowerment, the office of the Swedish prime minister was continuously strengthened in the decade following EU accession. The reforms typically involved shifts in authority, discretion, and resources in favor of the chief executive, and were explicitly motivated by the perceived institutional prerequisites for influence in European Council negotiations. Even the Swedish parliament, poised to lose from these reforms, recognized the functional necessity to limit legislative oversight, for purposes of allowing the chief executive sufficient room for maneuver in EU negotiations. Moreover, the comparative evidence from other European countries suggests that the Swedish experience is far from unique. Despite considerable variation in domestic institutional traditions, EU countries have experienced remarkably similar changes in executive-legislative relations and intra-executive relations, which can be linked to European integration in general and European Council decision-making in particular.

Our argument about the effects of international summitry on domestic institutional change carries implications for three distinct theoretical literatures. First, whereas existing research on the “presidentialization” of European parliamentary democracies frequently cites short-term contingent explanations, such as dominant personalities and comfortable parliamentary majorities, we identify a long-term structural cause of this trend. While we are not alone in emphasizing structural developments at the international level, we are the first to isolate and examine the institutionalization of EU summitry as the driving dynamic in processes of internationalization and European integration. Second, this paper suggests that the literature on the interplay between domestic and international politics has overlooked an increasingly important form of interaction between the two levels of political organization. While it is no longer controversial to claim that international relations and domestic politics profoundly affect each other, research so far has not paid the same attention to the domestic

institutional implications of international bargaining, as to the effects of domestic politics on international cooperation, strategic maneuvering by state negotiators in two-level games, and domestic coalition formation in response to international developments. Third, this paper contributes to the growing literature on “Europeanization,” by mapping an additional mechanism through which participation in European-level decision-making feeds back into the organization of domestic political systems. Yet, rather than endorsing the notion of European integration as a process that undermines state authority, we find that it redistributes power among domestic political actors, to the advantage of national chief executives.

The paper proceeds in four steps. In the first section, we outline our theoretical argument, specifying why and how institutionalized summitry affects the domestic organization of executive-legislative relations and intra-executive relations. The second section presents our in-depth case study of the effects of European Council decision-making on chief executive empowerment in Sweden. The third section addresses the extent to which the Swedish experience is unique, or shared by other European parliamentary democracies. We conclude the paper by expanding on the implications of our argument for existing research on the presidentialization of politics, the interplay between domestic and international politics, and the Europeanization of EU states.

Explaining Chief Executive Empowerment in Europe

While there is broad consensus that chief executives in Europe generally have become more powerful within domestic political systems, scholars still grapple with the sources of this development. In this section, we first review contingent and structural explanations advanced in existing research, then present our argument about the potential effects of summitry on the domestic standing of chief executives, and finally explain why the European Council, given its properties, may have generated such consequences.

Mapping the Field: Contingent and Structural Explanations

The position of chief executives in European political systems has developed into an increasingly prominent theme of research (e.g., Peters et al., 2000a; Arter, 2004; Poguntke and Webb, 2005a; Goetz, 2006). The contributions to this literature broadly share the assessment that we have witnessed a growing concentration of power around prime ministers and presidents in Europe in recent decades. In this vein, Peters et al. (2000b: 7) note that “there has been a steady movement towards the reinforcement of the political core executive in most advanced industrial countries and, that within the core executive, there has been increasing centralization of authority around the person of the chief executive,” while Webb and Poguntke (2005: 352) conclude, on the basis of a broad set of comparative case studies, that there is ample evidence for a “presidentialization” of the executive in European parliamentary democracies.

The explanations advanced to account for this phenomenon emphasize a range of contingent and structural factors, best conceived of as complementary (Poguntke and Webb, 2005b: 13–7). Contingent explanations center on factors that are claimed to have reinforced the position of chief executives, but are short-term and context-specific in nature. Accounts privileging the *personality of chief executives* suggest that the leadership styles of particular prime ministers and presidents explain their dominance on the domestic political scene. This interpretation is frequently forwarded in relation to the influential positions of, for instance, Britain’s Tony Blair (Foley, 2000), Italy’s Silvio Berlusconi (Calise, 2000), Germany’s Helmut Kohl (Bulmer et al., 2000), and Sweden’s Göran Persson (Ruin, 2007). Explanations favoring the *domestic political context* suggest that the powerful position of certain chief executives can be attributed to the specific majoritarian environment in which they operate. Notably, chief executives heading one-party majority governments are more likely to

dominate domestic politics than chief executives either heading minority governments or relying on multi-party coalition majorities.

Moving beyond contingent factors, structural explanations center on long-term, deep-seated trends in state, society and politics that are claimed to favor the position of chief executives. Accounts privileging the *internationalization of politics* emphasize how the governance of globalization through intergovernmental negotiations shifts power to those actors with exclusive access to these arenas, typically, chief executives, key advisors, and other cabinet members (Moravcsik, 1994). By transforming issues that previously were subject to the principles of domestic politics into foreign policy, traditionally at the discretion of heads of government and foreign ministers, internationalization is seen as favoring executives at the expense of legislatures. Explanations focusing on the *growth of the state* suggest that the reinforcement of chief executives constitutes a response to demands for coordination from the center, as the state becomes increasingly complex and fragmented (Peters et al., 2000b). Rather than diffusing authority, expansion of state functions, growing sectoral specialization, and organizational differentiation are seen as strengthening the executive. Accounts that center on the *logic of modern mass media* stress the extent to which especially television nurtures a focus on personalities in politics rather than on programs and issues (Street, 2001). This development is claimed to benefit chief executives, who become the natural foci of media attention and who often reinforce this development themselves by cultivating personal images tailored for modern mass media. Finally, explanations privileging the *erosion of traditional social cleavages* emphasize how politics becomes increasingly leadership-centered, as social group identities and voter loyalties weaken (e.g., Dalton and Wattenberg, 2000). Political parties, as a consequence, are seen as having been transformed from membership organizations into campaign organizations centered around party leaders.

Unpacking Internationalization: Summitry and Domestic Institutional Change

We share important analytical affinities with accounts that privilege the internationalization of politics as a source of chief executive empowerment. Yet we are dissatisfied with the existing status of this explanation in two regards. First, there is a strong tendency in existing research to refer broadly to internationalization or European integration, without specifying in detail what it is about this process that empowers chief executives at the expense of other domestic actors (cf., Poguntke and Webb, 2005a; Bäck et al., 2007). Second, where accounts offer such specifications, they center primarily on the ways in which exclusive access to international negotiation arenas expands the room for maneuver of chief executives and allows them to promote private political agendas (Moravcsik, 1994). Yet, as we shall argue, the contribution of internationalization to chief executive empowerment goes further than that. Most importantly, it extends to domestic institutional change with long-term implications for executive-legislative relations and intra-executive relations.

We conceive of the domestic institutional position of the chief executive as defined by two relationships: the balance of power between the executive and the legislature, and the balance of power within the executive, between the prime minister and other cabinet members. Our central argument is that international summitry, when vested with broad decision-making powers, generates functional pressures for the conferral of authority, discretion, and resources on chief executives. When acted upon, these pressures translate into domestic institutional change, shifting power away from legislatures and portfolio ministers and toward chief executives. In order to capture this effect, we adopt a broad definition of institutions as involving formal and informal norms, rules, practices, and procedures.

This argument is distinctly functionalist in orientation. Like other functionalist arguments, it should not be misunderstood as a claim that a certain institutional arrangement at all times is the most efficient solution to a problem. It only suggests that a particular

institutional arrangement was designed in anticipation of the benefits it would generate. Translated to the context of chief executive empowerment, we claim that domestic institutional change in executive-legislative relations and intra-executive relations constitutes a rational response to the functional requirements of summit decision-making. While we do not rule out domestic political contention over proposals to strengthen chief executives, because of the inherent redistribution of power, we generally expect institutional change in this direction, when it occurs, to be informed by ambitions of efficiency-maximization, with the ultimate aim of facilitating national influence in international summitry.

The extent to which summitry generates functional pressures for domestic institutional change, we suggest, is a product of the decision-making powers vested in the summit institution. Where summits are mainly declaratory or just address a narrow set of issues, they give rise to only weak functional pressures and are unlikely to engender domestic institutional change. However, where summits involve authoritative decision-making across a broad range of issues, they are likely to generate extensive and consequential pressures for shifts in power in favor of chief executives. We hypothesize that these effects of summitry on executive-legislative relations and intra-executive relations are translated through three causal mechanisms.

First, decision-making through summit institutions requires domestic delegation of *authority* to chief executives. This authority, we suggest, comes in two forms: external and internal. External authority consists of the right of the chief executive to represent the member state in international negotiations by presenting national positions, forming coalitions, and entering into agreements. Internal authority consists of the right of the chief executive to define the national interest, by coordinating, aggregating and adjudicating between alternative interests within the executive branch. The two forms of authority are functional prerequisites for participation in summit decision-making: unless chief executives possess external

authority, they cannot represent the member state in negotiations; and unless chief executives possess internal authority, they cannot determine what interests to pursue. Moreover, both forms of authority represent shifts in the domestic institutional balance of power, as both legislatures and other members of the executive typically enjoy greater formal power when issues are addressed through traditional domestic procedures, involving parliamentary adoption and oversight, as well as executive initiation and implementation.

The extent of authority conferred on chief executives is likely to be a consequence of the decision scope or competence of the particular summit institution. The broader the decision scope of a summit institution, the broader the set of issues on which chief executives requires external and internal authority. By the same token, changes in the decision scope of summit institutions affect the authority delegated to chief executives in predictable ways. If the decision scope of a summit institution expands over time, issues that previously were within the executive domain of portfolio ministers and the legislative domain of national parliaments are moved into the domain of chief executive representation and coordination. Conversely, if the decision scope of a summit institution contracts, issues that previously were within the domain of chief executives in international negotiations are shifted back into the domains of domestic executive and legislative actors.

Second, summit negotiations require that chief executives possess a degree of *discretion* vis-à-vis domestic constituencies. In line with principal-agent theory, we conceive of discretion as the sum of the authority delegated to an actor minus the control mechanisms instituted to oversee the exercise of this authority (Thatcher and Stone Sweet, 2002: 5). The traditional mechanisms of oversight operated by legislatures in relation to executives in the international realm include ex ante specification of negotiation mandates and ex post requirements of ratification (Martin, 2000). In the case of summit negotiations, chief executives enjoy an amount of discretion, as long as national parliaments do not operate

mechanisms of legislative oversight that fully dictate the positions they present, the compromises they strike, and the agreements they adopt at the international level.

For several reasons, legislative oversight vis-à-vis chief executives engaged in summit bargaining is typically less intrusive than oversight of executive action at the national level. This entails that any move toward more issues being decided through international summitry will reinforce a domestic institutional relationship between executives and legislatures that is relatively less advantageous for the latter. Not only is it difficult for parliaments to monitor the actions of chief executives in international negotiations behind closed doors, and costly for them to sanction chief executives if they submit unpopular agreements for ratification (Moravcsik, 1994). In addition, as theories of delegation to negotiating agents suggest, national parliaments have incentives to deliberately abstain from intrusive oversight, since complete control would negatively affect the capacity of chief executives to find bargaining solutions through exchange and compromise (Nicolaidis, 1999; Meunier, 2000).

Third, summit decision-making requires chief executives to possess independent administrative *resources*. For purposes of effectively representing the member state in summit negotiations, chief executives need staff that can provide them with information about the preferences of the other parties, the technical subject matter to be negotiated, and the applicable decision-making procedures. Likewise, in order to effectively define the national interest to be pursued through summit negotiations, chief executives need staff that can collect information on domestic preferences, adjudicate between competing interests within the executive, and coordinate government policy.

We would thus expect international summitry to affect the domestic organization of the executive, notably, the relative concentration of resources in the prime minister's office relative to portfolio ministries. As issues are shifted to the summit level and chief executives

gain in authority relative to other ministers, coordination responsibilities and resource allocation within the executive are likely to follow suit. While the organization of the executive by tradition varies across countries (Peters et al., 2000a; Goetz, 2006), these differences may become less pronounced. Decentralized executives with only weak government-wide coordinating mechanisms will be under pressure to become more hierarchical, and already centralized executives with strong coordination mechanisms will find increasing reason to sustain these structures. In both cases, summitry generates a long-term domestic institutional change, in favor of chief executives and to the disadvantage of other actors within the executive.

The European Council: A Source of Chief Executive Empowerment?

If the theoretical logic that we advance correctly captures the conditions under which summitry may empower chief executives domestically, we would expect such effects to be particularly prominent in the member states of the EU. The European Council over time has developed into the foremost example of an international summit institution with wide-reaching decision prerogatives. While summit bodies are a frequent feature of other international organizations as well, such as the G8, ASEAN, and NATO, none is comparable to the European Council in terms of decision scope and institutionalization. Moreover, since the EU engages in deeper cooperation than any other international organization, covering a range of areas typically considered to be part of domestic politics elsewhere, the issues addressed by the European Council are unusually salient politically.

The European Council today constitutes the supreme political body of the EU. It meets in principle four times a year, and its meetings “mark the rhythm of the Union’s various activities in the way religious feast days marked the rhythm of daily life in medieval Christendom” (de Schoutheete, 2006: 57). The European Council is formally composed of the

heads of state and government of the member states and the president of the European Commission, assisted by the ministers of foreign affairs and another member of the Commission.¹ It is distinct from the Council of Ministers, which brings together government ministers in nine specialized Council configurations and engages in everyday negotiations on EU legislation. In practice, however, there is considerable interaction between the two institutions, with the Council of Ministers preparing the work of the European Council, and the European Council setting guidelines and sometimes taking decisions for the Council of Ministers.

A central feature of the historical development of the European Council is the constant expansion of its decision scope. While originally founded in 1974 to provide a forum for informal exchanges between chief executives about the EU's strategic orientation, the European Council has evolved over time into an integral part of the organization's decision-making machinery (Westlake and Galloway, 2004: ch. 9; Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace, 2006: ch. 6; Werts, 2008). Next to providing strategic guidelines for the development of the EU, the European Council today serves as ultimate decision-maker on issues too complex or contentious for the Council of Ministers to handle, shapes the EU's collective foreign policy, coordinates member state policy on socioeconomic issues, appoints senior officials of the EU institutions, initiates and concludes constitutional conferences that amend the treaties, and effectively decides if, when, and how the EU should welcome new members. In effect, all major decisions in the EU now go through the European Council in some shape or form.

The issues referred to the European Council from the Council of Ministers constitute a notable part of its agenda. Whereas the specialized Councils enjoy the formal decision prerogatives within their respective policy fields, stretching from environment and social affairs to agriculture and regional aid, the European Council is frequently called upon to take

¹ Almost all member states are represented by their heads of government (prime ministers) and ministers of foreign affairs. However, France and Finland are represented by their heads of state (presidents) and either their heads of government or ministers of foreign affairs.

decisions even in these areas. This may happen because the portfolio ministers in the specialized Councils have been unable to reach compromises themselves, or because issues cut across several Council's and require a package agreement, or because the issues are of such a political magnitude that they require political decisions by the highest level of authority. As two observers conclude, "the very existence of the European Council has given rise to a constant upward pressure on decision-making" (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace, 2006: 175).

This expansion of the European Council's decision remit has been accompanied by a gradual but steady shift in the European-level preparation of summits from the ministries of foreign affairs to the prime ministers' offices. Whereas foreign ministers in the General Affairs Council formally enjoy an important function in preparing the agenda of upcoming summits, the negotiations before European Council meetings tend to be in the hands of the chief executives' EU advisors (Tallberg, 2007: 35–7). As the European Council increasingly has come to address issues traditionally conceived of as domestic policy, with foreign policy issues making up a declining portion of its agenda, the prime ministers' offices have developed into the natural locus of summit preparations and pre-negotiations. The operation of a tight network between the offices of the prime ministers, involving almost daily contacts between the EU advisors of the chief executives, is one central component.

We now proceed to test the core hypothesis that summit negotiations in the European Council has contributed to the domestic institutional empowerment of chief executives in EU member states through its effects on authority, discretion, and resources. We begin with an in-depth case study of the Swedish experience, and then turn to an analysis of observable patterns in a broader set of European countries.

Case Study: Chief Executive Empowerment in Sweden

The empowerment of the chief executive stands out as one of the most prominent developments in Swedish politics over the past decade and a half (Arter, 2004; Aylott, 2005; Ruin, 2007). In this section, we show how the government's integration into EU decision-making in general, and the prime minister's participation in the European Council in particular, have contributed to this development.² This empowerment of the Swedish prime minister is all the more notable, since Sweden was ruled by a minority government from 1995 to 2006, and since its government by tradition operates according to the principle of collective cabinet decision-making.

Executive-Legislative Relations

EU membership has weakened the ability of the Swedish parliament to control the executive. The format of EU decision-making excludes the parliament from direct participation, and its mechanisms for controlling the executive are purposefully designed to allow the government certain leeway in EU-level negotiations. Several reforms have been initiated to strengthen the involvement of the parliament in EU policy-making, but none has sought to challenge the balance between parliamentary scrutiny and government discretion.

When Sweden acceded to the EU in 1995, a central institutional question confronting the Swedish parliament, the *Riksdag*, pertained to its instruments for influence and control vis-à-vis the government on EU matters. As opposed to traditional domestic law-making, where the parliament's close involvement and support is required for legislation to be passed, EU decision-making only provides for national representation via the government, thus limiting the function of the parliament to one of control over the executive. The main institutional mechanism created to ensure such control by the *Riksdag* was the Committee on

² The case study summarizes unique and extensive primary evidence. More than fifty interviews have been conducted with diplomats, other civil servants, special and political advisors, and politicians, among them two former prime ministers and six former foreign ministers. In addition, the case study draws on official documents, archival material, and memoirs.

EU Affairs. The task of the committee is to monitor proposed legislation coming out of Brussels and to examine the positions being adopted and defended by the Swedish government in the Council of Ministers and the European Council. Hence, prior to all EU meetings, ministers must first receive support in the Committee on EU Affairs for the positions they intend to pursue. The government is then expected to observe the positions of the committee, which may be regarded as a form of mandate. Should it fail to do so, the government risks criticism from the *Riksdag* and ultimately a vote of no confidence in the chamber. This institutional arrangement reflects the constitutional provisions that the government represents the country when it enters into agreements with other states, and is responsible to the parliament.

Yet, despite the fact that the Swedish EU committee is considered one of the strongest in Europe, its powers are quite limited. Most notably, it cannot impose binding mandates on the executive. Rather, its hearings with the government are best regarded as consultations and its positions as strong advice. Whereas the option of a binding mandate was part of the institutional menu in the discussions preceding the establishment of the Committee on EU affairs, it was decided that the committee should not be able to issue formally binding mandates on the government or commit a minister to a certain position. In fact, the Swedish parliament itself, through the Committee on the Constitution, “opposed such a practice, since the government represented Sweden in the Council, and it was considered important that the government could act with full political responsibility” (Jungar and Ahlbäck Öberg, 2004: 189–90). There was broad parliamentary support for this constitutional arrangement, designed to allow the government a measure of autonomy in EU-level negotiations. Its effect was to make the committee less of an effective control mechanism and more of a legitimization instrument, permitting the Swedish government to negotiate with the formal support of the parliament.

Two significant institutional changes have taken place since the Committee on EU Affairs was first set up. Both have sought to strengthen the parliament's involvement in EU matters, but neither has entailed a step away from the approach of balancing parliamentary control and executive discretion.

First, and most significantly, the authority of the Committee on EU Affairs to scrutinize the government's actions in the Council of Ministers has been supplemented with a corresponding right in relation to the prime minister's participation in the European Council. As a political rather than legislative body, the European Council was not covered in the original arrangement for parliamentary scrutiny, designed in 1994, prior to the accession. Neither did the architects of this system anticipate the strengthening of the European Council during the second half of the 1990s and the early 2000s, through the conferral of additional decision authority on this body. However, once the Swedish parliament experienced EU cooperation first hand, it became distinctly clear that parliamentary scrutiny, in order to be meaningful, had to be extended to government actions in the European Council. Since January 2007, it is stipulated in the riksdag act that the government shall consult with the committee before meetings of the European Council. It is not formally stipulated that the prime minister should report back to the committee after European Council meetings, but this has been standard practice since the early 2000s.

Second, in response to dissatisfaction with the existing system of parliamentary scrutiny, a set of reforms was proposed in 2006. The proposals targeted concerns that the *Riksdag* receives information about new EU legislation too late for the parliament to be able to exert actual influence, and that parliamentary activity on European issues is concentrated to the Committee on EU Affairs. The reforms subsequently introduced were designed to "mainstream" EU affairs, by involving the specialized committees of the parliament to a greater extent and at an earlier stage in the handling of EU issues. It is notable that this

revision of the system of parliamentary scrutiny did not address as a problem the absence of binding mandates on the government in EU negotiations.

Moving from institutional design to political practice, the track record of the Committee on EU Affairs shows that the parliament has been reluctant to tie the hands of the government in EU negotiations, whether these pertain to everyday legislation or constitutional revisions. Despite its potential for influence, there are limitations to what the parliament can achieve in terms of control, given the need for executive discretion. In the words of Aylott, “there is the appreciation that, as in foreign policy, the Swedish position in multilateral negotiations can be weakened if a minister is mandated too tightly. --- This constraint is perhaps most visible before important meetings of the European Council; even Eurosceptical parties are reluctant to be seen to damage national interests by limiting the government’s room to bargain” (2007: 180).

Evidence on the operation of the Committee on EU Affairs indicates that its influence is limited in relation to the executive. The cases in which the parliament has not endorsed the proposed position of the government on EU issues are extremely few, and the committee has generally refrained from tough criticism of ministers. While, in principle, it could be that the government rationally anticipates the reactions of the committee and tailors its proposals to ensure support, multiple forms of evidence suggest otherwise.

Survey evidence reported by Raunio and Wiberg suggests that the parliament’s influence on EU policies is “rather limited and almost entirely *post-factum* in character” (2000: 346). The weakness of the *Riksdag* was seen as exacerbated by the strong position of the executive and the lack of constructive interest in EU matters on the part of members of parliament. Similarly, an elite survey with members of the Swedish parliament in 2001–2002 testified that the parliamentarians themselves conceive of the government as the dominant actor: “The self-image of the Swedish parliament is closer to the hypothesis that EU

centralizes power in the Member States. The Swedish parliamentarians perceive that the government and the governmental bodies, such as ministerial departments and the EU-representation in Brussels, have a power advantage in relation to the popular assembly. The cabinet is perceived to have the greatest say in the EU policy-making” (Jungar and Ahlbäck Öberg, 2004: 179–80). Finally, based on interviews, Aylott (2007: 180) reports that members of parliament complained about the government’s control of information and the fact that ministers first present an issue to the committee when it appears on the agenda of the Council, following months and often years of preparatory negotiations.

The ultimate weapon of the parliament, short of a vote of no confidence, is examinations of the government’s actions by the Committee on the Constitution. In a few cases, such examinations have been initiated for purposes of assessing whether the chief executive fulfilled its obligation to consult the parliament on national positions in advance of European Council meetings. These cases well illustrate the limits of parliamentary scrutiny and the extensive scope of government discretion, not least in the European Council.

One case where proper consultation with the Committee on EU Affairs did not take place in advance was the controversial issue of whether the EU should lift its arms embargo against China (Swedish Riksdag, 2004/2005). The issue was brought up spontaneously by the French president at a meeting of the European Council in December 2003 and, again, at a summit a year later. Whereas the Swedish prime minister was taken by surprise and opposed on the first occasion, he did not use the national veto when the issue was brought up again at the European Council summit in December 2004. The leaders of France, Germany and the UK were in favor of the proposal and, instead of opposing, the Swedish prime minister phoned the leader of the main opposition party to secure a majority in parliament. On neither occasion was the Swedish position presented to the Committee on EU Affairs for approval.

Another issue concerned the appointment of a new president for the European Commission in 2004 (Swedish Riksdag, 2004/05). The key question here was whether the Committee on EU Affairs had received sufficient information in advance from the government, notably the foreign minister. In the hearing before the Committee on the Constitution, the prime minister clarified that the decision on the appointment of the Commission president was taken by the heads of state and government in the European Council.

Yet the most illustrative case, and the only example so far of an explicit clash between the executive and the parliament on the conduct of EU policy, pertains to the proposal for a European Council president. In preparatory negotiations for a new EU treaty in 2002, the Swedish government presented a “non-paper,” suggesting that the rotating presidency of the European Council be replaced by an elected full-time president. The Committee on EU Affairs had not been consulted on the controversial contents of this non-paper, which eventually went against the majority opinion in the parliament. The Committee on the Constitution, in its annual report, criticized the government on the grounds that the Swedish proposal had been launched without prior consultation with the Committee on EU Affairs and also lacked support in this Committee (Swedish Riksdag, 2002/03). The proposal became the subject of parliamentary scrutiny in the following year as well, when the prime minister was called to hearing before the Committee on the Constitution (Swedish Riksdag, 2003/2004). Yet, over the subsequent course of the negotiations on the new treaty, the Swedish prime minister continued to communicate his support for the proposal in private conversations with other heads of government in the EU. While mentioning the lack of parliamentary support for the proposal, he simultaneously confirmed his great personal commitment to this issue and shared the assessment that an eventual Swedish veto was unlikely, since it would entail rejecting the entire treaty. This assessment turned out to be

correct and, in the end, a large majority in the parliament endorsed the new constitutional treaty, including the provisions for a full-time European Council president. The combined committee preparing the parliament's opinion on the new treaty even recognized that it was "important that the government has room for manoeuvre in the negotiations" (quoted in Aylott, 2007: 186).

The Swedish prime minister from 1996 to 2006, Göran Persson, has expressed great satisfaction with the existing system of parliamentary scrutiny, testifying that the Committee on EU Affairs caused his government "extremely few troubles" and in fact constituted "the precondition for a consistent European policy" (G. Persson, 2007: 236). The fact that Persson's social democratic government was in a parliamentary minority during this period, and had to secure support for its proposals through negotiations with other parties, did not prevent EU policy from being exceedingly government driven. It may therefore be argued that EU membership has changed the nature of parliamentarism in Sweden. Not only does the processing of EU issues involve a lower level of parliamentary scrutiny than usual; in addition, there are features of national unity government familiar from the conduct of foreign policy, with the opposition abstaining from formulating real policy alternatives.

Intra-Executive Relations

The history of Swedish intra-executive relations since 1995 is one of gradual reinforcement of the chief executive at the expense of other ministers. The principal driving factor in this process has been the demands of EU decision-making – not least EU summitry – on national policy coordination. Step by step, authority and resources have been shifted to the prime minister's office, which has taken the command over Swedish EU policy. Despite traditions and principles prescribing a small prime minister's office and collective decision-making in

the cabinet, power has been centralized in the prime minister's office and the chief executive has evolved into first *without* equals, rather than first *among* equals.

As a principle, the Swedish government takes decisions as a collective or collegial body. During the preparations for EU accession it was established that the principle of collective decision-making should apply to EU matters as well. However, EU membership has contributed to a gradual erosion of the principle of collective decision-making and a corresponding strengthening of the prime minister. In the search for a collective position, there is a continuous need to coordinate policies between prime minister's office and the ministries. Whereas other government ministers are responsible for their respective policy areas in the Council of Ministers, overall responsibility for Sweden's EU policy lies with the prime minister. Issues of high political salience tend to drift to the prime minister and his office. Moreover, only the prime minister has the authority to solve interministerial conflicts and forge a common line.

The erosion of cabinet government pertains to all policy fields, but has been especially prominent in foreign policy, where the chief executive has come to assume a broader operative role, according to interviewees. To a large extent, this follows from the fact that the European Council over the course of time has become increasingly involved in foreign policy, with the ministers of foreign affairs forced to take a secondary position. As a former state secretary for EU affairs explains: "The heads of government have become more and more involved in foreign policy and almost taken over the important decisions on EU policy. The reason for this development is the EU in general and the EU summits – the European Council – in particular. When the leaders of the EU now meet at least four times a year to take decisions on both general questions and important parts of the common foreign and security policy, they, of course, also want to be involved in the discussions on important issues between the summits" (Danielsson, 2007: 153–4). However, this trend extends to other

policy fields as well, such as economic policy. In 1999, the finance minister felt compelled to resign after clashes the previous year with the prime minister over Swedish macroeconomic policy in the EU context and the Swedish position on the regulation of tax free sales in the EU. On both dossiers, the finance minister was overruled by the prime minister, who intervened to set the Swedish position.

The concentration of power in the prime minister's office has taken place through gradual shifts in authority and resources since the mid-1990s, typically in the shape of organizational reforms of the government offices. The preparations for EU membership prior to 1995 involved the establishment of a system for managing the coordination of EU affairs. One option considered was to centralize the coordinating machinery in the office of the prime minister, but it was eventually decided that the unit for EU policy coordination should be located in the ministry of foreign affairs instead. The prime minister at the time, Ingvar Carlsson, was against incorporating EU policy coordination in his office (interview, August 29, 2005). Yet, recognizing that European Council meetings would have to be prepared, the prime minister established a foreign affairs division in his office, capable of supplying independent advice and support.

The decade-long process toward full control by the prime minister's office of all EU coordination began in 1996, one year after accession. When taking office, Göran Persson stated explicitly that the responsibility for coordinating EU matters should rest with his office (Ruin, 2000: 59). As a first step, he abolished the position of EU minister, which previously had existed in the ministry of foreign affairs. An additional major step was taken in January 1997, when all ministries were merged into one organizational entity, the government offices, with the prime minister as head. The reform was directly related to the challenges of internationalization and EU membership, and enhanced the role of the prime minister's office in policy coordination, at the expense of sectoral ministries, including the traditionally

powerful finance and foreign ministries (Elder and Page, 2000). According to the working group preparing this reform, interdepartmental questions were becoming increasingly common, not least as a product of EU membership, requiring a different organizational structure (Prime Minister's Office, 1996). In particular, there was a perceived need for the prime minister's office to have a clearer responsibility for the planning and setting of EU policy priorities, for example, in view of constitutional conferences and meetings of the European Council. However, the working group simultaneously concluded that the secretariat for EU affairs in the foreign ministry would not necessarily have to be placed within the prime minister's office, which already had the responsibility for solving conflicts between individual ministries on EU matters. The question of EU policy coordination revealed a significant degree of tension between the prime minister's office and the foreign ministry. For the time being, the ministry of foreign affairs maintained the responsibility for EU coordination.

In 1997, a new working group was set up to examine how the organization of EU coordination could be further improved (Prime Minister's Office, 1997). According to its report, a particular flaw in the existing system was weak political steering. Special emphasis was placed in the report on the meetings of the European Council and the need to better prepare the prime minister for these meetings. The report spelled out as an alternative to the existing organization that EU coordination should be located in the prime minister's office under the supervision of a special state secretary for EU affairs. The aim was clearly to strengthen the overarching coordination and political steering, by moving more and more to the prime minister's office, according to well-placed interviewees. Not surprisingly, the proposal met with strong opposition from the foreign ministry.

Nevertheless, in 1999, the chief executive proceeded to reorganize the machinery for EU coordination. The position of state secretary for EU affairs in the ministry for foreign

affairs was abolished and instead the EU and foreign affairs advisor to the prime minister was appointed state secretary for EU affairs. For the first time ever, a position of state secretary at the prime minister's office was designated to handle matters related to EU and international. The aim of the reorganization was again, even more explicitly than before, to concentrate the overall coordination responsibilities within the prime minister's office and thereby to overcome the earlier unclear division of competence between this office and the foreign ministry (Ruin, 2000: 60). This was perceived as particularly important, in view of the impending Swedish presidency of the EU in 2001. After the 1999 reform, Sweden was categorized in the group of "comprehensive centralizers" as regards the domestic coordination of EU policy, along with France, the UK, and Denmark (Kassim, 2003: 92, 94).

The new state secretary for EU affairs, Lars Danielsson, quickly became extremely influential within the government. Acting on the direct mandate of the prime minister, Danielsson created a sort of unitary command and control structure as far as EU policy of particular political salience was concerned (Johansson, 2008). He organized the prime minister's support structure, provided advice on EU matters, formulated Swedish negotiating positions, intervened in instructions given by sectoral ministries, and sought to ensure consistency and coherence in Swedish EU policy. The state secretary functioned as EU minister in everything but name, and sometimes even as foreign minister. Indeed, at European Council summits, the prime minister frequently sent away the foreign minister unless the EU's external relations were on the agenda, and instead asked the state secretary to take the seat next to him (Danielsson, 2007: 109).

In the context of the Swedish EU presidency in 2001, the state secretary is deemed to have performed an extremely important coordinating and political function (Ruin, 2002: 50; Ekengren, 2004: 215). Overall, holding the rotating presidency reinforced the need to improve EU coordination more generally and particularly to strengthen political steering. The overall

priority of running a good presidency meant that centralized coordination was accepted in the name of national interests (Ekengren, 2004: 213). A new organizational entity within the prime minister's office, the EU Department, had a key coordination role in relation to the presidency and the preparation of the meetings in the European Council.

The prime minister's office initiated yet another review of the system for EU coordination, inspired by a recent centralization of such power to the prime minister in Finland in the year 2000 (Prime Minister's Office, 2003). The review resulted in a proposal to establish a secretariat for EU affairs in the prime minister's office, and also put forward the option of moving responsibility for the Swedish EU representation in Brussels from the ministry of foreign affairs to the prime minister's office. The report sought legitimacy for such reforms through references to the systems for EU coordination in Britain, France, and Finland, where this authority was located in the prime minister's office. Moreover, the report explicitly emphasized the increasingly important role of the European Council and argued that this provided a further reason for EU coordination to be brought under the prime minister's office. In this context, the report called attention to the scheduled reorganization of the preparations of European Council meetings in the Council of Ministers, following a decision at the European Council summit in Seville in 2002. This decision, supported by the Swedish prime minister, entailed that the foreign ministers would mainly be confined to preparing issues pertaining to foreign policy. The reform gave added momentum to the tendency for EU affairs to be increasingly coordinated from the offices of the chief executives operating in the European Council.

Eventually, in September 2004, the prime minister announced that responsibility for EU coordination would be shifted from the ministry for foreign affairs to the prime minister's office. Whereas the previous foreign minister, Anna Lindh, had been able to block this reform for a number of years, Laila Freivalds, who had assumed office in 2003, found herself

confronted with a *fait accompli*. In late 2004, the prime minister made his deputy, based in the prime minister's office, responsible in the cabinet for the policy coordination of all "horizontal" EU issues apart from enlargement. In April 2005, this reform was completed through the establishment of a new EU coordination secretariat in the prime minister's office. This transfer of full responsibility for EU policy coordination to the prime minister's office constituted a major organizational reform of the central government machinery. Moreover, it entailed a critical juncture in the organization of EU affairs in Sweden and a break with tradition as regards the role and resources of the prime minister's office (Larue, 2006: 159; T. Persson, 2007: 213).

Taken together, these organizational reforms have involved incremental, but decisive, shifts in authority and resources in favor of the chief executive, and at the expense of other cabinet members, in particular the foreign minister. The reforms were explicitly motivated by the perceived institutional prerequisites for influence in European Council negotiations. As the chief executive is increasingly drawn into international relations, he is in greater need of support structures for foreign and EU affairs in his office.

Whereas, historically, the organization of the government offices has been shaped by the strong norm that the prime minister's office should be slim and not develop into a ministry of its own, these reforms have brought about a surrender of that model (T. Persson, 2007: 222). The resources available to the Swedish prime minister for coordination have grown considerably, and been concentrated in the prime minister's office. The personnel of the prime minister's office numbered about 135 in the spring of 2008, of which 30 worked in the EU coordination secretariat. Beyond the organizational reforms as such, EU cooperation has contributed to additional boosts in the staff of the prime minister's office through the resource demands associated with the Swedish presidency of the EU in 2001 and the constitutional negotiations from 2002 onward.

Moreover, there is evidence that the Swedish EU representation in Brussels and Swedish embassies in important EU countries during this period increasingly evolved into external resources at the special disposal of the prime minister, rather than organizational entities under the authority of the ministry of foreign affairs. Crucially, the Swedish EU ambassador from 2002 requested and received instructions from the state secretary on EU affairs. An institutionalized routine developed whereby these two met every Friday together with the prime minister to go over Swedish negotiating positions in the EU. This survey covered the full range of Swedish EU policy, and was considered particularly valuable in the preparations for European Council summits (interview, Sven-Olof Petersson, permanent representative to the EU, October 5, 2007). More generally, European Council decision-making created a special interest on the part of the prime minister in the domestic politics in other member states. Knowing the actual domestic constraints of other chief executives was considered a key to negotiating success. Interviews reveal that the prime minister therefore requested detailed briefing notes from all embassies in EU member states on the domestic political situation in these countries. In addition, the state secretary for EU affairs evolved into the main access point in Stockholm for key Swedish envoys, who sometimes were summoned from London, Berlin, and Paris to the prime minister's office on a short notice.

In sum, we find extensive support for the core hypothesis that European-level summitry contributes to domestic institutional change by empowering chief executives at the expense of other actors within the national executive. Despite structural and situational political conditions that worked against chief executive empowerment, the office of the Swedish prime minister was continuously strengthened in the decade following EU accession.

The General Record: Chief Executive Empowerment in Europe

Is the Swedish experience of chief executive empowerment unique, or the product of a general trend in the organization of European parliamentary democracies? To address this question, this section offers an inventory of existing evidence on European integration and chief executive empowerment in a range of EU countries. We conclude that European states, despite considerable variation in domestic institutional traditions, have experienced remarkably similar changes in executive-legislative relations and intra-executive relations, which can be linked to European integration in general and European Council decision-making in particular.

Executive-Legislative Relations

Empirical analyses of executive-legislative relations in EU member states overwhelmingly show that European integration has altered the relationship between executives and legislatures in favor of the former. Participation in European-level decision-making has provided executives with a political arena beyond domestic parliamentary scrutiny, and thus granted them extensive informational advantages vis-à-vis national legislatures and constituencies. While national parliaments have taken steps to reassert control from the 1990s onwards, through the establishment and strengthening of European Affairs committees, these mechanisms still stop short of providing effective control over the executive.

There is today almost universal agreement that national executives have strengthened their position at the expense of legislatures (Kassim et al., 2000; Raunio and Hix, 2000; Maurer and Wessels, 2001; Kassim, 2005; O’Brennan and Raunio, 2007). As Tanja Börzel and Thomas Risse conclude in a recent overview of the effects of the EU on the member states, while there is no clear picture as regards most aspects, “there is at least one finding that seems to be uncontested – Europeanization has strengthened the central executive at the expense of parliaments despite their increased involvement in EU policy-making” (2006:

487). Issues that parliaments traditionally had the right to decide over increasingly have come to be decided within the institutions of the EU. National executives enjoy privileged access to this arena, through their institutionalized participation in the Council of Ministers and the European Council. In addition, national parliaments experience greater difficulties in controlling executives on EU matters, since national executives typically possess superior information both with regard to the contents of EU policy and their own actions within the EU institutions.

The primary instrument whereby national legislatures in Europe have sought to influence and monitor executives is specialized EU committees. The standard tasks of these committees are to monitor proposed legislation coming out of Brussels and to examine the positions taken by the ministers of the executive in the Council and the European Council. Through these arrangements, national parliaments typically acquire a stronger role than they would on traditional foreign policy matters, but a weaker role than on domestic policy issues, leading some observers to claim the emergence of a new kind of parliamentary system for EU matters (Martin, 2000; Hegeland, 2006, 2007).

In a broad comparative perspective, two patterns are particularly notable as regards the role of national parliaments and EU committees. First, almost across the line, national legislatures have since the early 1990s made concerted efforts to regain some control vis-à-vis executives. Summarizing fifteen country studies, Mittag and Wessels conclude that, “in nearly all Member States, national parliaments have strengthened their formal role in the EU decision-making process. Though decision-making continues to be primarily in the hands of governments, their room for manoeuvre in Brussels negotiations will be restricted to an increasing extent by national parliaments and particularly by their specialised committees” (2003: 432). This assessment is shared by a range of other studies, which testify to attempts by parliaments to become more involved, but continuing difficulties in holding executives

accountable to the same extent as in domestic politics (Hix and Raunio, 2000; Kassim, 2005, Börzel and Sprungk, 2007). The introduction and strengthening of EU committees is the most prominent expression of these efforts, but they also include lobbying for a formal role in the EU policy process itself. This later strategy has paid off and, if the Lisbon Treaty of the EU enters into force as intended in 2009, national parliaments will be given a formal function, albeit weak, in ensuring respect for the division of responsibilities between the EU and the member states.

The second pattern is continuing differences between national legislatures in their relative involvement on EU issues. Whereas all parliaments have sought to improve their position in relation to executives, comparisons show that the Nordic legislatures constitute the most proactive and engaged in EU decision-making (Maurer and Wessels, 2001; O'Brennan and Raunio, 2007). In contrast to the parliaments in Greece and Portugal, which only operate weak EU committees, or the parliaments in XXX, which do not make use of specialized EU committees at all, the legislatures of the Nordic countries are equipped with relative extensive control powers, including procedures for ministers to receive prior instructions before meetings in the Council and the European Council, and to explain national positions taken afterwards.

With regard to decision-making in the European Council, the Danish and Finnish parliaments provide similar procedures as the Swedish parliament nowadays does (Raunio and Wiberg, 2000: 348–9). In Denmark, the prime minister must inform the European Committee of issues likely to be on the agenda of the meeting, and if the government expects important decisions to be taken, it must obtain a mandate from the committee. In Finland, the prime minister is obliged to inform the Grand Committee of questions to be addressed in the European Council, and he or she is also required to provide information afterwards on the actual deliberations. However, in neither case has the effectiveness of the system for

controlling the executive been deemed satisfactory, generating investigations into how it may be tightened further (Hegeland, 2007).

The underlying problem, according to a recent analysis, is that, “even the most powerful committee cannot fully neutralise the essential logic of politics: in order to be capable of reaching a compromise, politicians who participate in higher-level decision-making arenas need to have some freedom for manoeuvre. Parliamentary committees (and party bodies) may attempt to constrain this freedom, but they cannot apply strict control unless they want to obstruct the very decision making that they are trying to monitor and control” (Poguntke et al., 2007: 764). Cross-national data on the perceived autonomy of party elites in government from the national parties they represent confirm that ministers within the executive enjoy extensive discretion on EU issues, and even suggest that this discretion may have increased over time (Carter and Poguntke, 2007). Moreover, within the executive, the prime ministers in the European Council are generally perceived of as being subject to less control, and as possessing higher levels of discretion, than the portfolio ministers in the Council of Ministers.

Intra-Executive Relations

Empirical evidence on the development of intra-executive relations in EU countries paints an almost uniform picture. Invariably, we have witnessed a decline in collective cabinet government, with chief executives playing a more independent and pronounced role. As the European Council has grown more prominent as a decision-making arena in the EU, chief executives and their offices have gained in both coordinating responsibilities and resources. While this shift in power to prime ministers has taken place at the expense of all other cabinet members, foreign ministers have been particularly disadvantaged.

A comparative study of domestic institutional change in all fifteen member states prior to the 2004 enlargement of the EU finds that chief executives, without exception, have gained in relative power due to EU participation: “Particularly through their role as members of the European Council they are able to steer internal procedures and thus to lead the national decision-making process. The European Council and bilateral summits have even reinforced the role of those heads of government that were less powerful in the national arena. Given the need to act assertively and coherently in making key decisions, which are increasingly taken through the European Council, prime ministers have gained power *vis-à-vis* their colleagues” (Mittag and Wessels, 2003: 423).

A central component of this power shift is the authority conferred on chief executives for coordinating national positions – most obviously on those issues addressed by the European Council, but also on those EU issues that stretch across multiple functional domains or involve conflict within the executive. Whereas the specific procedures and mechanisms for adjudicating issues, coordinating policy, and fixing negotiating positions vary between member countries, national coordination systems have in common an increasingly deep involvement of chief executives (Kassim et al., 2000; Kassim, 2005).

A knock-on effect of the growing role of chief executives in the coordination of EU policy is the shift in resources toward the offices of prime ministers. Simply stated, “[t]he European Council’s increasingly high profile and the broadening of its agenda...require that Heads of State and Government have at their disposal the institutional resources necessary for effective participation” (Kassim, 2003: 85). Domestic coordination of EU policy demands considerable resources, as does the preparation and pre-negotiation of issues to be addressed in the European Council. EU level summitry has thereby contributed to a documented general development toward more resourceful offices around chief executives, regardless of whether

they are structurally weak or strong by tradition and constitutional design (Peters et al., 2000a).

Two forms of recurring events have contributed in particular to prime ministers' offices becoming empowered in terms of resources. Constitutional conferences convened to revise the EU treaties have taken place at regular intervals since the mid-1980s, and then constituted central themes on the agenda of the European Council. Since these conferences pertain to crucial institutional questions that typically cut across traditional policy domains, the resource-demanding responsibility of preparing national positions has tended to be placed in the offices of the prime ministers (Hayes-Renshaw and Wallace, 2006: 233). In addition, the rotating responsibility of chairing all meetings in the Council and the European Council has contributed to ratcheting up the resources of chief executive offices. Holding the presidency of the EU is a highly resource-consuming undertaking in both logistical and political terms, and a non-negligible part of the burden is often placed on the chief executives and their offices, for purposes of ensuring a coherent national approach (Tallberg, 2006).

Whereas the empowerment of chief executives has taken place at the expense of portfolio ministers in general, ministers of foreign affairs have been particularly disadvantaged by this development. Sweden is not the only case where the authority and resources to coordinate EU policy have been shifted partly or entirely from the ministry of foreign affairs to the prime minister's office. Rather, this is a general trend in EU countries (Kassim et al., 2000; Laffan, 2007). As the topics on the EU agenda pertain increasingly more to domestic behind-the-border concerns, it becomes inefficient and anachronistic to have ministries of foreign affairs coordinate national EU policy. Further indications of this development is the declining authority of the General Affairs Council as preparatory body for the European Council, and the increasingly frequent replacement of the foreign ministers at European Council meetings with other portfolio ministers, notably ministers of finance.

Evidence on the evolution of intra-executive relations in the UK and Finland since the mid-1990s shows how two countries that differ considerably from Sweden and each other in domestic constitutional and political conditions, have undergone a similar process of chief executive empowerment in EU affairs.

Whereas the office of the prime minister of the UK traditionally is regarded as strong by international comparison, it is first during the past decade that the coordination of EU policy has become centralized to the prime minister's office, which gradually has taken over the coordinating responsibility for all EU matters except foreign policy. Moreover, from 2000 onwards, the European Secretariat was substantially strengthened in terms of both personnel and status. This development reflects the commitment of Tony Blair as prime minister to fashion a more coherent British EU policy, and the institutional logic of regular European Council meetings (Allen, 2005; Bulmer and Burch, 2005). As Stephen Wall, former head of the European Secretariat, explains: "If you meet fairly regularly and you have to take decisive decisions, you want the mechanisms, and once you are down that road, power does not devolve downwards again. By mechanisms I mean authority and personnel in the Cabinet Office, in the UK case. When David Williamson was head of the Cabinet Office in the 1980s, he did not have an independent EU secretariat, but relied on the Foreign Office. The contrast with the 2000s and my own situation is striking. Blair has established a European policy framework that gives him a source of independent advice and execution" (interview, November 30, 2006).

Even in Finland, with its semi-presidential system and dual executive, European integration has contributed to empowering the prime minister. Accession to the EU in 1995 prompted a constitutional reform in Finland, which involved transferring the responsibility for EU policy to the government from the president, who previously had enjoyed exclusive authority on foreign policy. The driving concern was the "poor fit between presidentialism

and the demands of EU membership” (Johansson and Raunio, 2008: 9–10). Moreover, within the government, the authority and resources to define and coordinate Finnish EU policy over time have become concentrated in the prime minister’s office. Whereas the ministry of foreign affairs initially had been given the overall responsibility for handling European matters, its EU secretariat was transferred to the prime minister’s office in 2000, for purposes of ensuring a more efficient processing and coordination of EU issues within the state apparatus. This move also served to reinforce the support for the prime minister in relation to European Council meetings. In sum, “the political dynamic of the EU policy process has contributed to the prime minister emerging as the undisputed leader in both domestic and [European] integration policy” (Raunio and Tiilikainen, 2003: 146).

Conclusion

This paper suggests that an important contributing factor to the empowerment of chief executives in Europe is the institutionalization of summit decision-making in the EU over the past thirty years. Adapting rationally to the emergence of the European Council as the authoritative decision body on most vital issues of cooperation, EU states have refashioned domestic procedures and practices to provide chief executives with effective negotiation machineries. This has involved the conferral of additional authority, discretion, and resources on chief executives, with implications for the balance of power between the executive and the legislature, as well as within the executive branch itself. We have traced this dynamic at work through an in-depth account of domestic institutional change in Sweden, and demonstrated the broader applicability of these findings through an inventory of evidence on domestic institutional change in other European states.

Our argument should not be misunderstood as an unconditional claim about the effects of international summitry on the domestic empowerment of chief executives. Rather,

our argument is subject to two important caveats. First, it is only where summit institutions are endowed with broad decision-making prerogatives that we would expect them to generate pressures for the domestic conferral of authority, discretion, and resources on chief executives. In this regard, the European Council is positioned at one end of the spectrum, and we would therefore not expect the same extensive effects of summitry elsewhere. Second, the transformative pressure of summitry on the standing of chief executives is likely to be mediated by pre-existing domestic institutional and political conditions. While the independent effect of the European Council has been to strengthen EU chief executives in general, this has not occurred in a uniform way, nor have chief executives become equally powerful as a result.

Our results carry implications for three fields of research in Comparative Politics and International Relations. First, our account of the domestic institutional effects of European Council decision-making identifies a long-term structural cause of the observed pattern of “presidentialization” in European parliamentary democracies (Peters et al., 2000a; Poguntke and Webb, 2005a). Our findings challenge those who suggest that the sources of chief executive empowerment primarily are contingent rather than structural in nature (Aylott, 2005; Goetz, 2006). While we concur with the assessment that the empowerment effect of personalities and majoritarian relations varies over time, we submit that there are deep-seated changes, such as the transfer of authority to summit institutions, which explain the long-term trend of a concentration of power around chief executives. In addition, our findings speak to the need for unpacking the broad processes of internationalization and European integration as sources of “presidentialization.” While alluring concepts, they complicate analysis of chief executive empowerment by lumping together a range of economic and political developments that are best kept apart for purposes of explanatory precision. We have demonstrated in this paper that the specific mode of decision-making in the EU, with broad powers vested in the

European Council, constitutes a central pathway through which internationalization and integration empower chief executives, but do not rule out additional mechanisms.

Second, this paper suggests that the literature on the interplay between domestic and international politics has overlooked a central form of interaction between the two levels of organization. More specifically, our argument contributes to the “second-image reversed” tradition of isolating international sources of domestic political change (Gourevitch, 1978). Whereas scholars have devoted extensive attention to the domestic political determinants of international cooperation (Milner, 1997; Martin, 2000), two-level-game bargaining (Putnam, 1988; Evans et al., 1993), and domestic coalition formation in response to international developments (Gourevitch, 1986; Rogowski, 1990), they have yet to map the domestic institutional implications of international bargaining. Our argument about the effects of summit negotiations on executive-legislative relations and intra-executive relations serves to advance this agenda.

Third, this paper contributes to the growing literature on “Europeanization,” by isolating an additional mechanism through which European-level decision-making feeds back into the organization of domestic political systems. Research on Europeanization addresses the ways in which the EU as an independent variable affects the policies, politics, and polities of the member states (Cowles et al., 2001, Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003; Graziano and Vink, 2007). However, to date, most of this literature has centered on the extensive and easily observable consequences on policy, at the expense of exploring the less evident and discernible effects on domestic institutional structures (Börzel and Risse, 2006). Through our focus on chief executives, we identify an important, but neglected, form of institutional change. Moreover, our results endorse the notion that European integration serves to redistribute power among domestic political actors, rather than fundamentally undermine state authority.

Acknowledgements

This paper is the joint product of research conducted within two different projects: “The Government Offices and the Organization of Society,” funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation; and “Power and Negotiation in the European Council”, funded by the Swedish Research Council. Johansson is a member of the first project and Tallberg has led the second project. We wish to thank our project colleagues for constructive cooperation, and all the people who were willing to be interviewed for generously sharing their time and insights.

References

- Allen, D. (2005), ‘The United Kingdom: A Europeanized Government in a non-Europeanized Polity’, in S. Bulmer and C. Lequesne (eds) *The Member States of the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 19–41.
- Arter, D. (2004), ‘The prime minister in Scandinavia: ‘Superstar’ or supervisor?’, *Journal of Legislative Studies* 10 (2/3): 109–27.
- Aylott, N. (2005), ‘‘President Persson’ – How Did Sweden Get Him?’, in T. Poguntke and P. Webb (eds) *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 176–98.
- Aylott, N. (2007), ‘A long, slow march to Europe: The Europeanization of Swedish political parties’, in T. Poguntke, N. Aylott, E. Carter, R. Ladrech and K. R. Luther (eds) *The Europeanization of national political parties: Power and organizational adaptation*. London: Routledge, pp. 162–89.

- Bulmer, S., C. Jeffery and W.E. Paterson (2000), *Germany's European diplomacy: Shaping the Regional Milieu*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Bulmer, S. and M. Burch (2005), 'The Europeanization of UK Government: From Quiet Revolution to Explicit Step-Change?', *Public Administration* 83 (4): 861–90.
- Bäck, H., P. Dumont, H.E. Meier, T. Persson and K. Vernby (2007), 'Does European Integration Lead to a "Presidentialization" of Executive Politics? Ministerial Selection in Swedish Post-War Cabinets'. Paper presented at the ECPR General Conference, Pisa, 6–8 September 2007.
- Börzel, T.A. and T. Risse (2006), 'Europeanization: The Domestic Impact of European Union Politics', in K.E. Jørgensen, M.A. Pollack and B. Rosamond (eds) *Handbook of European Union Politics*. London: SAGE, pp. 483–504.
- Börzel, T.A. and C. Sprungk (2007), 'Undermining Democratic Governance in the Member States? The Europeanization of National Decision-Making', in R. Holzhaecker and E. Albæk (eds) *Democratic Governance and European Integration: Linking Societal and State Processes of Democracy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, pp. 113–36.
- Calise, M. (2000), *Il Partito Personale*. Roma: Editori Laterza.
- Carter, E. and T. Poguntke (2007), 'How does European Integration Change National Political Parties?'. Paper presented at the ECPR General Conference, Pisa, 6–8 September 2007.
- Cowles, M.G., J. Caparaso and T. Risse (eds) (2001), *Transforming Europe: Europeanization and Domestic Change*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Dalton, R.J. and M.P. Wattenberg (eds) (2000), *Parties without Partisans: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Danielsson, L. (2007), *I skuggan av makten*. Stockholm: Bonniers.

- De Schoutheete, P. (2006), 'The European Council', in J. Peterson and M. Shackleton (eds.) *The Institutions of the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 37–59.
- Ekengren, M. (2004), 'National Foreign Policy Co-ordination: The Swedish EU Presidency', in W. Carlsnaes, H. Sjursen and B. White (eds) *Contemporary European Foreign Policy*. London: Sage, pp. 211–26.
- Elder, N.C.M. and E.C. Page (2000), 'Sweden: the Quest for Co-ordination', in B.G. Peters, R.A.W. Rhodes and V. Wright (eds) *Administering the Summit: Administration of the Core Executive in Developed Countries*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 134–52.
- Evans, P.B., H.K. Jacobson and R.D. Putnam (eds) (1993), *Double-Edged Diplomacy: International Bargaining and Domestic Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Featherstone, K. and C. M. Radaelli (2003), *The Politics of Europeanization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Foley, M. (2000), *The British Presidency: Tony Blair and the Politics of Public Leadership*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Goetz, K.H. (2006), 'Power at the Centre: The Organization of Democratic Systems', in P.M. Heywood, E. Jones, M. Rhodes and U. Sedelmeier (eds) *Developments in European Politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 73–96.
- Gourevitch, P. (1978), 'The Second Image Reversed: International Sources of Domestic Politics', *International Organization* 32 (4): 881–911.
- Gourevitch, P. (1986), *Politics in Hard Times: Comparative Responses to International Economic Crises*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Graziano, P. and M.P. Vink (eds) (2007), *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Hayes-Renshaw, F. and H. Wallace (2006), *The Council of Ministers*. 2nd edition.
Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hegeland, H. (2006), *Nationell EU-parlamentarism: Riksdagens arbete med EU-frågorna*.
Stockholm: Santérus Academic Press.
- Hegeland, Hans (2007), 'The European Union in national parliaments: Domestic or foreign policy? A study of Nordic parliamentary systems', in J. O'Brennan and T. Raunio (eds) *National Parliaments within the Enlarged European Union: From 'Victims' of integration to competitive actors?*. London: Routledge, pp. 95–115.
- Johansson, K.M. (2008), 'Chief Executive Organization and Advisory Arrangements for Foreign Affairs: The Case of Sweden', *Cooperation and Conflict* 43 (3).
- Johansson, K.M. and T. Raunio (2008), 'Organizing the Core Executive for European Union Affairs: Comparing Finland and Sweden'. Manuscript prepared for publication.
- Jungar, A.-C. and S. Ahlbäck Öberg (2004), 'Are National Parliaments Lagging Behind? The Influence of the Swedish and Finnish Parliaments over Domestic EU Policies', in A. Ágh (ed.) *Post-Accession in East Central Europe: The Emergence of the EU 25*. Budapest: Hungarian Centre for Democracy Studies, pp. 175–96.
- Kassim, H. (2003), 'Meeting the Demands of EU Membership: The Europeanization of National Administrative Systems', in K. Featherstone and C.M. Radaelli (eds) *The Politics of Europeanization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 83–111.
- Kassim, H. (2005), 'The Europeanization of Member State Institutions', in S. Bulmer and C. Lequesne (eds) *The Member States of the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 285–316.
- Kassim, H., B.G. Peters and V. Wright (eds) (2000), *The National Co-ordination of EU Policy: The Domestic Level*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Laffan, B. (2007), 'Core Executives', in P. Graziano and M.P. Vink (eds) *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 128–40.
- Larue, T. (2006), *Agents in Brussels: Delegation and Democracy in the European Union*. Umeå: Umeå University/Department of Political Science.
- Martin, L.L. (2000), *Democratic Commitments: Legislatures and International Cooperation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Maurer, A. and W. Wessels (eds) (2001), *National Parliaments on their Ways to Europe: Losers or Latecomers?*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Meunier, S. (2000), 'What Single Voice? European Institutions and EU-US Trade Negotiations', *International Organization* 54 (1): 103–35.
- Milner, H.V. (1997), *Interests, Institutions, and Information: Domestic Politics and International Relations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Mittag, J. and W. Wessels (2003), 'The 'One' and the 'Fifteen'? The Member States between procedural adaptation and structural revolution', in W. Wessels, A. Maurer and J. Mittag (eds) *Fifteen Into One? The European Union and its Member States*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 413–54.
- Moravcsik, A. (1994), *Why the European Community Strengthens the State: Domestic Politics and International Cooperation*. Working Paper Series #52, Center for European Studies, Harvard University.
- Nicolaïdis, K. (1999), 'Minimizing Agency Costs in Two-Level Games: Lessons from the Trade Authority Controversies in the United States and the European Union', in R.M. Mnookin and L.E. Susskind (eds) *Negotiating on Behalf of Others: Advice to Lawyers, Business Executives, Sports Agents, Diplomats, Politicians, and Everybody Else*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, pp. 87–126.

- O'Brennan, J. and T. Raunio (eds) (2007), *National Parliaments within the Enlarged European Union: From 'Victims' of integration to competitive actors?.* London: Routledge.
- Persson, G. (2007), *Min väg, mina val.* Stockholm: Bonniers.
- Persson, T. (2007), 'Explaining European Union Adjustments in Sweden's Central Administration', *Scandinavian Political Studies* 30 (2): 204–28.
- Peters, B.G., R.A.W. Rhodes and V. Wright (eds) (2000a), *Administering the Summit: Administration of the Core Executive in Developed Countries.* Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Peters, B.G., R.A.W. Rhodes and V. Wright (2000b), 'Staffing the Summit – the Administration of the Core Executive: Convergent Trends and National Specificities', in B.G. Peters, R.A.W. Rhodes and V. Wright (eds) *Administering the Summit: Administration of the Core Executive in Developed Countries.* Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp. 3–22.
- Poguntke, T. and P. Webb (eds) (2005a), *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Poguntke, T. and P. Webb (2005b), 'The Presidentialization of Politics in Democratic Societies: A Framework for Analysis', in T. Poguntke and P. Webb (eds) *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1–25.
- Poguntke, T., N. Aylott, R. Ladrech and K.R. Luther (2007), 'The Europeanisation of national party organisations: A conceptual analysis', *European Journal of Political Research* 46 (6): 747–71.
- Putnam, R.D. (1988), 'Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-level Games', *International Organization* 42 (3): 427–60.

- Prime Minister's Office (1996), 'Regeringskansliets organisation m.m.' Final report of the working group on the future organization of the Government Offices. May 13, 1996.
- Prime Minister's Office (1997), 'Regeringskansliets samordning av EU-frågor – rapport från en särskild arbetsgrupp'. Final report of the working group reviewing EU coordination of the Government Offices. May 3, 1997.
- Prime Minister's Office (2003), *Ett effektivare regeringskansli – förslag till åtgärder*. Report from the project on efficiency and rationalization of the Government Offices. January 2003.
- Raunio, T. and S. Hix (2000), 'Backbenchers Learn to Fight Back: European Integration and Parliamentary Government', in K.H. Goetz and S. Hix (eds) *Europeanised Politics? European Integration and National Political Systems*. London: Frank Cass, pp. 142–68.
- Raunio, T. and T. Tiilikainen (2003), *Finland in the European Union*. London: Frank Cass.
- Raunio, T. and M. Wiberg (2000), 'Parliaments' Adaptation to the European Union', in P. Esaiasson & K. Heidar (eds) *Beyond Westminster and Congress: The Nordic Experience*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press, pp. 344–364.
- Rogowski, R. (1990), *Commerce and Coalitions: How Trade Affects Domestic Political Alignments*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Ruin, O. (2000), 'The Europeanization of Swedish Politics', in L. Miles (ed.) *Sweden and the European Union Evaluated*. London: Continuum, pp. 51–65.
- Ruin, O. (2002), *Sveriges statsminister och EU: Ett halvår i centrum*. Stockholm: Hjalmarson & Högberg.
- Ruin, O. (2007), *Statsministern: Från Tage Erlander till Göran Persson*. Stockholm: Gidlunds förlag.
- Street, J. (2001), *Mass Media, Politics and Democracy*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Swedish Riksdag (2002/03), Report by the Committee on the Constitution.

- Swedish Riksdag (2003/04), Report by the Committee on the Constitution.
- Swedish Riksdag (2004/05), Report by the Committee on the Constitution.
- Tallberg, J. (2006), *Leadership and Negotiation in the European Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Tallberg, J. (2007), *Bargaining Power in the European Union*. Report 2007: 1. Stockholm: Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies.
- Thatcher, M. and A. Stone Sweet (2002), 'Theory and Practice of Delegation to Non-Majoritarian Institutions', *West European Politics* 25 (1): 1–22.
- Webb, P. and T. Poguntke (2005), 'The Presidentialization of Contemporary Democratic Politics: Evidence, Causes and Consequences', in T. Poguntke and P. Webb (eds) *The Presidentialization of Politics: A Comparative Study of Modern Democracies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 336–56.
- Werts, J. (2008), *The European Council*. London: John Harper Publishing.
- Westlake, M. and D. Galloway (2004), *The Council of the European Union*. 3rd edition. London: John Harper Publishing.