*Robert Schuman*

# Leadership in the European Union: Assessing the Significance of the Trio Council Presidency

Colette Mazzucelli

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***Miami - Florida European Union Center***

University of Miami
1000 Memorial Drive
101 Ferré Building
Coral Gables, FL 33124-2231
Phone: 305-284-3266
Fax: (305) 284 4406
Web: www.miami.edu/eucenter

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# *Leadership in the European Union: Assessing the Significance of the Trio Council Presidency*[♣]

**Colette Mazzucelli** [♦]

## Introduction

> …the regional association must not become, or appear to be, an agency for great-power authority. A leaf may well be taken, here, from the arrangements of the European Community, based as they are in Brussels and designed to avoid even the appearance of domination by any single power… (George F. Kennan, 1993, *Around the Cragged Hill A Personal and Political Philosophy*)

In a European Union of 27+ member states, it is essential to question the capacity for leadership to drive the integration process forward in the 21st century. In this context, is it possible to create a negotiation space in which as many members as possible can identify their interests in agreements that address the objectives these different states want to achieve?[1] This analysis considers the emerging role of the already established Trio or Team Presidency, which is a grouping of three successive six-month presidencies of the Council held by different member states for a period lasting eighteen months. In September 2006, the Council of the European Union laid down the following in its amended Rules of Procedure: "Every 18 months, the three Presidencies due to hold office shall prepare, in close cooperation with the Commission, and after appropriate consultations, a draft programme of Council activities for that period."[2] Cooperation in the Trio Presidency aims to enhance the continuity of the Council's work and to increase the sustainability over time of the initiatives dealt within its institutional structure as a negotiating forum for the EU member states. This cooperation is different from the 'Troika,' which represents the European Union in external relations that fall within the scope of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP). Since the Treaty of Amsterdam, the Troika has brought together: the foreign affairs minister of the member state holding the Presidency of the Council of the European Union; the Secretary General/High Representative of the common foreign and security policy; and the European Commissioner responsible for external relations and European neighborhood policy. In order to address the puzzle of why the Trio Presidency, which lacks the attributes of an institution or a state, may be acceptable to a majority of the Union's members, it is important to consider the traditional sources of leadership and their capacity, or lack thereof, to drive integration. The traditional sources that have supplied leadership are French-German

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♦ **Colette Mazzucelli** is Assistant Professor and Fulbright Scholar, Department of History and Political Science, Molloy College, Rockville Centre, NY. She is contributing author and editor with Derek Beach, *Leadership in the big bangs of European integration*, Palgrave 2007, author, *France and Germany at Maastricht Politics and Negotiations to Create the European Union*, Garland 1997, and assistant editor with Reinhardt Rummel, *The Evolution of an International Actor: Western Europe's New Assertiveness*, Westview 1990.

[1] Ulrike Guérot, 'Frankreich und Deutschland – Lokomotive ohne Anhänger?,' in *Neues Europa – alte EU*. Johannes Varwick and Wilhelm Knelangen, eds. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2004, pp. 285-298; Colette Mazzucelli, Ulrike Guérot and Almut Metz, 'Cooperative Hegemon, Missing Engine or Improbable Core? Explaining French-German Influence in European Treaty Reform,' in *Leadership in the big bangs of European integration.* Derek Beach and Colette Mazzucelli, eds. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 158-177.

[2] For the Trio Presidency consult http://www.eu2007.de/en/The_Council_Presidency/trio/index.html

cooperation, working in tandem with the European Commission, and the six-month rotating Presidency of the Council. The literature on the agenda-shaping role of the Presidency, which takes rational choice as well as sociological perspectives to interpret the leadership performance of the Presidency, provides the basis for subsequent analysis. The argument set forth asks if a Trio Presidency has the potential to respond to a demand for leadership through privileged agenda control by employing a design that fits integration dynamics well. Can the requirements of increasing coordination within Trio Presidencies and a particular rotation dynamic function simultaneously enhance stability and avoid a concentration of agenda-shaping powers?

The necessity for a specific rotation design involving a Trio Presidency is interpreted as a response to: 1) the decline and dysfunction of the traditional French-German cooperation; 2) the difficulties that classic rotation in the Chair has encountered with successive enlargements; and 3) the potential for the European Council President, a new office proposed in the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties, to disrupt the institutional system. Leadership has a specific meaning in the European Union context. Here Young's definition of leadership is of particular relevance. His identification of 'three forms of leadership in the context of institutional bargaining,' 'structural,' 'entrepreneurial' and 'intellectual,' provides key insights.[3] The forms of leadership Young identifies allow for an analysis in this chapter of the nature of what it means to lead, which actors exercise this role, and how leadership occurs in the European Union.

Once the leadership question is addressed, we must inquire if the institutional evolution envisaged in the coming years can bring coherence and clarity in the Union's relations with third countries. In terms of leadership capacity, regardless of the personality in the position, it is not clear how the new 'High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy' will be able to accomplish multiple assigned tasks in practice. Moreover, the President of the European Council is a position that changes fundamentally the original institutional design, which emphasizes the role of initiative in the European interest taken by the Commission that made decision making by the Council of Ministers possible. Will the Union's evolution, including the prospect of future enlargements, bring about crises that spur integration further? Or will decisions elites make to reform the original Treaties increasingly obscure the citizens' understanding of the Union's purpose in the world today?

This analysis highlights potential challenges to rotation among successive Trio Presidencies by the new European Council President in the provision of leadership that accommodates divergent interests in a Union of 27+ members. The relationship between the Trio Presidency and the proposed European Council President is one that must be defined carefully in practice. This is necessary to ensure that the balance of power does not tip to advantage the latter personality at the expense of the former. Another feature of an increasingly complex institutional system that raises questions in terms of leadership capacity is the position defined in the Lisbon Treaty as the High Representative for Security Policy and Defense. Given all the responsibilities the person in this post inherits, it is necessary to ask if leadership on behalf of the Union is realistically possible to achieve. A corollary observation is that omni directional (*tous azimuts)* bilateral arrangements, often referenced in the literature as 'multiple bilateralism,' occur with greater frequency in a larger Union. This analysis draws the implications of these experiences for leadership in Europe's transnational polity.

**The Meaning of Leadership in the European Union**

In Young's terminology, the big member states in the European Union possess the material resources to exercise structural leadership.[4] The material resources translate into bargaining

[3] Oran R. Young, 'Political leadership and regime formation: on the development of institutions in international society,' *International Organization* 45, 3 (Summer 1991): 288.

[4] Ibid

leverage, which allows large member states to impose their will in the negotiation of agreements that serve their interests. The French-German duo is influential structurally in that no initiative is likely to advance in opposition to their combined weight.[5] In a larger European Union, initiatives by the big Six (Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Poland) in defense cooperation provides another example of structural leadership. In the European Union, such leadership is influential, but not always decisive. There are instances when structural leadership alone is insufficient to achieve desired negotiation outcomes. Although this leadership is normally exercised by states with material resources in the European Union, the new position of the permanent European Council President may allow an individual to exercise structural leadership, especially if that official chooses to change the system and its way of functioning once in office.

Young identifies entrepreneurial leadership as that of 'an individual who relies on negotiating skill to frame issues in ways that foster integrative bargaining and to put together deals that would otherwise elude participants endeavoring to form international regimes through institutional bargaining.'[6] Beach and Mazzucelli define this leadership as 'instrumental' in the context of constitutional treaty reform negotiations.[7] In Young's analysis, the 'source of the entrepreneurial leader's role lies in the existence of a bargainer's surplus coupled with more or less severe collective action problems plaguing efforts on the part of principals to strike the bargain needed to capture the surplus.'[8] In the European Union, institutions and individuals exercise entrepreneurial leadership. The role of the European Commission in the agenda-setting phase of the Economic and Monetary Union intergovernmental conference (ICG) is one example.[9] Jean Monnet's actions in the context of efforts to achieve European unity provide other examples. His efforts were made to promote a larger personal goal, which Monnet sought by acting behind the scenes using the power of a single idea to motivate leaders in a variety of domestic contexts to negotiate integrative agreements.[10]

Intellectual leadership is defined by Young as 'an individual who produces intellectual capital or generative systems of thought that shape the perspectives of those who participate in institutional bargaining and, in so doing, plays an important role in determining the success or failure of efforts to reach agreement on the terms of constitutional contracts in international society.'[11] His analysis identifies the fact that intellectual leadership 'operates on a different time scale' than either structural or entrepreneurial leadership.[12] This leadership is, in Young's findings, a 'deliberative or reflective process,' which has to be understood in terms of the difficulty to 'articulate coherent systems of thought in the midst of the fast-paced negotiations associated with institutional bargaining.'[13] A historical predecessor of the European Union, the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), originated with an idea to transform the context of relations between France and Germany, which had fought three wars in less than one hundred years. The idea to pool coal and steel, the materials necessary to make war, was Jean Monnet's, for which Robert Schumann, the then French foreign minister, took political responsibility. Monnet's idea was introduced while nationalism was still at a low point on the Continent after the Second World War. This idea still had to 'triumph over the entrenched mindsets or worldviews held by policymakers,' which made the negotiations to create the original Community difficult ones.[14] In terms of Young's analysis, Monnet was an individual who combined the skills of

[5] Eckhard Lübkemeier, 'Führung ist wie Liebe,' *SWP-Studie*, S 30, November 2007, Berlin: Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, 2007, p. 21.
[6] Young, p. 293.
[7] Beach and Mazzucelli, 'Introduction,' in Beach and Mazzucelli, p. 17.
[8] Young, p. 293.
[9] Beach and Mazzucelli, 'Introduction,' p. 18.
[10] Young, p. 297.
[11] Ibid, p, 298.
[12] Ibid
[13] Ibid
[14] Ibid

entrepreneurial and intellectual leadership. However, Monnet's work as an intellectual innovator did not necessarily precede his work as an entrepreneurial leader, as Young argues. History teaches us that Monnet learned from his experiences as Deputy Secretary General of the League of Nations after the First World War. His work as an entrepreneurial leader in the League of Nations, as a leading international financier, and as a purchaser of war supplies during World War II, arguably provided the genesis for his ideas that led to the Schuman Plan of 1950.

## Leadership through Privileged Agenda Control: Rational Choice and Sociological Interpretations

In recent years, research on the six-month rotating Presidency of the Council has challenged the conventional wisdom about its agenda-shaping powers and leadership influence.[15] As analyzed by Tallberg, the Presidency as 'agenda-shaper' can exercise different forms of influence, which he identifies as 'agenda-setting,' 'agenda-structuring' and 'agenda-exclusion'. This chapter analyzes leadership in terms of agenda-setting or the 'introduction of new issues to define the policy agenda'.[16] A rationalist understanding of the extent of Presidency influence conceives of 'member states as strategic actors, seeking to satisfy national preferences within the confines of their formally delegated role'.[17] Each member state engages in agenda-shaping although there is variation in the issues that each Presidency chooses to emphasize, de-emphasize or neglect. From a sociological perspective, how a member state performs its Presidency role is determined partly by the expectations it encounters from other actors, institutional and state, in the EU system.[18]

For example, there is the expectation of the member states that the Presidency should provide much needed leadership. Other expectations are directed specifically at the presiding country. These expectations are anchored in previous experiences and country characteristics. In other words, appropriate Presidency behavior is often determined by stakeholders' expectations.[19] These constraints notwithstanding, the identities and previous experiences of member states help to orient their appropriate interpretation of the role to be played in the Presidency. This fact is of particular relevance in an analysis of leadership potential by a Trio Presidency to act as a source of new initiatives to steer the Union forward with a vision of European integration's future.

The Trio Presidency that chooses a leadership, as opposed to a managerial, agenda must take an activist role. It is the Presidency's choice either to pressure other actors to follow its agenda or 'to act as an entrepreneur, leading the Union by innovative ideas and well-timed initiatives'.[20] Research on international relations and European integration recognizes the agenda-setting function of policy entrepreneurs. Young emphasizes 'the role of 'entrepreneurial leaders,' who shape the form in which issues are presented for consideration at the international level, and devise innovative policy options to overcome bargaining impediments'.[21] In the rationalist analysis of international negotiation, agenda-setting tends to be conceived of as 'the manipulation of ideas and information for private purposes, or the provision of 'focal points' around which bargaining can converge'.[22]

Within the functions that Tallberg identifies for the Presidency as an agenda-shaper, this analysis is concerned with a 'specific form of institutional entrepreneurship'.[23] The initial Trio Presidency began with the German Presidency in January 2007, continued with the Portuguese

[15] Jonas Tallberg, 'The agenda-shaping powers of the Council Presidency,' in *European Union Council Presidencies A Comparative Perspective*. Ole Elgström, ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 18-37.
[16] Ibid, p. 21.
[17] Ibid, p. 22.
[18] Ole Elgström, Introduction,' in *European Union Council Presidencies A Comparative Perspective*, p. 13.
[19] Ibid
[20] Ibid, p. 14.
[21] Tallberg, p. 23.
[22] Ibid
[23] Ibid, p. 25.

Presidency, which started in July 2007, and followed through with the Slovenian Presidency, which commenced in January 2008. This analysis questions the extent to which the Trio Presidency has the opportunity to develop 'new institutional practices that structure future cooperation and decision-making'.[24] In the context of shared leadership, the first experiences of the Trio Presidency are essential because the office of the rotating six-month Presidency is one that 'still remains institutionally underdeveloped and open to interpretation'.[25]

In comparison to Tallberg's rationalist analysis, the argument presented here utilizes both rationalist and sociological interpretations.[26] There is no disagreement that 'institutions are explained in terms of the effects they are expected to produce'.[27] This awareness is essential to our understanding of the Trio Presidency and its formally delegated leadership role. The three Council Presidencies in a Trio must coordinate their activities closely to be successful in terms of leadership influence. This chapter questions whether each Presidency can act as a 'governmental entrepreneur' within the Trio given that the anchor in each of the initial teams is a large member state, i.e., Germany in the initial Trio and France within the second Trio. The possibility that a large anchor can dominate the actions and agenda of a Team Presidency after its initial six-month tenure is a strong one. This development runs counter to the fact that each member of a Trio Presidency will rely heavily on its identity and previous experience to contribute to the shaping of a common agenda. These differences are necessary to create a negotiating space within which other member states identify their interests over time. However, the potential of the Trio Presidency to drive integration like French-German cooperation in the past is dependent on a number of factors. The most important of these is tenure in office by ministers in different policy sectors areas, for example, the environment, simultaneously for the same length of time in office in the three countries. Even under extraordinary circumstances, this is difficult to achieve politically.

The Trio agenda has the advantage of distributing responsibilities among at least three member states. In each Trio it is possible to envision a member that is large, medium, or small, a founding member or a later entrant, a northern European, Mediterranean or eastern European state. The Trio members will support each other at the helm over an eighteen-month period. The goals of continuity and stability are met while avoiding an excessive concentration of agenda-shaping powers.

The potential for the Trio Presidency to achieve its objectives depends fundamentally on the capacity for coordination across governments and national administrations as well as on the influence, personality and role of the European Council President at the apex in the Union's system. The latter is a leadership position originally proposed in the European Constitutional Treaty and retained in the Lisbon Treaty.[28] The European Council President exists at a higher level than that of the Trio Presidency. It is a position that can be established by the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in all 27 member states. This leader's impact in the short to medium term is likely to change the workings of the entire EU system.[29] It is for this reason that we turn to a discussion of the European Council President before further analysis of the Trio Presidency.

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[24] Ibid

[25] Ibid

[26] Compare Jonas Tallberg, 'The EU Presidency: France in the 2000 IGC' which 'builds on a rational choice institutionalist theory of formal leadership in international cooperation' and Colette Mazzucelli, 'Drawing Lessons in the Chair: Assessing the Dutch Presidency's Impact during the Maastricht and Amsterdam Conferences,' which utilizes rationalist and sociological approaches, in *Leadership in the big bangs of European integration*, pp. 22-37 and pp. 38-57.

[27] Ibid, p. 31.

[28] Open Europe, *The Lisbon Treaty and the European Constitution A side-by-side comparison*, 2008 at http://www.openeurope.org.uk/research/comparative.pdf

[29] The author is grateful to the Fulbright Kommission for the organization of the 2007 German Studies Seminar, which offered her the opportunity to participate in a series of interviews during the German Council Presidency in Brussels and Berlin during June 2007.

**Accepting a European Council Presidency: Risks and Opportunities for Structural and Intellectual Leadership**

The intergovernmental conference negotiations that led to the European Constitutional Treaty highlighted the differences between the Union's larger and smaller states. With the 2004 'big bang' enlargement the Union's membership grew to 25 of which 6 are larger states and 19 are small or medium sized members. Nicolaïdis has argued that the ill-fated text's 'biggest flaw is that it upsets the balance of power among member states'.[30]

If we look back to the United States Constitutional Convention, we realize that among the original 13 sovereign states, there were sharp differences of interest between the larger ones, notably Virginia and New York, and the smaller ones, like Rhode Island. These differences concerned the powers to be delegated to a central federal government and those to be retained by the individual states, which until that time accepted only the weak central government articulated in the Article of Confederation.

In the aftermath of the Nice European Council, which was contentious regarding institutional questions, the European Constitutional Treaty negotiations were dominated by differences regarding the creation of a permanent Chair for the European Council. The small and medium sized member states, concerned about the steady drift to an imbalance in the intergovernmental direction since the Treaty on European Union, feared that the President of the European Council 'could enshrine the preeminence' of the Heads of States and Government in the Union's institution system.[31]

The French-German compromise presented to the European Convention in January 2003 succeeded in trumping the interests of the smaller and medium sized member states. This compromise followed the Aznar, Blair and Chirac (ABC) proposal, which introduced the idea of a permanent European Council president. The large states were able to use structural leadership to push through a permanent President of the European Council. The smalls countered with the election of the European Commission by the European Parliament. The election of the Commission was a reform also requested by the Federal Republic of Germany. A form of rotation among the member states over six-month periods survived in the Council and in the composition of the Commission.[32]

Since the 1970s the European Council has been perceived as an intergovernmental institution dominated by the big states, which competes with the European Commission, viewed as the guardian of the Treaties and the protector of the smaller countries. Of particular significance in the context of creating a European Council President is the abolition of the classic six-month rotation within that institution, which is believed by many to be the most visible symbol of shared leadership in the Union.

The concern from a political standpoint focuses on an indirectly elected President heading the European Council who would exist alongside a directly elected President of the European Commission, forming the so-called dual Presidency. In this institutional set up, the EU system will start resembling the French Fifth Republic's model, which is torn between a head of state and a prime minister. The acceptance by the larger states of this fundamental change suggests the importation of the nation-state model into the essentially supranational system of the European Union. This is a basic misunderstanding of the way in which the EU system was designed to function. The Community system, in its original design, had introduced a set of

[30] Kalypso Nicolaïdis, 'We, the People's of Europe…,' *Foreign Affairs*, Volume 83 No. 6 (November/December 2004): 106.

[31] Ibid

[32] Simone Bunse, Paul Magnette and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, 'Big versus Small: Shared Leadership in the EU and Power Politics in the Convention,' in *Leadership in the big bangs of European integration,* p. 156.

institutional relationships and a style of leadership that rejected the hegemonic power politics responsible for centuries 'painted in blood'.[33]

Successive enlargements require adjustments of the system, not fundamental changes of governance. The risks of this choice should not be underestimated. It is clear that many within the Union believe that the EU is 'too big and too diverse' to 'rally around common political projects', which a transnational polity needs to create an identity.[34] In rationalist analysis, entrepreneurial leadership is required to identify these projects and create the focal points around which bargaining can converge.

This chapter argues that a European Council President is more likely to contribute effectively when he or she provides intellectual leadership while interacting on the same level with successive Trio Presidencies. This arrangement keeps rotation outside of the European Council, which allows the President to devote full attention to advancing constructive ideas while taking responsibility for European Council management. It also offers the Trio Presidencies to opportunity to continue their rotation. In this system, designed to accommodate the opportunities as well as the challenges of future enlargements, rotation ensures the exposure of each of the Union's members to an entrepreneurial role in a system defined as much by their shared leadership as that of any single leader, however integration-friendly or talented in the game of intergovernmental politics.

## Rotation in a Trio Council Presidency: A Triggering Entrepreneurial Effect for a Transnational Polity?

The initial Trio Presidency began on January 1, 2007. This is a structure that aims to improve coordination among the member states. Its implementation dates to a Council decision of September 2006 amending its rules of procedure although the 2002 European Council in Seville brought the principle of 'Team Presidencies' into force.[35] The Trio Presidency is an instrument that aims to ensure continuity and 'to give political initiatives more time to work'.[36] Germany was the first country to hold the Presidency in a Trio, playing the anchor role in the team. Both Portugal and Slovenia can count on Germany to provide its support to the initiatives defined in the Trio Program.[37] The content of the Program overlaps significantly with that of the agenda of the Federal Republic's EU Presidency.[38] The influence of the initial Trio Presidency is likely to be felt by the French Presidency, which is the next potential anchor in the subsequent Trio Presidency that brings together France, the Czech Republic, and Sweden.

The challenge to leadership in this context is the potential for the anchor country to dominate the Trio, thus denying its partner states the opportunity to play an influential role in setting and implementing a European Union agenda. Questions have already been raised in this regard pertaining to the influence of France in the second Trio. Moreover, concerns have been raised by Sweden about the necessity to outline a list of co-chairing tasks for leaders of future Trio Presidency countries after the new post of a permanent European Council President is

[33] Ibid

[34] Helena Spongenberg, 'EU is too big and diverse, says parliament's ex-chief,' *EUObserver,com*, 03.09.2007.

[35] Sara Seeger, 'Rotation in the Council – Bringing the Citizens Closer to the EU,' Presentation at the International Symposium, Whither the EU's Shared Leadership? (Re) Assessing the Value of the European Union Council Presidency, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 10-11 October 2007.

[36] Sebastian Kurpas and Henning Riecke, 'The 2007 German EU Presidency: A Midterm Report,' *SIEPS 2007:1op* (Stockholm: Swedish Institute for European Policy Studies, 2007), p. 19.

[37] *Council of the European Union*, '18-month Programme of the German, Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies,' 17079/06 (Brussels: Council Secretariat, 2006). The Federal Government's Work Programme, http://www.eu2007.de/en/The_Council_Presidency/Priorities_Programmes/index.html

[38] The Federal Government's Work Programme is accessible online on the Germany Presidency's website, http://www.eu2007.de/en/The_Council_Presidency/Priorities_Programmes/index.html; Interviews, German Foreign Office, Berlin, June 2007.

established.[39] Swedish Prime Minister Frederik Reinfeldt suggested that 'if there is no role for EU leaders in the future, it could have a negative impact on their engagement with the bloc's agenda.'[40]

The rejection of the Lisbon Treaty by Ireland in a national referendum on June 12, 2008 leaves the question of changes in the Union's institutional system open. The Treaty is unlikely to come into force before January 1, 2009. Plans are on hold for the Union to shift from the six-month rotating Presidency to a mixed system of permanent President of the European Council coordinating the highest tier debates with the ministerial sessions chaired by ministers from the Trio presidency countries. Before the Irish popular vote, Mr. Reinfeldt explained that the Union should discuss how to balance the future division of powers between holders of the new European Council Presidency and other institutions as well as the leaders of the Trio Presidency countries. This should be done to avoid the loss of 'a positive role of engaging different players of Europe' in Union-related activities. His suggestion is that a debate about the list of tasks for Prime Ministers of rotating presidency countries be held during the second half of 2009 under Sweden's leg of the second Trio Presidency.[41]

The geographic diversity of the initial Trio Presidency and the inclusion of a new member state help to cover a large spectrum of interests among the EU 27.[42] The choice of Slovenia as the new member is significant in light of its success adopting the Euro as its currency and its potential to serve as a bridge to the other states in southeastern Europe that aspire to Union membership. Trio diversity exists, for example, in the area of illegal migration. The Germans tackle interests in Eastern Europe while Portugal addresses the Mediterranean area, and Slovenia focuses on the crossroads region defined by the Adriatic, Black and Caspian Seas, which leads into Eurasia. The Trio Presidency Program is a dense working agenda that aims to create a momentum in the fields where integration and cooperation is urgently needed, for example the Lisbon Agenda or implementation of the European area of freedom, security and justice. The Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Council took the initiative to agree upon an individual 18-month agenda during its January meeting.[43]

Cooperation to provide shared leadership that advances dossiers in the Trio Presidency Program is likely to vary from issue to issue. Here the sociological perspective offers insights regarding the influence of each Presidency, notably its reliance on identity and previous experiences as reference points to orient its appropriate interpretation of the role to be played as the Chair. For example, the enlargement dossier highlights Portugal as a weak link between Germany and Slovenia.[44] Even though Slovenia is a new member state with no previous Presidency experience in comparison to Portugal, its ability to follow through on the enlargement dossier exhibits a constructive ability for instrumental leadership, which requires an ability to fulfill such functions as managing an agenda, crafting compromises, building coalitions and brokering deals.[45] A rationalist understanding of the extent of Presidency influence conceives of member states 'as strategic actors, seeking to satisfy national preferences within the confines of their formally delegated role'.[46] Each member state engages in agenda-shaping although there is variation in the issues introduced, emphasized, de-emphasized or neglected. As s a small member state with relatively limited resources, Portugal's traditional areas of interest are Africa and Brazil. Its preferences reflect these interests. Slovenia has much closer geographic and historical

[39] Lucia Kubosova, 'Sweden demands EU role for leaders of future presidency countries,' *EUObserver,com*, 20.02.2008.
[40] Ibid
[41] Ibid
[42] Kurpas and Riecke, 'The 2007 German EU Presidency,' p. 19.
[43] Ibid
[44] Interview, German Foreign Ministry, June 27, 2007.
[45] Beach and Mazzucelli, 'Introduction,' p. 17.
[46] Jonas Tallberg, 'The agenda-shaping powers of the Council Presidency,' p. 22.

links with those countries that have recently acceded to the Union, namely Romania and Bulgaria, or those which aspire to EU accession like Croatia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Its leadership was focused on a particularly difficult issue to manage in spring 2008, namely, the Union's recognition of an independent status for Kosovo/a.

One dossier in the field of European home affairs demonstrates the ways a Trio Presidency can bring about a triggering effect in the Union's transnational polity. This dossier involves negotiations concerning the Visa Information System, which were concluded under the German Presidency and represent a major step forward in the fight against illegal migration. In particular, this initiative helps to prevent what is referred to as visa shopping. The Trio Presidency also remained on schedule to introduce the Schengen Information System, which is an instrument of police cooperation that allows the reinforcement of alternative control over persons and goods. Within this context, in September 2006, at the Informal Council of Tampere, Portugal proposed to the European Justice and Home Affairs Council (JHA) the integration of the new member states (Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Czech Republic) in the Schengen Information System (SIS 1 +). The proposal involved 'the cloning of the Portuguese national system, its integration in the new member states and subsequently their connection to the central system already in use'. This proposal was designated SISone4ALL, which allows the removal of checks at the borders with and between the new member states at the end of 2007.[47] For this success, the German Presidency credited the Portuguese partner in the Trio and its initiative to take over the relevant project management duties.[48] Here a rationalist explanation can offer insights into the provision of governmental entrepreneurship by a smaller member state operating within the context of the Trio Presidency.

**Conclusion**

The creation and evolution of the Trio Presidency responds to the demand for consensual, shared leadership in a larger European Union.[49] The supply of leadership by the French-German tandem and the classic rotation in the Chair each have some drawbacks that call for institutional entrepreneurship coming from the Presidency. The concerns about the new President of the European Council, which accentuate the divergences between the 'big' and the 'small' member states, underscore that the relevance of structural leadership, 'the question of the Prince,' is still the most contested in constitutional treaty reform.[50] Although this analysis has focused primarily on institutional developments, further research on the interaction between personalities and institutions is necessary. In Young's terms, this means there is a need to understand the distinctions between structural and intellectual as well as intellectual and entrepreneurial leadership, particularly in light of the changes that are likely to occur with the introduction of the post of the President of the European Council. The larger states are likely to play more prominent roles given the propensity in a Union of 27 for these countries to exercise influence through bilateral *ad hoc* arrangements. This provides a contrast with the early period of European integration when Monnet provided intellectual and entrepreneurial leadership thereby asserting

[47] For the background and definition of SISone4ALL consult http://www.epractice.eu/cases/SISone4ALL

[48] *EU 2007 DE*, 'First EU Trio Presidency of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers Getrs Under Way,' Press Releases, 14.01.2007; *EU 2007 DE*, 'Federal Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble: German Council Presidency a great success,' Press Releases, 29.06.2007.

[49] Derek Beach, 'The strength of the rotating Presidency is that it keeps the Presidency weak,' Presentation at the International Symposium, Whither the EU's Shared Leadership? (Re) Assessing the Value of the European Union Council Presidency, St Antony's College, University of Oxford, 10-11 October 2007.

[50] Paul Magnette and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, 'Large and Small Member States in the European Union: Reinventing the Balance,' *Research and European Issues* No 25, Paris: Notre Europe, 2003; Simone Bunse, Paul Magnette and Kalypso Nicolaïdis, 'Big versus Small: Shared Leadership in the EU and Power Politics in the Convention,' in *Leadership in the big bangs of European integration*, pp. 134-157.

that ideas could be negotiated when Europe lacked structural power at the end of World War II.[51] This intellectual innovation emphasizes the relevance of process in institutional bargaining. As Young argues, a persuasive intellectual innovator reduces the need for structural leadership.[52]

While there continues to be a supply of leadership from multiple sources, including more recent bilateral and trilateral state initiatives in areas such as the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), there is an increasing demand for leadership that can solve collective action problems through the consensus building in multilateral bargaining. Classic rotation in the six-month Presidency brings to the fore the tensions between 'the pursuit of national interests and the provision of problem-solving and directional leadership'.[53] The pursuit of collective goals for the Union is often in competition with securing private (national) gains. As research findings confirm, smaller member states are more inclined to stay focused on advancing dossiers that promote the general European interest and to work with the established system of EU institutions, the European Commission, the Council Secretariat and the European Parliament, depending on the issue area in question.[54]

Smaller members are not likely to be more consensus-oriented nor do these states have the consensus-building resources that the larger ones possess.[55] For this reason, a combination of three members with different sizes, experiences with integration and geographical locations can promote the kind of agenda-setting leadership that provides 'focal points' around which bargaining can converge. This is particularly true in the sectoral Councils, like Justice and Home Affairs, when the three governments create an eighteen-month agenda and have the opportunity to utilize their respective attributes and talents in a constructive way. Negotiations to implement the Visa Information System provide one such example in the program of the initial Trio Presidency. This outcome is more likely to occur when the anchor state resists the tendency to dominate a Team Presidency's actions and agenda, particularly when that anchor possesses the structural assets of a large member state.

The need to disagree, often present in historic French-German compromises, is at times necessary because the inherent differences can open a negotiating space within which other member states can identify their interests. In a larger Union, the Trio Presidency has the potential no other single actor possesses to supply consensual, shared leadership. The point is not to strengthen or weaken the powers of the Presidency as an actor. It is to augment coordination capacity through innovative practices among governments, taking into account the need for successive Trio Presidencies to work with, not against, the established system in Brussels. A rationalist perspective helps interpret Trio Presidency's behavior. A rationalist understanding of the extent of Presidency influence conceives of member states 'as strategic actors, seeking to satisfy national preferences within the confines of their formally delegated role'.[56] In a Trio Presidency, each member state does engage in agenda-shaping although there is variation in the issues introduced as well as those each Presidency chooses to emphasize, de-emphasize or neglect.

As Seeger underlines, 'the idea of creating teams by its nature can serve to bring Europe closer to the citizens and facilitate a European sense of belonging'.[57] In order to underscore the Union's identity, countries sharing the Presidency must act as a team rather than as consecutive and separate Presidencies. As a way to embody the principle of 'diversity and geographical balance within the Union,' the Trio serves as the representative of the variety and plurality

[51] Young, p. 305.
[52] Ibid, p. 306.
[53] Erik Ryen, *Is Small Beautiful? A Comparative Analysis of Six EU Presidencies*, Master's Thesis, Department of Comparative Politics, University of Bergen, 2007.
[54] Ibid
[55] Ibid
[56] Tallberg, p. 22.
[57] Seeger, 'Rotation in the Council – Bringing the Citizens Closer to the EU,' p. 8.

inherent in the Union, which is reflective of the nature of European politics. In this context, the government in the Chair shapes its own profile as the idea of commonly shared tasks and cooperation stays in the public eye, which is one of the fundamental purposes of rotation. Coordination among governments in the Trio is the key to make shared leadership a reality. Countries jointly sharing the Presidency must be able and willing to accept responsibility and leadership together.

The fact that increased coordination is required asks different governments to view Union policy making from a self perspective as well as that of the others in the team. This demand can expose weak links in the chain, as, for example, Portugal's comparative lack of enthusiasm in enlargement questions. A sociological perspective is also useful in that member state performance is determined partly by the expectations it encounters as well as by its identity or historical experience. The example of Slovenia and its constructive behavior in the Trio concerning the enlargement dossier is illustrative.

Constitutional treaty reform is likely to test successive Trio Presidencies in their attempts to provide transformational leadership in the Union. The agreement on the Lisbon Treaty at the close of the intergovernmental conference under the Portuguese Presidency was followed by an intense phase of national ratifications. Germany, the anchor state in the initial Trio, continued providing its support to Portugal and Slovenia in this essential area, including Chancellor Merkel's visit to Ireland in support of Treaty ratification there. The real difficulties in national ratifications began when the anchor of the second team, France, assumed the Presidency. The Irish referendum produced an involuntary defection, in Putnam's terms, surprising the political leadership with its negative popular vote on the Lisbon Treaty. This context presents more of a challenge than an opportunity for the integration process.

The Union's leaders have decided not to take any decisions to address the Irish referendum outcome until late 2008.[58] The Lisbon Treaty may yet be implemented despite the Irish rejection of the document.[59] In that case, leadership in the mixed system introduced by the text is likely to be open to question institutionally regardless of the personalities involved. Future research must consider the extent to which large anchor states, given their structural assets, actually dominate successive Trio Presidencies. In addition, analysts must assess the leadership impact, positive or negative, of the European Council President on the rotating Trio Presidency's ability to influence agenda-shaping through institutional entrepreneurship. Moreover, research into the proposed 'High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy' must aim to evaluate the effectiveness and influence of a position that combines multiple tasks previously accomplished in more than one post. This position has the potential to make leadership on behalf of the Union more difficult to provide without clarifying the system's capacity to make and execute policy vis-à-vis third world countries. Lastly, research must explore the dynamics by which EU decision making is influenced by *ad hoc*, multiple bilateral arrangements that exclude Community institutions.

[58] Colette Mazzucelli, 'After Lisbon, What Next for the Trans-Atlantic?,' *LIBERTAS*, University of Birmingham, July 2, 2008, http://www.libertas.bham.ac.uk/blogs/guest/index.htm

[59] Bruno Waterfield, 'European Treaty: Irish Plan to get around 'no' vote,' *The Daily Telegraph*, June 11, 2008, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/2113401/European-Treaty-Irish-plan-to-get-around-'no'-vote.html