

Does Self-Perception Affect EU Council Presidency Performance? :

Studies of the German 2007 and French 2008 EU Council
Presidencies.

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Abstract

Studies of the European integration reveal that EU Council Presidency is an institution, whose vision of Europe defines and shapes ongoing and future integration processes. In times of deadlocks, it is the Presidency that is expected to exhibit leadership and guide the integration process towards new goals (Elgström 2003: 1). In the thesis we shall try to find out whether there are variations in guidance, understood as performance and whether performance can be explained by cognitive-normative factors, such as attitude, roles, expectations, intention or reputation.

Key words: European Union Council Presidency, self-perception, performance, Germany, France

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1 Introduction and Layout

The volume of events that have taken place during the decades of the European integration make some researchers attribute the status of the Council presidency as “grown by default than by design”(Kirchner 1992:71). Existing research on the Presidency of the European Union Council of Ministers (hereafter referred to as the EU Council Presidency or the Presidency) mainly focuses on discussing the causality of performance of a presidency by legitimately attributing the output to the initially embraced image or role and buttressed by the quality of execution of functions a presidency carries out during its six-month term, – functions, intrinsic to any presidency. Studies on Council presidencies (Renshaw: 2006, Kirchner: 1992, Wallace: 2005, Tallberg: 2001, Metcalfe: 1998, etc.), however, indicate that presidency’s orientation towards the European integration in general and presidency’s government or elite perception or attitude towards integration in particular may play a role in the ultimate performance of the presidency. Perception “demarcation” has been widely noted in the 1980s and 1990s literature on the European integration, where, as examples mentioned are stark perception-and-attitude-based biases in the United Kingdom (UK) or Denmark and approach to the European integration. Although the 80s extravagance of the British “indecision, vacillation and anti-Europeanism”¹ changed with the pro-European labour government in 1997, the precedent had been established: perceptions and attitudes may influence the process and outcomes of the presidency. Our norms, goals, stereotypes, expectancies, culture, prior knowledge, affect, needs and other characteristics can all direct *what we think we see* (Moskowitz 2005: 37). Self-perception related, the hypothesis may be translated into a supposition that norms, expectancies and prior knowledge, affects and needs can direct *what we think we are*. Attitudinal and contextual aspects of perception with regard to the European Union (EU) presidency performance therefore may rest on an assumption that norms, goals, expectations, identity, etc. affect how presidencies think they perform. Self-images and roles embraced by the Presidency in fulfilling specific tasks testify to the validity of such hypotheses. The raw material of presidency perceptions includes behaviour: presidencies perform actions directed toward the European citizens (ibid.). As such, categorizations and inference on presidency performance can be drawn from the type of behaviour that a presidency emits as viewed by the Presidency itself or the public sphere embraced into the “others” observer cluster. Attributions and inferences drawn from both the presidency and the “others” will help verify the existing roles, described in the academic literature. Performance, in its turn, is looked upon as a dependent variable,- dependent on the adopted roles, norms and expectations - the subject we elaborate on later in the thesis. The cases of the German 2007 and French 2008 presidencies are primarily linked to the images and identities of the countries holding the presidencies –Germany and France.

¹ T.Blair speech extract in I. Manners “The British Presidency of 1998. New Labour, new tone? in Elgström (ed.) pp.87-103, 2003, Routledge

1.1 Introduction into the Study

The study is not focused on the functions of the presidency per se, but rather on how the tasks fulfilled by the Presidency are perceived to have helped or restrained presidency performance.

The starting point, however, is the definition of major concepts used in the thesis: performance and perception. The thesis further aims to employ constructivism and the concept of “logic of appropriateness” as a theoretical skeleton for making informed inferences on behaviour and expectations. I will use historical institutionalism to explain attitudinal variations towards the European integration based on history-dependent values and ideas. The empirical part will include content analysis of the discourse in the German and French media, official presidency documentation and interviews to test the role categorization to be presented earlier in the thesis.

1.1.1 Purpose of the Study

The broader purpose of the thesis is to study German 2007 and French 2008 EU Presidencies.

The narrower purpose is to study the presidencies as decisive bodies in the EU architecture, their self-perceptions shaped by norms, identities, goals and expectations and ultimately behaviours as affected by both internal and external factors and investigate whether these affect Presidency performance. The thesis therefore seeks to slightly drift from the traditional approaches to the EU presidency research and ask a general question *whether there is anything outside the traditional functions-based profile of the presidency that affects its performance?* I will look at the presidency self-perception and other’s perception as a causal link to the presidency performance without disregarding member state characteristics, context and external events (see Elgström 2002:8).

1.1.2 Research focus and research questions

The existing literature on EU Council presidencies describes a relatively traditional profile of the presidency comprising a number of established functions of administrator, coordinator, broker and a representative. In view of these tasks behaviour and performance may be shaped by self-perception. As such, the thesis aims to ask:

1. What is performance and does performance involve perception causality?

The main aim of this part of the thesis is, with the use of historical institutionalism and constructivism to try to establish whether norms, identities, expectations and roles of the country-in-office affect the

performance of the Presidency; to reveal whether perception factors like roles, attitudes, expectations can be causally linked to presidency performance. In answering this question we shall also attempt to find out whether there is a difference between government performance and Presidency performance.

2. Do expectations cause Presidency roles?

To look at the 'others' perspective on EU presidency I aim to find out what was expected of the German and French presidencies by their citizens and institutions affected by or involved in presidency outcomes. I will largely rely on the data taken from Eurobarometer, but will also consult Presidencies' Working Programmes for higher reliability. I will divide the chapter into sub-chapters to look at Presidency self-image and roles.

3. Is what you see what you get?

This part seeks to address performance of the German 2007 and French 2008 Presidencies and the ideas they employed when formulated the agenda or conducted negotiations; and tries to find out whether performance exercised is related to these ideas

4. What is the discourse on the performance of the German and French presidencies and do inferences explain the causality "self-perception determines performance"?

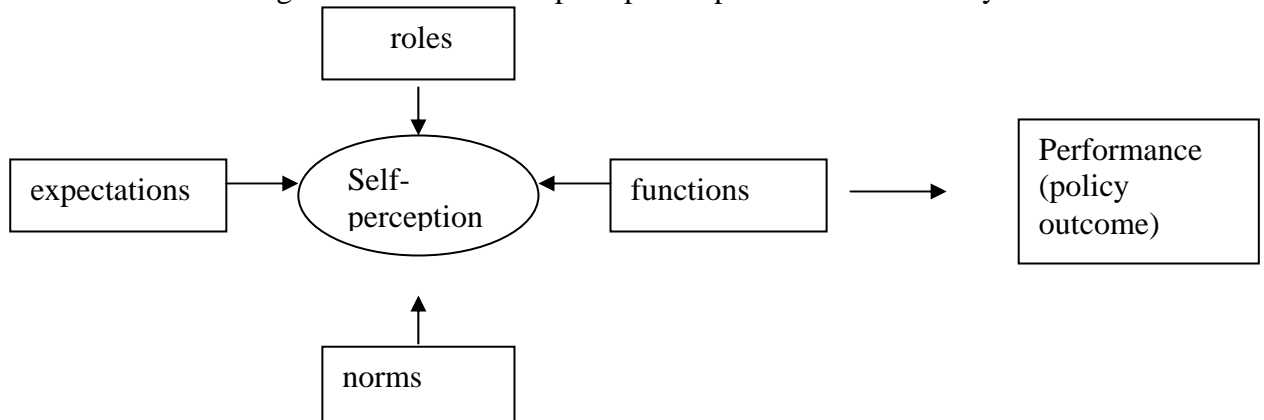
This will be the empirical part of the thesis that will rest on conducting the analysis of content taken from the German and French media, Council presidency-published resources, interviews with German and French government officials (high-rank diplomats) and non-governmental organizations. The offered framework is based on Kimberly Neuendorf's Flowchart for the Process of Content Analysis Research.

1.1.3 Structure of the presentation

The structure and presentation of the thesis follows the scheme and seeks to introduce the topic, inquire into the purpose of the thesis, reveal the research questions under study, make a revision of the relevant literature, undertake empirical investigation, make a general analysis of the findings and make a conclusion. Based on the theoretically-informed definitions of self-perception and performance given further, we shall follow a scheme (see below) that introduces self-perception and performance as actors to be able to describe and analyse their behaviour as well as establish a causal link between self-perception and performance.

The scheme of the presentation will look as follows:

Scheme 1. Integrated model for self-perception –performance causality



1.2. Theory and Definitions

Theoretical discourse on the EU Council Presidency extends to academic investigation of nearly all aspects of Presidency operations (functions): brokering, decision-making, agenda-setting, bargaining, etc. These tasks are emblematic of the multi-faceted nature of the Council Presidency and its substantive contribution to the various theoretical discourses. Functions of the presidency allow us to employ two main schools of thought, which mainly inform us of the attitudinal variations in the French and German presidency behaviours. These are: historical institutionalism and constructivism.

1.2.1. Self-perception

In assessing self-perception impact on a country’s Presidency performance, it is important to establish what we mean by “self” and “perception”, i.e. what is perception and who or what is the referent subject of perception. Behaviourists approach perception through a template of “exact sciences” and claim that “both the physicist and the chemist are interested in knowing how a system, which they are investigating will react when exposed to a certain set of conditions; they also ask how the reaction of the system will change with a variation of those conditions (see Köhler in Moskowitz 2005: 13). It would therefore be plausible to look at perception as behaviour. As such, in the process of “pursuit for understanding social environment through attributions” defining the subject of “perception”, it is crucial to ask *to what cause the performance observed can be attributed?* In the thesis we shall maintain that the cause for EU Presidency is, among others, its own attitude, self-image, adopted role, which are accumulated into the notion of self-perception. Following from this and for the purpose of the thesis we shall define Presidency perception as *the way of understanding social environment based and conditional upon reactions to a variety of stimuli (economic, political factors, unforeseen events) emitted*

through individually adopted and exercised norms, expectations, roles, functions. Helen Wallace (1985) maintains that the framework of the Presidency's general attitude to the EC and the particular interests that concern them will influence their behaviour and margin of manoeuvre.²

Now, when the definition of "perception" is given, it is important to establish who or what is the referent subject of perception – the self. Referring to J. Sutherland (2007), self-perception should be regarded as an actor³ as it cannot be treated as a cause being a concept. Following from here, self-perception should be regarded as behaviour that an actor emits to influence another behaviour (Sutherland: 2007). Considering the burden of EU Presidency is normally carried by the government of the country hosting the presidency, it would be logical to assume that the referent subject of perception is government. Manners (in Elgström 2003) refers to the performance of the "new idealistic government", that facilitated the work of the British EU Presidency in the first half of 1998. Hellen Wallace in her study of the Council Presidency (1985) refers to "government" as a source of perception. Wallace further maintains that "it is unrealistic to expect governments to act out of character for six months Presidency period"⁴. In measuring self-perception in Council Presidency I will partly rely on Bandura's (1977) self-efficacy model⁵(see Henck and Melnick 1995), which maintains that performance could be taken into account as a factor when estimating the capabilities of the Presidency.

1.2.2. Performance

Following the logic above (Thelen, Steinmo: 1992; Cini, Bourne: 2006; Moskowitz 2005 etc.) it can be established that government, as a law, rule and norm enforcing authority can be seen as the primary agent of performance, whereas the Presidency, as a "rule following satisfier" can be regarded as the secondary agent of performance. The tiers introduced, however, serve little purpose as both Government and Presidency could be seen as institutions that comprise formal rules, compliance procedures and customary practices(see Hall in Thelen 1992: 96) where validity, reliability and sensitivity⁶ of performance is ensured by policy outcomes. Following from here, government performance serves as a dependent variable (Stålfors 2008: 21). Based on the variables introduced, performance, should be

² See H.Wallace, the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, pp. 272-3

³ According to Sutherland (2007: p.112-127), although the self-concept construes the subject of a person's actions, a concept cannot be an actor

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <http://faculty.rcoe.appstate.edu/koppenhaverd/hardinpark/RSPS.pdf>

⁶ See in Debora Boehm-Davis, Robert W. Holt "The Science of Human Performance: Methods and Metrics", Advances in Human Performance and Cognitive Engineering Research, Volume 5 157-193, Published by Elsevier, 2004.

treated as a *policy outcome*. Academic literature on performance suggests that ‘performance’ is something that should be measured and assessed (ibid.). Therefore indicators and criteria of performance should be introduced. Performance, taken broadly from a cognitive perspective, includes *past successes, amount of effort necessary, patterns of progress and the belief in the effectiveness*.⁷ Confirmed further in the empirical part of the thesis, evaluation of performance should be done on an *a priori* standard, such as **social purpose** (Steinmo: 1992). To establish the purpose, I will use the articles of the Treaty of Lisbon Amending the Treaty on European Union and Treaty Establishing the European Community⁸, which state:

1. The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.
2. The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.
3. The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment

The article points reveal important themes that can serve as indicators of performance. These will be the outcome reached in domains of: the a) EU Constitution, and b) macroeconomic management. The latter is defined by Stålfors as comprising “economic growth, inflation, unemployment and budget deficit (Stålfors 2008: 25) and serve as signifiers for the construction of Presidency self-images, roles and self-perception. Based on the character concepts and for the purpose of the thesis, we shall utilise concepts that categorise performance into **static** and **dynamic**⁹. Using the logic of appropriateness, Presidency performance could be regarded as dynamic based on an assumption that Presidency acts with self-restraint, vision for the future of Europe and through acts that are governed by clear prescriptions and adequate resources (March and Olsen, 04/09). Static performance shall relate to the absence of self-restraint, vision and a situation where an actor is not able or willing to use rules ‘as a consequence to develop a community based on common identity and a sense of belonging’ (March and Olsen, p.11).

⁷ <http://faculty.rcoe.appstate.edu/koppenhaverd/hardinpark/RSPS.pdf>

⁸ Points 1,2 and 3 of article II; <http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/cg00014.en07.pdf>

⁹ http://www.k-state.edu/english/baker/english320/cc-static_vs_dynamic_characterization.htm

1.2.3. Constructivism vs. Historical Institutionalism in Research Overview

Defined by Hall (1996) as a theory focusing on the effects of institutions over time and the ways in which a given set of institutions, once established, can influence or constrain the behaviour of the actors, who establish them (Hall, Taylor: 1996, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms" *Political Studies* 49/5, 936-57) historical institutionalism argues that institutional choices taken in the past persist, thereby shaping and constraining actors later in time (A.Wiener, T.Diez 2004: 139). Theoretical contribution of historical institutionalism to the EU presidency study will be confined to studying whether attitudinal, perception and normative patterns towards the European integration persisted for the countries holding the presidencies. Following Thelen and Steinmo (1992:8) a key premise for historical institutionalism approach to Presidency performance is the rational choice causality, which allows us to see present institutions not so much as "all-knowing rational maximisers" but more a rule following "satisfiers"(ibid.). Thelen and Steinmo maintain that most of us, most of the time, follow societally defined rules, even when so doing may not be directly in our self-interest (Steinmo: 1992). Historical institutionalist argument comes into play when one perceives the EU Council presidency as a body built on historically-established patterned relations that lie at the core of an institutional approach (in Thelen, Steinmo 1992: 13). The institutionalists claim that institutions structure political interaction and in this way affect political outcomes (Hall 1996 in Thelen et.al. 1992). The mediating function of the Presidency, however, limits this argument insofar as mediation is seen as an extension of negotiation, which is built on impartiality and neutrality, latter defined by Elgström (2003: 42) as a "sense of total disinterest in the outcome". Institutionalists, however, justify this by claiming that institutions are an independent variable and explain political outcomes in periods of stability, but in break-down they become a dependant variable, whose shape is determined by the political conflicts. The political turbulences and institutional turmoils therefore become the moments when the "logic of the argument is reversed from "institutions shape politics" to "politics shape institutions" (Thelen, Steinmo 1992: 14).

As constructivism often assumes strong institutional and cultural effects ('socialisation' or 'Europeanization') at the systemic level, it would generally expect that member states have largely homogeneous preferences towards the performance indicators and thus there would be little conflict over the economic policies or Constitution issues (see M.Cini, A. Bourne 2006: 107). In explaining EU presidency self-perception, we shall refer to the constructivist concept of "logic of appropriateness", which explains Presidency behaviour through rules, norms, expectations comprising both cognitive and normative components (March and Olsen, 1995: 30-31). Presidency choices and actions are conditioned by formal and informal

constraints such as norms, decision rules, institutional mandate (Elgström 2003: 196). Presidency behaviour is therefore dependent on and constrained by what Habermas (1992: 432 in Fossum et.al 2009) calls “the streams of communicating information and points of view” – a public sphere, which, according to the logic of appropriateness, extrapolates the images and determines potential behaviours and roles of the Council Presidency through *perceived anticipated value* to be obtained by the Presidency in individual policy sectors. Performance emerges here as a dependent variable and the selection of roles and the construction of the Presidency’s self-image may depend on expectations entrusted to the Presidency in specific policy areas as well as on certain historical experiences. The Gaullist “France grandeur”(France prominence) and “puissance Europe” (Power Europe) as well as highly pro-integration public opinion influenced the way France and the French presidency perceived itself and its role in the European integration.

Expectations may also serve as a stimulus for shaping national approaches to policy and therefore setting Presidency priorities and agenda in line with national and broader European expectations.

2 Literature Review

Previous research on the subject has been rather broad. In this part we shall try to cover the main academic discourse that unfolded around the issue of the EU Council Presidency; we shall try to understand the phenomenology of the topic through acquainting ourselves with some of the existing research on the subject matter.

2.1 Academic Discourse on the EU Council Presidency

It has been noted by a number of researchers (Mayhew, Quaglia: 2007) that academic accounts on the EU Council Presidency are either theoretically descriptive or cases of individual presidencies. The general discourse on EU Council Presidency is, nevertheless, rather extensive. Seen as either an amplifier or a silencer, the Council presidency has been portrayed as either prone to promote national concerns or inhibit them (Elgström et.al, 2004). Tallberg, through the thorough analysis of various presidency functions and evaluations of the Germany's chairing of the Agenda 2000 and France's chairing of the IGC 2000, makes it explicit that EU Presidency possesses a set of informational and procedural resources that can help unlock incompatible negotiating positions and secure efficient agreements, while at the same time allowing the government in office to shape distributional outcomes. Kirchner (1992) equally looks at the Council presidency through the functions lenses and treats the SEA as a "platform through which the Presidency could achieve measurable and meaningful results". Academic discourse on Council Presidency equally involves a thorough description of Presidency functions, enumeration of which is important for the thesis to be able to assess the capacity that a Presidency has to influence its outcome and evaluate institutional and normative causality to performance.

The stocktaking of the German Council Presidency has been provided by Tallberg and drawn on the leadership in the Agenda 2000 reform package¹⁰. Tallberg categorizes the experience and behaviour of the German Presidency as winning, able to “weld together a compromise package, which was sufficiently appealing to all parties...”. Available literature on the German 2007 Presidency is scarce yet information is available in the form of on-line articles. In the analysis of the French Presidency, Fabio Liberti, an IRIS researcher focuses his attention on the personality of Nicolas Sarkozy attributing to him the *Gaullist* vision of Europe, which, in Sarkozy’s specific case contained three different circles; the first would constitute a common security structure, including Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and perhaps Israel; the second circle would contain the current 27 members more Balkans states within a common market, with common institutions and where intergovernmental cooperation would dominate; the third circle would be the nucleus, and would incorporate more or less the current Eurozone plus the UK. This zone would be characterised by heightened coordination in the commercial and political economy and especially in a common defence system complementary to that of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

¹⁰ The *Agenda 2000* reform package targeted agricultural policy, regional policy, and the EU’s financial framework for the period 2000–06. The driving concern behind this reform initiative was the financial implications of admitting 10–12 new states. The Commission’s (1997) package of proposals, which effectively required the support of all governments, suggested: a) reducing price support for agricultural products and modifying direct income payments to farmers; b) concentrating the resources of the EU’s regional funds to the areas of greatest need; and c) , capping the annual budget at 1.27% GNP.

3 Functions and Norms of the EU Council Presidency

3.1 EU Presidency Functions

EU Presidency is carried out on several levels for six months: on the level of the European Council, the Council of Ministers, COREPER, Working Groups and embassies in third countries.(see Kirchner 1992, pp.71-90 for more information). The tasks, traditionally performed by the presidency and extensively described by a number of academicians (Wallace 1985; Heyes-Renshaw 1996, 2005; Kirchner 1992; Tallberg 2001; Elgström 2003, etc.) include those of administration and co-ordination¹¹, setting priorities, mediation and representation. Functions and norms are interrelated: norms of impartiality or efficiency (Elgström 2003) exist within and are determined by the Presidency functions. The norm of impartiality is usually attributed to the function of mediation while the norm of effectiveness is intrinsic to practically all the functions. It is therefore feasible to look at the functions and norms in one set.

3.1.1 Administrative and Co-ordination function

While Kirchner (1992: 79-81) divides administrative and coordination function, Elgström (2003: 4-7) merges these two in one explaining it by a big load of both administrative and coordinating responsibilities, such as compiling and distributing documents, drawing up agendas, convening all meetings and at the same time making the necessary preparations with their counterparts in Brussels with the aim to increase probability that the incoming Presidency will receive the documents and proposals from the Commission that are needed to obtain results during its stint in office in the dossiers that it has prioritized. (Elgström: 2003:5).

¹¹ Literature on Council Presidency tend to merge the administrative and co-ordination functions into one – administrative function.

3.1.2 Agenda-setting

The task of preparing and presenting Presidency priorities is one of the central. Kirchner's description of the function as initiative function resonates with the traditional Commission function, yet in practice, Kirchner states, there is a great deal of collaboration between the Presidency and the Commission on setting the six-months priorities. Elgström, however, maintains the function has become even more pronounced with the Presidency's responsibility for the agenda of the European Council meetings while the image of the Commission unable to provide leadership gives the Presidency the operational leeway.

Tallberg (2001) introduces variations of the Presidency's agenda shaping and subdivided into three types of agenda control: agenda setting (introduction of new issues), agenda structuring (emphasis adjustment on issues) and agenda exclusion (active barring of issues from the policy agenda).

3.1.3 Mediation

Mediation, consensus-building and brokering comprise the mediating function of the Presidency where the "chair is searching for compromises that are acceptable to all or at least to a majority of parties" (Elgström 2003:6). Metcalfe (1998) maintains that Presidency's ability to mediate "competing interests" is "sustained by adherence to the principle of *impartiality*, with respect to the interests of the other member governments and the principle of *disinterest* with respect to the interests affecting the Presidency's (member states') own interest." With the post-enlargement increase in the number of member states the demand for Presidency mediating efforts and the "honest broker" role has augmented. Partiality, however, may also be exhibited to achieve more efficiency. The absence of critique among member states in negotiations subject to qualified majority voting over the directive for the internal market in natural gas proposed by Luxembourg reflect that the "overriding concern of delegates is not to insist on impartial mediation, but to achieve efficient and favourable outcomes, which have the desired impact." (see Underdal 1994 in Metcalfe 1998)

3.1.4 Representative Function

The Presidency equally carries out the task of representing Council in international negotiations and in its relations with other EU institutions (Elgström, 2003 pp.4-7). With regard to cooperation procedure, it must communicate to the EP the 'common position' taken by the Council

(Kirchner 1992) and in external matters, for example, Presidency acted and signed on behalf of the member states in the proceedings of the 1975 Helsinki Act sharing with the Commission in EC affairs, but acting alone in CFSP (EPC) matters (ibid.).

Bengtsson (see Bengtsson 2003: pp.55-71 in Elgström ed.) maintains the development of the representation function is part of an ongoing process of political institutionalization of the EU, a process in turn contested from various corners as it touches upon fundamental issues concerning the very nature and character of the EU as a political entity. The related problem, Bengtsson notes, lies in the rotating six-month presidency format, potentially hampering continuity and thus making it harder for the EU to speak with once voice externally.

3.2 The norms of neutrality and effectiveness

In the complex process of negotiations and decision-making, where Presidency seeks both effectiveness¹² and leadership¹³, the quality of leadership can be determined by the quality of mediation it exhibits, i.e. the balance it maintains between being *neutral(honest broker)* and being *partial/(being effective¹⁴)*. Institutional changes within the EU have led to the emerged principal role of the Presidency in ensuring smooth and efficient functioning of the Council machinery (Metcalf 1998). The norm of neutrality or *impartiality* is especially crucial for legitimating leadership (seen as the right to intervene), without which, Metcalfe believes that the actions of a potential leader will be rejected by other parties(ibid.). Impartiality is strongly linked with the lack of biases or preferences – sometimes strategically self-imposed by Presidencies (Elgström: 2003). In the case of the German 2007 Presidency, the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said Germany wanted to act as an “honest broker” to revive the EU Constitution.¹⁵ Adherence to norms in an attempt to legitimize leadership is further buttressed by the arguments of *trust* and *consensus* (Elgström 2003: 40), which are manifested in the efforts to foster a compromise based on trust among representatives and disinterest, which makes it easier for a negotiator to be consensus-oriented and detached (ibid.) *Partiality* concept is divided by Elgström (2003) and Metcalfe

¹² See Elgström pp.202-203

¹³ See Moravcsik, 3/268

¹⁴ See Metcalfe, p.421

¹⁵ Deutsche Welle, 19.12. 2006

(1998) who see it different along the semantic lines¹⁶ but share strong commonality in the idea that partiality is focused on ‘delivering a result’, i.e. being effective. Metcalf here quotes Underdal (1994), who claims that ‘the legitimization of partial leadership fits into the idea that the overriding concern of delegates is not to insist on impartial mediation, but to achieve efficient and favourable outcomes, which have the desired impact’.

Sustaining balance between impartiality and effectiveness is therefore a goal of a Presidency. These norms were equally visible in how the German 1999 EU Presidency self-perception of both German and French presidencies.

Agenda 2000 reform negotiations¹⁷ show that the German Presidency of 1999, despite highly competing interests, was able to balance out both individual preferences and outcome aspirations of other EU member negotiators.

3.3 Reputation

On the costs and benefits scale, reputation is a dependent variable that belongs to both camps (costs and benefits) and strongly depends on whether the Presidency follows norms and whether the behaviour and performance exhibited create a positive or negative image. Yet, the Presidency may disregard the norms if the gains they accrue from such behaviour exceed the expected costs of being labeled a norm-violator (Elgström 2003: 196). Internal or external crises and unexpected events give a particularly strong impetus for Presidencies to concern themselves with reputation costs. The case of the Constitution referenda outcomes in the Netherlands, France and Ireland made significant reputational damage to the French 2008 Presidency, which was ultimately viewed as needing to “sell Europe”¹⁸ to the European citizens, at least in the area where reputation had been damaged the most – the EU Treaty. From the constructivist account, means to regain reputation are rooted in Presidency performance and correspond to the willingness of the Presidency to conform to norms and expectations. The case of the UK Presidency in 1998 showed at the attempts of the British Labour government to ‘change the ingrained image of the UK as an awkward European partner’ (Elgström, p.196).

¹⁶ Elgström (2003: 43) stresses relational partiality refers to a mediator having a higher chance to persuade a reluctant actor to “deliver” provided the actor has a special relationship with the mediator and high trust in his or her will. Underdal (1994) (in Metcalfe (1998: 421) believes legitimization of partiality only serves to prove the interest of the Presidency in the effective outcome.

¹⁷ See Tallberg

¹⁸ Le Figaro, 18.07.2008

Reputational aspect of self-perception is therefore deeply rooted in the ability of the Presidency “to deliver” in individual policy areas where expectations are high. Further we shall look at the expectations as a prerequisite for image and role selection of Presidencies. Expectations influence self-perception as a factor that tests reaction capability of the Presidency to a specific social, political or economic stimulus. Based on the reaction exhibited, a particular inference could be made about the Presidency’s capability and ideational image. The 2000 French Council Presidency for example, was regarded as “arrogant”. (Elgström: 2003)

4 Expectations and Role selection

Expectations in Council Presidency performance are of central importance here as they comprise the benchmark for evaluating the level of anticipation of result by the category of observers we shall call “others”.

In explaining EU presidency self-perception, we refer to the constructivist concept of “logic of appropriateness”, which explains Presidency behaviour through rules, norms, expectations comprising both cognitive and normative components (March and Olsen, 1995: 30-31). Presidency choices and actions are conditioned by formal and informal constraints such as norms, decision rules, institutional mandate (Elgström 2003: 196). Presidency behaviour is therefore dependent on and constrained, among other factors, by what Habermas (1992: 432 in Fossum et.al. 2009) calls “the streams of communicating information and points of view” – a public sphere, which, according to the logic of appropriateness, extrapolates the images and determines potential behaviours and roles of the Council Presidency through *perceived anticipated value* to be obtained by the Presidency in individual policy sectors. Performance emerges here as a dependent variable and the selection of roles and the construction of the Presidency’s self-image may depend on expectations entrusted to the Presidency in specific policy areas as well as on certain historical experiences. The Gaullist “France grandeur” and “puissance Europe”(power Europe) as well as fairly optimistic¹⁹ public opinion influenced the way France and the French presidency perceived itself and its role in the European integration.

Optimistic expectations of the French for the 12 months from autumn 2007 were mainly concerned with economy and social issues (Eurobarometer 68).

Expectations may also serve as a stimulus for shaping national approaches to policy and therefore setting Presidency priorities and agenda in line with national and broader European expectations. According to Sebastian Stålfors (2008: 56), government responsiveness to the expectations, interests, needs and demands of citizens influences how citizens rate the current political system. The ultimately embraced roles may therefore emerge as feedback loops. Elgström (2003) singles out several of such causally-modified roles of a *leader* – a role in which Presidency is supposed to have visions that guide its behaviour, a *bargainer* egocentric

¹⁹ Eurobarometer, France Report 68 in 2007 showed moderate optimism of the French towards the European integration before the start of the Presidency.

role, accentuating the domestic responsibilities of the member states where a Presidency is expressly prioritizes national preferences; a *broker*, the role necessitating fostering compromises and “getting results” and a *bureaucrat* – the role of a routine, yet efficient Presidency.²⁰

Presidency self-perception and its behaviour can be influenced by intentions (Hall 1996), which in their turn may explain variations in role selection. Modeling Presidency behaviour may be constructed on the premise that intentions are part of a system of values, goals and attitudes that embeds intentions into the structure of other beliefs and aspirations. (March and Olsen: pp.65-66)²¹ Examples of France or Spain²² testify that intentions manifested in beliefs in and aspirations about the European integration determine the ultimate roles the Presidency chooses to realize these intentions. Intentions are not the sole cause of role-selection. According to Wiener and Diez (2004: 163), social norms like *sovereignty* also regulate behaviour and constitute the identity of actors. The French 2005 referendum on the Constitution Treaty²³ could be one such example. The roles, could be assumed, are therefore selected with the aim to adhere to the norms and satisfy intentions.

4.1 The self-image of the EU²⁴

The qualitative study on the European citizens perceptions and the Future of Europe, conducted by Eurobarometer in February- March 2006 revealed that performance indicators outlined earlier in the thesis serve as intentions upon which self-image and roles could be constructed.

Germany and France, belonging to the “old” bulk of the EU members are said to have expressed “dark” views concerning the Future of the EU. The specific reasons for concern among the European citizens were mostly of economic nature. For instance, employment was indicated as the greatest fear. Opening of borders as a cause for intensified immigration and ultimate

²⁰ See Elgström, Ole (ed.) European Union Council Presidencies. A Comparative Perspective.

²¹ See March and Olsen, Rediscovering Institutions, pp.65-66

²² See Elgström 2003: 199

²³ See Pascale Dufour (2006) the referendum moment transformed the main cleavage about Europe, from more or less European integration to a right/left debate upon the nature of the European building. For some actors, these two dimensions are still closely interconnected (extreme-right party who defend French nation and national territory in the name of nation first but also in the name of the French social model ; some left republicans who want to preserve French sovereignty in the name of the French model), for others they are disconnected (more integration could be associated with more European social development and regulation, as for some European federalists or more integration could be associated with more free market as for the present government party, UMP);

<http://www.ces.columbia.edu/pub/papers/Dufour.pdf>

²⁴ Eurobarometer Qualitative Study Among Citizens in the 25 EU member states, Overall Report, DG Communication; http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/quali/ql_futur_en.pdf

competition from low labour cost countries was attributed to the overall impact of globalization. Additional to this, weakening of social protection system was a cause for fear in most of the “old” countries. Immigration theme is continued in the concerns expressed over internal security, attributed to the difficulty of assimilating immigrants and broader world-wide insecurity. Constitution was often mentioned in the polls as a symptom of “dissension” and sometimes of the mutual distrust, primarily among new member states. The widespread expectations and hopes, according to Eurobarometer, are related to the continuing process of the European integration.

Intentions to “deliver” in the respective policy fields can therefore be a prerequisites for Presidency self-images and role-selection. For the purpose of the thesis, we shall differentiate between *intentions*²⁵ as determination to resolve for a specific result, and *expectations*²⁶ concerning anticipation of a result. There are also different referent subjects for intentions and expectations, former being the Presidency (government), latter being the public.

4.2 Role attribution in Presidency Self-perception

Presidency self-perception and its behaviour can be influenced by *intentions* (Hall 1996), which in their turn may explain variations in role selection. Modeling Presidency behaviour is sometimes constructed on the premise that intentions are part of a system of values, goals and attitudes that embeds intentions into the structure of other beliefs and aspirations. (March and Olsen: pp.65-66)²⁷ Examples of France or Spain²⁸ show that intentions manifested in beliefs in and aspirations about the European integration determine the ultimate roles the Presidency chooses to realize these intentions. French leaders do not hesitate to share their firm convictions about the future of Europe with other member states and feel that they, as representatives of a major nation, have a responsibility for Europe²⁹. The ultimate “grandiloquent” 2008 Presidency agenda and intentions to “make progress in the process of a common policy for immigration, a common policy for defense and a common policy for energy and a common policy for environment”³⁰ testify to the special integrative role the French Presidency aimed to embrace. Intentions are not the sole cause of role-selection. According to Wiener and Diez (2004: 163), social norms like sovereignty also regulate

²⁵ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/intention>

²⁶ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/expectation>

²⁷ See March and Olsen, *Rediscovering Institutions*, pp.65-66

²⁸ See Elgström 2003: 199

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ <http://www.sarkozynicolas.com/nicolas-sarkozy-conference-de-presse-8-janvier-2008-texte-integral/>

behaviour and constitute the identity of actors. The French 2005 referendum on the Constitution Treaty³¹ could be one such example. The roles of *silencer* and *amplifier*, articulated by Elgström³² could therefore be treated as manifestations of intentions of either strengthening the tendency to promote national interests, or inhibiting national interests and encouraging European policy orientation (Elgström 2004). The intention of the German 2007 Presidency to act as an “honest broker” in dealing with Constitutional issue led to the identical role ultimately assumed. However, roles embraced by Presidencies in one policy area do not necessarily persist with regard to the wider vision of the European integration. Despite the French 2008 Presidency exhibited a “silencer”-type behaviour in negotiations procedures on Immigration Pact, the initiative guided by the principles of nationalism and intergovernmentalism is difficult to reconcile with building a common European policy on migration, borders and asylum³³ and thus Presidency role could be subject to a new role selection.

³¹ See Pascale Dufour (2006) where he explains the sovereignty norm as a cleavage component stating: the referendum moment transformed the main cleavage about Europe, from more or less European integration to a right/left debate upon the nature of the European building. For some actors, these two dimensions are still closely interconnected (extreme-right party who defend French nation and national territory in the name of nation first but also in the name of the French social model ; some left republicans who want to preserve French sovereignty in the name of the French model), for others they are disconnected (more integration could be associated with more European social development and regulation, as for some European federalists or more integration could be associated with more free market as for the present government party, UMP); <http://www.ces.columbia.edu/pub/papers/Dufour.pdf>

³² Elgström, Ole; Bengtsson, Rikard; Tallberg, Jonas ”*Silencer of Amplifier? The European Union Presidency and the Nordic Countries*”, Scandinavian Political Science, Vol.27 – No. 3 , 2004.

³³ CEPS Policy Paper No.170 by Sergio Carrera and Elspeth Guild, Septembre 2008; A strong intergovernmental approach is also evident here in the sentence on border control: “*the European Council recalls that each Member State is responsible for the controls of its section of the external border*”.

5 EU Germany and France Council Presidency. Performance Overview

This chapter is concerned with the performance of the German and French EU Presidency as related to the formerly established social purpose as the performance measurement, i.e. outcomes achieved in domains of Treaty reform, immigration and macroeconomy (including social policy). Other policy areas where performance of Council Presidency was especially indicative of the behavior exhibited will be looked at.

5.1 Motivations and Priorities of the German EU Presidency

Establishment and promotion of good relations with its Western neighbours as well as “integration as such” were the main motivations and interests of the German EU Presidency³⁴. France’s and the Netherlands’ rejection of the EU’s Constitutional Treaty at the respective national referenda, Poland’s and the British government opposition to the ECT made EU members turn their eyes towards Berlin (Overhaus: 2008). The major EU expectation was therefore dealing with the revival of the Constitutional Treaty. Not least, “issues remained at the national level with *Länder* trying to promote their “items”(ibid.) additional to the standing requests of deepening European integration, fully closing the EU’s democratic deficit, smooth running of institutions and capacity for action in an enlarged Union.³⁵

Attempts to revive the EU Constitution dominated the discourse of the German officials prior to the start of the Presidency with Frank-Walter Steinmeier (SPD Party) claiming Germany wanted to use its term to act as an “honest broker”. Policy priorities largely reflected the demands of the German and European citizens in bettering results in specific policy areas (see Eurobarometer report 66). The tasks of the Presidency therefore aimed

³⁴ Sebastian Kurpas, Henning Riecke, German 2007 EU Presidency, Midterm Report, SIEPS, 2008

³⁵ Jutta Hergenhan, German Federalism and European Integration, Notre Europe, European Issues No.5, 2000

at satisfying these demands and constituted (see Spilberg speech, October 4 2006):

Public opinion polls reveal a strong commitment of both Germans and Europeans to utilitarian issues like employment or internal and external security. In autumn 2006 most of the Germans were sceptical about the state of economy with 54% of East Germans (+ 8 points) and 44% of West Germans (+3 points) believing that Germany's economic situation will further deteriorate while their lives will 53% and 61% respectively believe their own lives will not change within the next twelve months.³⁶

1. maintaining the European way of life in the era of globalization by means of a strong and dynamic economy and a social model attuned to citizens' needs;
2. safeguarding internal security in the face of the threat of terrorism and cross-border crime, while at the same time preserving civil rights and freedoms;
3. stabilizing Germany's immediate geographical neighbourhood in Europe and promote freedom, democracy and free-market economies in other parts of the world;
4. commitment to the future of our planet, i.e. to sustainable development, environmental and climate protection, and the preservation of our natural heritage.³⁷

Party politics in Germany is a highly important determinant of debate on Europe with Social Democrats (SPD), Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (Bavarian sister organisation) (CDU/CSU), Liberal Democrats (FDP) and the Greens (Alliance 90/Die Gruenen) forming a "strong pro-European consensus"³⁸ with Kanzleramt (the Chancellery) taking guidance and control over the European affairs. The governing Grand Coalition of CDU/CSU and SPD, articulated by Angela Merkel³⁹ put forward the goal of '*edging the external and internal contours of the European Union*' by means of fostering progress in individual policy areas and thus formulating an ambitious agenda comprising four priorities:

- the relaunch of the Constitutional Treaty

³⁶ Eurobarometer, Report 66, 2006,

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_de_exec.pdf

³⁷ Speech by Germany's State Secretary Silberberg, October 4, 2006 "A Privew of Germany's EU Presidency: The Status of the Federal Government's Preparations".

³⁸ Sebastian Kurpas, Henning Riecke, German 2007 EU Presidency, Midterm Report, SIEPS, 2008

³⁹ Speech by Angela Merkel to the European Parliament, Starsbourg, January 17, 2007;

http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/Speeches_Interviews/January/Rede_Bundeskanzlerin2.html

- putting emphasis on economic reform, energy policy, EU foreign policy, regulatory practice, climate protection
- commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome
- bringing the EU closer to its citizens.⁴⁰

5.1.1 EU Constitution

The purpose of bringing the topic of the European Union Constitution into the Presidency agenda not only corresponds to the ongoing processes of the European integration, but also to the unexpected outcome of the French and Dutch referenda as well as the boost in membership number to include Romania and Bulgaria. Reviving or “breathing life into the dead Treaty”⁴¹ was therefore of increasingly high importance for the German Presidency and regarded by some as the “greatest challenge” and an obvious “yardstick” to measure the effectiveness of the Presidency’s performance. The plan was to present a roadmap of how to get the Constitution back on track, “in which the timetable and the contours of a solution are laid out” (in an interview of Frank-Walter Steinmeier to the *Bild* newspaper). In the months preceding the Presidency Germany consulted member states on their expectations and biases concerning the roadmap.

Furthermore, the drafting of the Berlin Declaration – the declaration for the 50th anniversary of the Treaties of Rome was thought to be “testing the ground”.⁴² Setting the EU Constitutional treaty as a presidency priority could also be attributed to Germany’s looking at the Constitution as a “part of a larger vision of Europe as a federal entity”⁴³.

The major dividing line amongst the governments concerning the approach to the Constitutional treaty emerged between those who advocated pro-Constitution stance comprising those who ratified the Constitution plus Germany, Portugal and Ireland. The other camp comprised the advocates of the “amending treaty” approach, who favoured taking the existing treaties as a starting point⁴⁴. These included France, the UK, the Netherlands plus the less outspoken Poland and Czech Republic. Germany, however, seems to have joined the second camp to secure support from other members and

⁴⁰ See Mayhew and Quaglia (SEI, 2007) for more information

⁴¹ Deutsche Welle, Germany Faces Daunting Agenda for EU, G8 Presidencies, 01.01.2007.

⁴² Each government had to nominate two representatives from each country; See Declaration on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome, (Berlin Declaration), Berlin, 25.3.2007, http://www.eu2007.de/de/News/download_docs/Maerz/0324-RAA/English.pdf

⁴³ See Mayhew and Quaglia (SEI, 2007) for more information, Working paper 97, You can’t always get what you want, but do you sometimes get what you need? Sussex European Institute, 2007

⁴⁴ See Kurpas, Henning Riecke, German 2007 EU Presidency, Midterm Report, SIEPS, 2008

claimed the need for the EU to “reform its founding treaties, which lay out how the EU operates”.⁴⁵ This way the European treaties would be reformed by an “amending treaty” (Kurpas and Riecke: 2008).

5.1.2 Economic policy and Internal market

Back in November 2006 the German Federal Government issued a statement outlining the targets for economic growth and employment and emphasizing that an “agreement on a balanced package of measures aimed at promoting competitiveness, growth and employment as well as social cohesion and healthy environment” will be sought.⁴⁶ ‘Restoration of economic dynamism’ articulated by the Germany’s State Secretary was considered a “prerequisite for the future-proof EU” and becoming a “first-division economic region”⁴⁷. The ambition echoes the aspiration vocalised at the 2000 Lisbon Summit where EU leaders declared they would turn the EU into “the most dynamic and knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010”⁴⁸. The priority of the Presidency to deal with Europe’s economic, social and environmental future largely reflect an all-European concern in improving the European economy (concern of 65% of Europeans and 75% of Germans)⁴⁹ yet sustaining the European economic and social model where, the polled believed, EU performed better than the US.⁵⁰

The followed 2004 Kok report on the performance exhibited strongly critiqued the “disappointing delivery” made hitherto “due to the overloaded agenda, poor co-ordination and conflicting priorities” in addition to the lack of political will of the member states.⁵¹ It could well be possible that the critique served as a stimulus to craft effective economic and social policy responsive to the flaws of the Lisbon goals and the public opinion. It was therefore, especially articulated in the Council Conclusions that the German Presidency “gave high priority to strengthening competitiveness and Europe’s social dimension” and “fleshed out Europe’s

⁴⁵ http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2007/06/2007-06-27-eu-bilanz-einleitung_en.html

⁴⁶ Bundesregierung (Federal Government), http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2006/11/2006-11-30-europa-gelinkt-gemeinsam_en.html

⁴⁷ Speech by Germany’s State Secretary Silberberg, October 4th 2006

⁴⁸ <http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/lisbon-agenda/article-117510>

⁴⁹ Eurobarometer, Report 66, 2006,

http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb66/eb66_de_exec.pdf

⁵⁰ Europeans still see the USA ahead in the technical and scientific realm and in economic organisation and capability. Concerning social matters, the protection of the environment and the health care system, both Europeans and Germans see the EU as better organised and more capable than the USA.

⁵¹ Ibid.

social dimension with concrete measures”⁵² such as the adoption of the Payment Services Directive, liberalisation of postal markets, reduction of roaming tariffs or the reduction of *bureaucratic procedures* named by Angela Merkel as the “*cutback of bureaucracy*”⁵³

While at the EU level, the German Presidency was able to achieve the setting to concrete targets for reducing the administrative burden caused by EU legislation by 2012 by 25%, the question on the measurement of reduction still arises. Further, Kurpas (2007) claims the German Presidency failed to reach agreement on bureaucracy reduction at the national level and it was up to national governments to set their own targets.⁵⁴

At the Spring European Council it was agreed that the social dimension has special significance for Europe. Recalling the Erobarometer pre-Presidency polls, developing the European Social Model and taking “greater account” of the Member States’ social aims were high on the Presidency’s agenda.⁵⁵ With regard to internal market, the German presidency came up with the Remedies directive, reached during the Presidency, with the aim to ensure a higher level of legal certainty for companies when it comes to the award of public contracts.(see Federal Government Stocktaking on the German EU Presidency). Achievement could also be regarded the political agreement on the modernization of the Customs Code. The approach advocated by the German Presidency with regard to the social policy served as a reaction test to the ongoing critique examined the ability to satisfy ‘consumers’ demands.

5.1.3 Energy and Climate

Climate and Energy, regarded by Germany as “one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century”⁵⁶, was a top priority for the German Presidency. Before the European Council set targets on reducing CO2 emission by 30% by 2020, the Commission Communication “An Energy Policy for Europe” had offered its proposals for the Action Plan “with

⁵² Europe-Succeeding Together. Taking Stock of Germany’s EU Presidency, Federal Government; <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2007/06/Anlagen/2007-06-27-bilanz-der-deutschen-eu-ratspraesidentschaft.property=publicationFile.pdf>

⁵³ Kurpas et.al, SIEPS p.23

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ See Federal Government Stocktaking of the Germany’s EU Presidency at <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2007/06/Anlagen/2007-06-27-bilanz-der-deutschen-eu-ratspraesidentschaft.property=publicationFile.pdf>

⁵⁶ Federal Government, German Presidency Stocktaking; <http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2007/06/Anlagen/2007-06-27-bilanz-der-deutschen-eu-ratspraesidentschaft.property=publicationFile.pdf>

equally ambitious targets for energy efficiency” (20% reduction in energy consumption by 2020)⁵⁷.

In addition to that, German Presidency performance record contains a binding agreement that the share of renewable energies in overall consumption would reach 20% by 2020 plus a European Energy Strategy for Transport with measures aimed at improving climate relevance, energy efficiency and the increased use of fuels in road and other type of transport.⁵⁸ The agreement reached on the Action Plan for an Energy Policy for Europe came out as, yet, another success of the Presidency, despite a couple of serious conflicts that erupted upon Commission’s energy proposal for a “full ownership unbundling”⁵⁹ and the EU Environment Commissioner’s plan for reduction of CO2 emission from cars.⁶⁰

The efforts undertaken by the German Presidency to tackle energy and climate matters were transferred to the attempts to push other developed countries, such as the USA to embrace similar climate responsibilities; yet, the response was not particularly forthcoming.

5.2 Motivations and Priorities of the French EU Presidency

The French EU Presidency constituted an interesting mix of “hopes and skepticism”, - latter mostly due to the outcome exhibited by France in the 2005 referendum on the draft constitutional treaty. The picture gets even more exciting with the “heterodoxical”⁶¹ image of Sarkozy, who entered the Office in 2007 and since then made a proposal to draft a new EU treaty. European motivations of France, however, go back to the Gaullist vision of Europe through the lenses of a special French role in the integration process where Europe was at least driven by ‘commercial motivations’ and ‘idiosyncratic geopolitical perspectives’ (Moravcsik 1998:pp.12-14) and at most a vector of France grandeur and the leading role (see van Herpen, p.5)

⁵⁷ Kurpas et.al., p25

⁵⁸ See German Federal Government Stocktaking for more information.

⁵⁹ The major German energy suppliers immediately voiced their opposition to full ownership unbundling and the Minister for Economics and Technology Michael Glos (CSU) claimed that it would endanger the security of supply and even be in contravention of the German Constitution, see Kurpas and Riecke, p.26

⁶⁰ The plan caused uproar among car manufacturers in Germany, who produce mostly large cars, which emit on average more CO2 than smaller models from France or Italy, *ibid.*

⁶¹ Christian Lequesne and Olivier Rozenberg, *The French Presidency of 2008: Unexpected Agenda*, SIEPS, 2008

in the European integration. Gaullist typology continued with the “socialist” and “volatile”⁶² types Gaullists emerging as forms of sustaining national interests at the expense of common means. The concept of *Europe puissance* (Europe power), which dominated the French and European political scene before Maastricht transformed into a more rational approach buttressed by the need of France to prove it was back in Europe after the 2005 referendum and Chirac’s allegedly immobilizing approach to the EU at the end of his term. Expectations in autumn 2007 remained steadily growing with regard to immigration (36%, +6 points), common defence and security policy (82%, =), climate and environment (41%, +3 points)⁶³. The emergence of Nicolas Sarkozy as a political figure promising to return France to the EU, draft a ‘simplified’ version of the Lisbon Treaty and find a solution to the emerged deadlock – all reflected largely a response to moderate optimism among the French towards the European integration processes exhibited. The priorities chosen, therefore, aimed at rejuvenating Euroenthusiasm among the French and Europeans and reflected the internal demand: firstly, to take immigration and asylum; secondly reforming CAP; thirdly, reaching progress in the area of climate-energy package; fourthly, reviving the European Security and Defense policy by means of creating a commanding and planning unit for ESDP missions, revising the European Security Strategy and defining the rules governing Permanent Structured Cooperation provided in the Lisbon Treaty⁶⁴.

The ‘grandiloquence’ (Lequesne 2008) of agenda and ambition of Nicolas Sarkozy was further reinforced by the speech, where he stated on January 8 that “by the end of the French Presidency my objective is to make progress in the process of a common policy for immigration, a common policy for defence and a common policy for energy and a common policy for environment”⁶⁵. The events that occurred during the French Presidency term allow us to speculate on the Presidency’s normal agenda and introduce crisis agenda (term taken from an interview), latter as a reaction capability test.

5.2.1 Pre-determined Agenda

⁶² Van Herpen, Marcel “Chirac Gaullism: Why France Became the Driving Force Behind an Autonomous European Defence Policy?” Van Herpen stresses Mitterrand’s “social Gaullist” and Chirac’s “volatile Gaullist” inclinations.

⁶³ See Eurobarometer Report 68, Autumn 2007, published Spring 2008.

⁶⁴ Fabio Liberti, l’IRIS, December 2008; <http://www.iris-france.org/en/index.php>

⁶⁵ A la fin de la présidence française, mon objectif est qu’elle ait avancé dans la voie d’une politique commune de l’immigration, d’une politique commune de la défense, d’une politique commune de l’énergie et d’une politique commune de l’environnement.; <http://www.sarkozynicolas.com/nicolas-sarkozy-conference-de-presse-8-janvier-2008-texte-integral/>

The initial pre-determined agenda of the French Presidency comprised three broader aims of a) making Europe a model of sustainable social, ecological and economic development; b) making Europe more attentive to the rights, security and aspirations of citizens and c) reinforcing Europe's role in the international stage.⁶⁶ The priorities of the Presidency were there fine-tuned to match the broader aims.

Immigration

The motivations for immigration as a French Presidency priority reflected both the growing public demand for internal security (82%)⁶⁷ and events that preceded the French Presidency. The December 2007 European Council announced the development of a comprehensive European migration policy a “fundamental priority of the Union”, and called for a “renewed political commitment on this front” (French Presidency Working Programme). Chirac's concerns over the lack of cooperation in the migration and asylum sectors as well as Sarkozy's interest in including immigration into his agenda at the time of his being the Minister for Domestic Affairs are also said to have contributed to putting immigration on the French Presidency agenda.⁶⁸ The idea to respond to Europe's labour and economic needs was translated into the idea to negotiate a European Pact on Immigration and Asylum, not least to fulfil one of Sarkozy's ambitions for a “common policy for immigration”. The ideational framework for the pact was the idea that legal immigration constitutes a tool for economic growth, both of the European Union as a whole and of each individual state within the EU. The pact uses the term “*immigration choisie*” or “selective immigration”, which rests on the idea of developing immigration policies by member states taking into account the perceived needs in their own labour markets and the potential impact that domestic policies will have on other member states.⁶⁹ With regard to irregular migration, the Pact called for reinforced cooperation among member states; in border control domain the Pact considered a number of measures with mixed responsibilities among member states (SIEPS 2007). The explicit intergovernmental nature of the Pact questioned the intention of building a common European policy on migration. The Pact was very much oriented towards the member states and was driven by a predominately intergovernmental logic prioritising the competences of the member states over those of an EU at 27⁷⁰. If results of the Presidency performance in this specific sector are to be viewed as “strategic interaction” (Risse 2000: 3)

⁶⁶ French Presidency Working Programme, http://www.eu2008.fr/webdav/site/PFUE/shared/ProgrammePFUE/Programme_EN.pdf

⁶⁷ Eurobarometer 68

⁶⁸ SIEPS Study on the French Presidency, 2008

⁶⁹ CEPS Policy Paper No.170 by Sergio Carrera and Elspeth Guild, Septembre 2008

⁷⁰ Ibid.

among actors, who are guided by specific preferences, performance of the Presidency in this specific area can be regarded as self-interested, rational and efficient.

Climate Change and Energy

The French Presidency continued the Action Plan on “Energy Policy for Europe” agreed on under the German Presidency. The ambition to set climate package as a priority was, among other reasons, driven by the desire to “reinforce its driving role and credibility in international negotiations on climate change”⁷¹

The idea of regaining credibility in international negotiations was also close to the broader idea of maintaining competitiveness in this area⁷² In his statement, the French State Secretary Jean Pierre Jouyet said “Europe must be competitive and open so that its market functions better, but this opening must be done in the interests of a safer and more independent Europe in terms of energy. We will not accept liberalization solutions, which lead to a weakening of the European producers – in other words a weakening of Europe’s independence and sovereignty on this issue.”⁷³ It was clear from both official statements and the volume of tasks envisioned within the agenda that climate change and energy issue will be one of the main yardsticks to measure the Presidency performance. This was further confirmed by President Sarkozy, who stated climate issue was “probably the most delicate issue of the Presidency”⁷⁴. This phrase in view of the French penchant for cant phrases, could be treated as raising the value of the ultimate outcome delivered or as a caution lest negotiations on the issue fail.

Negotiations on the climate and energy package were, indeed, regarded as a challenge.(SIEPS Report 2008). Fears about negative economic consequences in terms of slower economic growth were vocalized by some of the CEE countries. Germany favoured free CO₂ quotas for its most exposed industries, while France acted protectionist to get firms importing products from outside the EU buy CO₂ quotas.⁷⁵ Cleavages between member states, Commission and the European Parliament could also be tracked along the question of revenues, generated by ETS (emission trading scheme) with member states being staunchly opposed to Brussels intervening into matters of individual member state concern. The agreement with the European Parliament was finalized (See French Presidency Review and Outlook). In the Outlook, the Presidency is also explicitly positioned as a problem-solver adopting a roadmap to combat “significant increase in

⁷¹ See Working Programme for the 2008 French EU Presidency.

⁷² <http://www.openeurope.org.uk/research/frenchpresidency.pdf> Competitiveness was to be maintained by demanding reciprocity from the French partners in this area, mainly China.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Nicolas Sarkozy, interview in *France 3*, 1 July 2008 in SIEPS Study on the French Presidency, 2008

⁷⁵ Christian Lequesne, Olivier Rozenberg “The French Presidency of 2008: the Unexpected Agenda”.

petrol prices”, yet noting that “mechanisms aimed at reducing the impact of increased energy costs in the long term should be pursued in the context of long term pressure on resources. Researchers of the Presidency thus conclude the outcome of the Presidency in this particular policy sector is “uncertain” (Lequesne et.al. 2008).

Lisbon Treaty

The urgency and importance of adjusting priorities to fit the Lisbon Treaty was caused by the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty by Ireland with 53.4% voting “no”⁷⁶.

A significant diplomatic turn in the approach exercised by the French Presidency was taken in the result of the rejection of the Lisbon Treaty by Ireland and the Russian-Georgian conflict. The Presidency was thus forced to exhibit pro-active style of work. EU Council Conclusions of October 2008 contained a line with reference to the Lisbon Treaty, stating “The Irish Government will continue its consultations with a view to contributing to finding a way to resolve the situation”⁷⁷. The ambiguity of phrasing slightly marred the pro-active image of the Presidency and annoyed Sarkozy and who was counting on more substantive progress in this domain (SIEPS 2008). His continued verbal pressure over the necessity for the rest of the states who had not ratified the Treaty to ratify it has been called “pressure politics” and “external blackmail”⁷⁸. Due to significant delays in Treaty ratification process the European Council delivered a number of statements concerning measure to expediate Treaty ratification, ‘notably transition measures concerning the composition of the European Parliament (increase in the number of Members of the European Parliament as soon as possible after the entry into force of the Treaty for the 12 Member States for which this number should increase⁷⁹. A *compromise solution* adopted by the European Council on December 11 and 12 comprised a number of statements and proposals concerning ‘legal guarantees to respond to the concerns expressed by the Irish on taxation policy, the family, social and ethical issues and the policy of neutrality.’(ibid.)

5.2.2 Crisis Agenda

⁷⁶ See Euractiv at <http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/irish-eu-treaty-referendum/article-172508>

⁷⁷ Presidency Conclusions; <http://www.delgeo.ec.europa.eu/en/press2008/081016.pdf>

⁷⁸ See Christian Lequesne and Olivier Rozenberg, p.21 *The French Presidency of 2008: Unexpected Agenda*, SIEPS, 2008

⁷⁹ Review and Outlook of the French Presidency, www.ue2008.fr

In the introduction I already mentioned the role that situational factors play in shaping behaviour- they provoke reactions and offer opportunities for action (or obstacles to action). In the course of interviews it was revealed that in Presidency performance in times of internal or external turbulences an important role could be played by the so called “crisis agenda”. While “crisis agenda” remains a contentious concept⁸⁰, it nevertheless was a visible situational factor in which the behaviour of the French Presidency managed to deliver feasible results.

The French Presidency’s “crisis agenda” comprised two major events, which a) tested the Presidency’s capability to be reactive and pro-active at the same time b) examined France’s commitment to strengthen the European Security and Defence Policy.

The strong bias towards NATO as a left-over from the Gaullist wartime suspicion of the Anglo-Saxon tandem (Moravcsik: 1998) has characterised France’s attitude and behaviour towards entering the alliance for several decades. Tackling this priority reflected an overwhelming French support for a common defence and security policy (82%)⁸¹ and the resurrection of the military capabilities of the Union. France insisted on strengthening ESDP capabilities and making ESDP and NATO complimentary. (Lefebvre 2009: 3). The unexpectedly erupted conflict in Georgia served as a sufficient justifier and an impetus to again vocalise the French own aspirations regarding NATO and foster the security agenda, which was based on an ambition to strengthen EU’s military and crisis management capabilities, which included strengthening civilian crisis management capabilities (mobilisation of police and customs officers), capabilities for planning and conducting ESDP military and civilian operations, etc.⁸² The European Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia was therefore a timely and relevant operational contribution to the Presidency reaction and action capability.

Financial crisis was the second situational factor and a reaction test for the French Presidency to “take a rapid and coordinated response”.⁸³ Raising the level of deposit guarantees for individuals, amendment of the accounting rules, solidarity action with some of the EU members (like Hungary or Latvia) and reform of the international financial system based on the principles of responsibility and transparency were among the many ambitious proposals that characterised the French Presidency in general and President Sarkozy in particular as proponents of the “reform of the world’s capitalist system”⁸⁴ where the role of institutions in regulating market is high. This approach was confirmed in Sarkozy’s vision of the “economic government for the Euro zone” (ibid).

⁸⁰ Academic literature suggests that Presidency agenda is pre-determined by the ongoing processes and “Community timetable”, see Kirchner, 1992, p.100

⁸¹ Eurobarometer Report 68, 2007.

⁸² French Council Presidency Working Programme.

⁸³ Eurobarometer Report 68, 2007

⁸⁴ SIEPS Study on the French Presidency 2008.

5. Content Analysis

Content analysis has been noted by a number of academicians to be a major component in qualitative and quantitative research within various disciplines. In conducting content analysis I will largely rely on the works by Ole Holsti (1969), Bernard Berelson (1971) and Kimberly Neuendorf (2002) .

Following the mentioned literature and for the purpose of the thesis, we shall define content analysis as *a qualitative technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages* (Berelson 1952:18; Neuendorf 2002:34). Janis' definition allows for more leeway looking at content analysis as "referring to any technique, which relies solely upon the judgments (which theoretically may range from perceptual discriminations to sheer guesses)"⁸⁵ The definition reflects Holsti's (1969) understanding of content analysis as the analysis that is "always performed on a message", and is therefore, qualitative in its nature. The approaches chosen for the analysis confirm the qualitative commitment of the analysis. In the course of the thesis we inferred on the behaviour exhibited by the Presidency in individual policy domains. As studying perception and performance is inevitably linked to studying behaviour, qualitative nature of content analysis may yield better clues to the particular performance of a particular presidency at a particular moment in time. According to Berelson (1971), content analysis can describe communication, but it may not *per se*, evaluate them (Berelson:46). Evaluation necessitates the acceptance of a standard, with which the communication content is then compared by means of content analysis (ibid.). He therefore suggests using an 'a priori' social purpose to evaluate performance. Drawing on the Treaty of Lisbon Amending the Treaty on European Union and Treaty Establishing the European Community, *social purpose* can be established through points 1,2 and 3 of article II⁸⁶ of the Treaty, which state:

1. The Union's aim is to promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples.
2. The Union shall offer its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal frontiers, in which the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime.
3. The Union shall establish an internal market. It shall work for the sustainable development of Europe based on balanced economic growth and price stability, a highly competitive social market economy, aiming at full employment and social progress, and a high level of protection and improvement of the quality of the environment

⁸⁵ Janis I.L "The problem of validating content analysis. In H.D. Lasswell, N. Leites (et.al) *The Language of politics: studies in quantitative semantics*; in Hostli, O. "Content Analysis in Social Sciences and Humanities".

⁸⁶ <http://consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/cg00014.en07.pdf>

The aim of EU Council Presidency Self-Perception Content Analysis is to approach causality concept “ EU Presidency self-perception determines performance” in cases of the French EU Council Presidency 2008 and German Council Presidency 2007. The specific aim is to establish whether EU Presidency self-perception is treated in the German and French media as predicting the Presidency performance as covered in the selected articles.

Content Analysis Research Design⁸⁷

| Purpose | Branch of semiotics | Type of Comparisons | Question | Research Problem |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To make inferences as to the effect of communication - to diagnose specific behaviour traits based on the noted observations - to establish whether Presidency behaviour predicts Presidency performance | Pragmatics (for all) | Sender, Messenger/Recipient, Messages | To what effect? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - analyse the flow of information - make behavioural attributions - assess responses in communication |

5.1. Integrated approach to Content Analysis

Neuendorf (2002) offers an **integrated approach**, which categorizes and characterizes content analysis onto *descriptive, inferential, psychometric and predictive*. She maintains, “only with an integrated approach to data collection can applications of content analysis aspire to the highest goal: explanation” (2002: 47). Initial academic introduction into the subject of EU presidencies testing of

⁸⁷ Based on the CA Table by Holsti, 1968, p.26

self- and “others” perception as variables that could affect the ultimate performance allow me to pool and employ and possibly merge predictive, inferential and psychometric approaches to content analysis offered by Neundorf (2002) latter in a more semi-diagnostic fashion. According to Neuendorf (2002), “in inferential content analysis, interpersonal communication-type content analysis (with known receivers) tend to infer to the source, whereas mass communication-type studies (with undifferentiated receivers) tend to attempt to infer to receivers or receiver effects or both.” Predictive type of analysis aims at prediction of some effect or outcome of the message under examination. Psychometric approach, in its turn, involves process of validation, in which content analysis is linked with other time-honored diagnostic methods, such as observations of the subject’s behaviour with the ultimate goal to infer to a given source after careful validation⁸⁸ [with other sources]. Explanation will, therefore, be achieved through describing, inferring and diagnosing and predicting certain performance characteristics through variations in behaviour.

As such, the methodological part of the thesis will rest on conducting the analysis of content taken from the German and French media, Council presidency-published resources, interviews with German and French government officials (high-rank diplomats) and non-governmental organizations. The offered framework below concerns with providing theoretical background on and rationale for content variables, conceptualisation, which includes definitions of self-perception and performance given earlier in the text and content screening; sampling, where sources for analysis are indicated, categorization and coding; reliability, validity and reporting.

→Theory and rationale→ Sampling→Conceptualization→ Coding→Reliability→ Validity→ Reporting

5.1.1. T Theory and Rationale

Theory and Rationale: What is examined and why?

The object of investigation is the performance of two EU Council presidencies – German in the first half of 2007 and French in the second half of 2008. The basis for the analysis is the content drawn from selected articles in the French and German media as well as presidency press releases, statements and speeches (both text and audio) reflecting on the performance of the presidencies and contributing to the construction self-perception image.

The Study on the EU German and French presidencies essentially focuses on the following research question: 1) How do German and French presidencies perceive themselves and their performance? 2) How do others perceive the performance of the German and French presidencies? 3) Has self-perception affected the performance of the German and French presidencies in 2007 and 2008?

⁸⁸ Kimberly Neuendorf “Content Analysis Guidebook”, pp.50-69, SAGE 2002

In the course of the analysis operationalisation, I will try to merge descriptive, inferential and psychometric approaches to content analysis as well as integrate interviews with the German and French government officials working in the respective embassies, NGO representatives linking content analysis with other data to show relationship with both source and receiver characteristics.

Inter-relationship of self-perception and performance

Literature on social cognition (Moskowitz: 2005) suggests that our experience of self-esteem is linked to social comparison and depends on how we perform relative to others. Hall (1986) argues the organization of policy making influences an actor's perception of his own interests, by establishing his institutional responsibilities and relationships to other actors. In this way, organizational and cognition factors affect both the degree of pressure an actor can bring to bear on policy and the likely direction of that pressure (ibid). Moskowitz (2005) contributes to the perception conceptualization stating "the perceivers are active participants in interpreting the behaviour (they) observed, with (their) psychology as perceivers often being a larger factor in determining how a behaviour is interpreted than the actual behaviour that is observed".

Presidency viewed as a group of professional individuals executing managerial Council presidency tasks in its respective bodies represents a collective set of behaviours. Referring to Ichheiser (in Moskowitz: 2005), "the behaviour of the individual is always determined by two groups of factors: by personal factors (attitudes, dispositions, etc) and by situation factors. The situation plays its part in determining behaviour in two ways: as a system of stimuli, which provokes reactions, and as a system of opportunities for action (or obstacles to action). Ichheiser further maintains that [...] the importance of situational factors is often greater than the importance of personal factors".

5.2. Conceptualisation

According to Neuendorf (2002) variables used in the empirical part should be described and defined. If looking at the title of the thesis through the cause-and-effect prism, we may regard *self-perception* and *perception by others* as "presumed causes" and therefore as independent variables, while *performance* will serve as a "presumed effect" and therefore as a dependent variable. Earlier in the thesis we defined self-perception as a type of behaviour and *a way of understanding social environment based and conditional upon reactions to a variety of stimuli (economic, political factors, unforeseen events) emitted through individually adopted and exercised norms, expectations, roles, functions*. We refer to the definition of performance as "policy outcome" and use cognitive explanation to include *past successes, amount of effort necessary, patterns of*

*progress and the belief in the effectiveness.*⁸⁹ Earlier in the thesis we introduced two types of performance which shall be checked against validity in the content analysis. These are static and dynamic performance.

5.2.1. Content Screening

Content screening for the German EU Presidency is based on the articles published by and posted on the Deutsche Welle website, Süddeutschezeitung and the German Bundestag Documentation Centre and European Affairs section. French EU Presidency Content Screening is based on the newspapers le Figaro, La Tribune and

Deutsche Welle portrays the German 2007 Presidency at the start of the presidency as a “missionary”. The inference is drawn based on the wording of the tasks, aimed at “saving the EU's failed constitution and hammering out a new energy security policy for the 27-nation bloc.” The Süddeutschezeitung (SZ) before the start of the presidency makes a lucid claim on the mission to “*revive*” (wiederzubeleben) the discussion on the EU Constitutional Treaty⁹⁰. The subject of the Constitutional Treaty at the time of the constitutional turmoil and is therefore for obvious reasons at the core of the media discourse on the German EU presidency. SZ speaks of the “urgent need” in a Constitutional Treaty for the EU and states it’s up to the German presidency to make it *operational* (handlungsfähiger= Germ. *able to act*) and *transparent* (transparenter).⁹¹

The ideas of bringing Europe “back on track” and “regaining its ability to act” became leitmotivs before and at the start of the German presidency in the examined media sources. Hans-Gert Pöttering in a DW interview wanted the presidency to “come up with a way of moving forward”, mainly referring to the European Constitution, be “ambitious”, “choose our values. Germany, despite a grand agenda, nevertheless, realized its performance could not and would not exceed the capacities it possessed. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier noted “we cannot perform miracles in six months”,⁹² The cautious tone was repeated once again by Angela Merkel with regard to the Treaty, who stated “that half a year may not be sufficient to *resurrect* a treaty that has been in the deep freeze for more than 18 months.” Pöttering further noted that “*it is important to make it clear to people that the glass is half full, not half empty. And if we approach European policy with optimism and hope and confidence, then I think*

⁸⁹ <http://faculty.rcoe.appstate.edu/koppenhaverd/hardinpark/RSPS.pdf>

⁹⁰ Nun ist es also an Deutschland, die Diskussion wiederzubeleben, SZ, 11.10.2006, <http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/347/402128/text/>

⁹¹ Dabei benötigt die EU dringendst einen neuen (Verfassungs-)Vertrag, um handlungsfähiger und transparenter zu werden, 11.10.2006, Süddeutschezeitung “Gefordert und Fordernd, Deutsche Europapolitik“, by Bernd Oswald

⁹² Deutsche Welle, 19.12.2006, « Germany Wants EU Constitution Back on Track »

we will be able to get Europe moving forwards again and the people of Europe moving forward with us."⁹³

A contribution to self-perception characterization was offered by Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier who claimed Germany should play an "honest broker". SZ focuses on the personality trait of the Chancellor Merkel, namely "ambition", stating "The expectations of the German EU Council presidency are high-so is the ambition of the Chancellor"⁹⁴

Broader discourse on the outcome of the German EU presidency portrays the presidency outcome as largely the outcome that fulfilled expectations – presidency as a promise keeper. Merkel noted ""At the end of the day we did not disappoint people's expectations and we avoided a division". With regard to the EU treaty and the post of high representative, Merkel stated it was "European political quantum leap"⁹⁵

"It's been exciting time – but also challenging", Merkel added.⁹⁶ The most commonly inferred was the concept of cooperative task resolution through common action, confirmed in a number of sentences⁹⁷ or through the use of the words "we" and "together". Süddeutschezeitung speaks at the end of the presidency of a "therapy" that Germany allegedly applied in the so called "crisis mood".⁹⁸ A significant contribution to the characterization of the German presidency as cooperative has been the utterance of Angela Merkel to the European Parliament claiming "Who wants to move fast should do it alone, who wants to move far should do with others".⁹⁹

The French presidency, as portrayed through Le Figaro, at the start of the term seemed less optimistic. Le Figaro regards the French as having an "ambiguous attitude" towards Europe¹⁰⁰ The ideas of "European norms affirmation" through technical cooperation or "European values affirmation" through the EU social policy¹⁰¹ were vocalized in the speech by the French EU Affairs Secretary Jean-Pierre Jouyet. Cooperative rhetoric can be observed in the French media in time of

⁹³ Deutsche Welle, 06.01.2007, « Without Values, EU Has No Future »

⁹⁴ Die Erwartungen an die deutsche EU-Ratspräsidentschaft sind hoch - der Ehrgeiz der Kanzlerin auch, SZ, 11.10.06

⁹⁵ Deutsche Welle, 29.06.2007, « Merkel Bids Adieu to EU Presidency with Praise for Treaty »

⁹⁶ Deutsche Welle, 29.06.2007, « Merkel Calls G8 Summit, EU Presidency Tremendous Fun »

⁹⁷ " Together we made progress overall", SZ, 29.06.2007

⁹⁸ Süddeutschezeitung, 18.06.2007, „Tätscheln, Taktieren und Therapieren“, by Martin Winter *Kirschenstimmung in Es ist wieder einmal eine Zeit der Krisenstimmung*, Süddeutschezeitung,

⁹⁹ Süddeutschezeitung, 26.07.2007 „Merkel Warnt vor Neuen Gräben in Europa“ *Wer schnell gehen will, sollte es alleine tun, wer weit gehen will, sollte es mit anderen tun*, Süddeutschezeitung, 26.07.2007 „Merkel Warnt vor Neuen Gräben in Europa“

¹⁰⁰ Le Figaro 08-07-2008 "*les Français ayant une relation ambiguë à l'Europe*" in "Comment les ministres vont "vendre l'Europe"

¹⁰¹ Le Figaro "Nous voulons reconcilier la jeunesse avec l'Europe", 28-08-2008 *Sur l'affirmation des normes européennes sur la scène internationale, je rejoins votre conviction que seule une démarche harmonisée au niveau européen est de nature à faire émerger pour demain des normes techniques qui soient un instrument d'influence décisif pour nos entreprises sur le marché mondial*, Le Figaro "Nous voulons reconcilier la jeunesse avec l'Europe"; *L'affirmation des valeurs européennes face aux dérives du capitalisme passe également par une relance de la dynamique sociale à partir des propositions de la Commission sur un nouvel agenda social*. 28-08-2008.

financial and economic worsening and the ultimate crisis. Le Figaro again cites Jouyet who refers to the “inescapable partnership”¹⁰² with the UK and a long-term partnership with Germany.¹⁰³ La Tribune at the end of the French presidency maintains approaches within EU to tackling economic crisis differ and states “important distortions exist between Anglo-Saxon and Franco-German economic approaches. If the first group aims at handling them carefully, the second target the enterprises and chooses to reduce production costs. This gives the plans a half-hearted boost”¹⁰⁴. La Tribune also refers to the Head of Robert Schuman Centre Jean-Dominique Giuliani, who maintains that the unforeseen events – the conflict in Georgia and the financial crisis – were “brilliantly handled” by the presidency and “constituted a chance for Nicolas Sarkozy to revive the French presidency”¹⁰⁵

5.3. Sampling

The goal of the content analysis is to pursue a systematic and objective description of the attributes of communication (Hostli p.127) to map causality. These data will be used to make inferences about Presidency’s performance as determined certain normative or behavioural causes. Since research carried is limited to investigating the performance and self-perception of two EU Council presidencies – German 2007 EU Presidency and French 2008 Presidency, the sampling of actors is evident. Content analysis is conducted on the newspaper articles, topically relevant to the subject of research and referent member states, official Presidency and government documentation and interviews.

5.3.1. Sampling Sources

On the French Presidency:

Le Figaro – is a widely popular newspaper in France, with circulation of over 300.000. The newspaper is said to have conservative ideology and has generally supported the Rally for the Republic political party, which transformed into the Union for a Popular Movement

¹⁰² Le Figaro, 28-10-2008 “... le Royaume-Uni est un partenaire incontournable”

¹⁰³ Ibid. “nous sommes engagés avec l’Allemagne dans une relation à long terme...”

¹⁰⁴ La Tribune, 19-12-2008, “...des distorsions importantes existent entre les plans anglo-saxons et franco-allemands. Si les premiers visent les ménages, les seconds ont ciblé les entreprises en choisissant de réduire les coûts de production. Ce qui donne des plans de relance «unijambistes»...” “Unijambiste” here is used as a metaphor to denote “not fully capable” or “handicapped”.

¹⁰⁵ La Tribune, 19-12-2008 “... Les événements internationaux ont constitué une chance pour Nicolas Sarkozy pour relancer la présidence française.”

La Tribune- is a another popular newspaper with the main focus on financial issues.

Other sources:

- French EU Council Presidency website 2008
- German EU Council Presidency website 2007
- Le Gouvernement Français (French Government) documents
- Interviews

According to Association for the Control of Media Diffusion (Association pour le contrôle de la diffusion de medias, OJD), the French press is often used as a tribune for political struggles. The choice of the French media selected therefore portrays the diversity in and volume of critique, political preferences and variations in presidency performance perception.

On the German EU Presidency

Die Deutsche Welle - “promotes understanding of Germany as an independent nation with its roots in European culture and as a liberal, democratic, constitutional state based on the rule of law.” It is also meant to "provide a forum in Europe and on other continents to German and other points of view on important issues, with the aim of fostering understanding and exchange between cultures and people.”¹⁰⁶

Süddeutschezeitung (SZ) – is the largest German newspaper published in Munich with readership of 1.1 million daily and a liberal editorial stance¹⁰⁷.

German Bundestag documentation serves as an original resource centre and allows drawing reliable and relevant information on the German presidency.

Other sources:

The *sampling table* therefore looks the following way:

| Members | Communication Sources | Documentation Sources |
|---------------------------|--|--|
| German 2007 EU Presidency | Suddeutschezeitung (SZ) Deutsche Welle (DW) Bundestag documentation | - 3 articles from SZ (in German), 6 articles from DW (in English), Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome, - Presidency Working Programme, |

¹⁰⁶ Die Deutsche Welle website (www.dw.de)

¹⁰⁷ Wikipedia

| | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|
| | Interviews | Presidency Conclusions - Ulrike Guerot, Senior Research Fellow and Head of the Berlin Office (ECFR); Mr. Markus Broich, Verbindungsbüro Brüssel der SPD-Fraktion im Deutschen Bundestag; German Embassy (Stockholm) – no quoting permitted; |
| French 2008 EU Presidency | Le Figaro La Tribune Documentation Interviews | 4 articles from le Figaro (in French) 3 articles from la Tribune (in French), Presidency Working Programme, Presidency Conclusions - Mr. Laurent Delahousse, Senior Counselor, French Embassy in Washington D.C.; Guillaume Perron-Piché, European Suppliers of Waste to Energy Technology (EU policy think tank) |

5.4. Interviews

In the research I conducted semi-standardised interviews in English to try to reveal the subjective theory of the respondent about the causal relationship of self-perception and performance. The aim to unveil the “complex stock of knowledge” (Flick: 155) about Council Presidency performance, attitude towards Europe and possible causal attributes of it drove the type of questions I chose.

Question addressed to both German and French EU Presidencies:

1) Chancellor Angela Merkel in her speech before the European Parliament on January 17, 2007 said “Just as Europe has to redefine itself externally, so does it need to do internally”⁴. If you think of the German presidency in the EU, which activity (ies) of the German presidency corresponds to this conceptual framework (external and internal redefinition)?

2) In your view, how do unforeseen events influence the performance of the EU presidency in general and the performance of the German/French presidency in particular (such as the failed referenda in France and the Netherlands/Irish rejection of the Constitutional Treaty, conflict in Georgia)?

4) To what extent, do you think, Germany’s/France’s party politics affected the performance of the German/French Presidency in 2007/2008?

5) In your view, how relevant is the size of the member-state in presidency performance and how does that relate to the idea in academic literature that a large part of the actual Presidency agenda is predetermined by on-going processes?

The question on external and internal redefinition of the EU aimed to reveal what parties understand under these terms and whether the responses related or reflected in any way attitudinal aspects towards the European integration.

The responses concerning the understanding of “**EU’s internal and external redefinition**” focused on the revision of the Constitutional Treaty “*to ensure capacity to act*”. Both, German and French diplomats, however, had different referential objects for capacity. The German interviewees attributed this capacity to enlargement and a number of concrete goals that corresponded to Presidency priorities and included emission reduction goals of 20%, increased use of renewables, strengthening consumer protection as “internal redefinition” aspects. Externally, the German diplomat added strengthening CFSP, diplomatic efforts in the Middle East, European Strategy for Central Asia, EU-USA relations, opening new chapters in EU-Turkey and EU –Croatia negotiations. The German interviewees mostly relied on the fulfilment of technical Presidency agenda (distinction was made between technical and crisis agenda) and projected a solid *leader* image of the German Presidency.

The French interviewee referred to the French population as a yardstick for the French Presidency performance and stated “EU Presidency is routine, not something important for the French”. Both the German and the French interviewees placed attention on the personalities of the countries’ leaders- Merkel and Sarkozy, although with different semantic emphases. While the German interviewee stressed a big role of Angela Merkel in the constitutional matter stating she “saved the Treaty”, the French interviewee extensively referred to the President Sarkozy stating he was a “*man of volonté*”. As the interviewee did not elaborate on the meaning of “volonté”, it would be relevant to translate the word. The philosophical translation of the word suggests “*volonté*”¹⁰⁸ is a set

¹⁰⁸ <http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Volont%C3%A9>

of tendencies governed by the principle of rationality; legal definition suggests the term deals with “intentionality” while in psychology the terms deals with being capable to act voluntarily. Such attribution indications are important here as they inform us about the foundations for self-perception.

With regard to **unforeseen events**, the German and French interviewees approached answering the questions from different angles. The German respondent made explicit statements about the significant role played by unforeseen event, which affect agenda-shaping capability of the Presidency through the emergence of the so called “crisis agenda” in the Presidency timetable – the agenda that “should be based on the “pro-European intuition” of the Presidency. The French diplomat-respondent stated “there is no such thing as crisis agenda” The second German respondent stated unforeseen events “can and will always impact EU Presidency”. Unforeseen events can be regarded as *reaction-tests*, checking a capacity of a Presidency to formulate an effective response to an unanticipated event. Whether reactions should be immediate like in the French 2008 case or protracted like in the German 2007 case doesn’t seem to play a significant role. Both, German and French respondents admitted the ability of respective Presidencies to come up with “hands-on approaches to EU” (French respondent) and “bring together differing positions concerning the vote in the Council on the Treaty” (German respondent) in times of crisis deserves mentioning.

With regard to **party politics**, responses were only received from the German interviewees, which claimed party politics play a role in EU Presidency performance. SPD (German party) party respondent stated SPD “ was able to highly influence the programme and politics of the German Presidency. The SPD strongly promoted ambitious targets to prevent climate change. Among others, these consisted of a 20% (a reduction of 30% if there will be a new global treaty signed in Copenhagen). These targets were set on a Council meeting during the Council Presidency and were put into a concrete regulation within the climate change package in 2008. The second German respondent admitted “party politics matter for big countries”.

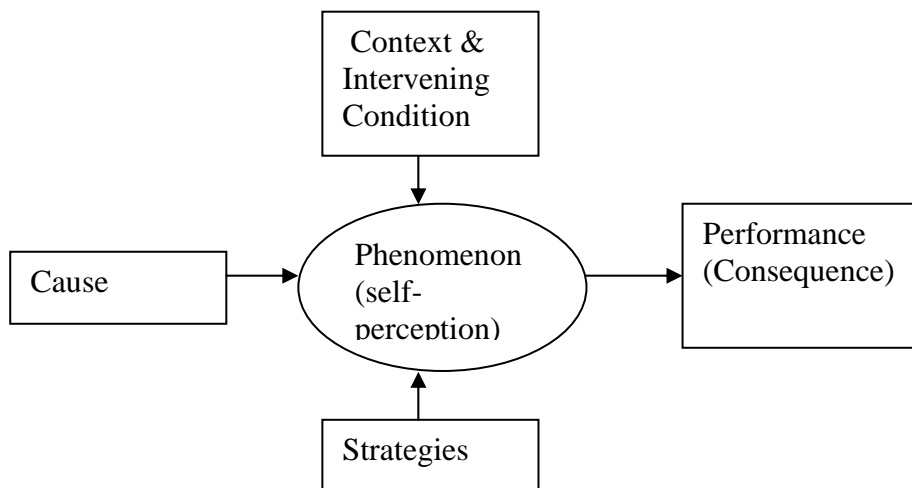
As such, the **size of a country** emerges as a possible variable that may explain the Presidency’s functioning and behaviour. According to the French respondent, “size does not affect performance”. The French interviewee drew a parallel with the Luxembourg Presidency which “is traditionally excellent”. The French interviewee noted that “Presidency capacity...and attitude towards Europe” are more important than the size. A more elaborate response was given by the German interviewee, who stated that “the Presidency of the Council requires a tremendous amount of resources and institutional capacity...the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the European Union in Brussels was enlarged during the Presidency. It does require for small country to invest more in building institutional capacity than a big country, which can already draw on existing resources. Additionally it is probably easier for countries, which have been part of the EU for a long time than for those which are the “newcomers” in the Community. Nonetheless, a Presidency can also be a chance to set the agenda, promote new programs and guide the EU for small

countries, too.” It is rather clear that ideational self-images of the Presidency are dependent on and responsive to various external and internal factors such as unexpected events, size, party preferences or vision of Europe. Cumulatively or individually these factors may lead to variations in performance.

5.5. Coding and Categorising

In coding, the main goal is to break down and understand a text and to attach and develop categories and put them in order. (Flick: 300) In order to illustrate and clarify relationships between categories I shall use a paradigm model (Strauss and Corbin 1998, p.127 in Flick: 301) and axial coding¹⁰⁹. The model aims to “clarify the relations between a phenomenon, its causes and consequences, its context and strategies of those involved” (ibid.). The concepts included into the category are the phenomenon and for the context and conditions for other categories. The developed relations and categories are verified against the context and the data. (ibid.)

The paradigm model is used to process the question of causality. The developed categories are verified against the text and the data (Flick: 301). Categories of self-perception are drawn from academic literature on EU Presidencies (see Elgström 2003) and accumulate cause, context and strategy factors into a single category of self-perception.



¹⁰⁹ Axial coding employs the use of inductive (developing concepts, categories and relations from the text) and deductive (testing the concepts, categories and relations against the text) thinking. (Flick: 301). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990, p.114) Axial coding is the process of relating subcategories to a category.

Scheme 2. Paradigm Model for Coding and Categories

Table.1 Explaining the categories.

| German Presidency | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| <i>Cause</i> | <i>Context & Intervening Condition</i> | <i>Strategy</i> | <i>Self-perception</i> | <i>Performance</i> |
| Expectation | Revival of the Constitutional Treaty, Restoring Economic Dynamism | Honest broker | Broker | dynamic |
| French Presidency | | | | |
| Reputation/ Credibility | Irish 2008 and French 2005 referenda, conflict in Georgia, financialcrisis | Bargainer | Ambiguous | static |

5.6. Validity

As the aim of the analysis is to make inferences, diagnose and predict as to the effects of communication, my goal here is to validate through “confirming” the sequence and repetition of themes in the text . This would also allow us to treat the analysis as “credible” or “referentially adequate”. As Eisner (1991) states, “we seek a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility, that allows us to feel confident about our observations, interpretations and conclusions.(Eisner 1991: 110)¹¹⁰ The approach employed by Eisner echoes Mishler’s (1990) process of “validation as the social construction of knowledge”, in which we evaluate “the trustworthiness of reported observations, interpretations and generalizations (1990, p.419 in Flick 2006: 373).

¹¹⁰ Eisner (1991) in Creswell, J. Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design, Choosing Among Five Approaches, SAGE, 2007.

The validity of the analysis is ensured by the universe from which samples were drawn. Holsti (1969) introduces content (face) validity, which in this case, is the most suitable form of revealing causality between self-perception and performance. In descriptive research, content validity is sufficient to draw plausible results. Neuendorf (2002: 115) proposes to take a “WYSIWYG” (what you see is what you get) approach to face validity in content analysis. Based on this approach and the sample created, we may state the *external validity* (generalizability) of the analysis is moderate to high. The sample comprises identifiable representative actors, while content measurement, verified through interviews, is “true to life” (ibid.). *Internal validity* explains whether observed changes can be attributed to a specific cause and *not* to other possible causes¹¹¹. Causal relationship between self-perception and performance is extensively discussed in the literature on EU integration. Internal validity of the research may therefore be regarded as *moderate or low* as the cause-effect relationship is qualitatively approached on the basis of inferences and assumptions made of reality (Flick: 371).

5.7. Reliability

Procedural reliability (Flick: 369) as a type of reliability backed by theories on constructivism and historical institutionalism serves the purpose of content analysis the best as it allows to check the “dependability of data and procedures” (Flick: 371) on specific theoretical constructions. Reliability with respect to the thesis is also founded on the stability of responses to a variety of norms and conditions outlined in standardised interviews. Reliability of the data collected can be regarded as high. Sources were identified to provide reliable first-hand information on the Presidency performance. To ensure reliability of information collected during the interviews, the sample comprised diplomats, party representative and think tanks representatives (see “Sampling”). The choice of media sources was verified both through online data published by Association for the Control of Media Diffusion (Association pour le contrôle de la diffusion de medias, OJD - for the French media) and a German-speaking politically-conscious German national (for the German media).

5.8. Summary

¹¹¹ <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/intval.php>

The analysis was essentially based on descriptive, inferential and psychometric approaches, that is making inferences about Presidency self-perception and performance based on process description, process categorisation and process-diagnosis.

Content analysis and axial coding applied revealed two cause-forming categories for Council Presidency self-perception, - expectation and reputation/credibility. Inference of expectation were drawn from both, prior Eurobarometer surveys, which weren't included into the content screening but datawise nevertheless affected the analysis, and media sources.

By using descriptive, inferential and psychometric approaches, I was able to selectively describe certain situation factors that affected the behaviour of the Presidencies. Inferential approach to content analysis was based on pointing out words or phrases, which inferred particular behavioural characteristics. The inferences were based on respective definitions of self-perception and performance. The sampling of media and interviewees allowed to record relevant and reliable information to validate the research. Interviews revealed divergence in ideational images for Presidency behaviour. While the German interviewees were prone to view the German Presidency in terms of "capacity to act", following the rules and norms associated with being an "honest broker" (which corresponds to the dynamic performance), the French interviewee claimed "EU Presidency is a routine, not something important for the French" with the French media portraying the stance of the French Presidency on an individual issue as ambiguous. There was an agreement, however, in viewing the roles of personalities of Merkel and Sarkozy as important in Presidency performance, though with emphasis placed different areas. Various emphasis was placed on the role of the country's size. While the French spokesman on behalf of the French Presidency stated the size does not play a role (gave an example of the Luxembourg President), the German interviewee stated that size does affect institutional resources and therefore performance and capability to act. Behaviour observation in content screening and their further validation through interviews allowed me to refer to the specific self-perception categories (derived from previous Presidency studies in academic literature) and generalise the type of self-perception into broker and ambiguous, and performance- into static and dynamic.

6. Conclusions

Studying EU Council Presidency is not new. Prior studies have been conducted and aim at studying the Presidency either as institutional constructs (Kirchner: 1992, Hayes-Renshaw: 1996) or through the lenses of empirical cases¹¹² Theoretical accounts on the EU Council Presidency offered by Elgström (ed.: 2003) present an opportunity single out a specific phenomenon in the Council Presidency –Presidency performance. In the thesis I attempted to argue that institutions are constrained by both normative and historical factors, which affect Presidency self-perception, navigate the process and affect the outcome. Drawing on cognition-based hypothesis by Moskowitz (2005), I suggest that norms, goals, expectancies, culture, affect and needs can direct what we think we are, - in other words, our self-perception. On the other hand, the effects of self-perception on performance of the Presidency can be derived from the historical institutionalist argument that “institutional choices taken in the past persist, thereby shaping and constraining actors later in time.” (Wiener, Diez 2004: 139)

6.1. Presidencies’ performance from constructivist and historical institutionalist perspectives

As constructivists largely refer to norms and roles to explain performance, the cases of the French and German EU presidencies indicate at diverging ways of norm application. The norm of impartiality is linked to the quality of leadership, which in its turn is determined by the quality of mediation. The norm of effectiveness is linked to the ability of the Presidency to achieve ‘achieve efficient and favourable outcomes, which have the desired impact’ (see Underdal 1994 in Metcalfe 1998). Both norms exist within Presidency performance as contextual signifiers and are linked to eventual type of role and strategy a Presidency chooses to apply these norms. From constructivist point of view role and strategy choices as behavioural choices are dependent on norms as defining not so much *what* a presidencies wants

¹¹² See Mayhew, Alan and Quaglia, Lucia, Working Paper 97, 2007; See the briefing notes and reports in, for example, the *Journal of Common Market Studies Annual Review, Notre Europe, Centre for European Policy Studies* for more evidence of this.

to achieve (the agenda is pre-determined), but *how* and *with what effect* on the Presidency image and performance.

In negotiations on climate change, the French Presidency was preoccupied with “reinforcing its driving role and credibility”(Lequesne, SIEPS Report 2008) and came out as “uncertain” over the type of performance it ultimately exhibited. In immigration domain, French Presidency is regarded to have exhibited self-interested, yet efficient behaviour. According to CEPS finding¹¹³, “the explicit intergovernmental nature of the Pact questions the intention of building a common European policy on migration. The Pact is very much oriented towards the member states and is driven by a predominately intergovernmental logic prioritising the competences of the member states over those of an EU at 27”.

The German Presidency’s willingness to act as “an honest broker” on Constitutional negotiations and the French Presidency ambition to regain credibility in climate change negotiations illustrate that intention emerges as a factor structuring the behaviour of the Presidency. According to March and Olsen (1995, p.65) behaviour belongs to the part of a system of values, goals and attitudes that embeds intentions into the structure of other beliefs and aspirations. Intentions as prerequisites for behaviour are determined by what Habermas (1992: 432 in Fossum et.al 2009) calls “the streams of communicating information and points of view” – a public sphere, which, according to the logic of appropriateness, extrapolates the images and determines potential behaviours and roles of the Council Presidency through *perceived anticipated value* to be obtained by the Presidency in individual policy sectors. Expectations influence self-perception as a factor that tests reaction capability of the Presidency to a specific social, political or economic stimulus. Based on the reaction exhibited, a particular attribution was made about the Presidency’s capability and ideational image.

In the performance of the German and French EU Council presidencies historical institutionalist patterns were visible the most in areas where actors tried to adopt behavioural patterns exercised by the governments of the respective presidencies. The historical institutionalist argument, however, has not fully proved its validity in the French Presidency case of approaching security and defence policy. Sarkozy’s unequivocal support for the idea of bringing France back into the NATO structures and the idea to strengthen EU-NATO partnership on the principle of complementarity do testify to the willingness of the French Presidency to base its performance on real-time needs and priorities.

Tasks a Presidency traditionally performs relate to the logic of appropriateness insofar as “presidencies act as they believe they should act” (Elgström 2003: 198). The logics of action chosen may serve to describe, explain, justify and criticize behaviour. According to March and Olsen

¹¹³ CEPS Policy Paper No.170 by Sergio Carrera and Elspeth Guild, Septembre 2008

(04/09), behavioural mechanisms are history-dependent processes of adaptation . Rule-driven behaviours associated with successes, March states, are likely to be repeated, while rules associated with failures are not (March 04/09). This explains why self-perception rests predominately on an assumption that history-dependent processes play a role in determining the behavioural paths Presidencies choose and why successfully integrated behaviour is applied to performance.

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