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Defying the Treaty: The Influence of the Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies on the Development of the Eastern Partnership

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Adam Kaznowski graduated with First Class BA Honours in French and Politics from Newcastle University in 2013, having previously spent one year studying at Sciences Po Lyon. This paper is based on his Master's thesis at the College of Europe (Voltaire Promotion), which received the 2014 European External Action Service Award for the Best Master's Thesis on EU External Relations. Having graduated from the College of Europe with an MA in EU International Relations and Diplomacy Studies, he will undertake two traineeships, the first on a trans-boundary water management project in Central Asia, and the second at the EEAS in Brussels.

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Abstract

Many scholars now argue that the Treaty of Lisbon has removed the role and influence of the rotating Council Presidency in the domain of the European Union's foreign affairs. This paper will, however, go beyond a superficial, treaty-based analysis of the influence of the post-Lisbon rotating Council Presidency and instead look at two primary, residual, informal Presidential roles, namely agenda-shaping and brokering. It will examine the extent to which these informal roles allowed the Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies of July to December 2011 and 2013 respectively to influence the development of the bilateral, multilateral and internal tracks of the Eastern Partnership. The paper will argue that the considerable influence of these rotating Presidencies defied the logic of the Lisbon Treaty, suggesting that the 'golden age' of this six-month position, whereby individual Member States pursue foreign policy issues of significant domestic interest at the European level, has not yet passed.

Introduction

Prior to the Treaty of Lisbon it was widely acknowledged by scholars and practitioners alike that the country holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union¹ had an “opportunity to advance particular national interests” at the European level.² This ability to bring domestic policy priorities to the forefront of EU decision-making has been particularly apparent in the area of foreign affairs. For example, in 1999 Finland launched the ‘Northern Dimension’ to engage more actively with Russia and the Baltic region;³ in 2002 the Spanish Presidency strengthened Euro-Mediterranean and Euro-Latin America relations;⁴ and in 2001 Sweden prioritised EU enlargement.⁵

Since December 2009 however, and the coming into force of the Treaty of Lisbon, the rotating Presidency in EU external affairs has become, according to Piotr Maciej Kaczyński, “politically irrelevant”.⁶ Despite this apparent removal of the role of the rotating Presidency from EU external affairs, Member States in the post-Lisbon era have continued to place domestic foreign policy priorities on the EU agenda during their six-month Presidencies. Two prime examples are the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies, which ran from 1 July to 31 December 2011 and 2013 respectively. In spite of their different country characteristics,⁷ both countries specifically identified the European Union’s Eastern Partnership (EaP) programme, under which relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are conducted, as a priority for their

¹ Hereafter, the terms “rotating Council Presidency”, “rotating Presidency”, “Council Presidency”, and “Presidency” will be used.

² Ole Elgström, “Introduction”, in Ole Elgström (ed.), *European Union Council Presidencies: A comparative perspective*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 1.

³ Jonas Tallberg, *Leadership and Negotiation in the European Union*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 90-101.

⁴ Francesc Morata and Ana-Mar Fernández, “The Spanish Presidencies of 1989, 1995, and 2002: from commitment to reluctance towards European integration”, in Ole Elgström (ed.), *European Union Council Presidencies: A comparative perspective*, London, Routledge, 2003, pp. 185-186.

⁵ “Policy issues”, *The Swedish Presidency website*, 5 June 2001.

⁶ Piotr Maciej Kaczyński, “General Performance of the Polish Presidency”, *Lithuanian Foreign Policy Review*, no. 28, 2012, p. 117.

⁷ Whilst similarly located geographically and sharing the same accession date, Lithuania is territorially much smaller than Poland with a much smaller population, GDP, government budget, and foreign trade statistics (see “Poland vs. Lithuania”, *Index Mundi*, January 2014). In addition, Lithuania is considered by scholars to be a ‘small state’ with a ‘small state’ mind-set whereas Poland is not (see, above all, Simone Bunsé, *Small States and EU Governance: Leadership through the Council Presidency*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

respective Presidencies.⁸ Indeed, it was Poland, alongside Sweden, who first presented the idea of the Eastern Partnership to the EU's General Affairs and External Relations Council on 26 May 2008.⁹ According to Margarita Šešelgytė, the EaP has been on Lithuania's foreign policy priority list "since the country's accession to the EU [where it] aspired to a special responsibility" in the region.¹⁰ For Poland and Lithuania, therefore, the Eastern Partnership reflects both a significant domestic priority and a programme of special interest on the European Union's external relations agenda. Thus, it is perhaps unsurprising that both countries would identify the EaP as a policy priority for what was their first experience as holders of the Council Presidency. In fact, the development of the Eastern Partnership as an EU policy has, since its creation, been explicitly linked to the role of the rotating Council Presidency. The Poles approached Sweden to co-initiate the EaP as the Swedes were "about to take over the rotating Presidency of the EU", whilst all three EaP summits to date have taken place under the Presidencies of Central and Eastern European Member States.¹¹ The role of the rotating Council Presidency in the development of the EaP appears, therefore, to be significant. Considering on the one hand that the Treaty of Lisbon appears to have removed the role of the rotating Council Presidency in EU external relations, and on the other the importance of the EaP dossier to the respective national administrations of Poland and Lithuania, this begs the question as to whether these Council Presidencies were able to influence the development of the Eastern Partnership during their respective six-month periods; and if so, how?

Having defined the key terms and methodology, the second section will identify agenda-shaping and brokering as the two significant informal roles available to a post-Lisbon Council Presidency, and will outline the three pre-requisites that are required for a Presidency to use such roles to its advantage. Subsequently, I will argue that both the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies were able to use these residual roles for the

⁸ Lithuanian Foreign Ministry, *Programme of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union*, Vilnius, 2013, pp. 9-10; Council of the European Union, "The future Irish, Lithuanian and Greek Presidencies: 18 month programme of the Council (1 January 2013 – 30 June 2014)", 17426/12, Brussels, 7 December 2012, pp. 14, 23, 55, 73-74; Council of the European Union, "The future Polish, Danish and Cypriot Presidencies: 18 month programme of the Council (1 July 2011 – 31 December 2012)", 11447/11, Brussels, 17 June 2011, p. 14; Piotr Maciej Kaczyński, "Polish Council Presidency 2011: Ambitions and Limitations", *SIEPS*, no. 3, Stockholm, 2011, p. 38.

⁹ Nathaniel Copsy and Karolina Pomorska, "The Influence of Newer Member States in the European Union: The Case of Poland and the Eastern Partnership", *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2013, p. 425.

¹⁰ Margarita Šešelgytė, "The First Leadership Test: What to Expect from the Lithuanian Presidency of the EU", *SIEPS*, European Policy Analysis, August 2013, p. 9.

¹¹ Copsy and Pomorska, *op.cit.*, p. 425.

Presidency to significantly influence the development of the Eastern Partnership across three separate tracks: bilateral, multilateral, and internal. The fourth section compares the influence of the two Presidencies and assesses the implications of the analysis. The final section recommends how the post-Lisbon role of the Council Presidency can best be utilised for the benefit of the EU and for the Member States, before briefly summarising the paper's findings.

Definitions

For the purpose of this paper, I define 'development' as the way in which a policy or programme - in this case the Eastern Partnership - has evolved since its creation. Thus, the 'development of the Eastern Partnership' refers to the deliverables and outcomes for the bilateral, multilateral and internal tracks of the EaP during the six-month periods of the respective Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies. Consequently, the paper will concentrate on the way in which the Eastern Partnership currently appears, regardless of whether these developments have been successful, advisable or binding.

Following Vandecasteele *et al.*, I define 'influence' as "intentionally changing an outcome from what it would have been in the absence of an action".¹² Influence, thus, is seen as an intentional process based on the actions of an agent, in this case the rotating Council Presidency. This paper will adapt the indicators for measuring influence developed by Vandecasteele *et al.* in order to assess the residual roles of the Polish and Lithuanian rotating Council Presidencies (agenda-shaping and brokering) on the development of the EaP.¹³

As such, the influence of agenda-shaping and brokering will be assessed in terms of 'goal achievement' and 'ascription'. Goal achievement refers to "how much of the [Presidency's] goals are reflected in the outcome", while ascription refers to "the contribution of the [Presidency] to the outcome in relation to the contribution of other actors".¹⁴ Vandecasteele *et al.* also use 'political relevance', that is, "how politically

¹² Bruno Vandecasteele, Fabienne Bossuyt and Jan Orbie, "Unpacking the influence of the Council Presidency on European Union external policies: The Polish Council Presidency and the Eastern Partnership", *European Integration online Papers*, Special Issue 1, vol.17, 2013, p. 5.

¹³ Taking into account the existing research (see, for example, Erika Márta Szabó, *Background vocals: The role of the rotating Presidency in the EU's external relations post-Lisbon*, Master's thesis, Bruges, College of Europe, 2011, p.4.) and the testimony of interviews conducted within the framework of this study, it would appear that the roles of agenda-shaping and brokering – which will be defined fully in the second section – are the primary roles still associated with the position of the rotating Council Presidency. Other residual roles, including but not limited to business manager, administrator, promoter of initiatives, liaison point, political leader, spokesperson, or collective representative may still remain, but are less apparent.

¹⁴ Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie, *op.cit.*, p.5.

important and binding the outcome is” as a measure of influence; however, I consider this measure to be irrelevant to this paper.¹⁵ The reason for this lies in the definition of the word ‘development’, whereby the paper will look at the overall way in which the Eastern Partnership has evolved since its creation rather than whether this evolution has been successful, advisable, or politically binding. The indicators for Presidency influence through ‘agenda-shaping’ or ‘brokering’ are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Indicators for Presidency influence

Indicator	Level	Description
Goal Achievement	None	The outcome entirely contradicts the Presidency’s preferences.
	Limited	The outcome partially corresponds to and partially contradicts the Presidency’s preferences.
	Substantial	The outcome is not the most preferred result for the Presidency, but does not contradict its preferences.
	High	The outcome reflects the Presidency’s preferences as much as was legally and practically feasible.
Ascription	None	The Presidency was not involved in developing the outcome.
	Limited	The outcome was mainly developed by other actors, with the Presidency involved to a limited extent.
	Substantial	The Presidency steered the outcome, but other actors also played a role in developing the outcome.
	High	It is unlikely that the outcome would have been the same if it had not been for the involvement of the Presidency.

Source: Based on Vandecasteele *et al.*, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

The overall degree of influence of the rotating Council Presidency through a given mechanism (agenda-shaping or brokering) in a given track of the Eastern Partnership (bilateral, multilateral, internal) will therefore be established by taking an average of all outcomes within a single track. Following Vandecasteele *et al.*, the paper avoids numerical values to measure influence so as “to avoid creating the impression that influence is quantified or measured on an interval scale”.¹⁶ The judgement of the author in each case therefore remains solely based on qualitative reasoning.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Influencing an EU foreign policy priority as a post-Lisbon Presidency

As noted by Kaczyński, “the domain of external relations and foreign policy is, arguably, among the most affected by the [Lisbon] Treaty”.¹⁷ In theory, certainly, the formal role of the rotating Presidency in EU external affairs has been ceded to the President of the European Council, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission (HR/VP), and the officials of the European External Action Service (EEAS). It is the President of the European Council rather than the Head of State or Government of the country holding the rotating Presidency who “ensure[s] the external representation of the Union on issues concerning its common foreign and security policy [CFSP]”;¹⁸ the HR/VP rather than the national Foreign Minister who conducts the Union’s CFSP, represents the Union abroad and in international organisations, and chairs the Foreign Affairs Council (minus the Trade configuration);¹⁹ and it is EEAS officials who now chair meetings at all levels of CFSP, with the exception of COREPER II, but including the Political and Security Committee (PSC) and all geographic Council preparatory bodies such as the Council Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia (COEST).²⁰ Scholars have predicted that “the post-Lisbon regime will reduce the rotating Presidency’s ability to pursue its priorities in the field of external relations”, and that it now occupies merely a facilitating or supporting role.²¹ As Martin Westlake posits, however, “a mere reading of the Treaty would reveal only a little about the Presidency’s [...] functions”; the informal roles and mechanisms of the Presidency have been equally important in enabling it to pursue policy priorities during its six-months at the helm.²² It is therefore important to assess to what extent the rotating Presidency has retained its informal roles in the post-Lisbon era.

¹⁷ Joint Study of European Policy Centre & Egmont & Centre for European Policy Studies, *The Treaty of Lisbon: A Second Look at the Institutional Innovations*, Brussels, CEPS, Egmont, and EPC, September 2010, p. 141 [hereafter, “EPC, Egmont & CEPS”].

¹⁸ European Union, “Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union of 13 December 2007”, *Official Journal of the European Union*, C115, 9 May 2008, Art.15 TEU [hereafter, “Lisbon”].

¹⁹ European Union, “Lisbon”, *op.cit.*, Art.27(2) TEU.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Art.27(3) TEU; ISIS Europe, “The impact of the Lisbon Treaty on CFSP and ESDP”, *European Security Review*, no. 37, March 2008, p. 2.

²¹ Piotr Maciej Kaczyński, “What is Left for the Rotating Council Presidency under the Lisbon Rules?”, in Elvire Fabry (ed.), *The contribution of 16 European think tanks to the Polish, Danish and Cypriot EU Trio Presidency*, Paris, Notre Europe, June 2011, p. 340; Margarita Šešelgyté, “The Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council and Common Security and Defense Policy: Opportunities and Challenges”, *Lithuanian Annual Strategic Review*, vol. 10, no. 1, January 2012, p. 100.

²² Martin Westlake, *The Council of the European Union*, 2nd edition, London, John Harper, 1999, p. 50.

Informal roles of the Presidency: agenda-shaping and brokering from pre- to post-Lisbon

'Agenda-shaping' and 'brokering' are not formally attributed to the rotating Council Presidency in the Treaty of Lisbon, nor were they in preceding Treaties. It is these mechanisms, defined below, that will form the basis for a subsequent evaluation of how and to what extent the Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies influenced the development of the Eastern Partnership.

Whilst the Treaties have never delegated specific formal powers to the Presidency to shape the agenda, that is, "to initiate proposals for new EU policy, to structure the agenda according to its own liking, or to exclude issues it does not consider worthy of consideration", it has nonetheless been able to do so.²³ Tallberg's evidence for such a claim is largely linked to the Presidency as holder of the chair, which, as has been noted above, is no longer necessarily the case post-Lisbon. With regard to brokering, whilst many argue that a Presidency should be "a neutral mediator, an 'honest broker'", I argue that holding the Presidency allows the Member State at the helm to seek "efficient and favourable outcomes" through brokering (without the 'honest' prefix).²⁴ Indeed, this argument is well supported in the literature, where it is claimed that "mediators usually have a stake in the conflict they try to resolve and [therefore] complete altruism is rare".²⁵ As Elgström astutely notes, as an "insider mediator [...] the Presidency is by definition one of the negotiating actors [and] therefore neutrality ('no stake in the outcome') is seldom an option".²⁶

Pre-requisites for using Presidential mechanisms of influence

Whilst agenda-shaping and brokering are still available to the rotating Council Presidency even in the post-Lisbon era, the ability to use such mechanisms effectively, however, is far from inevitable. In fact, the ability of Poland and Lithuania to influence successfully the development of the Eastern Partnership through agenda-shaping and brokering rests on the fulfilment of three criteria, which will be outlined briefly below. In addition, it should again be noted that it is for the Member State holding the Presidency

²³ Jonas Tallberg, "The agenda-shaping powers of the Council Presidency", in Ole Elgström (ed.), *European Union Council Presidencies: A comparative perspective*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 22.

²⁴ European Union, *Handbook of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union*, Brussels, November 2011, p. 10; David Metcalfe, "Leadership in European Union negotiations: The Presidency of the Council", *International Negotiation*, vol. 3, p. 421.

²⁵ Ole Elgström, "The honest broker? The Council Presidency as a mediator", in Ole Elgström (ed.), *European Union Council Presidencies: A comparative perspective*, London, Routledge, 2003, p. 41.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

to choose for itself what type of Presidency it wants to conduct. Already in the post-Lisbon era, scholars have noted a difference between 'passive' Presidencies, whereby leadership and influence are left largely to the post-Lisbon EU actors or other Member States, and 'national' Presidencies, whereby influence on EU policies is deliberately pursued.²⁷ It is these so-called 'national' Presidencies, as those of both Poland and Lithuania can be characterised, which therefore must fulfil the following pre-requisites.

Firstly, a Member State that seeks to influence the development of a domestic policy priority on the European level during its six-month Presidency must accept to a certain extent its new role as defined by the Lisbon Treaty and the relevant Council decisions. The Presidency is a service in the interest of all of the European Union, and its primary duty in foreign affairs is to support the HR/VP and the EEAS in their work.²⁸ Without accepting this new role and the position of the Presidency in relation to the EEAS, HR/VP, and the President of the European Council in the post-Lisbon hierarchy, the Presidency runs the risk of souring relationships with actors with whom it is forced to work with for six months. Lithuania and indeed even Poland, which in the literature had been labelled as a highly ambitious Presidency,²⁹ both visibly accepted the formally reduced role of the Presidency and so, in theory, were in a position to use their informal roles to influence the development of the Eastern Partnership during their respective six months at the helm.³⁰

Secondly, significant thought must be put into the Member States' Presidential programme. It is extremely important that a Member State does not focus on just one issue during its Presidency, as this can lead to the country in question being negatively labelled as having a hobbyhorse and thus can create resentment within the Council.³¹

²⁷ *Ibid.*; Śešelgyté, "The Lithuanian Presidency of the EU Council and Common Security and Defense Policy: Opportunities and Challenges", *op.cit.*, p. 100.

²⁸ Interview with an official of the European Union institutions 1, via telephone, 14 March 2014 [hereafter, "Interview 15"]; Interview with an official, Foreign Ministry of a European Union Member State, via telephone, 7 April 2014 [hereafter, "Interview 8"]; Interview with an official, European Union Member State Permanent Representation to the European Union, Brussels, 27 March 2014 [hereafter, "Interview 6"]; Interview with a senior official, European Union Member State Permanent Representation to the European Union, Brussels, 8 April 2014 [hereafter, "Interview 5"]; Interview with an official of the European Union institutions, Brussels, 17 February 2014 [hereafter, "Interview 9"]; Interview with an official of the European Union institutions 1, via telephone, 14 March 2014 [hereafter, Interview 14"]; Interview with an official, European Union Member State Permanent Representation to the European Union, via telephone, 2 April 2014 [hereafter, "Interview 7"]; Interviews 2 and 3, *op.cit.*

²⁹ Kaczyński, "Polish Council Presidency 2011", *op.cit.*, pp. 44, 49; Mikołaj Dowgiewlecz, "External Challenges for the Polish Presidency in the Council of the EU", *Yearbook of Polish European Studies*, vol. 13, 2010, pp. 15-16.

³⁰ Interview with an official of the European Union institutions, Brussels, 5 March 2014 [hereafter, "Interview 12"]; Interview with an official of the European Union institutions 2, Brussels, 3 March 2014 [hereafter, "Interview 11"]; Interviews 1, 5-7, 9, and 10, *op.cit.*

³¹ Interviews 6, 7, 9, and 15, *op.cit.*

Indeed, as Vaidotas Verba notes, “if you pursue only your own national priorities you won’t win many friends”.³² Ultimately, Member States still accept that Presidencies will identify a range of priorities that have the interest of that particular country at heart, even in external relations, as they too will want to employ such tactics in the future.³³ Nevertheless, if a Presidency is looking to make progress on a specific issue from within its range of policy priorities, it is important that this dossier meets two additional criteria. Firstly, it must be presented as being in the general interest of the European Union. Both Poland and Lithuania sought to convince Member States that the more interconnected the Union is with the Eastern neighbourhood, the more stable and the more prosperous everyone becomes.³⁴ Highlighting the importance of a developed relationship with the Eastern partners for European security, energy security, and for the promotion of EU common values took the emphasis away from Presidency-specific relations.³⁵ Secondly, the issue must have support from other Member States and, crucially, the EEAS. Both Presidencies carefully selected the EaP as a priority policy after having consulted with their allies in the Council: with the Visegrád countries, the Baltic states, the Scandinavian states, and with Germany.³⁶ Furthermore, the EaP, with its support from the HR/VP down to the EEAS officials, and from Commissioner Füle down to the sectoral working parties, clearly fits into the EU’s own objectives.³⁷ Having met both of the aforementioned criteria, the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies were then potentially able to use the residual agenda-shaping and brokering roles to develop all three tracks of the EaP.

Finally, a Presidency needs to be well prepared for the six-month period in question. Indeed, thorough preparation and strategic thinking is recognised as a way of ensuring that a Presidency runs smoothly and that any unforeseen challenges that arise can be dealt with as efficiently and effectively as possible.³⁸ In hindsight, such challenges included the economic crisis, the arrest of Yulia Tymoshenko, and fallout from the ‘Arab

³² Interview with H.E. Mr. Vaidotas Verba, Ambassador, Special Envoy for the Eastern Partnership, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, via telephone, 18 February 2014 [hereafter, “Interview 1”].

³³ Interviews 6-8, *op.cit.*; Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, New York, Basic Books, 1984, pp. 126-129.

³⁴ Irene Hahn-Fuhr and Kai-Olaf Lang, “Ambitious realism: The Eastern Partnership as a top priority of the Polish EU Presidency”, in Ireneusz Pawel Karolewski, Thomas Mehlhausen and Monika Sus (eds.), *Poland’s EU-Council Presidency under Evaluation: Navigating Europe through Stormy Waters*, Wroclaw, Nomos, January 2014, p. 69; Lithuanian Foreign Ministry, *op.cit.*, pp. 16-17.

³⁵ Interviews 1, 5, 6, 8, 10, and 15, *op.cit.*; Hahn-Fuhr and Lang, *op.cit.*

³⁶ Interviews 1, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 15.

³⁷ Conversation with Mr. David O’Sullivan, Chief Operating Officer EEAS, Bruges, 18 March 2014; Interviews 3, 6, and 8, *op.cit.*

³⁸ Vanhoonacker, Pomorska and Maurer, *op.cit.*, p. 24; Piotr Maciej Kaczyński, “How to assess a rotating presidency of the Council under new Lisbon rules: The case of Hungary”, *CEPS Policy Brief*, no. 232, 2011, p. 3; Interviews 1, 5, 6, 8, 10-12, and 15, *op.cit.*

Spring' in the case of Poland; and in the case of Lithuania the Armenian and Ukrainian refusals to initial and sign their respective Association Agreements with the EU at the Vilnius Summit in November 2013.³⁹ Both Poland and Lithuania created new positions for their Presidencies: Mikołaj Dowgielewicz was appointed Government Plenipotentiary for the Preparation of Administrative Agencies and Poland's Presidency of the Council of the EU; while Vaidotas Verba was appointed Lithuanian Ambassador, Special Envoy for the Eastern Partnership and Chief Coordinator for the preparations of the Eastern Partnership Vilnius Summit in the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.⁴⁰ In addition, both countries took care to deliver training for staff in Brussels and in the national capitals, which was especially vital given that both Poland and Lithuania lacked the experience of having previously conducted a Presidency.⁴¹ Lithuanian representatives in Brussels benefitted from at least four years of experience, during which time they had witnessed at first hand different types of Presidencies, including that of Poland, which weighed heavily on how they approached their own six-month period.⁴² Both Poland and Lithuania prepared effectively and thoroughly for their respective Presidencies, and thus were able to utilise agenda-shaping and brokering as informal mechanisms of influence.

The influence of the Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies on the development of the Eastern Partnership

This section will assess the extent to which the aforementioned residual roles enabled the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies to influence the development of each of the three tracks of the Eastern Partnership (bilateral, multilateral, and internal). By separating the two roles and by analysing the three tracks individually, it will be possible to take note of any specific trends that appear.

Bilateral track

The bilateral track of the Eastern Partnership refers to the deepening of relations between the EU and the EaP countries on an individual basis. The EU bilaterally supports reforms in three main areas: "good governance; rule of law and fundamental freedoms; and sustainable economic and social development, and trade and investment".⁴³

³⁹ Kaczyński, "Polish Council Presidency 2011", *op.cit.*, pp. 46-47; Kaczyński, "How to assess a rotating presidency of the Council under new Lisbon rules", *op.cit.*, p. 3; Interviews 1, 5-7, 10, 11 and 15, *op.cit.*

⁴⁰ Kaczyński, "Polish Council Presidency 2011", *op.cit.*, p. 33; Interview 1, *op.cit.*

⁴¹ Interviews 6 and 8, *op.cit.*

⁴² Interviews 1, 5, 6, 9, and 12, *op.cit.*

⁴³ "EU cooperation with eastern neighbours in the framework of the Eastern Partnership", *European Commission Development and Cooperation Aid*, 11 March 2014.

Deliverables to date have included Association Agreements (AA), Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas (DCFTA), agreements on visa facilitation and liberalisation, and technical and financial assistance in a number of individual fields.⁴⁴

Agenda-shaping

In the EU's bilateral visa policy towards Armenia and Azerbaijan respectively, the Polish Presidency exerted high levels of influence. Having pressured the Commission "to propose starting negotiations with both countries on visa facilitation and readmission agreements", the Polish Ambassador to the EU Jan Tombiński then "immediately initiated discussions at COREPER".⁴⁵ By using agenda-structuring capabilities to prioritise the issue on the COREPER agenda, Tombiński was able to ensure that the Council adopted the negotiation mandates in December 2011.⁴⁶ Indeed, this agenda-shaping influence eventually led to EU Visa Facilitation Agreements being signed with Armenia in December 2012 and with Azerbaijan in November 2013 at the Vilnius Summit.⁴⁷ This outcome fully reflected the goals of the Polish Presidency and thus we can observe that the level of goal achievement was high. The level of ascription to the Presidency was also high, as Polish intervention led both the Commission proposal for a mandate and the adoption of the mandate by the Council to be "earlier than was planned".⁴⁸

Poland also used its ability to shape the agenda to maintain bilateral relations with Ukraine during the arrest and trial of former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko. With the EU making progress on the Association Agreement and DCFTA dependent on Tymoshenko's acquittal, Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski used his right to chair the Gymnich meeting in September 2011 to put the issue of relations with Ukraine on the agenda, as did Tombiński on a continual basis in COREPER.⁴⁹ These actions were crucial in keeping the dialogue between the EU and Ukraine alive and the AA on the EU's agenda.⁵⁰ We can assess, therefore, that whilst the Polish Presidency did not make as much progress with the Ukrainian AA as it had hoped to during its Presidency, its

⁴⁴ Laure Delcour, "The Institutional Functioning of the Eastern Partnership: An Early Assessment", *Eastern Partnership Review*, Issue 1, October 2009, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁵ Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie, *op.cit.*, p. 13; Interviews 8 and 15, *op.cit.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Council of the European Union, "EU-Armenia agreement on facilitating the issuing of visas", Press release, 17866/12, Brussels, 17 December 2012; Council of the European Union, "EU-Azerbaijan agreement on facilitating the issue of visas", Press release, 17088/13, Brussels, 29 November 2013.

⁴⁸ Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie, *op.cit.*, p. 13.

⁴⁹ Andrew Wilson, "Viewpoint: Ukraine, the EU and Tymoshenko", *BBC*, 11 October 2011; "Informal meeting for EU foreign ministers in Sopot", *Republic of Slovenia Ministry of Foreign Affairs website*, 2 September 2011; Interviews 8 and 15, *op.cit.*; Hahn-Fuhr and Lang, *op.cit.*, p. 73.

⁵⁰ Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

agenda-shaping capabilities were crucial in maintaining momentum of some kind. Thus, goal achievement is limited and ascription in this instance is high.

The prime example of the Lithuanian Presidency influencing the development of the EaP's bilateral track through agenda-shaping was at its final COREPER II meeting, when a Visa Liberalisation Agreement with Moldova was reached.⁵¹ It was an objective of both the Lithuanian Presidency and the Moldovan authorities to reach such an agreement before the turn of the year for two reasons: firstly, to provide a timetable that could accommodate the necessary legislative procedure of the European Union and the complications posed by the European Parliament elections; and secondly, so that the agreement would be in place prior to the 2014 summer holiday season, therefore benefitting both Moldovan citizens and, it was hoped, the ruling Pro-European Coalition in the Moldovan parliament ahead of the national elections in November 2014.⁵² In hindsight, Ambassador Karoblis putting the agreement on the agenda in December 2013 has subsequently allowed both the European Parliament and the Council to pass the legislation on 27 February and 14 March 2014 respectively.⁵³ Indeed, the way in which the Lithuanian Presidency combined progress on the Moldovan dossier with that of similar agreements on visa-free travel for many other third countries during its six-month period, including Peru, Colombia, Morocco, and sixteen Caribbean and Pacific countries, was instrumental in persuading Member States such as Spain and France to sign off on the Moldovan agreement.⁵⁴ Evidently, as has been mentioned previously, a Presidency in the post-Lisbon era can directly influence a policy outcome through agenda-shaping, especially when there is a careful packaging of deals and when the Presidency does not ignore issues that are important to other Member States solely in order to pursue its own priorities. We can note here, therefore, that levels of both goal achievement and ascription to the Presidency are high; Lithuania's influence in the development of Moldovan visa liberalisation is of significant importance.

Added to this example is the development of the Eastern European Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P), which was expanded to include not only Ukraine but

⁵¹ "Lithuanian Presidency reaches agreement on visa free travels for the Republic of Moldova", *Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013 website*, 20 December 2013.

⁵² Interviews 4 and 6, *op.cit.*; "Moldova gets first vote for visa free travel in EU's Schengen Zone", *Moldova.org*, 12 February 2014.

⁵³ Council of the European Union, "Visa liberalisation for Moldova", *Council of the European Union*, Press release, 7645/14, Brussels, 14 March 2014.

⁵⁴ "Lithuanian Presidency reaches agreement on visa free travels for [...] Moldova", *op.cit.*

also Armenia, Georgia and Moldova under the Lithuanian Presidency.⁵⁵ In this instance, whilst Lithuania successfully developed this mechanism with a view to expanding bilateral cooperation with the EaP countries in the fields of energy efficiency and environment cooperation (high goal achievement), the reliance on significant donations from third countries including the United States, Norway, and Iceland dilutes the level of ascription (limited) to the Presidency.⁵⁶

Bar the limited ascription to the Lithuanian Presidency in the case of developing the E5P, and the limited goal achievement in the case of the Polish Presidency's attempts to maintain momentum in the EU's bilateral relations with Ukraine, all other examples cited above demonstrate both high levels of goal achievement and ascription to the Presidency. With this in mind, we can assert that the EaP's bilateral track was substantially (borderline highly) influenced by the agenda-shaping efforts of both the Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies.

Brokering

Whilst the role of the Presidency as a broker was used both to conclude the aforementioned bilateral visa facilitation agreements with Azerbaijan and Armenia and to continue EU-Ukraine bilateral relations, the Polish Presidency significantly failed to shape bilateral relations with Belarus within the EaP framework in the way in which it would have liked. The 'Declaration on the situation in Belarus' of 30 September 2011 criticised the state of human rights, democracy, rule of law, media freedom, political prisoners, and civil society in the country.⁵⁷ The declaration was not, however, signed by the remaining five EaP countries alongside their EU counterparts, as had been the Polish Presidency's intention.⁵⁸ A common declaration of all participants would, according to a Polish EU Presidency representative, have helped to develop closer relations between the EU and the Eastern partners.⁵⁹ A failure to broker such a deal, in spite of its excellent bilateral relations with these five remaining EaP countries, demonstrates the inability of a Presidency to influence a specific outcome when it faces a bloc of opposition. Goal achievement in this case is therefore none. The Polish Presidency's brokering roles in maintaining bilateral EU-Ukraine relations (limited goal achievement and substantial

⁵⁵ European Commission, "Eastern Partnership: Armenia, Georgia and Moldova join Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership", *European Commission website*, Press release, IP/13/985, Brussels, 22 October 2013.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*; Interview 1, *op.cit.*

⁵⁷ Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit", 14983/11, Warsaw, 30 September 2011, p. 9.

⁵⁸ "No agreement on Belarus at Warsaw EU summit", *News from Poland*, 1 October 2011.

⁵⁹ "Diplomatic fiasco mars Warsaw summit", *EurActiv*, 3 October 2011.

ascription, due to the supporting role played by senior EU officials and other EU Member States' Foreign Ministers), and in concluding visa facilitation agreements with Azerbaijan and Armenia (high goal achievement and ascription) were both more successful.⁶⁰

Under the Lithuanian Presidency the Association Agreements with both Moldova and Georgia were initialled; a major development of the EaP's bilateral track.⁶¹ Significant lobbying efforts on the part of the Lithuanian Presidency led to the initialling of the entire AA, rather than only the political part of the AA and the first and last pages of the DCFTA, as had been recommended initially by DG Trade.⁶² Thus, we can say that goal achievement was high and ascription to the Presidency substantial. Regarding the wording of the preamble of the Georgian AA, it was the Lithuanian Presidency-to-be rather than their Irish incumbents who negotiated an acceptable formulation; Georgia was recognised as "an Eastern European country", which has potential repercussions surrounding a future Georgian EU membership application.⁶³ As for the Lithuanians an ideal wording would have been "European country", the level of goal achievement in this instance can only be described as substantial. We can, however, confidently ascribe this outcome to the Lithuanian Presidency-to-be, as it was Lithuanian officials who interacted with Georgian officials, using their close relations to find a solution to the complex and delicate issue, who sought a coalition with the Swedes to take the proposal to the EEAS, and who finally achieved unanimity among Member States.⁶⁴

The Lithuanian Presidency's ability to broker deals was not, however, unlimited. Following Ukrainian President Yanukovich's decision to suspend preparations for signing the Association Agreement at Vilnius, which was supposed to be the highlight of the EaP Summit, Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė attempted to negotiate with Yanukovich both by telephone and in person on the eve of the summit itself, but to no avail.⁶⁵ Given the importance of the AA to both the EU and to the Lithuanian Presidency, the failure to broker a deal is significant and potentially demonstrates both the limitations of a 'smaller state' Presidency (though we can but speculate over

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*; Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie, *op.cit.*, p. 15.

⁶¹ European External Action Service, "Georgia and Moldova one step closer to enhanced political and trade relations with the EU", Fact sheet, 131202/01, Brussels, 2 December 2013, p. 1; "Eastern Partnership summit prepares signing of association agreements", *European Council website*, 29 November 2013.

⁶² Council of the European Union, "Foreign Affairs, Trade Items", Press Release, 14845/13, Luxembourg, 18 October 2013, p. 6; Interview 6, *op.cit.*

⁶³ European Union, *Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and Georgia, of the other part*, Vilnius, 29 November 2013, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Interview 6, *op.cit.*

⁶⁵ "Tymoshenko urges protests after Ukraine ditches EU deal", *EUBusiness*, 22 November 2013.

potential outcomes had Germany, for example, been in the driving seat), and also questions the preparation of the Presidency for such a possibility. Though the Lithuanian Presidency surely cannot be blamed for Yanukovych bowing to Russian pressure, they perhaps could have been better informed and therefore better placed to deal with such eventualities. Goal achievement in this case, therefore, is none.

Interestingly, when it came to the influence of brokering in the bilateral track, both Poland and Lithuania suffered major setbacks: the former regarding the Declaration on the situation in Belarus, and the latter over the Ukrainian AA. That said, the way in which both Presidencies otherwise used brokering to successfully influence other outcomes means that the overall levels of influence are substantial (borderline limited).

Multilateral track

The multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership allows the EU and EaP countries to “tackle common challenges as a group”.⁶⁶ This track consists of flagship initiatives alongside four multilateral thematic platforms: (1) Democracy, good governance and stability; (2) Economic integration and convergence with European Union policies; (3) Energy security; and (4) Contacts between people.⁶⁷

Agenda-shaping

The ability to shape the agenda of the EaP’s multilateral track during its Presidency was used to great effect by the Polish administration both in Warsaw and in Brussels. An overriding aim of the Polish Presidency was to use the sectoral policies chaired by the Council Presidency in the post-Lisbon era, rather than the HR/VP or EEAS officials, to broaden considerably the scope of the EaP’s multilateral dimension.⁶⁸ Thus, the Polish Presidency took time to organise both an EU-EaP Transport Ministers’ conference in Kraków, as well as the first EaP Business Forum in Sopot.⁶⁹ In the case of the former, the agenda-setting capabilities of the Polish Presidency were combined with an important brokering role whereby the Polish Minister of Infrastructure, Cezary Grabarczyk, played a

⁶⁶ “Glossary of Eastern Partnership and relations with Russia”, *EU Neighbourhood Info Centre*, no publication date.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*; Hrant Kostanyan and Jan Orbie, “The EEAS’ discretionary power within the Eastern Partnership: in search of the highest possible denominator”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2013, p. 49.

⁶⁸ Interviews 8 and 15, *op.cit.*; Szymon Ananicz, “Will the Polish Presidency enhance the EaP?”, *EaP Community*, 12 July 2011.

⁶⁹ European Commission, “EU and Eastern Partnership region move forward with transport cooperation”, Press release, IP/11/1240, Brussels, 25 October 2011.

vital mediating role between the EU and his Azerbaijani counterpart.⁷⁰ For the latter, the initial proposal came both before the Polish Presidency, in January 2010, and from the Working Group on Economic Integration and Convergence with the EU Policies rather than from a Polish official, meaning that ascription to the Presidency is substantial.⁷¹ Nevertheless, for both the Transport Ministers' conference and the Business Forum, the level of goal achievement for the Polish Presidency was high. We can assess, therefore, that agenda-shaping by the Polish Presidency was influential in the development of the Eastern Partnership's multilateral track in this regard.

Secondly, the Polish Presidency used agenda-shaping to develop the EaP's multilateral track by establishing the European Endowment for Democracy (EED).⁷² Given that the EED was an initiative of Foreign Minister Sikorski, proposed to the HR/VP in January 2011, it was natural that Poland would look to develop this initiative during its Presidency.⁷³ Indeed, the agenda-setting capabilities of Ambassador Tombiński in COREPER meant that Poland was able to "put the issue on the agenda as often as was needed to reach unanimity on the idea".⁷⁴ Combined with an important brokering role, whereby the Polish Ambassador overcame concerns over funding, the sovereignty of partner countries, and overlap with existing instruments, the Polish Presidency was able to achieve an agreement in December 2011.⁷⁵ Goal achievement and ascription are therefore both high, with the agenda-setting roles of Foreign Minister Sikorski and Ambassador Tombiński of particular note.

In addition to organising only the second ever EaP Business Forum, which produced a declaration ensuring the longevity of the project, Lithuania also used its agenda-setting capabilities to arrange the first joint EU-EaP Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) Ministerial meeting and a joint EU-EaP Transport Ministerial meeting.⁷⁶ Regarding the former, this event was seen as vital for the Lithuanian administration given that they seek regular

⁷⁰ Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie, *op.cit.*, p. 13; Interview 10, *op.cit.*

⁷¹ Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, *Newsletter June 2010*, Brussels, June 2010, p. 5.

⁷² "About European Endowment for Democracy", *European Endowment for Democracy website*, no publication date.

⁷³ Aleksander Fuksiewicz, *The European Endowment for Democracy after lift-off: Opinions and expectations*, Foundation Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw, 2013, p. 5; Interviews 8 and 15, *op.cit.*

⁷⁴ Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie, *op.cit.*, p. 14; Interviews 8 and 15, *op.cit.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ "Eastern Partnership Business Forum", *Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union website*, 28 November 2013; "Eastern Partnership: ministerial meeting targets common transport space between EU and EaP", *EU Neighbourhood Info Centre*, 8 October 2013; Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration on Eastern Partnership Justice and Home Affairs", 14558/13, Luxembourg, 8 October 2013.

JHA meetings to become an integral part of the EaP.⁷⁷ This objective was achieved in the joint declaration.⁷⁸ The meeting was significant as it gave EU Ministers and their EaP counterparts an opportunity to discuss the status of visa liberalisation agreements, which paved the way for significant progress to be made with Moldova at the aforementioned European Council meeting in December 2013. The declaration of the joint EU-EaP Ministerial meeting for transport spoke of the need to consolidate the development of the Regional Transport Network between the Eastern partners and to create a trans-European Transport Network, thus reflecting the objective of the Lithuanian Presidency.⁷⁹ For all three of these events, we can comfortably assess that levels of goal achievement are high; Lithuania's objectives were achieved throughout. Regarding ascription, it is necessary to note the influence of the Commission in the JHA and Transport meetings, as well as the business community and other EU Member States in the EaP Business Forum.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, all three examples demonstrate the ability of the rotating Presidency to use agenda-shaping to influence the development of the EaP's multilateral track; without Lithuania's efforts to arrange such events and to push for ambitious goals, these achievements may not have been accomplished.

Agenda-shaping in the multilateral track proved to be the most influential mechanism/track combination overall. Poland was consistently highly influential through its use of agenda-shaping, whilst Lithuania, through working with other Member States and EU institutions, had substantial-to-high influence in each of the three outcomes detailed above.

Brokering

In addition to the aforementioned brokering role for the Polish Presidency during the first EU-EaP Ministerial meeting for transport, where we can note high levels of both goal achievement and ascription for the Presidency, another important brokering role was during COEST meetings, despite the fact that in the post-Lisbon era this working party is permanently chaired by an EEAS official rather than by the rotating Presidency.

⁷⁷ "Lithuanian Presidency invites Eastern Partnership Justice and Home Affairs ministers to discuss cooperation", *Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013 website*, 7 October 2013.

⁷⁸ Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration on Eastern Partnership Justice and Home Affairs", *op.cit.*, p. 3.

⁷⁹ "Transport links with Eastern Partnership countries – links of life", *Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013 website*, 10 October 2013; Interviews 1, 5, and 6, *op.cit.*; European Commission, "Joint Declaration: Future of Eastern Partnership transport cooperation", Brussels, 9 October 2013.

⁸⁰ Interviews 1, 5, 6 and 10, *op.cit.*; "Speech by Štefan Füle on 2nd Eastern Partnership Business Forum in Vilnius", *Government-World*, 28 November 2013.

Whereas most Member States have one or a maximum of two representatives in COEST, the Polish Permanent Representation had three representatives for the duration of its Presidency.⁸¹ Consequently, when preparing the work for the main multilateral forum of the Eastern Partnership programme (the biennial summit), the Polish representatives were able to multiply contacts, conduct informal meetings with different Member States and EU officials simultaneously, and shape the direction of conversation in COEST meetings.⁸² This numerical advantage, which was continued at the summit itself, allowed Poland to achieve as comprehensive a joint declaration as possible, as had been its intention.⁸³ While ascription of the joint declaration to the Presidency can be assessed as limited-to-substantial at best, due to the number of other actors involved in the declaration formulation, we can nonetheless clearly see an influential role for the Presidency as a broker through the high level of goal achievement in this particular instance.

Lithuania's attempts to develop the multilateral track of the EaP through brokering were mostly executed with the support of other actors, such as the Commission, the EEAS, and other Member States, which, according to Thorhallsson and Wivel, is a common strategy of 'small state' Presidencies.⁸⁴ Over the six month period, deals were negotiated on multilateral (as well as bilateral) energy diversification, integration and security projects in order to develop the EaP's third multilateral platform: energy security.⁸⁵ Given the context of unstable EU-Ukraine-Russia relations and the divergence of relations between different EU Member States and Russia, such outcomes are impressive and the level of goal achievement is high.⁸⁶ However, with lobbying and negotiation efforts led largely by DG Energy and EEAS officials – albeit supported *primus inter pares* by Lithuania alongside states such as Latvia, Estonia, the UK and Poland – ascription to the Presidency in this instance is limited. The first Eastern Partnership Youth Forum, held in Kaunas in October 2013, is another example of how Lithuania worked alongside other actors to make its mark on the EaP's multilateral track. Sensing a certain

⁸¹ Interviews 6-9, *op.cit.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Interviews 5, 8, 14, and 15, *op.cit.*; "Breathing new life into the Eastern Partnership", *European Council website*, 18 August 2011.

⁸⁴ Baldur Thorhallsson and Anders Wivel, "Small States in the European Union: What Do We Know and What Would We Like To Know?", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 19, no. 4, December 2006, p. 660.

⁸⁵ For a complete list, see, Council of the European Union, "Joint Declaration of the Eastern Partnership Summit", 17130/13, Vilnius, 29 November 2013, p. 10; Interviews 5, 6, and 10, *op.cit.*

⁸⁶ Interviews 5-7 and 10, *op.cit.*; for divergent intra-EU relations towards Russia, see, for example, Mark Leonard and Nicu Popescu, "A Power Audit of EU-Russia Relations", *European Council on Foreign Relations*, Policy Paper, London, November 2007.

reluctance from some EU Member States to take part – perhaps due to the plethora of events that had been organised under the Polish Presidency – Lithuanian organisers of the Forum exerted considerable effort to achieve a high level of participation from across the EU.⁸⁷ Whilst Lithuania's objective of hosting the first Youth Forum was achieved, given that eventually the forum lacked participation from Romania, Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, and Croatia, and only had two or fewer representatives from eight other EU Member States, we must assess goal achievement as limited-to-substantial.⁸⁸ Ascription to the Presidency is substantial rather than high as the majority of the organisers were from Lithuania, but a significant number were from partner countries and, more importantly, from the EU institutions.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, both of these examples demonstrate the ability of the Lithuanian Presidency to use brokering as a means to develop the multilateral track of the EaP.

Whilst not as highly influential as agenda-shaping, brokering as a means of influencing the multilateral track of the EaP proved an effective tool both for Lithuania and, in particular, for Poland, whose brokering influence was tempered only by significant input from other actors into the Declaration of the Second EaP Summit. As with agenda-shaping in the multilateral track, Lithuania relied heavily on building alliances with other actors in order to achieve its objectives through brokering, and did so successfully.

Internal track

Though officially an 'internal track' of the Eastern Partnership does not exist, I consider the way in which actors within the European Union itself perceive the policy to be of significant importance. Such actors include the Commission, the EEAS and, perhaps most crucially, the Member States. Indeed, both academics and practitioners note the mixed reception received by the Eastern Partnership initiative among EU Member States,⁹⁰ while both Šešelgytė and Delcour posit the need for a more even engagement across Member States for the EaP to become a truly EU-wide foreign policy.⁹¹ As such, this section will analyse the extent to which the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies were able, through agenda-shaping and brokering, to influence the attitudes and increase the understanding of actors within the European Union towards the Eastern Partnership, and thus influence the development of the EaP's so-called 'internal track'.

⁸⁷ Interviews 6, 7 and 10, *op.cit.*

⁸⁸ "List of participants", *Eastern Partnership Youth Forum 2013 website*, 30 October 2013.

⁸⁹ "Organisers", *Eastern Partnership Youth Forum 2013 website*, no publication date.

⁹⁰ See, for example, Copsey and Pomorska, *op.cit.*, p. 16; Interviews 1-15, *op.cit.*

⁹¹ Šešelgytė, "The First Leadership Test", *op.cit.*, p. 8; Delcour, *op.cit.*, p. 4.

Agenda-shaping

The Polish Presidency used its agenda-shaping role to influence the internal track of the EaP through prioritising alternative dossiers important to those Member States with less of an inherent natural interest in the Eastern Partnership, such as the 'Arab Spring', the economic crisis, and the situation in Libya.⁹² Consequently, the Polish administration was able to build on improved relations with these Member States by encouraging them to pay more attention to similar issues in the Eastern neighbourhood, such as democracy, human rights, trade, development, drug-related crime, and judicial reform.⁹³ The study on Polish influence in the Eastern Partnership by Vandecasteele *et al.* neglected, therefore, this important way in which the EaP was developed internally through significant attention to other issues. With the level of goal achievement as high, and ascription to the Presidency substantial (rather than high, as other actors were nonetheless proactive in dedicating agenda space to these alternative dossiers)⁹⁴, we yet again see the importance of the pre-requisites for a Presidency to influence a policy priority. Firstly, it is clearly important for a Presidency to have several policy priorities, chosen carefully from across a range of issues, to be able to influence a particular policy of its choosing. By focussing on one policy and neglecting others, a Presidency risks alienating Member States and thus jeopardising potential progress elsewhere. Secondly, prudent planning is absolutely vital if a Presidency is going to be able to pursue its own priorities whilst at the same time adapting its schedule to deal with unforeseen circumstances that may arise. Unfortunately, and as alluded to in the previous section, the Polish Presidency's proactive agenda-setting for the Eastern Partnership may at times have had a detrimental effect on the development of the EaP's internal track. Whilst Poland's enthusiasm for organising a vast number of events, meetings, conferences, and visits was influential in the development of the bi- and multi-lateral tracks of the EaP, there was a feeling among several EEAS officials and the representatives of some Member States that a more targeted approach may have been preferable.⁹⁵ In addition, the Polish Presidency perhaps could have adhered to pre-requisite one – accepting the reduced role for the Presidency in the post-Lisbon era

⁹² "France pays tribute to Polish EU Presidency", *Embassy of France in London website*, 30 December 2011; Interviews 7, 8, and 15, *op.cit.*

⁹³ Adam Balcer, "Poland and the Arab Spring: A New Opening?", *Visegrad Revue*, 6 December 2012; Interviews 7, 8, 10, 14, and 15, *op.cit.*

⁹⁴ Hahn-Fuhr and Lang, *op.cit.*, pp. 73-74.

⁹⁵ Natalia Shapovalova and Tomasz Kapuśniak, "Is Poland still committed to the Eastern neighbourhood?", *FRIDE Policy Brief*, no. 91, August 2011, p. 3; Interviews 5, 6, 9-12, and 14, *op.cit.*

– as it was at times too forthcoming and forceful in its agenda-shaping, to the detriment of its relationships with *certain* EEAS and national officials.⁹⁶

The Lithuanian Foreign Ministry identified increased engagement across the EU's Member States in the EaP as a specific priority of its Presidency.⁹⁷ Like the Polish Presidency, Lithuania assisted with the organisation of the biannual COEST excursions to increase interest and understanding of the EaP among the Member States and the EEAS.⁹⁸ Not only did Lithuania cover some of the common costs and host a reception at the Lithuanian embassy in Chisinau under the Irish Presidency, it also played a key agenda-shaping role in arranging the COEST excursion to Ukraine during its own Presidency.⁹⁹ Though the COEST excursions are formally arranged by EEAS officials, the Lithuanian administration used its excellent relations with the COEST chair and its privileged position as the Presidency to arrange for the Ukrainian government to invite the COEST, to persuade Member States to visit both Istanbul and Kiev (before Istanbul was dropped over domestic issues), and to lengthen certain parts of the trip to suit the programme Lithuania had envisaged.¹⁰⁰ The Presidency's role as an agenda-shaper was clearly highly influential in the development of the EaP's internal track in this regard.

Whereas for the COEST trip we can see high levels both of goal achievement and ascription to the Presidency, for the PSC trip the Lithuanians compromised on their initial objective of going solely to Georgia by visiting Moldova as well, and the agenda was shaped significantly by the PSC chair; thus, both levels are substantial rather than high.¹⁰¹ Notably, while the PSC excursion was acknowledged as "eye opening" and "worthwhile", therefore meeting the Lithuanian objective of increasing understanding of the Eastern Partnership among EU participants, there was a certain unwillingness of some EEAS staff to recognise the important role of the Lithuanian Presidency in this development.¹⁰² Whereas the agenda-shaping role of the Lithuanian administration was welcomed in the COEST, PSC officials were more reluctant to ostensibly cede their agenda-shaping role to the Presidency, thus demonstrating that the importance of visibly accepting a reduced role for the Presidency varies between EU bodies.

⁹⁶ Interviews 6, 8, 9, and 12, *op.cit.*

⁹⁷ Interview 1, *op.cit.*

⁹⁸ "Representatives of the EU Council Working Group on Eastern Europe, South Caucasus and Central Asia visited Georgia", *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia website*, 19 October 2011.

⁹⁹ Interview 6, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁰ Interviews 6 and 9, *op.cit.*

¹⁰¹ "Ștefan Füle and 28 EU ambassadors to pay a visit to Moldova", *Moldova.org*, 12 September 2013; Interviews 6 and 9, *op.cit.*

¹⁰² Interviews 5, 6, and 12-14, *op.cit.*

The EaP's internal track was substantially influenced by both Presidencies' agenda-shaping. The Lithuanian administration was perhaps slightly more successful than their Polish counterparts due to their ability to consistently work in a constructive and cooperative manner with EU officials, most notably those of the EEAS.

Brokering

The internal track of the Eastern Partnership was undoubtedly developed through Polish brokering efforts in Brussels, Warsaw, and other national capitals. Indeed, given that the EaP was conceived by the Polish Foreign Minister, it was a primary concern of the Polish Presidency that it would be viewed as having a hobbyhorse for the Eastern Partnership simply because of the policy's domestic importance.¹⁰³ Consequently, at every level of the decision-making process in Brussels the Polish Presidency was careful to explain how the development of the bilateral and multilateral tracks of the EaP would benefit the Union as a whole or individual Member States where appropriate. Every effort was made to engage in dialogue with all Member States, especially those that carried particular weight or held particular concerns that might have obstructed Poland's Presidential priorities.¹⁰⁴ At a national level, Poland used its considerable political weight and complex network of personal relations to conduct negotiations with individual Member States and also country groupings such as the Benelux Ministers, the Visegrád four, the Baltic three, and the Weimar Triangle group.¹⁰⁵ The arguments evoked depended on the country in question, and ranged from gaining leverage in talks with Russia, to increased energy security; from prospects for economic recovery through increased trade and investment, to altruism.¹⁰⁶ This brokering role of the Presidency was crucial in making the whole European Union aware of the benefits of increased contact and better relations with the Eastern neighbours. We can assess, therefore, that the level of goal achievement was high, and that ascription to the Presidency was substantial, due in part to the active mediating role of the Commission and the EEAS.¹⁰⁷

Lithuania, like Poland before it, fully mobilised its diplomatic capacity during its Presidency to play a key mediating role with other EU Member States. According to the Lithuanian Ambassador to the Eastern Partnership, "the main thing was to show that the Eastern Partnership could be relevant for everyone. Maybe not the whole project but

¹⁰³ Hahn-Fuhr and Lang, *op.cit.*, p. 69; Interviews 8 and 15, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁴ Interviews 8 and 15, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁵ Interview 8, *op.cit.*; "The Visegrad Group and Germany Foreign Ministers' Statement on the Eastern Partnership", *Visegrad group*, 3 March 2011.

¹⁰⁶ Hahn-Fuhr and Lang, *op.cit.*, p. 69; Interviews 8 and 15, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁷ Interviews 8-12, 14, and 15, *op.cit.*

certain aspects would be more interesting than others.”¹⁰⁸ Whilst the Vilnius Summit may not have produced the signing of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, the Summit was exceptionally well attended, which had been the objective of the Lithuanian administration. Not only were high levels of participation and representation across the EU important for the message being sent to Eastern partners, they were also important for the longevity of the Eastern Partnership.¹⁰⁹ With only Ireland, Finland, and Portugal represented at a lower level than Head of State or Government, we must assess the level of goal achievement to be substantial-to-high, with the level of ascription of this achievement to the Presidency as substantial, given the input of other actors such as Commission, EEAS and other Member State officials to the eventual outcome.¹¹⁰

Both Presidencies substantially influenced the development of the EaP’s internal track through brokering. Interestingly, Lithuania appears to have learned from Poland’s successful mobilisation of its diplomatic network to secure support and understanding for its objectives and initiatives in the EaP programme.

Comparison and implications

Table 2 summarises the findings for all three tracks, taking into account each individually illustrated outcome or development.

Table 2: The influence of the Polish and Lithuanian rotating Council Presidencies in the Eastern Partnership

Track	Poland		Lithuania	
	<i>Agenda-shaping</i>	<i>Brokering</i>	<i>Agenda-shaping</i>	<i>Brokering</i>
Bilateral	Substantial (+)	Substantial (-)	Substantial (+)	Substantial (-)
Multilateral	High	High	Substantial (+)	Substantial
Internal	Substantial (-)	Substantial (+)	Substantial (+)	Substantial (+)

From this analysis we can come to the following conclusions: (1) that given the impact of agenda-shaping and brokering as residual, informal roles available to the post-Lisbon rotating Council Presidency, a lack of formal roles does not equate to a lack of influence; (2) the potential to use these residual roles requires: (a) an acceptance on

¹⁰⁸ Interview 1, *op.cit.*

¹⁰⁹ “Vaidotas Verba: Eastern Partnership is not a geopolitical tool”, *Mediamax*, 18 July 2013; Interviews 1, 5-7 and 9, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁰ Georgi Gotev, “Ukraine, EU dig in heels as Vilnius summit opens”, *EurActiv*, 29 November 2013.

behalf of the Presidency that its role is primarily to support the new post-Lisbon actors in external action; (b) a careful choice of policy priority; and (c) thorough preparation for the Presidency; and (3) having sufficiently met these pre-requisites, the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies were able to influence the development of the EaP through agenda-shaping and brokering.

Despite these general conclusions, Table 2 in fact reveals few clearly observable patterns as to where or how a Presidency can have greater influence, despite demonstrating a clear substantial-to-high influence of both Presidencies overall. Neither agenda-shaping nor brokering was a more influential mechanism than the other, and indeed they were often used in tandem to achieve results, such as during Lithuania's attempts to influence the outcomes of the COEST and PSC excursions during its Presidency. We also cannot differentiate between the bilateral and internal tracks; both were similarly influenced by the Presidencies. It is perhaps surprising that the two Presidencies enjoyed such influence in the internal track as fundamentally altering the perception of a fellow Member State or EU official *vis-à-vis* a specific policy in the space of six-months is presumably difficult. A substantial level of influence in the internal track tended to come as a result of high levels of goal achievement and lower levels of ascription to the Presidency. We must therefore assert that the Presidency can influence the development of the EaP's internal track as successfully as it can the other two tracks if it engages with other actors in a coordinated and cooperative approach. That the multilateral track of the EaP was the most influenced by the two Presidencies, especially that of Poland, can perhaps be explained by the Presidency's residual chairing responsibilities of sectoral issues, such as those included in the EaP's thematic platforms or flagship initiatives, rather than in CFSP issues.

The Polish Presidency was found to be highly influential on two occasions, through agenda-shaping and brokering in the multilateral track, compared to Lithuania's none. However, it would appear that Lithuania received high levels of goal achievement in nine out of the thirteen individual outcomes illustrated. In contrast, all but three outcomes had a substantial or lower level of ascription to the Presidency. This does not necessarily mean, however, that the approach of the Polish Presidency is more advisable than that of Lithuania. On the contrary, lower levels of ascription to the Presidency, whilst in theory reducing its influence, may be more beneficial to the Presidency in the short- and long-term. In the first section of the paper, we noted that limited and substantial levels of ascription are the result of other actors playing an increasing role, at the expense of the role of the Presidency, in developing an

outcome.¹¹¹ Subsequently, in the second part we noted the importance of the Member State holding the Presidency choosing a policy priority that has support from the EU institutions and among the Member States. As such, we can assess that Lithuania successfully adopted a cooperative and collaborative approach with other actors so as not to appear forceful or domineering.¹¹² The Lithuanian Presidency, in contrast at times to their Polish counterparts, was considered to have worked very well with the EU institutions, especially the EEAS, and was admired among Member State officials for the way in which they actively consulted and engaged with them in achieving common objectives.¹¹³ An explanation for Lithuania's tendency to cooperate and collaborate with others more so than Poland may be offered by the aforementioned debate surrounding 'small states' in the EU and their accompanying mentality.¹¹⁴ In the short-term, Lithuania's approach to its Presidency is said to have created a positive attitude from other actors towards their Presidential priorities, and in the long-term many predict that Lithuania will enjoy favourable relations with the EEAS and future Council Presidencies.¹¹⁵ Thus, we can say that while EU Member States have the potential to highly influence the development of a foreign policy priority during their Presidency, a more advisable approach may be to forgo high levels of ascription to the Presidency and instead achieve preferred outcomes through engaging with other actors.

Recommendations and conclusion

This paper has, through examining the influence of agenda-shaping and brokering on the development of the Eastern Partnership under the Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies, looked at whether the changes to the role of the rotating Presidency have impacted its ability to influence EU foreign policy. A Member State looking to pursue a foreign policy priority during its six months must, to this end, firstly accept the reduced role of the rotating Council Presidency in the post-Lisbon era so as to foster trust and enhance cooperation with the EU institutions, especially the EEAS. Secondly, the Member State holding the Presidency must target a range of policy priorities so as not to alienate other Member States, must ensure that its specific foreign policy priority enjoys the support of the EU institutions and a number of other Member States, and must present the foreign policy priority in such a way as to appear beneficial to the Union as a whole. Finally, thorough preparation enables a Member State to cope efficiently and

¹¹¹ Vandecasteele, Bossuyt and Orbie, *op.cit.*, p. 7.

¹¹² Interviews 1, 5-7, and 9-13, *op.cit.*

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ See, above all, Bunse, *op.cit.*

¹¹⁵ Interviews 1, 5, 6, and 9-13, *op.cit.*

effectively with additional, unforeseen challenges that could otherwise drastically hinder the Presidency's ability to pursue its own pre-determined priorities. Having met these three criteria, both the Polish and Lithuanian Presidencies were able to significantly influence the bilateral, multilateral and internal tracks of the EaP through agenda-shaping and brokering. A lack of formal roles does not, therefore, equate directly to a lack of influence for the Presidency, while a collaborative approach to pursuing common objectives is more advisable than an independent one.

Though the above analysis is interesting from an academic viewpoint, it should also be of interest to national and European officials as they seek to make the most of the post-Lisbon system. Based on the paper's findings, four recommendations as to how the post-Lisbon rotating Presidencies can best serve both Brussels and Member State governments will be detailed below. Firstly, changes to the role of the Presidency were made with the intention of bringing stability and continuity to EU foreign relations.¹¹⁶ As such, the Member States should recognise the added value of 'uploading' a domestic foreign policy priority to the European level.¹¹⁷ As noted by one EEAS official, one of the primary reasons for Poland and Sweden initiating the EaP at the European level was because politically a policy becomes much more credible and heavyweight if there are twenty-eight countries that stand behind it.¹¹⁸ Similarly, the administrative capacity of the EEAS allows the EaP to develop continuously at this higher European level, with certain rotating Presidencies bringing additional resources to build on the existing work carried out by the EEAS on a day-to-day basis.¹¹⁹ The long-term approach of the EEAS can therefore be complemented by the rotating Presidency's short-term strategy.¹²⁰

Given that the Presidency rotates on a six-monthly basis, each new Presidency brings with it energy and enthusiasm, a desire to achieve visible outcomes, and fresh impetus to on-going processes.¹²¹ The EEAS should not fear the post-Lisbon rotating Presidencies; they can provide energy, drive, enthusiasm, and initiatives for six months at a time,

¹¹⁶ See, above all, Jonas Paul, "EU Foreign Policy After Lisbon: Will the New High Representative and the External Action Service Make a Difference?", *Centre for Applied Policy Research, Policy Analysis*, no. 2, June 2008; Olaf Wientzek, "The European External Action Service: A Difficult Start of an Innovative Institution", *KAS International Reports*, September 2013, pp. 79-100; Rosa Balfour, Alyson Bailes and Megan Kenna, "The European External Action Service at work: How to improve EU foreign policy", *European Policy Centre, Issue Paper no. 67*, January 2012, Brussels, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ Rosa Balfour and Kristi Raik, "Equipping the European Union for the 21st century", *FIIA Report*, no. 36, Helsinki, 2013, p. 34.

¹¹⁸ Interview 14, *op.cit.*; Balfour and Raik, *op.cit.*, p. 34.

¹¹⁹ Interviews 6, 8 and 14, *op.cit.*

¹²⁰ Conversation with Mr. David O'Sullivan, *op.cit.*; Interviews 5-15, *op.cit.*

¹²¹ Markella Dimitrakopoulou, "The Changing Role of the Rotating EU Presidency", *Egmont Royal Institute for International Relations, Roundtable Report*, October 2012, p. 5; Conversation with Mr. David O'Sullivan, *op.cit.*; Interviews 12 and 14, *op.cit.*

which is something that the EEAS is understandably not able to do every day. The rotating Presidencies, through their particular priorities, will ensure that the EEAS maintains a high level of ambition in its dossiers.¹²² Indeed, the post-Lisbon EEAS-rotating Presidency relationship is one that allows for dossiers to be constantly maintained and gradually developed by the EEAS, thus ensuring continuity, with periodic increases in the speed or depth of the dossier when a Member State prioritises the issue for six months. Like an athletics relay, which requires a number of athletes to take the baton from start to finish, rotating Presidencies with a will to do so can carry the baton of the Eastern Partnership in a faster, more dynamic way that will benefit the overall outcome.¹²³ Thus, the EEAS should acknowledge that a post-Lisbon rotating Presidency brings an energy that can help rather than hinder the development of a policy.

Whilst the size of the EEAS has grown since being launched in December 2010, it remains the case that Member States possess a long history of relations with third countries that the EEAS, as of yet, does not.¹²⁴ Member States' networks can be useful for the EEAS. The personal relations of the Polish President and Foreign Minister with their Ukrainian counterparts helped to maintain EU-Ukraine relations during the furore surrounding the arrest of Tymoshenko, whilst the relationship of mutual understanding between Lithuania and Georgia helped to find a solution to the wording in the preamble of its Association Agreement. Taking into account the diverse histories of EU Member States, where complex networks of relations stretch to Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Australia, and the Americas, and the credibility of Member States to speak on certain policy issues, there is a wealth of human knowledge and contact upon which the EEAS would do well to tap in to. In addition, the propensity of Member States to dedicate substantial financial resources to their Presidency should be a relief to the EEAS, which itself operates on a strict budget.¹²⁵ Lithuania earmarked €62 million for its Presidency and Poland €100 million, which are significant sums.¹²⁶ This budget, as was the case for both Presidencies, can have significant benefits for the EEAS and for the policy priority that the Presidency wishes to promote. The EEAS should embrace the willingness of the rotating Presidencies to dedicate funds to activities, meetings or excursions that enhance the EU's policies,

¹²² Interviews 8 and 14, *op.cit.*

¹²³ Interview 4, *op.cit.*

¹²⁴ Delcour, *op.cit.*, p. 11; Interviews 4, 6, 8, 12, 14, and 15, *op.cit.*

¹²⁵ Interviews 9-14, *op.cit.*

¹²⁶ "EU Presidency Budget", *Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2013 website*, 20 June 2013; Karolina Pomorska and Sophie Vanhoonacker, "Poland in the Driving Seat: A Mature Presidency in Turbulent Times", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, vol. 44, no. 5, 2006, p. 76.

without feeling intimidated by their leadership. Unfortunately, despite the aforementioned benefits of a strong relationship between the EEAS and the Member State holding the rotating Presidency, it would appear that at times the relationship still struggles from feelings of mutual suspicion.¹²⁷ Within the EEAS, the rotating Presidency is seen as a threat to their newly acquired areas of competence, whereas the Member States feel a mixture of resentment over the loss of pre-Lisbon, formal Presidency roles, distrust over the EEAS' links to the Commission, and the threat of 'competence creep'.¹²⁸ To remove mutual suspicion, the rotating Presidency and the EEAS must create a history of increased cooperation and collaboration. This can be achieved over time through increased dialogue, regular coordination meetings, working towards common objectives, and the secondment of national civil servants to Brussels.¹²⁹ Ultimately however, neither the rotating Presidency nor the EEAS "can hope to book meaningful successes without close cooperation with the other".¹³⁰ A good working relationship is therefore vital.

In conclusion, the Treaty of Lisbon may have "replaced the role of the rotating Presidency with a new range of foreign policy actors"; however, one must go beyond a mere superficial reading of the treaties if we are to understand the real roles of the rotating Presidency in the post-Lisbon era.¹³¹ The Polish and Lithuanian Council Presidencies are prime examples in this respect; both used agenda-shaping and brokering to influence the development of the Eastern Partnership during their respective six-months at the helm. Thus, one can say that they defied the logic of the Treaty; the rotating Council Presidency retains an important role in EU external affairs post-Lisbon. To what extent this level of influence can be replicated by other Presidencies in other foreign policy priorities remains to be seen and will, I hope, provide the basis for further research.

¹²⁷ Interviews 5-15, *op.cit.*

¹²⁸ Charles Grant, "The European External Action Service", *Centre for European Reform*, London, March 2013, p. 2; Interviews 8, 9, 12, 14, and 15, *op.cit.*

¹²⁹ Interviews 6, 8 and 12, *op.cit.*

¹³⁰ EPC, Egmont & CEPS, *op.cit.*, p. 22.

¹³¹ Thomas Ramopoulos and Jed Odermatt, "EU Diplomacy: Measuring Success in Light of the Post-Lisbon Institutional Framework", *Global Power Europe*, vol. 1, 2013, p. 24.

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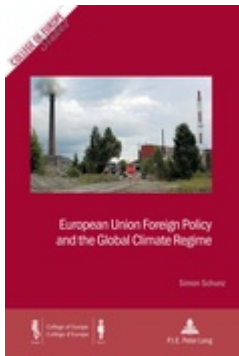
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