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**The Power of the Chair:
Formal Leadership in International Cooperation**

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Abstract

This article addresses the influence wielded by the formal leaders of international cooperation – those state or supranational representatives that chair and direct negotiations in the major decision bodies of multilateral organizations and conferences. This is a topic that so far has received limited systematic attention by IR theorists, who have tended to treat bargaining parties as functionally and formally equivalent, leaving little theoretical space for formal leadership. Drawing on rational choice institutionalism, I introduce a theory that develops a coherent argument for the delegation of authority to the chairmanship, the power resources of negotiation chairs, and the influence of formal leaders over outcomes. I assess the explanatory power of this theory through evidence on formal leadership in three alternative organizational settings: the EU, the GATT/WTO, and UN environmental conferences. I find in favor of the chairmanship as a source of independent influence in international cooperation. Formal leaders perform functions of agenda management, brokerage, and representation that make it more likely for negotiations to succeed, and possess privileged resources that may enable them to steer negotiations toward the agreements they most prefer.

Multilateral negotiations have become the most prominent method by which states address joint problems, resolve disagreements, and formulate common norms in world politics. Over the past two decades, this development has spurred a substantive body of research on international negotiations in a broad range of issue areas. At the heart of the debate are fundamental issues of efficiency and distribution. Why do some negotiations lead to agreements that exploit all possible joint gains, whereas others collapse or produce sub-optimal bargains? Why are some parties more successful than others in securing benefits from multilateral agreements?

This article addresses a phenomenon that so far has received limited systematic attention by international relations (IR) theorists, yet carries important implications for our understanding of multilateral bargaining – the power of the chair. I explore the influence wielded by the formal leaders of international cooperation – those state or supranational representatives that chair and direct negotiations in the major decision bodies of international organizations and conferences. I argue in favor of the chairmanship as a potential power platform in international cooperation, and isolate the conditions under which actors in control of this office shape the outcomes of multilateral negotiations. Formal leaders fulfill functions of agenda management, brokerage, and representation that make it more likely for negotiations to succeed, and possess informational and procedural power resources that may enable to steer negotiations toward the agreements they most prefer.

For most negotiators, the argument that “the chair matters” is uncontroversial. Regardless of whether they themselves have directed international negotiations, or experienced the effects of other actors’ access to this power platform, they tend to recognize the political implications of the chairmanship. In fact, most people who have ever served as chairs would probably admit that this position is accompanied by a capacity to affect decision-making through resources that other participants do not enjoy. However, IR theorists have been slow to acknowledge the power of the

chair and so far unable to provide a theoretically grounded explanation of when, why, and how formal leadership matters.¹ Students of international negotiation have tended to treat bargaining parties as functionally and formally equivalent, thus leaving limited theoretical space for formal leaders with asymmetric control over the nature of the game. Negotiation is typically conceptualized as a process between actors that enjoy the same formal status, but differ in terms of power capabilities, preferences, information, ideas, and alternatives to negotiated agreements.² Where existing literature emphasizes the importance of political leadership or entrepreneurship, this is typically conceptualized as informal influence, anchored in structural power, entrepreneurial capacity, or intellectual capital – not in formal power positions (Young 1991; Underdal 1994; Hampson with Hart 1995; Moravcsik 1999; Beach and Mazzucelli 2007).

In this article, I present and test a theory of formal leadership that develops a coherent argument for the delegation of authority to the chairmanship, the power resources of negotiation chairs, and the effects of formal leadership on multilateral bargaining. The theory is informed by rational choice institutionalism and shares analytical affinities with recent research on institutional design and principal-agent relationships in international cooperation (Koremenos et al. 2001; Pollack 2003; Hawkins et al. 2006). It suggests that the impact of formal leadership on outcomes is the product of a two-step logic, where states first delegate process functions to the chairmanship in response to specific bargaining problems, and chairs subsequently draw on privileged power resources to influence the efficiency and distributive dimension of negotiations. It generates the additional expectation that rotating chairs will be relatively more capable of shaping distributional outcomes than elected or supranational chairs.

¹ However, for rare contributions, see Metcalfe (1998), Odell (2005) and Blavoukos et al. (2006).

² For overviews of the field, see Jönsson (2002) and Kremenjuk (2002).

I assess the explanatory potential of this theory by summarizing evidence on formal leadership in three organizational settings with variation in the design of the chairmanship: the European Union (EU), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and its successor the World Trade Organization (WTO), and United Nations (UN) environmental conferences. My central findings are two. First, formal leaders in all settings have been delegated powers and conduct interventions that raise the efficiency of negotiations and facilitate agreement. Chairs typically contribute by structuring the agenda through single negotiating texts, brokering agreement through bilateral talks and compromise proposals, and representing the negotiating group vis-à-vis third parties. Second, the institutional design of the chairmanship conditions the capacity of formal leaders to bias distributive outcomes in their own favor. Whereas rotation of chairmanships in the EU has generated a logrolling dynamic whereby state representatives take turns in exploiting the office for national purposes, supranational chairs in the GATT/WTO and elected state chairs at UN conferences have been confronted with control mechanisms and decision rules that limit the scope for distributional influence. These findings challenge competing claims about formal leadership, which either point to alternative power resources and behavioral constraints, or remain skeptical of formal leaders exerting influence in international cooperation.

The article proceeds as follows. The first section develops the logic of the theory of formal leadership and outlines two alternative approaches. The second section presents the empirical case studies and discusses the generalizability of the results. I conclude by delineating the boundaries of my argument, revisiting alternative claims about formal leadership, and pointing to the broader implications of this article.

Formal Leadership: A Rational Institutionalist Theory

The theory I advance offers hypotheses about the conditions under which states are likely to delegate process powers to formal leaders, and the conditions under which formal leaders are likely to influence outcomes in multilateral bargaining. The theory is summarized in Figure 1 and developed below in two steps. I conclude the section by outlining two alternative approaches.

[FIGURE 1: Formal Leadership: A Rational Institutionalist Theory]

The Demand for Formal Leadership

Why do states, sensitive to challenges of their decision-making prerogatives, agree to vest powers of process control in the office of the chair? I suggest that the delegation of authority to the chairmanship of international negotiation bodies constitutes a functional response to three forms of bargaining problems: agenda failure, negotiation failure, and representation failure. The tasks that states typically confer on the chairmanship – agenda management, brokerage, and representation – answer directly to these problems. The chairmanship is not the only institution or actor capable of ameliorating these bargaining problems, and the existence of alternative sources of leadership conditions the empowerment of chairs in international cooperation.

Agenda failure refers to the absence of progress in negotiations because of overcrowded or shifting agendas. As negotiation theorists regularly emphasize, complexity increases manifold as we move from bilateral to multilateral bargaining (Touval 1989; Zartman 1994). Whereas the existence of multiple parties and issues may facilitate agreement by allowing for cross-cutting

package deals, there is a notable risk that agendas will become overloaded. As Richard Walton and Robert McKersie (1965:146) stress: “The parties would want to avoid having an overwhelming number [of issues] – so that the negotiators are not overloaded and do not need to devote too much time sorting through items to the detriment of genuine exploitation of particular items.” Conflicts over the order and number of issues can force states to devote scarce resources to pre-negotiations whose sole purpose is to arrive at a negotiable agenda (Stein 1989). Rational choice theorists highlight a related source of agenda failure. Decision systems that grant equal agenda-setting opportunities to all actors are liable to issue cycling and will be unable to secure stable majorities for the proposals advanced (McKelvey 1976; Riker 1980). While originally developed in relation to national legislatures, this argument sheds light on the challenges of arriving at stable outcomes in multilateral negotiations as well (Mesquita 1990).

The functional solution to the problem of agenda failure is the institutionalization of agenda control. Negotiation theorists point to procedures and practices for dealing with complexity, such as issue sequencing and subtraction, coalition building, and single negotiating texts (Raiffa 1982; Sebenius 1983; Dupont 1994). Rational choice theorists, for their part, speak of how institutional arrangements in legislative politics, such as agenda-setting power, gate-keeping authority, and sequential choice, can prevent the manifestation of agenda instability (Shepsle and Weingast 1984; Fiorina and Shepsle 1989; Baron 1994). In international cooperation, states frequently attempt to address this problem by delegating agenda-management powers to the chairmanship of negotiation bodies. The responsibilities conferred on the chairmanship typically comprise tasks and functions prescribed for dealing with overcrowded or unstable agendas. By executing these powers, negotiation chairs keep the agenda to manageable proportions, assign priority to the issues on the agenda, and structure the negotiations.

Negotiation failure refers to deadlocks and breakdowns in bargaining that are caused by the parties' inability to identify the underlying zone of agreement, because of stratagems that conceal or distort their true preferences. This is a classic bargaining problem (Walton and McKersie 1965; Lax and Sebenius 1986). For purposes of finding an agreement that makes all parties better off, states must signal what they can and cannot accept. Yet revealing information about one's true preferences is both risky and non-tactical. Instead, states have incentives to be secretive or dishonest about their true preferences by exaggerating the value of their own sacrifices and downplaying the benefit of others' concessions. The result is a distorted picture of preferences that either reduces the perceived zone of agreement, with the effect that gains are "left on the table," or eliminates it altogether, with the effect that negotiations break down. The logic of this bargaining problem is strong in bilateral negotiations and further reinforced in the multilateral setting, with its particular difficulties of communicating preferences and exchanging information among a large number of parties (Winham 1977; Zartman 1994).

In international cooperation, the delegation of brokerage responsibilities to the chairmanship constitutes a common way for states to deal with the risk of negotiation failure. This act of delegation seldom involves the conferral of formal powers. Instead, it takes the shape of a practice among states to share information about their private preferences with negotiation chairs, and a mandate for negotiation chairs to structure bargaining around single negotiating texts. Through bilateral encounters, chairs are provided with privileged information about state preferences that subsequently may be used to construct compromises capable of capturing the underlying zone of agreement. The authority to formulate a single negotiating text facilitates this process and allows negotiation chairs to cut through the complexity of competing and overlapping proposals.

The risk of *representation failure* is a product of interdependent decision-making in international cooperation. Multilateral negotiations seldom take place in a vacuum, but tend to be nested within broader political processes. International regimes have become increasingly interlinked, and activities in one issue area often impact on activities in another field, producing a demand for mechanisms of inter-institutional coordination (Young 1999). Furthermore, international organizations seldom encompass all potential parties, creating a demand for procedures that enable the members to handle relations with non-members and to negotiate the accession of prospective members. Finally, agreements within one negotiating body may be directly dependent on external negotiations with third parties, generating a demand for agents that can represent the collective of states.

The delegation of representation authority to the chairmanship offers a functional solution to these problems. International organizations cannot be represented by all constituent member states in their external relations, but must devise institutional arrangements for representation and negotiation. States' decision to empower chairs to speak on their behalf constitutes a subset of the general phenomenon of representation powers being delegated to negotiating agents (Mnookin and Susskind 1999; Meunier 2000).

Summarizing the first step of this theory, it predicts that the powers conferred on the chairmanship will reflect concrete functional demands in cooperation and be concentrated in the areas of agenda management, brokerage, and representation. More specifically, we would expect: (a) delegation to be contingent on a distinct demand for leadership, as expressed through an inability of the parties to provide negotiable agendas, identify compromise agreements, and represent the collective vis-à-vis third parties; (b) delegation to be conditioned by alternative institutional solutions to the demand for leadership, such as international secretariats, states, or individuals; and thus (c) delegation to be tailored to the pattern of bargaining problems in a given

political context, generating variation over time and across organizations in the powers conferred on the chair.

The Influence of Formal Leaders

What are the consequences of empowering chairmanships in international cooperation? I suggest that the office of the chair, once vested with powers of process control, offers a political platform for influencing the outcomes of negotiations. Formal leaders enjoy privileged access to a set of power resources that may enable them to enhance the efficiency of negotiations and shape distributional outcomes. However, the institutional environment in which formal leaders operate conditions their ability to steer negotiations toward the agreements they most prefer.

Negotiation chairs benefit from an asymmetric distribution of two forms of *power resources*. First, they tend to enjoy access to information that is either unavailable to the other parties, or relatively more costly to acquire. The practice of bilateral encounters at which governments offer chairs privileged information about national resistance points provides formal leaders with unique information about state preferences. Moreover, international secretariats at the chair's special disposal endow formal leaders with expert information about the technical subject matter of the negotiations, as well as legal and procedural advice. Second, chairs benefit from asymmetric control over negotiation procedure. As process managers, formal leaders tend to enjoy privileged control over decisions on the sequence of negotiations, the frequency of negotiation sessions, the format of negotiations, and the method of negotiation. Furthermore, as managers of individual negotiation sessions, formal leaders open and conclude meetings, structure the meeting agenda, allot the right to speak, direct voting procedures, and summarize the results.

By drawing on these power resources, negotiation chairs can help states to overcome bargaining impediments that prevent the realization of collective gains. However, the very same resources may be exploited to pursue private gains as well. As agenda managers, chairs are endowed with formal procedural instruments that permit the organization of a negotiable agenda; yet the structuring of the agenda is not a neutral exercise, since it involves prioritizing some issues at the expense of others. As brokers, chairs are granted privileged access to information about the parties' preferences in the pursuit of viable compromise proposals; yet this exclusive preference information may be used to promote agreements with certain distributional outcomes rather than others. As representatives, chairs enjoy the power to negotiate on behalf of a collective of states; yet the interaction with third parties offers possibilities to present positions and strike bargains that diverge from the group's median preference.

Assuming that negotiation chairs are strategic and opportunistic actors with an independent set of preferences, we would expect them to exploit their exclusive resources to promote agreements with distributional implications structured in their own favor. In the language favored by rational choice theorists, formal leadership would not only move outcomes toward the Pareto frontier, making negotiations more efficient, but also along the Pareto frontier, affecting the distribution of gains (Krasner 1991).

However, negotiation chairs do not operate in a world without constraints. The *institutional environment* in which they act constitutes an intervening factor, shaping their influence over outcomes. Two components merit particular attention: the rules governing decision-making and the design of the chairmanship.

Decision rules affect the ease with which the chair can promote proposals that satisfy the requirements of an efficient bargain and meet the partisan interests of the chair. For any given distribution of preferences, a more demanding decision rule reduces the zone of agreement and

the scope for maneuvering by formal leaders. Where unanimity or consensus is prescribed, negotiation chairs must take the interests of all parties into consideration, and will find it relatively more difficult to steer negotiations toward their ideal point. Finding an agreement that makes everyone better off may in itself constitute a major challenge. Where decisions may be taken through majority voting, it is relatively easier for states to reach an efficient outcome and for negotiation chairs to influence the distribution of gains. The fact that not all parties must be brought on board expands the range of potential agreements, as well as the discretion of formal leaders, who may select among multiple equilibria.

The institutional design of the chairmanship affects the incentives and discretion of formal leaders. I introduce a distinction between three alternative institutional models: (1) rotation of the chair between state representatives; (2) election of a chair from one of the participating states; and (3) appointment of a supranational official as chair. The central hypothesis is that formal leaders operating in a system of rotation will be subject to less extensive control mechanisms, enjoy greater room for maneuver, and be more capable of influencing the distributional dimension of negotiated agreements, than elected or supranational chairs, whose influence will be restricted to the efficiency of the negotiations.

Rotation of the office is likely to create dynamics of diffuse reciprocity that work to the advantage of negotiation chairs. If the gains of an unrestrained rotating office are concentrated, but the costs are diffuse, the parties will offer each other latitude in the execution of the chairmanship, as all eventually get their privileged opportunity to direct the negotiations. Rotating chairmanships thus resemble committee assignments in the distributive model of congressional institutions – extended logrolling arrangements with explicit distributional consequences (Shepsle 1978; Shepsle and Weingast 1987). This dynamic is likely to be most stable in settings with a restricted number of parties that hold the chairmanship at regular

intervals and for some length of time. The dynamic is likely to be less stable, or may never develop, in settings with a large number of parties, where the opportunities to benefit from the rotating office are few and far between, and in settings with brief chairmanship periods, where time limits reduce the scope for exploitation.

Election of one state's representative as permanent chair is likely to result in constrained formal leaders with more limited impact on distributional outcomes. Unless states wish to grant one of the parties exclusive means for securing national interests, they will establish intrusive mechanisms of control. The parties can exercise *ex ante* control by electing a chair from a state with central and/or weak preferences in the issues under negotiation, or electing co-chairs drawn from competing interest constellations. Alternatively, the parties can establish *ex post* control mechanisms, such as time limits and re-election requirements, which enable them to end a chair's term of office and provide incentives for chairs to refrain from undue exploitation.

Appointment of a supranational official as chair, too, is likely to result in formal leaders with limited influence over distributional outcomes. As the literature on supranational delegation suggests, the conferral of powers to international officials tends to go hand in hand with the establishment of control mechanisms, such as institutional checks, budget control, power over senior appointments, and authority to revise the organization's mandate (Tallberg 2002; Pollack 2003; Hawkins et al. 2006). Moreover, the preference of supranational secretariats is typically the political ideals embodied in the international organization they serve. Whereas the pursuit of this preference leads supranational chairs to promote outcomes that favor the most ambitious parties on each individual dossier, the aggregated effect is likely to be diffuse, given variation between the parties in the relative weight attributed to alternative issues.

Summarizing the second step of this theory, it predicts that the influence of formal leaders will be contingent on the delegation of process powers to the chairmanship, based on asymmetric

access to informational and procedural power resources, and conditioned by the applicable decision rules and the design of the office of the chair. More specifically, we would expect: (a) the exercise of influence to involve the exploitation of privileged information on preferences and procedures, as well as the mobilization of privileged means of control over the organization and conduct of negotiations; (b) the scope for influence to be greater under majority voting than under unanimity decision making; and (c) rotating chairs to be more capable of influencing the distributional dimension of negotiated agreements than elected or appointed chairs.

Alternative Approaches to Formal Leadership

The theory I advance is distinct from two alternative approaches to formal leadership. These rival approaches are drawn from broad theoretical perspectives in the study of international cooperation, neither of which explicitly formulates a theory of formal leadership, but both of which offer general propositions that may be disaggregated into specific expectations about the demand for formal leadership and the influence of formal leaders.

The first alternative approach is inspired by constructivism and sociological institutionalism. It generates the expectation that diffusion of legitimate organizational models plays a more central role than functional efficiency in the design of chairmanships, and that institutional stickiness rather than efficient adaptation to changing functional demands characterizes the evolution of chairmanship over time (DiMaggio and Powell 1983; Barnett and Finnemore 2004). It leads us to expect an isomorphic pattern of homogeneity rather than heterogeneity in the design of chairmanships, a standardized template of chair functions rather than powers tailor-made to contextual demands, and slow rather than swift adjustment of chairs' responsibilities in response to functional shifts.

Furthermore, this approach suggests that we should expect chairs to exercise influence, not when they mobilize informational and procedural resources, but when they evoke the legitimacy of the office, draw on acquired trust, and persuade parties through the power of the better argument (Risse 2000; Ulbert et al. 2004). By the same token, the constraints on formal leaders should consist less of formal rules and strategic gains calculations, than of norms of appropriate behavior (March and Olsen 1998; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998). In this context, the expectation of neutrality in the chair constitutes the most prominent norm. As one contribution puts it: “The only expectation a presiding officer should always strive to fulfill is that of impartiality and fairness” (Lang 1989:33; see also Bercovitch and Rubin 1992; Carnevale and Arad 1996). Instead of opportunistic chairs, we would expect to see chairs that strive to meet the norm of an “honest broker,” with limited regard to national or organizational interests.

The second alternative approach is grounded in models of decentralized bargaining and developed in a recent critique of the literature on supranational entrepreneurship (Moravcsik 1998; 1999). According to this approach, multilateral bargaining only involves low transaction costs. When negotiation failure occurs, this is most frequently the product of domestic structural constraints, rather than impediments in interstate bargaining. In international negotiations, states possess sufficient information about each other’s preferences to identify mutually beneficial agreements, and face no shortage of ideas or focal points around which agreements can be constructed. As the leading advocate of this approach puts it: “[T]he costs of generating and distributing the information needed to identify and negotiate efficient interstate bargains may often be low enough (relative to the stakes) to assure that states are ‘naturally’ well-informed and bargaining efficiently.” (Moravcsik 1999:301).

This conclusion translates into a skeptical hypothesis about the importance of leadership. If states are capable of identifying efficient agreements themselves and transaction costs are low,

there will be a limited demand for political leadership, which will prove redundant when offered. Alternatively, if the distribution of state preferences prevents a zone of agreement from materializing, the efforts of leaders are bound to fail and thus futile. Since political leadership in neither case will constitute a necessary or sufficient condition for agreement, we should not expect leaders to gain a position from which they can shape outcomes in international cooperation.

Formal Leadership in Multilateral Negotiations

We now proceed to an empirical assessment of the theory of formal leadership. In this section, I consider evidence on the demand for formal leadership and the influence of negotiation chairs in three organizational contexts: the EU, the GATT/WTO, and UN environmental conferences. These cases are drawn from a broader inventory of chairmanship arrangements in international cooperation, summarized in Table 1. Each of the selected negotiation contexts conforms to one of the alternative ways of organizing the office of the chair – rotation between state representatives, appointment of a supranational official, and election of one state’s representative.³

[TABLE 1. Chairmanship Arrangements in International Cooperation]

³ The EU offers some exceptions from the general principle of rotating chairmanships and the GATT/WTO provides for both supranational and elected chairmanships. However, for purposes of comparison, I focus on rotating chairmanships in the EU and supranational chairmanships in the GATT/WTO.

Each case study summarizes evidence from multiple negotiation rounds, rather than describes a single negotiation episode. This strengthens the reliability of the findings from each setting by establishing a general pattern, and reduces the likelihood of case results being influenced by exceptional circumstances, such as particularly skillful or inept individuals in the chair. The evidence in the EU case is drawn from a body of research specifically assessing the influence of negotiation chairs, while the evidence on formal leadership in the GATT/WTO and at UN conferences primarily is drawn from general negotiation histories. To strengthen the confidence in the findings and ensure comparability across cases, I base the summaries on multiple independent sources and employ a common standard for the measurement of influence.

The impact of chairs on outcomes is measured in terms of efficiency and distribution, where the first dimension captures the extent to which chairs affect the potential for an agreement that exploits all possible gains, and the second captures the extent to which chairs systematically favor a particular division of gains between the parties. To establish that negotiation chairs have exerted independent influence over outcomes, and not only engaged in superfluous activity, I require evidence of a causal chain of events where interventions by chairs help to solve bottlenecks in bargaining (efficiency) and/or generate agreements biased in favor of the chair's interests (distribution). More specifically, efficiency is assessed through a combination of process-tracing and counterfactual analysis, permitting an evaluation of the extent to which formal leaders engage in negotiation-facilitating actions that the parties could not have performed themselves, whereas influence over distributive outcomes is measured against the patterns expected on the basis of standard measures of bargaining power, notably, the parties' voting power (where majority voting as decision rule) and relative interest in a negotiated agreement (where unanimity or consensus as decision rule) (for an extended discussion, see Tallberg 2006: ch. 1).

The comparison reveals that formal leaders in all three contexts have been delegated process functions that raise the efficiency of negotiations. However, only the EU case provides evidence of chairs systematically shifting distributional outcomes to their national advantage, lending support to the hypothesis that states grant relatively more discretion to rotating chairs than to elected state chairs or appointed supranational chairs. I conclude the section by discussing the extent to which these results can be generalized to the broader population of international organizations.

Formal Leadership in the EU

In the EU, the office of the presidency rotates between the member states on a six-month basis. The country that holds the office of the presidency appoints the chairs of the working groups, committees, and ministerial meetings in the Council of Ministers, as well as the summits of the European Council.

Demand for formal leadership. While only equipped with basic administrative powers when established in the 1950s, the presidency nowadays performs extensive functions of agenda management, brokerage, and representation. An assessment of the historical process of delegation grants strong support to the hypothesis that functional demands have driven this development (for an extended treatment, see Tallberg 2006: ch. 3). The member states have continuously adjusted and extended the functions of the presidency in search of more efficient methods of negotiation. At the same time, delegation has been conditioned by other EU actors, especially the European Commission, performing similar functions.

In the original design of the EU, the presidency was entrusted limited procedural tasks in the organization of the agenda, whereas the Commission enjoyed exclusive authority to set the

legislative agenda. However, the presidency was propelled into a more pronounced agenda-management role in the second half of the 1960s, when the member states challenged the Commission's promotion of supranational ideals, and the scope of EU legislative activity increased (Kirchner 1992:72; Westlake 1999:40). In the decade to follow, consecutive rounds of adaptation in institutional practices reinforced the presidency's function as agenda manager (Wallace 1985; Schoutete 1988). When new negotiation forums were created outside the traditional Council machinery in the early 1970s, through the establishment of European Political Cooperation (EPC) and the European Council, the presidency was placed in control of both the procedural preparation and substantive setting of the agenda. When EU cooperation expanded further in the 1980s and early 1990s, this brought renewed initiatives to strengthen the presidency, which gained the authority to formulate six-month working programs.

The development of the presidency's role as broker displays a similar pattern. While relying mainly on the Commission as broker in the early years of the EU, the member states began to depend more heavily on the presidency from the mid-1960s onwards, as they became increasingly wary of the Commission's supranational agenda (Wallace 1985; Werts 1992:95). In the EPC and the European Council, the presidency automatically assumed the role of broker. In the 1970s and 1980s, the demand for brokerage by the presidency was fuelled by the growing complexity of EU decision-making, involving more negotiation arenas and an expanding number of parties, rendering agreement more difficult (Westlake 1999:38). Moreover, institutional reforms that introduced majority voting in the Council and strengthened the European Parliament as legislative counterpart required the presidency to engage in more active coalition-building. To facilitate brokerage, EU governments equipped the office with specific mediation instruments, such as the practice of bilateral meetings where member states offer privileged information on

bottom lines (“confessionals”), and the practice of single negotiating texts that replace Commission or state proposals as the basis for bargaining (“presidency compromises”).

In the area of representation, the presidency gradually acquired powers both in relation to international counterparts and other EU institutions, reflecting distinct functional demands. The development of its function as the Council’s international representative went hand in hand with the EU’s increasing involvement in world politics (Wallace 1985; Schoutete 1988). When engaging in foreign policy cooperation in the 1970s, the member states granted the presidency the power to speak on their behalf with third parties, in the UN General Assembly, and in relation to countries applying for EU membership. In the early 1980s, the presidency gained the authority to meet with third parties, and in the 1990s, it was delegated the power to negotiate international agreements in areas outside the original EC Treaty. In a similar fashion, the evolution of the presidency as the Council’s representative vis-à-vis other EU actors mirrored the Parliament’s development into an important interlocutor (Westlake 1999:36; Farrell and Héritier 2003). When the Parliament in the 1970s was given a central role in the adoption of the EC budget, the member states appointed the presidency as their intermediary in inter-institutional negotiations. When the Parliament subsequently became a key player in the adoption of EU legislation in the late 1980s and 1990s, the member states boosted the powers of the presidency as their representative in legislative negotiations.

Influence of formal leaders. Extensive data on the influence of chairs in the EU testifies to effects on both the efficiency of negotiations and the division of gains. The evidence grants support for the hypotheses that rotation of the office generates processes of logrolling, and that decision rules condition chairs’ capacity to shape distributive outcomes.

The overall positive contribution of formal leaders to negotiation efficiency is a stable finding in existing research. Through the general functions they perform and the specific

interventions they make, EU chairs structure negotiation agendas, facilitate compromise agreements, and solve problems of collective representation (e.g., Kirchner 1992; Metcalfe 1998; Svensson 2000; Elgström 2003; Dür and Mateo 2006; Tallberg 2006). Yet the influence of chairs in the EU extends beyond efficiency, to the distributional dimension of negotiated agreements. A recent book-length study of negotiations in multiple issue domains demonstrates that EU chairs can successfully shift outcomes in favor of national interests, and illustrates the opportunities for exploitation inherent in the execution of agenda management, brokerage, and representation functions (Tallberg 2006; see also Tallberg 2003, 2004). However, the study also finds that the scope for distributional influence is affected by the applicable decision rule, with less room for EU chairs to shape the terms of agreements requiring unanimous support, than agreements that can be adopted by a qualified majority.

As agenda managers, EU chairs both engaged in traditional agenda setting and forms of non-decision-making. As an example of the first, the Finnish chair of the European Council, Paavo Lipponen, in 1999 successfully promoted the establishment of a “northern dimension” in EU foreign policy, by calling attention to this issue in Finland’s presidency program, placing it on the agenda of formal and informal meetings, securing the Commission’s active endorsement, and engineering support for a European Council decision on a policy action plan. Pursuing the reverse strategy, the German chair of the Environmental Council, Jürgen Trittin, in 1999 put the nationally sensitive issue of car recycling on the backburner, by unilaterally postponing a scheduled decision on a proposal for a directive, thus securing the time required to build a blocking minority.

As brokers, EU chairs promoted agreements with distributive terms favorable to the interests of the state they represented. Drawing on the procedural and informational resources of the office, German chancellor Gerhard Schröder, as chair of the European Council, in 1999

succeeded in forging a package agreement that satisfied national interests on agricultural policy and regional policy, but only went half-way in achieving Germany's goals for the EU's long-term budget, because of the requirement of unanimity. As chairs of the European Council and the intergovernmental negotiations on institutional reform, France's Jacques Chirac and Pierre Moscovici in 2000 went one step further in exploiting the office for national purposes, by framing French position papers as compromises from the chair, summarizing sessions to the advantage of France, and defusing opposition through side-payments, eventually securing outcomes remarkably consistent with French interests.

Finally, as representatives, EU chairs shaped the terms of agreements through their exclusive access to both internal and the external negotiation arenas. The Swedish chair of the Committee of Permanent Representatives, Gunnar Lund, in 2001 secured a deal on ambitious new rules on public access to EU documents, against a majority of secrecy-oriented states, by initiating informal negotiations with the Parliament even before the Council had come to an internal position, eventually concluding a *fait accompli* agreement. The Danish prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, as the Council's representative in accession negotiations with candidate countries, in 2002 successfully engineered an agreement on a broad and swift enlargement of the EU – Denmark's top national priority – by playing off recalcitrant parties on both sides against each other, and by offering concessions not condoned in the Council.

Additional evidence in favor of systematic distributional effects is offered in a recent set of quantitative analyses of presidency influence in EU decision-making. Schalk et al. (2007) assess the capacity of chairs to achieve policy outcomes close to national positions on 66 legislative proposals, and find that holding the presidency significantly and positively contributes to the bargaining power of member states, when controlling for issue salience and voting power. Addressing the same issue, Thomson (2008) analyses negotiations on 70 legislative proposals and

concludes that decision outcomes are significantly more favorable to member states in control of the chair than to other member states, when taking into consideration the effects of preference polarization, voting power, and decision rules. Moreover, chairs are most successful in promoting national policy objectives when decisions only require the support of a qualified majority of states. Finally, Warntjen (2007) finds in a study of negotiations in the environmental field from 1984 to 2001 that chairs significantly influence legislative activity in the EU by accelerating or decelerating negotiations on dossiers depending on national priorities, controlling for variation in legislative procedures, voting thresholds, member states positions, and overall issue salience.

In sum, the evidence suggests that the rotation of the right to appoint chairs grants each member state in turn a privileged opportunity to shape the outcomes of EU policy-making. As a close observer of the Council notes: “[M]ember states seem to use the Council Presidency to promote their own domestic policy priorities, but this is not necessarily negative and is probably a recognized and accepted practice by all member states” (Sherrington 2000:166). There is yet no evidence that the recent enlargement of the EU from 15 to 27 member states has undermined this logrolling dynamic.

Formal Leadership in the GATT/WTO

Global trade round negotiations feature a combination of supranational and elected state chairs. Ministerial conferences, convened to initiate, review, and conclude negotiation rounds, are chaired by the minister of the host government. The Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC), effectively coordinating the negotiations, is chaired by the director general of the GATT/WTO. The specialized groups engaging in technical negotiations, and since 1995 the permanent bodies of the WTO, are chaired by elected state chairs.

Demand for formal leadership. GATT/WTO chairs have been delegated basic responsibilities of agenda management and extensive powers of brokerage, but very limited representational duties. The evidence suggests that the parties have tailored the mandates of GATT/WTO chairs to the distinct pattern of functional demands in the trade regime, as shaped by variation in bargaining problems and the presence of alternative sources of leadership.

The demand for agenda management by chairs has traditionally been reduced by informal practices that give the US and the EU joint control over the agenda. Trade rounds generally come about on the initiative of these two parties, which also decide the areas of negotiation and fix the mandates of the negotiation groups. However, once a trade round has been launched, negotiation chairs become involved in the management of the agenda. Their formal powers include the standard procedural responsibilities of the chair. But, in addition, GATT/WTO chairs can draw on a range of informal practices, such as the development of single negotiating texts as a way of structuring the agenda, and strategic sequencing of agenda items as a way of achieving momentum in the negotiations (Odell 2005).

The large number of parties, the preference divergence between the central actors, and the requirement of consensus combine to create a strong demand for brokerage in the GATT/WTO. This explains why chairs in general, and the chair of the TNC in particular, have been delegated extensive informal authority in this area, including access to a set of procedural and informational resources (Odell 2005). GATT/WTO chairs enjoy the authority to initiate bilateral consultations, in order to sound out concerns and test potential compromise solutions. The GATT/WTO Secretariat assists negotiation chairs by providing privileged information about the parties' positions and potential resistance points, as well as technical expertise on the dossiers under negotiation. Where progress is slow because of multiple competing proposals, chairs may develop and seek convergence around single negotiating texts. Finally, the director general may

convene “Green Room” meetings between key parties in order to achieve pre-agreements that subsequently can be presented to the broader membership for acceptance.

The representation function of GATT/WTO chairs is very restricted, reflecting the absence of functional demands in this area. The negotiation bodies of trade rounds do not engage in bargaining with each other and are therefore not in need of chairs with powers of representation. Even if GATT/WTO chairs possess certain reporting functions within the internal negotiation machinery, these do not comprise the authority to speak or negotiate on behalf of others. In its relations with non-members and other international organizations, the GATT/WTO is represented by the director general, acting in the capacity as head of the Secretariat, rather than as chair of the TNC.

Influence of formal leaders. Accounts of trade rounds since the 1960s present a relatively stable pattern as regards the influence of formal leaders. Brokerage efforts by the supranational chair of the TNC, as well as by other GATT/WTO chairs, have on several occasions been pivotal in helping the parties past deadlocks and generating consensus around core agreements. By contrast, there is little evidence of negotiation chairs using their position to systematically favor particular distributional outcomes, which may be attributed to consensus as decision rule and the supranational design of the chairmanship.

Accounts of the Kennedy Round (1963-1967) demonstrate that GATT director general Eric Wyndham White facilitated the negotiations, drawing on the chair’s informational and procedural resources (Preeg 1970:178-195; Winham 1979:196-202). The TNC chair helped the US and the EC out of deadlocked negotiations by proposing a reorganization of the talks into specific working groups. When the negotiations were stalled from lack of realistic proposals, Wyndham White took initiatives in both formal and informal forums to restart the talks. In this process, he engaged the GATT Secretariat to collect information on domestic political constraints and

resistance points. When an agreement eventually could be secured in May 1967 around the outstanding conflictual issues of chemicals, agriculture, and steel, it was on the basis of the “Wyndham White compromise” – a carefully calibrated package deal drawn up by the TNC chair and released when the negotiations officially had entered overtime. Wyndham White’s contribution was celebrated by US and EC representatives alike.

The Tokyo Round (1973-1979), too, revolved around the US-EC relationship. Yet, different from in the Kennedy Round, the GATT director general at the time, Olivier Long, is not given a central role in accounts of the Tokyo Round. A prominent book-length analysis points to the absence of a zone of agreement during the first part of the negotiations, rendering third-party brokerage futile, and a readily identifiable zone of agreement during the latter part of the negotiations, making third-party brokerage redundant (Winham 1986). The negotiations began in 1973, but real progress was only achieved after the election in 1976 of Jimmy Carter as president, when a shift in US preferences opened up a zone of agreement between the two adversaries. This analysis instead points to the leadership exercised by the US trade representative Robert Strauss, who was the main communicator of the new American approach.

The Uruguay Round (1986-1994) was considerably more complex than previous rounds, involving more issues and parties. Accounts of the negotiations unanimously emphasize the contribution of TNC chair Arthur Dunkel, whose brokerage efforts saved the round from collapse on several occasions (Sjöstedt 1994; Underdal 1994; Hampson with Hart 1995:191-192, ch. 8; Croome 1995: chs. 4, 6). At the mid-term review in Montreal in December 1988, divisions between the US and the EC on agricultural liberalization caused a breakdown of the ministerial conference. Over the next four months, Dunkel engaged in intense discussions with the parties, meeting bilaterally in the capitals and minilaterally in the Green Room. In April 1989, Dunkel judged that the deadlock could be broken and convened the TNC, which approved the mid-term

review package. “The success of the meeting was largely attributable to one man – the Director General of the GATT,” testify EC negotiators Hugo Paemen and Alexandra Bensch (1995: 145). A second major breakdown occurred at the ministerial conference in Brussels in December 1990, and Dunkel was again given the mandate to reconvene the process. To create a structure where political trade-offs more easily could be identified, the TNC chair reduced the number of negotiating groups. In addition, he engaged in consultations with the key delegations and the chairs of the negotiating groups, on the basis of which he developed a single negotiating text. For the remainder of the Uruguay Round, the negotiations centered on the “Dunkel draft” and revised versions of this text, which eventually formed the backbone of the final act, adopted under Dunkel’s successor Peter Sutherland.

The Doha Round (2001-) so far provides a mixed picture on the contribution of formal leaders, giving evidence of both futile brokerage efforts and pivotal interventions. This pattern emerged already in the failed attempt to launch the round in Seattle in 1999, and the subsequent success in Doha in 2001. A detailed comparative analysis of the two cases suggests that shifts in the preferences of the major players and in the supply of brokerage explains the variation in outcomes (Odell 2008). Whereas the chair of the WTO General Council in the run up to Seattle presented a counterproductive compilation of rival texts, the chair leading up to Doha drew up a single negotiating text that proved very formative for the final ministerial declaration. As John Odell (2008: 30) concludes: “Ministers...settled on declarations whose language was almost entirely identical to Harbinson’s. [A]n intermediary had created a particular bold focal point that helped parties break their deadlock.” The actual negotiations on the Doha agenda have been fraught with difficulties, generating successive breakdowns and delays (Das 2005). While credited for injecting new energy into the negotiations on several occasions, TNC chair Pascal Lamy has been unable to bridge the interest differences between developed and developing

countries, highlighting the challenges of brokerage when parties are very far apart and agreement requires consensus.

In sum, the engagement of GATT/WTO chairs as brokers often has been conducive in helping the parties to overcome negotiation barriers. However, existing accounts provide limited evidence of chairs systematically favoring some parties at the expense of others. Only reaching an agreement has proven a significant challenge in these trade rounds, given the diverging interests of the key parties and the demanding decision rule. In addition, TNC chairs appear to have been guided primarily by the objective of arriving at liberalizing agreements, rather than the specific distributional details of such accords.

Formal Leadership in UN Environmental Negotiations

Three of the most central environmental negotiations over the past thirty years are the UN sponsored talks on the law of the sea (1973-1982), the ozone convention and protocol (1982-1987), and the climate change convention and protocol (1991-1997). The negotiations took place in conferences specifically organized for these purposes, and were led by elected chairs drawn from the participating states.

Demand for formal leadership. The three negotiation processes provide a strikingly similar picture of the demand for formal leadership at multilateral environmental conferences, offering support for the hypothesis that specific bargaining problems drive the empowerment of chairmanships. A combination of broad conference mandates and equal agenda-setting rights produced overcrowded agendas, causing states to endow chairs with agenda-management powers. Similarly, the large number of participants, the broad spectrum of preferences, and the requirement of consensus, made it exceedingly difficult to identify a zone of agreement, leading

the parties to engage the conference chairs as brokers. By contrast, the organization of these conferences did not create a functional demand for internal or external representation.

In the law of the sea negotiations, formal leaders were engaged to perform extensive agenda management and brokerage services (Sebenius 1984; Koh and Jayakumar 1985; Antrim and Sebenius 1992). The demand for agenda management stemmed primarily from the failure of the United Nations Sea-Bed Committee, charged with preparing the conference, to deliver a preparatory negotiation text. Instead, negotiators were confronted with several hundred competing proposals, which had adverse effects on the talks. At the third session of the conference, the parties delegate the task of developing a single negotiating text to the chairs of the main committees, and at the fourth session, the parties formally conferred the control over this text to the conference president and the committee chairs. “Responsibility for issuing new versions of the negotiating text added a significant new power to the limited authority of the presiding officer. The authority to revise the draft text was, in effect, the power to define the issues to be addressed in the negotiation process” (Antrim and Sebenius 1992:101).

The ozone negotiations, too, generated a demand for agenda management and brokerage (Benedick 1991: chs. 6-7; Széll 1993; Hampson with Hart 1995: ch. 9). The talks on the convention were heavily shaped by the diverging preferences of two groups of industrialized countries – the Toronto Group and the EC. While agreeing on the need for a convention, the two groups presented competing proposals on the precise obligations. The conference chair was granted the authority to achieve approximation through informal consultations, the creation of drafting groups, and text revisions, but it proved impossible to define commitments in the convention as such. A second round of negotiations, aimed at developing specific obligations in a protocol, was initiated soon after the adoption of the convention. However, “[t]he negotiations for the Montreal Protocol opened chaotically with several conflicting proposals on the table”

(Benedick 1993, 239). The parties reacted by delegating the authority to develop a single negotiating text to the executive director of the UNEP and the conference chair.

In the climate change negotiations, broad disagreements between developed and developing countries, as well as among the developed countries, produced a demand for leadership by the negotiation chairs (Benedick 1993; Mintzer and Leonard 1994; Hampson with Hart 1995: ch. 11). The initiation of negotiations on a convention was dominated by conflict over procedural questions, functioning as a surrogate for substantive disagreements. Once the talks eventually got underway, it proved very difficult to achieve progress, leading the parties to authorize the co-chairs of the two working groups to prepare single negotiating texts. However, the cleavages between the parties remained wide on core issues, and the texts therefore saturated with brackets and alternative formulations. The parties eventually delegated to the conference chair to develop his own compromise text, devoid of options. In the subsequent negotiations for a protocol, laying down precise obligations, a similar process ensued. While beginning the negotiations with 430 pages of state submissions, outlining alternative versions of draft articles, the parties in the run up to the Kyoto conference authorized the chair of the AGBM, the central negotiating group, to draw up a compromise text (Deplege 2005: 156-162).

Influence of formal leaders. Accounts of these environmental conferences show that formal leaders positively influenced the efficiency of the negotiations by transforming competing proposals into single texts, encouraging parties to unveil bottom lines in confidential talks, and forging agreement. At the same time, there are no indications of chairs successfully and systematically having biased outcomes in favor of the countries they represented.

Evidence from the law of the sea negotiations testifies to the brokerage efforts of Tommy Koh of Singapore, first as chair of the negotiation group on financial arrangements, and then as chair of the overall conference (Sebenius 1984; Antrim and Sebenius 1992; Rubin 1993). The

negotiations on financial arrangements were initially characterized by extreme proposals, an adversarial air of suspicion, and ideological clashes on the merits of regulation versus market forces. The convergence of state positions on an acceptable text is generally attributed to Koh's brokerage strategies. Making use of his procedural arsenal as chair, Koh established his own informal secretariat charged with collecting information and drafting proposals, hot-housed the talks by progressively restricting the size of the negotiating group, introduced a formula for the negotiations by incorporating a financial model developed by American researchers, and linked the two main issues in the negotiations to each other, thus creating a potential zone of agreement. As Antrim and Sebenius (1992:125) conclude: "Koh's process opportunism was in no small measure responsible for the result."

Accounts of the ozone negotiations point to the complementarity of alternative leaders, recognizing the interventions by conference chair Winfried Lang, but also emphasizing the brokerage efforts of UNEP executive director Mustafa Tolba and a set of participating states (Benedick 1991: chs. 6-7; Széll 1993; Hampson with Hart 1995: ch. 9). The breakthrough in the negotiations on a detailed protocol came at the third session, when Tolba and Lang for the first time organized closed, informal talks between the representatives of key parties in a group of "Friends of the Chair." This group managed to produce a single negotiating text, labeled Tolba's personal text, which was well received when presented to the broader set of parties, and which became the basis for the remainder of the negotiations. At the Montreal conference, Lang used his procedural powers as chair to adjourn the formal negotiations before the ministers could adopt inflexible public positions, instead convening the Friends of the Chair group, where a deal subsequently was hammered out under his and Tolba's leadership.

In the climate change negotiations, formal leaders are acknowledged to have greatly facilitated the agreements on both the convention and the protocol (Mintzer and Leonard 1994;

Hampson with Hart 1995: ch. 11; Deplege 2005). When delegated the power to develop a draft convention, conference chair Jean Ripert engaged in bilateral consultations with the key parties, and prepared a text that constituted his best approximation of a potential agreement. The parties welcomed Ripert's draft convention as a balanced compromise product – “a consensus position which countries had been unable to negotiate” (Dowdeswell and Kinley 1994:118-119) – and adopted it as the basis for the concluding stage. At the final session, the parties eventually reached agreement on a text broadly reflecting Ripert's draft convention. Summarizing the impact of leadership in these negotiations, Fen Osler Hampson (1995:340) concludes: “Conference chair Jean Ripert played a critical role in helping to devise a document that would be acceptable to the major interests in the negotiation.” In the subsequent negotiations on the Kyoto protocol, AGBM chair Raúl Estrada is considered to have played a similar pivotal part, making interventions that “helped to maximize the efficiency of the negotiations” (Deplege 2005: 43). Estrada took an active role throughout the negotiations, organizing bilateral talks, convening informal groups, proposing compromises, and boldly proclaiming consensus. Yet the most distinct contribution to outcomes was probably the single negotiating text tabled before Kyoto, which functioned as a focal point at the concluding stage of bargaining.

In sum, there is evidence from multiple environmental negotiations of formal leaders improving the prospects of efficient agreements. This observation is supported by the findings in a comprehensive study of environmental regimes, which concludes that leadership by chairs in negotiations tends to produce more effective agreements (Miles et al. 2002: 451). In contrast, chairs do not appear to have successfully exploited their position to achieve outcomes in line with state interests. This pattern may be explained by several complementary factors, consistent with the theory I advance. First, the parties deliberately elected representatives of states with weak and/or central preferences, which resulted in chairs with limited incentives to skew distributional

outcomes (law of the sea). Second, the parties reduced the scope for exploitation by requiring bureaus to be geographically balanced (ozone, climate change), by dividing the chairmanships of subsidiary bodies between different regions (law of the sea), and by instituting co-chairs from competing interest coalitions (climate change). Third, the high degree of preference divergence, in combination with the requirement of consensus, further reduced the capacity of formal leaders to favor specific distributional interests (all three). Finally, in the single documented case where the office of the chair was used for national purposes, the aggrieved parties put an end to the exploitation and sanctioned the chair (law of the sea).⁴

Issues of Generalizability

The evidence from the EU, the GATT/WTO, and the UN is broadly consistent with the expectations generated by the theory I advance. In all cases, the process powers delegated to the chairmanship reflected distinct functional demands, generating variation over time and context in agenda management, brokerage, and representation. In addition, the three cases demonstrate how alternative chairmanship designs and decision rules shape the capacity of formal leaders to influence outcomes. Below, I briefly discuss whether these cases are exceptional within their respective categories, or may provide a basis for generalizations about formal leadership.

While the EU may be the best example of rotating chairmanships with distributional consequences, it is not the only one. It is common practice in organizations with coordinated rotation of all or most chairmanships that states enjoy discretion in shaping the agenda for their

⁴ A chair from Cameroon manipulated a text in favor of the developing countries, leading the US and other developed countries to leave the negotiations until changes in the text and revisions in the powers of the committee chairs had been agreed (Koh and Jayakumar 1985: 64-65).

respective periods at the helm. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Group of Eight (G8), and the Nordic Council of Ministers, for instance, all have institutionalized the practice that incoming chairmanships present political programs for their terms in office and shape meeting agendas toward these ends. Even where dossiers inherited from preceding chairmanships and external events requiring attention reduce the scope for entirely new initiatives, chairmanships in these organizations exert distributional influence by assigning relative priority to the issues already on the agenda, and by keeping issues off the agenda (Dobson 2007: 22; Galbreath 2007: 50).

The OSCE offers a particularly relevant parallel to the EU. In this organization, the annually rotating Chairman-in-Office (CiO) is vested with overall responsibility for executive action, and its powers have increased significantly since the early 1990s, in order to match the expansion of the OSCE's operational activities (Gheballi 2001). Whereas the requirement of consensus restricts the CiO's discretion as broker, it enjoys extensive room to shape outcomes through agenda management and representation. Most notable are the CiO's independent powers of initiative, which involve the tabling of a political program for which it carries executive responsibility, making it "the key agenda setter within the OSCE" (Galbreath 2007:50). In addition, the CiO shapes policy as representative, issuing instructions to OSCE missions and making public statements on behalf of the organization. While the rotation of the office makes the CiO's influence broadly acceptable, its discretion has been a source of Russian discontent in recent years, following extensive attention by Western chairmanships to issues of human rights and democracy.

Yet not all rotating chairmanships generate logrolling dynamics with distributional consequences. Evidence from the UN Security Council (UNSC) and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) suggests that short chairmanship periods, in combination

with demanding decision rules, have been used to ensure power sharing, but avoid exploitation of the office. In the UNSC, the monthly rotation of the chair, coupled with the requirement of consensus, has significantly limited the chair's capacity to implement its own political agenda, even if there are rare examples of this (Blavoukos et al. 2006). In the CSCE during the Cold War, daily rotation of the chair between the East and the West served the explicit purpose of making sure that the office would not be used for political ends (Sizoo and Jurrjens 1984: 63-64). These observations testify to the relevance of the period in office as a scope condition when generalizing about the distributional effects of rotating chairmanships.

As regards supranational and elected chairmanships, there is much to suggest that the experiences from GATT/WTO negotiations and UN environmental conferences are not atypical. Table 1 shows how the same forms of control mechanisms that were instituted in relation to the chairs of UN environmental negotiations, are very frequent in other cases of elected state chairmanships as well. The election of chairs within the central systems of both the UN (General Assembly and main committees) and the WTO (General Council, committees, and bodies) are guided by principles of power sharing and balancing between competing regional groupings. Where chairs instead are elected to lead specific conferences, the selection process itself tends to function as a control instrument. As one experienced diplomat and chair testifies: "A person is unlikely to be elected to the presidency of a conference if the government he or she represents adopts partisan views not shared by the majority or certain key players" (Lang 1994:209). It is therefore indicative that empirical studies of negotiations directed by elected chairs in multiple institutional contexts offer few or no examples of formal leaders successfully biasing outcomes in favor of the states they represent, but extensive evidence of efficiency-enhancing interventions (e.g., Kirsch and Holmes 1999; Odell 2005; Blavoukos et al. 2006; Tsebelis and Proksch 2007).

Supranational officials appointed to chair central decision-making bodies of international organizations face similar constraints, as they enjoy this position in their capacities as secretary generals or director generals, with appointment and reappointment decided by the member states. In addition, their overarching preference tends to be the furthering of the organization, rather than the advancement of specific state interests. Evidence from the IMF and the World Bank suggests that the pattern observed in the GATT/WTO extends to these organizations as well. Even if the US and Europe uphold the practice of awarding the managing directorship of the IMF to a European and the presidency of the World Bank to an American, this is motivated more by domestic political considerations and credible commitment concerns than by distributional advantages (Kahler 2001). As Miles Kahler (2001:16) concludes in a study of leadership selection in the global economic multilaterals: “[T]he strength of the nationality principle cannot be explained by calculations that common nationality will serve as a conduit for influence between a government and the organization’s head. Too much evidence exists to the contrary.”

Comparative evidence thus suggests that the differences between chairs in the EU, GATT/WTO, and UN contexts extend to other cases of rotating, elected and supranational chairmanships. As hypothesized, the three models generate alternative logics that shape the scope for distributional influence by formal leaders. Rotation of the office in most cases opens up for logrolling dynamics that grant state representatives in the chair a room for maneuver that is rare where the parties elect one state’s representative as chair for the duration of negotiations or appoint a supranational official to this position. When considered together with the evidence from the EU, GATT/WTO, and UN cases, these comparative observations also serve to address the alternative interpretation that chairs in the rotation model attempt to and succeed in exerting distributional influence mainly because they represent a state, with its national interests and resources. This interpretation neglects that elected chairmen, too, are representatives of states –

but prevented from exploiting their powerful position for national benefit through ex ante and ex post control mechanisms. Moreover, as the examples of the UNSC and CSCE demonstrate, the mere fact that a chairmanship rotates between state representatives is not a guarantee for patterns of distributional influence. That said, it should be recognized that organizations where the chairmanships of all or most negotiation bodies shift from one state to the other at the same time, may be particularly open to distributional influence, since they grant the state at the helm opportunities to pursue a more coherent set of objectives through its control over multiple chairs.

Conclusion

The influence of chairs in multilateral negotiations is a political phenomenon that so far has received scant attention by IR theorists. In this article, I have sought to address this gap in our understanding of international cooperation. I have introduced a theory that generates hypotheses about the delegation of process powers to the chairmanship and the influence of negotiation chairs over outcomes. Furthermore, I have assessed the explanatory power of this theory through evidence from three alternative institutional contexts – the EU, the GATT/WTO, and UN conferences – which offer support for the core claims of the theory. I conclude by delineating the boundaries of my argument, revisiting alternative approaches, and pointing to the broader implications of these results.

The argument I have advanced should not be misunderstood as an unconditional claim about the power of the chair in international cooperation. In its full version, it is subject to four qualifications, identified in the theory and illustrated in the empirical case studies. First, the

influence of negotiation chairs is conditional on a demand for leadership. It is only when states by themselves are unable to provide negotiable agendas, identify compromise agreements, and represent the collective vis-à-vis third parties that we can expect them to empower chairmanships with functions that subsequently may be used to shape outcomes. Second, the influence of negotiation chairs is conditioned by alternative solutions to the demand for leadership. International secretariats, states, and even individuals may function as alternative leaders, fulfilling functions that reduce the powers delegated to the chairmanship. Third, the influence of formal leaders is conditioned by the decision rule governing the adoption of negotiated texts. A more demanding decision rule reduces the zone of agreement for any given set of preferences in comparison to a more lax decision rule, and thus limits the capacity of formal leaders to steer negotiations toward the distributive outcomes they most prefer. Fourth, the influence of formal leaders is conditioned by the design of the chairmanship. States are less concerned with issues of control and grant more extensive discretion to negotiation chairs where the office rotates, than in cases where they elect a chair from one of the parties or empower a supranational official.

While lending support to this conditional argument, the empirical evidence summarized in the article poses a challenge for the two alternative approaches to formal leadership. The first approach generated expectations of homogeneity in the design of chairmanships, and emphasized the constraints on chairs from norms of appropriateness. Table 1 and the case studies reveal that states have refrained from adopting a standardized model, instead tailoring the chairmanship to particular functional demands. Rotating, elected, and supranational chairmanships coexist in international cooperation, and sometimes even within the same organization. Functions of agenda management, brokerage, and representation are not conferred on chairmanships in a uniform way, but delegated and adjusted depending on specific needs, generating a pattern of variation across organizations and over time. The independent effect of the norm of neutrality in the chair is

difficult to assess in GATT/WTO and UN negotiations, because of the simultaneous presence of controls and incentives that reduce the scope for exploitation. However, evidence from the EU, often described as an advanced norm community by international standards (Checkel 2005), suggests that norms of appropriateness play a secondary role when the chair's preferences are intense and the gains from exploitation significant (Tallberg 2006). Chairs in the EU frequently pay lip service to the neutrality norm, but do not let their behavior be guided by this expectation when important national interests are at stake.

The second alternative approach questioned the demand for formal leadership and challenged the notion of negotiation chairs exerting influence in international cooperation, stipulating that multilateral negotiations are naturally efficient and interventions from leaders likely to be either futile or redundant. While reminding us that a demand for leadership constitutes a prerequisite for negotiation chairs to influence bargaining, the propositions of this approach are not supported by the empirical evidence in this article. The case studies suggest that bargaining impediments are normal and ever-present ingredients of the negotiation process. They demonstrate that states turn to the chairmanship for help when confronted with overloaded agendas, deadlocked negotiations, and an absence of institutional formulas for representation. Moreover, they illustrate how the process powers of formal leaders subsequently are used to reduce or eliminate such barriers to agreement. In one case, the EU, there is even extensive evidence of formal leaders regularly affecting the division of gains.

The broader implications of this article for the study of international cooperation are three-fold. First, it endorses the notion that leadership in general frequently is necessary for states to arrive at ambitious agreements. Involving multiple parties, multiple issues, and multiple arenas, modern international negotiations constitute an environment rich in transaction costs. Where states are unable to cut through the complexity of multilateral negotiations themselves, political

leaders oftentimes can help them overcome bargaining problems by structuring agendas, facilitating exchange, and forging agreement.

Second, it points to the chairmanship as a particularly powerful platform for such leadership. While existing research predominantly conceives of leadership in informal terms, emphasizing the entrepreneurial contributions of individuals with limited regard to institutional positions, this article highlights the advantages of the formal position of the chair. It shows that access to the chairmanship grants actors informational and procedural assets they otherwise would not have possessed, permitting them to influence outcomes in ways they otherwise would not have done. Chairs such as Chirac, Koh, and Dunkel affected negotiations, not simply because they were individuals with considerable authority, ingenuity and perseverance, or because they relied on state or organizational resources, but because they mobilized the exclusive assets of the chairmanship for their purposes.

Third, it suggests that prevailing conceptualizations of bargaining power must be supplemented with an understanding of the influence wielded by formal leaders. Whereas standard theories of negotiation in IR tend to conceive of the parties as formally equivalent, and outcomes as determined by differences in power capabilities, preference intensities, and domestic constraints, this article points to the potential for actors to affect distributive outcomes through the institutional position of the chair. It does not offer an alternative comprehensive theory of bargaining power, but it explains when, why, and how access to the chairmanship will permit actors to shift outcomes away from the terms predicted by traditional theories.

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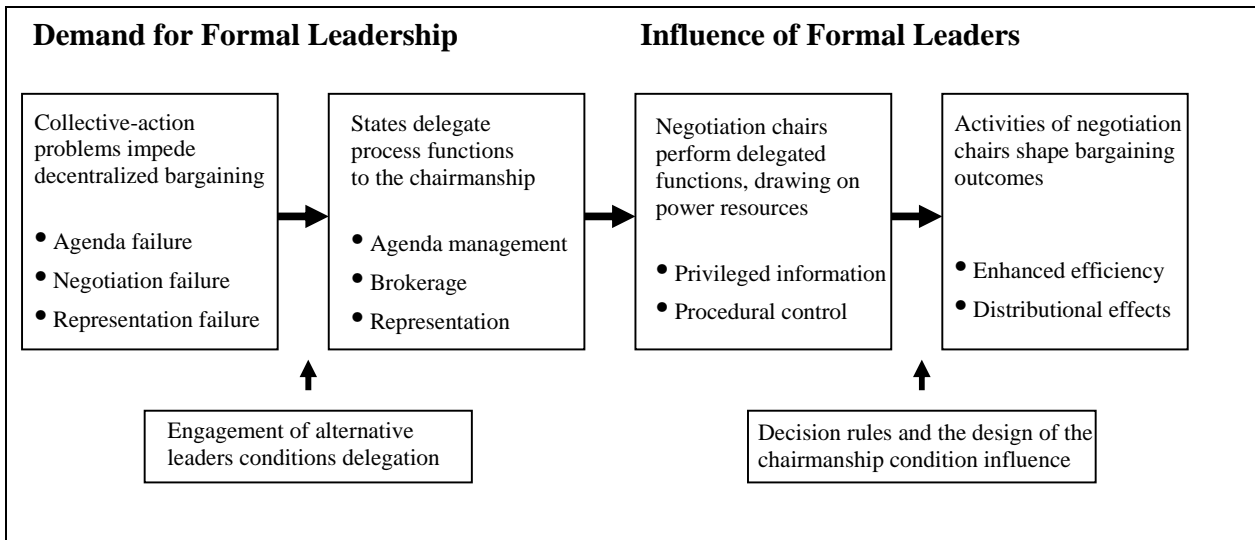


FIGURE 1. *Formal Leadership: A Rational Institutional Theory*

TABLE 1. *Chairmanship Arrangements in International Cooperation*

Rotation between state representatives	Election of state representative	Appointment of supranational official
APEC	IAEA ²	NATO Atlantic Council
ASEAN	IMF Board of Governors	NATO Defence Planning Committee
AU ²	OECD ministerial meetings	IMF Executive Board
Council of Europe	World Bank Board of Governors	OECD Council
EFTA	WTO ministerial conferences	World Bank Executive Board
EU	WTO General Council ¹	WTO Trade Negotiations Committee
G8	WTO committees and bodies ³	
NATO ministerial meetings	UN General Assembly ^{1,2}	
Nordic Council of Ministers	UN main committees ³	
OSCE	UNEP ^{1,2}	
UN Security Council		

¹ Geographical rotation of right to nominate candidate for election prescribed in treaty, rules of procedure or equivalent document.

² Geographical balance in the composition of the bureau or presidium prescribed in treaty, rules of procedure or equivalent document.

³ Geographical division of chairmanships prescribed in treaty, rules of procedure or equivalent document.