

Parameters of the Chairmanship's Effectiveness: The Case of the UN Security Council

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Summary

The article discusses the parameters conditioning the chair's effectiveness in international multilateral negotiations. Building on existing accounts of Presidential functions, an analytical typology of these parameters is provided, elaborating on the direction and magnitude of their impact. Conditioning parameters are clustered into three categories: the broader international environment in which the chair operates and the issues with which (s)he is called to deal; organization-specific features of an institutional and political nature; and the chair's personal skills and country-of-origin attributes. The potential for effect of these parameters is illustrated by reference to the chairmanship of the UN Security Council (SC). The origins, institutional features and main tasks of the Council are discussed, as well as the role of its chair as an agenda manager and broker. It is argued that the SC President's role well exceeds the formal tasks that are stipulated in the Rules of Procedure. Although mainly procedural in nature, these tasks may have important political implications, stressing the informal component of Presidential intervention. The conditioning parameters identified have a catalytic impact upon and account for the great variance in SC chair performance and the effectiveness of the chair's intervention.

Key Words

Chair, UN Security Council, parameters of effectiveness, functions, tasks, performance

The great thing in chairing any difficult assembly or large meeting is to choose the right second for striking the 'come on now, let's chuck it and get down to business' note. Nothing is

more painful than a nervous or hesitant Chairman; but equally a bullying type may provoke a riot. The collective animal in front of you has to be handled, in other words, like a horse which is inclined to bolt.¹

Introduction

Multilateral negotiations usually suffer from collective action problems and transaction costs that prevent states from concluding agreements. To overcome such problems, constituent states' principals delegate power to member states' representatives or supranational officials with mandates to manage the agenda, structure deliberations and broker agreements. Given such mandates, the role of the chair can become critical in delineating the negotiation space and/or in affecting the direction and outcome of negotiations per se.

Despite the significance of the Presidential role, however, existing literature on the chairmanship's institution remains incomplete in many regards. More specifically, it is characterized by the lack of a systematic account of both the sources of a chair's role in multilateral negotiations (that is, why do constituent states' principals delegate powers to chairs in multilateral negotiations?) and, most important, of the parameters that allow chairs to exert a strong influence over the outcome of multilateral negotiations.² And yet more specifically, neither a *coherent set* of factors that affects the chairmanship's ability to play the multitude of roles is available, nor the *specific factors that account most for — or determine — the chair's ability* to affect the direction and/or outcome of negotiations has been explicitly discussed. Hence, this article's primary objective is to contribute to the more systematic study of the chairmanship in international, multilateral negotiation settings by exploring the specific factors that condition, if not determine, the chair's role, performance and influence.

This analytical contribution is subsequently applied to the role of the President in the particular institutional setting of the UN Security Council (SC). The SC is the sole UN organ with primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The SC consists of fifteen members, five of which are permanent members (the United States, Russia,

¹ Lord Gladwyn, *The Memoirs of Lord Gladwyn* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1972), p. 253. Lord Gladwyn was the UK Permanent Representative to the UN from 1950-1954.

² See Tallberg in this issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*.

France, United Kingdom and China) with veto power on substantive issues. The remaining ten are elected for two years by the General Assembly on the basis of a formula to ensure equitable geographical and regional distribution,³ and they do not have the veto option. Both the pivotal SC role in international affairs and the idiosyncratic features of this UN body render the SC a very interesting case study for the role of the chair in multilateral negotiations. Official SC records report only formal proceedings and therefore cannot shed light on behind-the-scenes' activities where the SC Presidents play a more important role. Consequently, the in-depth testimonies of diplomats who have held this post have been relied upon, in order to collect the necessary empirical evidence.⁴

This article proceeds in three parts: the first briefly reviews the chair's roles in negotiations; the second provides an analytical clustering of the set of parameters that condition the chair's ability to play these roles of agenda manager and broker; the third discusses these parameters in the SC's institutional context, assessing on the basis of the empirical material the main determinants of the SC President's capacity to influence the direction and/or outcome of negotiations. The article concludes by providing some methodological prerequisites and directions for future research on the chair's role.

The Chair's Functions and Modes of Conduct in Multilateral Negotiations

In broad concordance with the rational approach to the design of international institutions,⁵ the article adheres to the functional origin of the chair as a governance form to resolve impediments to collective action in multilateral

³) Originally the Security Council was composed of eleven members, six of which were non-permanent. As the membership of the UN increased, non-permanent seats rose from six to ten after the 1965 UN Charter amendment. Currently, there are five non-permanent SC members from the Afro-Asian region, one from Eastern Europe, two from Latin America and two from the group of Western Europe and Others.

⁴) We have extensively used data from a research project of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), which reviewed the experiences of eighteen past SC Presidents. See D. Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace: The UN Security Council and Its Presidency* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981). We have supplemented this source with additional material from our own research.

⁵) B. Koremenos, C. Lipson and D. Snidal, 'The Rational Design of International Institutions,' *International Organization*, vol. 55, no. 4, 2001, pp. 761-799.

negotiations.⁶ Through power delegation and agent formation, constituent states' principals aim to redress agenda, negotiation and representation failures, ensure procedural order, overcome information asymmetries in political and technical areas of governance and enhance rule-making efficiency.⁷

In that respect, the most important functions of the Chair entail *agenda management* and *brokerage* services. *Agenda management* encompasses a broad spectrum of the chair's activities, related to agenda-setting, -structuring and -exclusion.⁸ These activities range from administrative functions regarding the sequence, frequency and method of negotiation to a more substantial role in the various negotiation stages (from the pre-negotiation stage to the conclusion of an agreement) regarding the structure of meetings, the format of meeting agendas, the voting procedures, etc. The chair's *brokerage* services address the common practice of states in multilateral negotiations to withhold information about true preferences, thus limiting the chances of concluding an agreement. In other words, *brokerage* services are primarily meant to tackle negotiation failures because of tactical concealing of information,⁹ with the chair functioning as a channel of more — or less — reliable information about states' preferences.

As an agent of the principals of constituent states, the chair is supposed to conduct the assigned functions with a view to promoting collective gains, which suggests that (s)he manages the agenda in a neutral and impartial way and acts as an 'honest broker' in the bargaining stage. However, as the principal agent and bargaining literature suggest, egotism and opportunism are omnipresent features of human nature¹⁰ and agents can be self-interested figures who are motivated to exercise their functions to further their own preferences and values.¹¹ Chairmanship may thus be seen by certain actors as a 'window of opportunity' to shift the agenda and post-bargaining distri-

⁶ J. Tallberg, 'The Power of the Chair in International Bargaining', paper presented at the 2002 ISA Annual Convention, New Orleans LA, 24-27 March 2002.

⁷ M. Thatcher and A. Stone Sweet, 'Theory and Practice of Delegation to Non-Majoritarian Institutions', *West European Politics*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2002, p. 4.

⁸ J. Tallberg, 'The Agenda-Shaping Powers of the EU Council Presidency', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2003, pp. 6-13.

⁹ See H. Raiffa, *The Art and Science of Negotiation* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

¹⁰ For an account based on the principal-agent theory, see D.R. Kiewiet and Mathew D. McCubbins, *The Logic of Delegation: Congressional Parties and the Appropriations Process* (Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 5.

¹¹ On the bargaining theory, see O. Young, 'Political Leadership and Regime Formation: On the

bution of gains to their own advantage, exhibiting an *opportunistic* conduct of the chair's functions in the pursuit of individualistic or national/country-of-origin interests. The promotion of private interests can either take the form of directing negotiations to an own preferred outcome along the Pareto optimal frontier or induce a sub-optimal solution (as depicted in Table 1).¹²

Table 1

		Mode of Conduct	
		<i>Collective</i>	<i>Individualistic – Opportunistic</i>
Chair's Functions	<i>Agenda Manager</i>	Neutral and impartial	Agenda-hijacking
	<i>Broker</i>	'Honest broker'	Promoter of own interests (a) along Pareto frontier or (b) sub-optimal bargaining outcomes

In the first case, the effect is mainly distributional, and skewed to the chair's benefit, whereas in the second case the chair's activities may impede overall bargaining efficiency. The mode of conduct of Presidential functions thus affects both the process and outcome of negotiations, according to whether chairs serve the agents of constituent states' interests or jump through the available 'window of opportunity' and shift the agenda and bargaining to their own preferences.

Development of Institutions in International Society', *International Organization*, vol. 45, no. 3, 1991, p. 296; and T. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1960), p. 144.

¹² The Pareto frontier comprises all possible outcomes that optimize overall efficiency, maximizing the utility of all of the actors involved without causing negative repercussions to the utility of other

Conditioning Factors: Developing an Analytical Typology

Building on different theoretical strands and approaches, an attempt is made in this section to develop a comprehensive list of the parameters that condition the chair's ability to perform the assigned roles and tasks. The proposed parameters mainly derive from realist and institutionalist accounts of inter-governmental negotiations. However, the need is acknowledged for a more eclectic approach that considers personal-psychological, cognitive and persuasive aspects of deliberation and communicative action in various institutional settings. To this end, conditioning parameters are clustered into three broad categories: the broader international environment in which the chair operates and the issues with which (s)he is called to deal; organization-specific features of an institutional and political nature; and personal skills and country-of-origin attributes of the chair (see Table 2 for a summary).

Table 2: Parameters Affecting the Chair's Effectiveness

PARAMETERS	OPERATIONALIZATION		DIRECTIONAL IMPACT ON THE CHAIR'S EFFECTIVENESS (+) positive impact (-) negative impact
INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT	Systemic Power Configuration		Conditions of amity : + Polarization and enmity: -
NATURE OF ISSUE	Degree of Salience		-
	Degree of Controversialism		-
ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES	Institutional Design <i>-rotation</i> <i>-election</i> <i>-appointment</i>	Process (agenda management and brokerage) control	+
		Continuity	+
		Duration of Tenure	+

actors. However, each of these outcomes entails a different distribution of benefits to each actor. Therefore, each actor strives to direct outcomes to his/her own preferred solution.

Table 2: (cont.)

PARAMETERS	OPERATIONALIZATION		DIRECTIONAL IMPACT ON THE CHAIR'S EFFECTIVENESS (+) positive impact (-) negative impact	
ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES	Resources	Informational	+	
		Chair's Legitimacy and Authority	+	
	Constraints	Formal	<i>mandate</i>	Narrow and specific mandate: -
			<i>decision-making rules</i>	Special majority or unanimity: -
			<i>control mechanisms</i>	Efficient control mechanisms: -
	Informal: <i>behavioural norms</i>	-		
PERSONAL SKILLS	Personality-specific Features		+	
	Leadership Potential		+	
	Expertise		+	
COUNTRY-OF-ORIGIN ATTRIBUTES	Power Reflection		ambiguous	
	Country's Legitimacy and Authority		+	

Before elaborating on these parameters, three general points should be made. First, not all of them are relevant to all institutional settings or cases; it may well be that in a particular case or setting a parameter has an overwhelming effect on the performance of a chair's functions and in a different case or setting bear no influence at all. Second, the identified parameters are inter-related; they should be seen as a coherent set, whereby each has a varying relative weight of influence. In each case the effect of one parameter is filtered through the others (for example, the salience of issues affects a chair's effectiveness negatively, but not if the degree of controversialism is low and negotiating partners share the same perspective). Thus, although each of the parameters can trigger individual analytical propositions about the direction

and magnitude of impact, they should not be disassociated from each other and treated independently. Third, in the real world there is often an overlap and parameters cannot easily be disentangled from each other.

The International Environment and the Nature of Issue

General patterns of cooperation and conflict in world politics have a direct bearing on the activities of international organizations¹³ and environmental forces shape goals, boundaries and the internal activity of international institutions.¹⁴ Thus, the systemic power configuration creates an international climate within which the chair operates. In other words, general world conditions of enmity or amity (periods of international polarization against periods of détente) constitute important exogenous parameters, which can affect political power constellations in the international contours of multi-lateral negotiations and create a more (or less) conducive environment for the chair to perform his/her functions. This impact of international environmental political conditions can be seen either with regards to the chair's resources (basically legitimacy-related and informational) and/or the chair's functions per se. A polarized international environment curtails not only the chair's resources, subsequently limiting the chair's potential to deliver, but also the chair's functions, minimizing the range of assigned roles to simple procedural tasks and formalities.

In that respect, the systemic polarization of the Cold War years and the deriving confrontational climate could hardly 'legitimize'¹⁵ the initiatives of a chair in an international organization. In such a context where both rival camps were members, the chair lacked the necessary political backing to pursue his/her tasks. However, the end of the Cold War has increased the demand for a more prominent role for international institutions (especially

¹³ R.W. Cox and H.K. Jacobson, 'The Framework for Inquiry', in R.W. Cox and H.K. Jacobson (eds), *The Anatomy of Influence: Decision-Making in International Organization* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1973), pp. 25-34.

¹⁴ G.D. Ness and S.R. Brechin, 'Bridging the Gap: International Organizations as Organizations', *International Organization*, vol. 42, no. 2, 1988, p. 249.

¹⁵ In IR theory and strategic studies' literature, *external legitimacy* refers to the extent that a state's strategy coincides with international norms and public opinion of the time. See P. Kennedy, 'Grand Strategy in War and Peace: Toward a Broader Definition', in P.M. Kennedy, *Grand Strategies in War and Peace* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 1-7.

for those with universal membership, such as the UN).¹⁶ As a result, the institution of chairmanship in such organizations has been empowered with greater authority to perform the assigned tasks and thus a greater potential to perform them effectively.

The nature of the negotiating issue (military, economic, humanitarian, environmental security, etc.) also affects the chair's ability to perform his/her functions successfully. 'Hard core' security issues that touch upon core national interests are usually considered to be more sensitive and difficult to handle than non-security ones (economic, environmental, etc.). However, the 'nature-of-issue' parameter goes beyond the traditional 'high-low politics' dichotomy, which is often misleading and does not fully encapsulate an issue's sensitivity. Our contention is that a more qualified treatment is required, taking into consideration *the degree of salience* and *controversialism* of an issue.

The *degree of salience* disassociates the importance of an issue from the 'high-low politics' dichotomy, linking it to the particular value that it holds for a negotiating party regardless of its thematic classification. The impact of the salience of the issue on the chair's performance is straightforward: the more salient an issue is for a constituent principal state, the more difficult it is for the chair to perform his/her functions. In cases where the issue in question is non-salient, it is more likely for the disagreeing country or group in the minority to be cajoled by the chair (or the other negotiating partners), especially in institutionalized settings of repetitive negotiations. In contrast, the chair has much less room for manoeuvres when the issue is salient for at least some of the negotiating parties. In such cases, and particularly when the unanimity requirement applies, the chances of brokering an agreement decrease and the chair's role becomes more difficult.

The *degree of controversialism* of an issue basically refers to the extent that an issue is amenable to compromise or not.¹⁷ There are three criteria to identify whether an issue is amenable to compromise or not. First, negotiating sides should be able to see a clear need for departure from the current status quo (in the same direction). Second, it should be possible to derive arrangements that are perceived as equitable to most, or even better, to all sides involved. Third, identifiable salient solutions should exist around which the

¹⁶ See, among others, the introduction to T. Weiss, D.P. Forsythe and R. Coate, *The United Nations and Changing World Politics* (Boulder CO: Westview, 2001), pp. 1-18.

¹⁷ O. Young, 'The Politics of International Regime Formation: Managing Natural Resources and the Environment', *International Organization*, vol. 43, no. 3, 1989, pp. 366-371.

debate can be focused.¹⁸ The general direction of impact on the chair's performance is similar to the salience issue parameter: the more controversial an issue — that is, the greater the distance among the agreement zones of negotiating partners and the smaller the contract zone — the more difficult it is for a chair to perform his/her functions effectively.

Organization-Specific Features of an Institutional and Political Nature

The second group of parameters that affects the chair's performance comprises organization-specific, institutional and political features and can be divided into three sub-categories: institutional design of the chairmanship; available resources; and imposed constraints in the course of task execution.

First and foremost, the particular choice of the *institutional design of the chairmanship* constitutes a critical parameter delineating the quality and quantity of the chair's resources and constraints. The three alternative institutional models available to the constituent states' principals comprise rotation of the chairmanship among states' principals, election of the chair from one of the participating states, and appointment of a supranational official. Obviously, each of these institutional alternatives reflects different states' dispositions and power configurations. In terms of chairmanship, each state shapes the chair's negotiation manoeuvrability and intervention capacity differently. The alternative models vary in the way that they treat issues of process (agenda management and brokerage) control,¹⁹ institutional continuity and duration of tenure.²⁰ Greater process control, more institutional continuity and longer duration of tenure have a positive effect on a chair's effectiveness.

For example, provisions in the agenda-management rules that enable the chair to table draft proposals in a particular decision-making forum constitute an institutional asset for the office of chairmanship, in the sense that

¹⁸ C.B. Smith, 'Three Perspectives on Global Consensus Building: A Framework for Analysis', *International Journal of Organization Theory and Behaviour*, vol. 5, nos. 1 and 2, 2002, pp. 124-126.

¹⁹ In contrast to what bargaining literature takes for granted, namely that the institution of the chairmanship has an asymmetrical process control over agenda management and brokerage, our contention is that although the chair may indeed enjoy a certain amount of a privileged status over process control, the exact terms of this status are determined by the specific institutional design (and should thus neither be overemphasized nor taken for granted).

²⁰ See Elgström in this issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*.

it caters for some agenda-management autonomy for the chair that can be instrumentally exploited in the course of negotiations. Furthermore, the capacity to delegate decisions to other forums assists the chair to shape the agenda and either introduce proposals that (s)he wants to promote or to discourage others that (s)he wants to keep away from collective consideration.²¹ Institutional continuity is often hampered by changes in the chair, which is usually the case in the rotational institutional design and in appointment/election schemes with short periods for the chairmanship-in-office. Institutional discontinuity impedes socialization effects, economies of scale and learning curves in the building of the chair's interaction with constituent partners, skills and informational resources. In the same vein, a longer duration in office enables repeated social interaction between the chair and the negotiating constituent states' principals, facilitates familiarization with working methods and techniques and leads to the emergence of a common policy perspective.²²

The second sub-group of organization-specific features revolves around the *resources* available to the chair to perform his/her functions. The more resources that are available, the greater the chair's potential to deliver on the assigned tasks. The most important asset for the chair is the *privileged and asymmetrical access to information* that is either unavailable to or extremely costly for the constituent states' principals.²³ Through existing bureaucratic mechanisms (Secretariats, etc.) and procedural arrangements (confidential bilateral meetings, etc.), the chair enjoys privileged access to undisclosed preferential information, which can be instrumentally used for the exact demarcation of the existing contract zone facilitating multilateral agreement. Besides information-related resources, the chair's intervention potential is also positively associated with the 'legitimacy'²⁴ and authority of the

²¹ For a discussion of such a case in NATO's institutional setting, where decisions were transferred from the North Atlantic Council (NAC) to Defence Planning Committee (DPC) and vice versa, see P. Gallis, *NATO's Decision-Making Procedure*, CRS Report for the US Congress, 5 May 2003, p. 3.

²² See D. Metcalfe, 'Leadership in European Union Negotiations: The Presidency of the Council', *International Negotiation*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1998, pp. 416-426.

²³ See T. Moe and W. Howell, 'The Presidential Power of Unilateral Action', *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1999, p. 138.

²⁴ Here legitimacy is regarded '...as a resource that strengthens the political power [of rational political actors], improves their access to positions of authority, enhances their capacity to govern and extends their period of rule'; in F. Schimmelfennig, 'International Socialization in the New

chairmanship office.²⁵ If the chair's intervention is seen as legitimate by the negotiating partners and (s)he is considered an authoritative source of brokerage activities, (s)he has more chances to perform his/her tasks effectively. The chair's legitimacy reflects the legitimacy of the international organization and the mode of the chair's selection affects his authority, with a consensual decision for the chair's appointment or an election with an overwhelming majority empowering the chair in the exercise of his/her tasks.

The third sub-group of organization-specific institutional parameters comprises *formal* and *informal constraints* that have an effect on the chair's effectiveness. Formal institutional constraints derive from three sources: *mandate*; *decision-making rules*; and the *control mechanisms* that are set in place by states' principals to control the chair in cases of over-assertiveness. Informal constraints mainly refer to *behavioural norms* that should underlie the chair's actions and initiatives. In general, the more extensive the range of these constraints, the more limited the role of the chair will be and the less the chances to perform his/her functions effectively.

With regard to *formal constraints*, the *mandate* outlines the assigned formal tasks and delimits the chair's scope for formal intervention. A broad and/or vague mandate that allows space for the chair's initiatives raises the potential of an agent's assertiveness and reinforces his/her effectiveness. In contrast, a very narrow and/or detailed mandate curtails the chair's capacity to perform his/her functions. In general, the fewer the formal-institutional constraints identified in the mandate and the more the institutional autonomy of the chair, the more the potential exists for effective activity by the chair. *Decision-making rules* also affect the chair's effectiveness. The method of decision applied to a particular multilateral setting — that is, unanimity versus majority voting — has important implications for the chair's ability to perform his/her tasks. Apparently, in multilateral settings where decisions are taken through simple majority voting, it is relatively easier for the chair to master the necessary support through appropriate redistribution of agreement benefits than in more demanding decision-making settings. By the same token, the more demanding the policy-making rule (that is, special majority or unanimity), the more difficult it is for the chair to perform his/

Europe: Rational Action in an Institutional Environment', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2000, p. 117.

²⁵ See J. Wall and A. Lynn, 'Mediation: A Current Overview', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol. 37, no. 1, 1993, p. 173.

her functions. *Control mechanisms* are set in place by principals to curtail the chair's quest for more institutional autonomy and usually take the form of appointment, administrative and oversight procedures.²⁶ The more efficient that these control mechanisms are, the more constrained the chair is in performing his functions and subsequently the fewer expectations there are for effectiveness.

Informal constraints comprise basically the — most often implicit — behavioural norms, which impose *ex ante* constraints on the chair's behaviour. Most commonly met are the norms of efficiency, neutrality and impartiality. The former is directly linked with the functional nature of the agent to deliver prosperity-enhancing solutions to collective action problems, whereas the two latter norms underlie the choice of options from the multitude available at the Pareto frontier.²⁷ In terms of decision-making rules, the norm of consensus may apply even in decision-making frameworks where unanimity is not required, making the chair's life more difficult and undermining his/her effectiveness.

The Chair's Personal Skills and Country-of-Origin Attributes

Personality-specific features and the appropriate use from the chair of distinct personal skills can advance bargaining and negotiation efficiency.²⁸ Temperament and working style, competence and experience, intellect and physical endurance are critical determinants of the chair's performance. Furthermore, the chair's *leadership potential* can assist negotiating parties to overcome

²⁶ J. Tallberg, 'Delegation to Supranational Institutions: Why, How and With what Consequences', *West European Politics*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 25-27; M.D. McCubbins, R.G. Noll and B.R. Weingast, 'Administrative Procedures as Instruments of Political Control', *Journal of Law, Economics and Organization*, vol. 3, no. 2, 1987, pp. 243-277. The nature and strictness of these control mechanisms depend on the *purpose of delegation*. If principals create an agent in order to realize predetermined and quite specific objectives, then the distribution of policy preferences among principals at the time of the delegation will determine *ex ante* the exact scope of agent discretion. In contrast, in cases of high levels of uncertainty, rapid change or the existence of several policy alternatives along the Pareto line, effective *ex post* controls will be better suited to deal with 'agency losses'. Thatcher and Stone Sweet, 'Theory and Practice of Delegation to Non-Majoritarian Institutions', p. 5; and R.L. Calvert, M.D. McCubbins and B.R. Weingast, 'A Theory of Political Control and Agency Discretion', *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 33, no. 3, 1989, p. 589.

²⁷ Tallberg, 'The Power of the Chair in International Bargaining'.

²⁸ G. Yuki, *Leadership in International Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall, 1981), p. 270; and M. Hermann, 'Explaining Foreign Policy Behaviour Using the Personal Characteristics of Political Leaders', *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1980, pp. 8-12.

bargaining impediments.²⁹ Through arm-twisting and side-payments (structural leadership), use of negotiation skills (entrepreneurial leadership) and/or framing appropriately the problem at hand by means of effective use of ideational power (intellectual leadership), the chair can exercise a catalytic influence on the decision-making outcome.³⁰ Moreover, chairs often enjoy a unique expertise over the subject matter, deriving either from some special technical knowledge or wide-held experience. This *content* or *issue expertise* may have been acquired in a personal capacity or derive from the chairmanship institution itself, in which case it may be further strengthened by particular auxiliary bodies of the multilateral organizations (such as the Secretariats).³¹ Personal skills, leadership potential and expertise increase the chair's effectiveness in pursuing his/her functions.

Country-of-origin attributes refer to the home country's features and reputational assets that ease the performance of the chair's functions. The country-of-origin's international record can add to (or subtract from) the chair's resources and affect his/her political status, with negotiating partners showing a more positive disposition towards chairs from countries with a pacifist and mediator profile. However, the chair's legitimacy and performance do not necessarily correlate with power reflections. Indeed, a chair originating from a strong state is often met with a priori scepticism, if not distrust, with regard to its ability to perform his/her tasks objectively.

The UN Security Council President

Setting the Background: Origins, Institutional Features and Main Tasks

The SC Presidency has grown in stature over time by default rather than by design. The UN Charter provided no substantial base for the emergence and

²⁹ See, among others, R. Malnes, "“Leader” and “Entrepreneur” in International Negotiations: A Conceptual Analysis', *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1995, pp. 87-112; and A. Underdal, 'International Cooperation in Political Engineering', in S. Nagel (ed.), *Global Policy Studies* (London: Macmillan, 1991).

³⁰ See Young, 'Political Leadership and Regime Formation', pp. 281-308.

³¹ Wall and Lynn, 'Mediation', pp. 160-194; and Metcalfe 'Leadership in European Union Negotiations'; On the role of auxiliary institutional bodies in multilateral negotiations, see D. Beach, 'The Unseen Hand in Treaty Reform Negotiations: The Role and Influence of the Council Secretariat', *Journal of European Public Policy*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2004, pp. 408-439.

development of the office of SC chairmanship. It contains only one provision with regard to the SC Presidency, stipulating that the SC shall adopt its own rules of procedure, including the method of selecting its President (Article 30). Thus, the UN Charter entrusted the SC members with the authority to shape the President's office, through the rules of procedure and according to the functional needs that arose from the actual operation of the Council. The UN's founders and more specifically the main drafters of the UN Charter, namely the United States, United Kingdom and the former Soviet Union, refused to discuss in detail the Presidency issue during the 1945 San Francisco conference, leaving it for discussion at a later stage in the UN Preparatory Commission (PC).³² Proposals for a SC President elected on a personal basis for a term ranging from two months to one year were rejected during the PC's sessions. Instead, the PC adhered to a US proposal and recommended (in contrast with its recommendations for the other UN bodies) the rotation of the Council's Presidency on a monthly basis in English-language alphabetical order of the names of its members. Evidently, the main drafters of the UN Charter were very sensitive to the powers entrusted to the SC President. They preferred a Presidency on the basis of automatic rotation for a calendar month rather than a long-serving President selected on the basis of personal qualifications, competence, experience and political impartiality. The PC's recommendation was unanimously approved by the SC when it adopted its Rules of Procedure.³³

Following this special arrangement, the institutional design of the SC Presidency differs from that of the other UN institutional bodies. The model of automatic rotation gives every member, permanent and non-permanent, the opportunity to preside over the SC. However, the short-term tenure of the post suggests that each President has very little time at his/her disposal to become familiarized with the Presidential tasks and exercise them efficiently. It thus needs a lot of personal skill and leadership capacity for a President to

³² The Preparatory Commission, convened shortly after the San Francisco conference, was entrusted with the task to make the first procedural arrangements for the opening sessions of the various UN organs, including the Security Council.

³³ See S. Bailey and S. Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), pp. 9-15. The SC's Rules of Procedure were adopted at the first SC meeting and amended at its 31st, 41st, 42nd, 44th and 48th meetings on 9 April, 16 and 17 May, 6 and 24 June 1946; 138th and 222nd meetings on 4 June and 9 December 1974; 468th meeting on 28 February 1950; 1463rd meeting on 24 January 1969; 1761st meeting on 17 January 1974; and 2410th meeting on 21 December 1982.

manage the SC's agenda successfully and to make a substantial impact on the SC's works. True, rotation gives the SC the chance to get rid of a problematic Presidency in only one month, thus minimizing risks of failure. On the other hand, the monthly rotation creates an element of discontinuity in the SC's work. To fill this gap, outgoing Presidents (and the Secretariat) fully brief the next President about the issues on the SC's agenda. Still, it is very difficult for the outgoing President to pass on to his/her successor all of the privileged information entrusted to him/her in confidence.

The SC President is expected to exercise the tasks of office showing impartiality and neutrality. However, the rotating Presidency is attached to the member state concerned and not to the country representative as an individual, which means that the President has a 'double-hatted' position in the Council, acting both as presiding officer and country representative. This double-hatted identity raises inevitable concerns about the President's impartiality³⁴ and the possible interplay with domestic politics.³⁵ Although rotation in itself constitutes a form of control, by putting a time limit on each state's exploitation of the office,³⁶ it only eases and does not suppress the underlying suspicion that the country holding the office may use the period to promote national interests.³⁷ Rhetorical adherence to principles of neutrality and impartiality is taken for granted but not considered sufficient. To overcome such suspicions, the SC's Rules of Procedure offer a safety clause, providing the President with the option to cede the presidency whenever (s)he '...deems that for the proper fulfilment of the responsibilities of the presidency he should not preside over the Council during the consideration of a particular question with which the member he represents is directly

³⁴ D. Nicol, *The United Nations Security Council: Towards Greater Effectiveness* (New York: UNITAR, 1982), p. 33.

³⁵ In 1979, the US Ambassador in the SC, Andrew Young, met in private in his capacity as imminent SC President with the PLO representative, at a time when the US still did not officially recognize the PLO. The meeting was leaked to the press and after Israel's strong protest to the US government, Young had to resign.

³⁶ See Tallberg in this issue of *The Hague Journal of Diplomacy*.

³⁷ In the 354th SC meeting, in 1948, the US representative criticized the former USSR's representative, who held the Presidency at that point, pointing to role confusion: 'I believe that Mr Malik's [USSR Representative] reply was perhaps, at least in part, given as the representative of the USSR rather than as President, but I rather suspect that the President of the Security Council would agree with the representative of the USSR on the position, which he voiced in that matter' (S/PV. 354, 19 August 1948, p. 29).

connected' (Rule 20). However, it is at the President's discretion to cede the office temporarily and only for the consideration of a question in which his/her country is *directly* involved. Both the element of direct involvement and whether it impedes the President from performing his/her tasks are at the judgement of the President, as illustrated by the cases when this Rule has been invoked.³⁸

The tasks of the SC President can be clustered in three broad categories.³⁹ The first group consists of formal tasks that mainly revolve around procedural arrangements. Since they cannot cover all of the possible eventualities, these formal procedural tasks offer the President considerable interventionist latitude as long as presidential rulings on the contested procedural issues are acceptable to a SC majority.⁴⁰ As stipulated in the Rules of Procedure, the SC President is responsible for calling a meeting (Rules 1-3); approving the provisional agenda of each meeting, which is drawn up by the Secretary-General (Rules 7 and 20); presiding over SC meetings and representing it

³⁸ See Table 4 in Bailey and Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*, p. 126. The US representative passed on the President's office in 1948, when the SC discussed the restrictions imposed unilaterally by the former USSR on transport and communications between the Western occupation zones in Germany. Similarly, the representative of China withdrew from his capacity as chair when the SC came to discuss, in 1950, a draft resolution on the rightful composition of the Chinese delegation in the UN. For these cases, see S.E. Werners, *The Presiding Officers of the United Nations* (Haarlem: Bohn, 1967), pp. 44-47. Similarly, India withdrew in 1951 when the India-Pakistan question was brought to the foreground and so did Lebanon in 1954 over the Palestine question. At a later stage, the British representative ceded the Presidency in 1975 when Iceland brought fisheries' disputes to the SC, directly implicating the UK (See I. Richard, 'The Council President as Politician', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 251-252). More recently, Cuba ceded the office in 1990 over tension in the Gulf of Mexico region; Cape Verde in 1993 on the International Court of Justice election; and Rwanda in 1994 over the Rwanda crisis. In contrast, the US representative refused to cede the Presidency in 1958 when the former USSR brought to the SC the issue of US bombers armed with nuclear weapons flying in the direction of USSR frontiers. The US representative argued that '... a representative of a Government should disqualify himself if the matter before the international body is one in which his Government has a selfish national interest. In my view that is not the case today' (S/PV 814, 2 June 1948, p. 3). So did the former USSR's representative over the Congo situation in 1960. The British representative also refused to cede the Presidency over the Southern Rhodesia-Zimbabwe issue in 1978, although in an earlier occasion on the same topic in 1968, where direct involvement was more apparent, the British representative had ceded the office. These cases illustrate that the Presidential response to any challenge related to direct involvement and deriving concerns of impartiality is in his/her sole discretion.

³⁹ See Istvan Pogany, 'The Role of the President of the UN Security Council', *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1982, pp. 231-245.

⁴⁰ Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, p. 9.

under the SC's authority as a UN organ (Rule 19);⁴¹ calling upon representatives to take the floor in the order they have expressed their desire to speak (Rule 27); ruling on a point of order and, if the ruling is challenged, submitting it to the SC for immediate decision (Rule 30); ruling on the order of voting on motion or resolution amendments (Rule 36); signing the verbatim records (Rule 53); and referring membership applications to the relevant Committee, unless decided otherwise by the Council (Rule 59). Besides these mandatory tasks, the President acts on his/her own discretion in calling extraordinary meetings at any time (s)he deems necessary (Rule 1); according precedence in debate to SC-appointed rapporteurs (Rule 29); and referring corrections of verbatim records back to the Council if (s)he considers them important (Rule 52).

Further to the tasks specified in the Rules of Procedure, the SC President regularly undertakes additional, procedural and formal tasks that have mainly evolved through the SC's day-to-day practice.⁴² This second group of tasks, which is not enshrined in the Rules, is carried out by the President with the members' implicit acquiescence. Although they may be seen as mere formalities, they still entail a certain degree of discretionary power for the SC President since they are custom-based and do not derive from explicit rules.⁴³

Finally, the third group comprises extraordinary tasks that have been assigned to the SC President on an ad hoc basis, including, most importantly,

⁴¹ According to the UN Preparatory Commission, the provision that the SC President should represent the SC was intended to give the SC President authority to nominate committees, appeal to parties in situations of tension or conflict and make oral statements of consensus or summaries, etc. (see Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 10-12). Representation tasks also entail relations with the UN General Assembly, the media and global society more generally.

⁴² Such tasks comprise opening and closing SC meetings; maintaining order and observance of Rules during the meetings; limiting informally the number or length of speeches in cases of utmost urgency; welcoming new members; offering condolences on the death of distinguished world leaders; expressing the SC's sympathy on human calamities or natural disasters, etc.; See Bailey and Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*, pp. 131-132.

⁴³ Formalities sometimes constitute actions with deep political implications. In January 1992, for example, the British SC President called an extraordinary SC meeting with a dual agenda. Although the meeting formally aimed to consider the SC's role in the post-Cold War era, in reality it meant to confirm Russia as the rightful successor to the former USSR's SC seat so as not to open the Pandora's Box of SC reform. In concert with other interested parties, permanent and non-permanent members, the British President, in a highly symbolic gesture at the beginning of the meeting, welcomed Russia as a permanent member of the Council, sealing the issue of succession. See D. Bourantonis and G. Kostakos, 'Diplomacy at the United Nations: The Dual Agenda of the 1992 Security Council Summit', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2000, pp. 212-226.

information-gathering and following the implementation of the SC's regulations or decisions.⁴⁴ In the same vein, the President has occasionally engaged in formal diplomatic activities to ease tension, either on his own initiative⁴⁵ or after a SC mandate.⁴⁶ The latter group have been based on a 1950 SC resolution that empowered the President, under certain conditions and principles and under the SC mandate, to undertake reporting or conciliatory action.⁴⁷ However, such tasks occurred more often in the early UN years and dwindled after the Secretary-General's role came to the ascendance.

The SC Chair as an Agenda Manager and Broker

Bearing in mind the assigned tasks, the President's competence appears to be limited by and large to procedural matters. However, procedural issues can easily evolve into substantive ones, upgrading the political importance of the President's role.⁴⁸ Thus, the decision to call an extraordinary meeting or suspend an ongoing meeting constitutes an act with potentially significant political bearings. Calling a meeting in response to an urgent request may provoke hasty, premature and poorly prepared debates that ultimately turn out to be counterproductive. That is why the President needs to act with prudence.⁴⁹ Suspension of meetings may obstruct the tackling of an international

⁴⁴ Bailey and Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*, pp. 133-134.

⁴⁵ On three occasions in the early UN years, in 1948, the President took a diplomatic initiative without prior consultation with the Council (the Indo-Pakistan conflict; meetings with the Jewish Agency for Palestine and the Arab Higher Committee; and the establishment of a neutral Technical Committee in connection with the Berlin question). However, such practice disappeared in the following years.

⁴⁶ The most important case remains the mission of the then SC President, Ambassador Gunnar Jarring of Sweden, in connection with the India-Pakistan question in 1957. More recent cases comprise, for example, the Dutch (van der Stoep) SC President's efforts to arrange safe passage for the PLO leadership through a corridor crossing Lebanon and Israel on their way to Tunis in December 1983 (see UN Doc. S/16228, 21 December 1983); or van Walsum's negotiations with the Indonesian leadership in his capacity as SC President for a fact-finding, UN-led mission in East Timor in 1999. See Peter van Walsum, 'The Security Council and the Use of Force: Kosovo, East Timor and Iraq', in Niels Blokker and Nico Schrijver (eds), *The Security Council and the Use of Force: Theory and Reality — A Need for Change?* (The Hague: Brill, 2005).

⁴⁷ SC Res. 81 (S/1486), 24 May 1950. The resolution was based on an earlier recommendation of the General Assembly (GA Res. 268b (III), 28 April 1949).

⁴⁸ F.Y. Chai, 'A View From the UN Secretariat', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, p. 88.

⁴⁹ M. Jakobson, 'The Importance of Periodic Meetings', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, p. 161; and J. Morizet 'Conflict and Collaboration Among States', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 170-171.

dispute or conflict and unnecessarily delay their settlement.⁵⁰ Setting the provisional agenda in controversial issues requires delicate handling, since in many cases the acknowledgement that an issue is appropriate for consideration constitutes in itself an act with significant political repercussions.⁵¹

Presidential rulings on the order of voting on motions and resolution amendments may cause friction in a contentious atmosphere around an important issue and bear an impact on the final voting outcome. The voting sequence may in particular become controversial if a revised version of a previous draft resolution is reintroduced for discussion.⁵² Calling non-SC members to participate (without vote) in a discussion over an issue of direct concern also has potentially political connotations and should therefore be treated with caution. Many delegations have in the past asked the floor for reasons of geographical or political solidarity, without adding substantially to the debate but grasping the opportunity to make strong (and sometimes counterproductive) political statements. It is not in the President's capacity to turn down any such request; still, the President has the duty to dissuade member states informally from such practices.⁵³ In a nutshell, because of the frequent blurring between procedure and substance, the SC President's role

⁵⁰ For example, Sir Laurence McIntyre, representative of Australia and SC President when the Yom Kippur War broke out in 1973, considered his mistake the suspension of the SC's meeting on the night of 23 October 1973. In retrospect, he assessed that it further delayed the deliberations on the ceasefire demand (L. McIntyre, 'The Yom Kippur War of 1973 and Other Reflections', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, p. 179).

⁵¹ For example, the Vietnam-China and Cambodia-Vietnam crises in 1979 required the President's active intervention to be brought to the SC's foreground, given the deep division between China and the former USSR (A. Bishara, 'The Vietnam-China-Kampuchea Conflict, 1979', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 67-73). The Spanish representative, Jaime de Piniés, had to deal in 1969 with the crisis in Northern Ireland, which the Irish representative wanted to bring to the SC's attention despite British objections that it was a matter of domestic jurisdiction and therefore not eligible for discussion. The procedural issue of agenda-setting was turned into a substantive one and led to the adjournment of the SC's meeting without taking any action on whether the agenda should be approved (and subsequently discussed) or not. See J. Piniés, 'Prompt and Effective Action', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 229-233. The Argentinean representative got bogged down in 1972 with overlapping requests from Lebanon, Syria and Israel to add items to the SC's agenda that threatened to stall the SC's works (C. Rozas, 'The Council as Master of its Procedure', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 208-215).

⁵² D. Nicol, 'The Security Council', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, p. 21; and A. Farah, 'The Council Meets in Africa', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 110-114.

⁵³ Morizet 'Conflict and Collaboration Among States', pp. 170-171.

well exceeds in some cases the envisaged procedural dimension and has an important political dimension.⁵⁴

The highly political nature of (parts of) the presidential, agenda-shaping function brings to the foreground the President's implicit brokerage function. With the exception of the extraordinary diplomatic activities assigned to the SC President in the early UN years, brokerage tasks are not explicitly enshrined in the Rules of Procedure for the SC President. However, the sensitivity of the SC's agenda requires extensive negotiating in advance to avoid grievances aired during an open formal SC meeting. Presidential brokerage activities mainly occur during the informal consultation process that precedes all of the SC's formal meetings.⁵⁵ It is in these private consultations that the decision for convening a public meeting is reached, the agenda is agreed upon, procedural points are discussed and substantive views are exchanged on the subject matter with the aim of establishing agreement zones, if any, among SC members.

The informal brokerage function of the SC President has grown in importance alongside the shift to a more consensual decision-making style in the Council. The gradual ascendance of consensus-seeking in the Council has strengthened the President's role and facilitated brokerage activities. In the first decades of UN life and especially at the peak of the Cold War, permanent members resorted extensively to the use of veto, blocking SC decisions in often high-spirited meetings whereby the President had very limited power of intervention. Following the increase in membership in the mid-1960s, which altered the UN's and SC's dynamics, the shift to a less adversarial SC environment in the quest for consensus laid more emphasis on informal consultations, whereby the President was less constrained and enjoyed members' implicit acquiescence to act as an honest broker. The consensus-seeking trend rose in frequency in the 1980s and 1990s and has in fact become formalized over recent years. As a result, fewer votes are being cast nowadays,

⁵⁴ Jakobson, 'The Importance of Periodic Meetings', p. 161.

⁵⁵ Olof Rydbeck, Sweden's representative in the Council and SC President in the past, has distinguished six rounds in the informal consultation process: initial soundings with the parties and some important delegations with a stake on the issue; consultation with parties involved as a group; with members individually; second full-range consultation; informal consultation on the draft (if an agreement is reached and it comes to that point); and presentation of the draft at full informal consultations (O. Rydbeck, 'Conflict in the Western Sahara', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, p. 266). Of course, depending on the issue and the course of the informal consultations, not all of these stages occur all of the times.

since an item does not usually enter the public phase of SC meetings unless the necessary support has been ensured through informal consultations.⁵⁶ Informal consultation has thus grown in importance as a by-product of the qualitative shift in the SC's works away from confrontational public meetings, with more behind-the-scenes activities, where the role of the SC President as an agreement-broker (and consensus-seeker) has assumed greater significance.⁵⁷

Parameters of the SC President's Effectiveness

The international climate has been a very important parameter conditioning the effectiveness of Presidential initiatives, especially in heated periods of the Cold War when confrontational bipolarity had a devastating impact on the SC's deliberations. In the post-Cold War environment, the increased UN prestige and legitimacy to handle international crises can be valuable instruments in the hands of an efficient President to increase pressure on recalcitrant members.⁵⁸ The nature of the issue also generates varying degrees of success expectations for the President. The SC deals primarily — but not exclusively — with 'hard core' security issues that touch upon national interests and (some of them) entail sovereignty costs. However, the salience and controversialism of issues emerge as more important determinants of the chair's effectiveness and can thus better capture the essence of the issue's nature.⁵⁹ The same holds for cases where the President has to deal with the substance of an issue and not with secondary aspects (for example, intra-SC

⁵⁶ Bailey and Daws, *The Procedure of the UN Security Council*, p. 228; and J. Dedring, 'The Security Council', in P. Taylor and J. Groom (eds), *The United Nations at the Millennium: The Principal Organs* (London: Continuum, 2000), pp. 75-77. Another consensus indicator is the significant number of Council decisions that take the form of presidential statements (an average of 53 per year since 1993). These are statements made in public by the SC President, which have in advance been agreed in every single detail. Unlike resolutions that are put to a vote, presidential statements *require* consensus (S. Hulton, 'Council Working Methods and Procedure', in D. Malone (ed.), *The UN Security Council: From the Cold War to the Twenty-First Century* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2004), p. 238.

⁵⁷ Waldheim in his forward to Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, p. x. Kurt Waldheim served as UN Secretary-General from 1971 to 1981.

⁵⁸ Dedring, 'The Security Council', pp. 78 and 81.

⁵⁹ In terms of how controversial an issue is, the January 1992 extraordinary SC meeting called by the British President to confirm indirectly the Russian succession to the former USSR's SC permanent seat constitutes a good example of how permanent members' support and consent, and the

negotiations to agree on a peace settlement framework in comparison to demands for a ceasefire).

With regards to organization-specific institutional and political features, the element of rotation in non-permanent membership renders the exact configuration of SC composition an important institutional and political parameter. It can have an effect on the Presidency's conduct, not that much in the sense of altering balances among groups (since equitable regional and geographical representation remains the main criterion for non-permanent membership) but more in the sense of SC members' assertion in international affairs, authority, prestige and willingness to cooperate.⁶⁰ Radical voices tend to obstruct and curtail the President's capacity for intervention, especially given the very short duration of the period in office (just one month), which generates concerns about continuity and the extent of the chair's familiarization with the office. At least the two-year SC service for non-permanent members somehow ensures a certain degree of familiarization with issues for the chair when (s)he takes office, although this is often a matter of luck given that rotation is based on alphabetical order.⁶¹

Process control, which increases the President's capacity to intervene in formal and informal SC deliberation procedures, in the SC mainly takes the form of tabling draft resolutions, should the opportunity or the need arise. A text drafted by the President can break the negotiating deadlock in cases where the directly involved members (permanent or non-permanent) have tabled their own respective drafts and no third state or group of states is willing to submit a compromise text despite the issue's growing maturity.⁶² Or in

acquiescence of the most important non-permanent members, allowed the SC President to show initiative and rapidly conclude an issue as sensitive as SC reform (S. Blavoukos and D. Bourantonis, 'The Chair in the UN Context: Assessing Functions and Performance', *Clingendael Discussion Paper in Diplomacy*, no. 101 (The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations 'Clingendael', 2005), pp. 5-11). In terms of salience, fisheries, for example, may be generally considered as a 'low politics issue', but is extremely salient for countries like Iceland or Norway and has in the past triggered several international frictions discussed even in the SC (see I. Richard, 'The Council President as Politician', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 251-252).

⁶⁰ Richard, 'The Council President as Politician', p. 244; and Nicol, *The United Nations Security Council*, p. 47.

⁶¹ 'The tyranny of English alphabet' may result in a non-permanent member taking on the chairmanship office very early in its SC service; see R. Jaipal, 'The South African Arms Embargo Debate, 1977', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 154-159.

⁶² That was the case, for example, in the Vietnam-Cambodia and China-Vietnam crises in 1979, when the SC President, Abdala Bishara, tabled four draft resolutions to 'massage' members'

cases where, despite agreement in principle on the resolution's content, members hesitate to embrace resolutions drafted by rival countries or groups.⁶³ Informal procedural interventions may take a more varied format and depend on Presidential initiative and imagination.⁶⁴

Informational asymmetry constitutes the main Presidential resource in steering negotiations towards a successful outcome. In the SC's case, it derives from three sources. First, after the series of private, informal consultations, the SC President should be able to assess states' positions (not only of those directly involved, but all permanent and non-permanent SC members at the time) on the basis of confidential and therefore privileged information entrusted to him/her.⁶⁵ Second, the UN Secretary-General (SG) constitutes an additional source of privileged information, given the bilateral contacts (s)he has and familiarity with an issue because of longer tenure in office. Thus, the SG is involved in the Council's private deliberations prior to the public official meeting and can offer valuable assistance to the SC President in performing his/her tasks.⁶⁶ Third, the UN Secretariat, besides its bureaucratic and administrative resources, facilitates informal consultations, provides legal advice and gives the background of an issue, ensuring continuity in the work of the Council.⁶⁷ The Secretariat's service is more crucial for Presidents from non-permanent SC members rather than permanent members, the former serving in the Council for only two years and perhaps not having the appropriate acquaintance and familiarization with practices and

positions to a compromise. In such attempts, however, the President has to be very careful to avoid the risk of veto and the loss of prestige that a formal rejection might entail for the office (Bishara, 'The Vietnam-China-Kampuchea Conflict, 1979', p. 71).

⁶³ Such cases have occurred in various stages of Middle East imbroglios, whereby the President has been asked to draft and table the outcome of backstage negotiations (Rydbeck, 'Conflict in the Western Sahara', pp. 265-267). See also R. Jaipal, 'A Personal View of Consensus-Making in the UN Security Council', *International Security*, vol. 2, no. 4, 1978, pp. 195-200.

⁶⁴ In the diplomatic conundrum that preceded the 1981 UN Secretary-General's election, Olara Otunnu, Uganda's UN Ambassador and SC President persuaded both competing candidates, Waldheim and Salim, to step aside for an informal straw ballot. This initiative revealed the controversial nature of both candidacies, with ardent supporters and fierce opponents. As a result, the need arose for a more uniting candidacy, with Pérez de Cuéllar receiving an overwhelming backing and becoming the new Secretary-General (Dedring, 'The Security Council', pp. 79-80).

⁶⁵ All contributors to Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, agree on that point.

⁶⁶ Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, p. 24; and McIntyre, 'The Yom Kippur War of 1973 and Other Reflections', p. 180.

⁶⁷ Nicol, *The United Nations Security Council*, p. 55.

issues. In sum, the SC President relies heavily on privileged information during the informal consultation stage; in that respect, (s)he constitutes an indirect communication channel among SC members as well as between the Council and other UN members.⁶⁸

The SC President's mandate is rather narrow and specific, reflecting the limited formal role envisaged for the SC President by the UN's founders. The SC's decision-making system, with the veto option available to the five permanent members, also significantly curtails Presidential manoeuvrability. The veto potential of the permanent members imposes constraints on presidential activities and hangs over all informal contacts, rendering permanent members' consent (or at least non-objection) an indispensable prerequisite.⁶⁹ Thus, the specific SC institutional setting, with the great empowerment of permanent members but also the qualified majority voting (nine out of fifteen votes required), delimit the scope and extent of Presidential mediation activities and prescribe the President's course of action. Positive disposition of and (even better) support by permanent members emerge as a key parameter affecting the President's effectiveness, although good relations with all SC members more generally facilitates the performance of Presidential tasks and functions.⁷⁰ Relationships with all SC members have risen in significance with the ascendance of the consensus-seeking norm. Although this trend has shifted action to the SC's backstage, enabling a more active role for the President, it has also posed additional constraints on the SC President.

The third group of parameters comprises the President's personal skills and country-of-origin attributes. The former are important in light of the numerous and varied interpersonal interactions during the SC's deliberations, often in conditions of high pressure. Role perception, temperament and style, working methods and techniques, competence and experience,

⁶⁸) Jakobson, 'The Importance of Periodic Meetings', p. 161.

⁶⁹) Hulton 'Council Working Methods and Procedure', p. 239. Although data show that the use of the veto has been constantly declining (as a result of the consensus-seeking trend), it '...belies the fact that the mere presence of the threat of veto or its possible use more often than not determined the way the Council conducts its business' (Permanent Representative of Jamaica and former SC President, S/PV 4363, 31 August 2001, p. 7). See also Nicol, *The United Nations Security Council*, p. 48; and McIntyre, 'The Yom Kippur War of 1973 and Other Reflections', p. 182.

⁷⁰) Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 22 and 48; and McIntyre, 'The Yom Kippur War of 1973 and Other Reflections', p. 182.

leadership and skills in conducting negotiations, intellect and physical endurance are critical determinants of the President's performance.⁷¹ Some SC Presidents have also felt that being active politicians instead of high-ranking diplomats has facilitated their conduct of Presidential tasks, having direct access to the highest government strata and thus being in a better situation to handle crisis situations.⁷²

A country's legitimacy to act as mediator is more conducive to an effective SC President than power reflection.⁷³ Actually, 'the big beasts in the world jungle', especially permanent members, are often met with scepticism and distrust regarding their capacity to exhibit the necessary degree of objectivity required for the performance of Presidential tasks. Instead, small- and medium-range states with a constant record of support to UN activities and commitment to UN principles are in a better condition to meet the informal, political requirements of the President's role successfully.⁷⁴ Furthermore, country membership in a more or less cohesive group offers (or at least used to in the past) solid backing and more authority to the President, but also possibly negative predisposition from opposing political forces.⁷⁵ Finally, the timing of the Presidency can affect performance, impeding the President from taking proper initiatives so as not to harm other country's interests.⁷⁶

Conclusions

Although it is acknowledged that the role of the chair in multilateral negotiations is important, only scarce evidence and even less theoretical and analytical insights can be recorded in academic literature. This article attempts to make a dual — analytical and empirical — contribution. First, it develops

⁷¹ Nicol, 'The Security Council', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 31-32.

⁷² G. Ignatieff, 'Prompt and Regular Access to Political Government at Home is Essential', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 130-139; and Richard, 'The Council President as Politician', pp. 242-243.

⁷³ Richard, 'The Council President as Politician', p. 243.

⁷⁴ For some examples of states that have acted as brokers in the past from the SC President's post, see Smith, 'Three Perspectives on Global Consensus Building', pp. 127-128.

⁷⁵ SC President Bishara considered that a member with no base in the Council is bound to be a weak President, his own power emanating from being a NAM active member and enjoying the group's support in his initiatives (Bishara, 'The Vietnam-China-Kampuchea Conflict, 1979', pp. 68-69). See also Nicol, *The United Nations Security Council*, pp. 56-62.

⁷⁶ The Japanese representative, Shizuo Saito, held the SC Presidency in 1975, at the time when the then Japanese Prime Minister visited the US to attend an important Japan-US summit. To avoid

a comprehensive typology of parameters affecting the chair's performance in multilateral negotiation settings. The proposed parameters derive from a broad array of theoretical strands, including realist, institutionalist and cognitive accounts of intergovernmental negotiations. They are clustered in three categories, namely the international environment in which the chair operates and the issues with which (s)he is called to deal, organization-specific features of an institutional and political nature, and the chair's personal skills and country-of-origin attributes. The provided analytical blueprint of chair effectiveness can be generalized and subsequently applied to various institutional and political settings within which chairs operate.

Second, the article provides insights into the particular functioning of the SC President as an agenda manager and broker, highlighting an aspect of SC deliberations that has so far been largely ignored in UN literature. The effectiveness of the SC President's functions is discussed in accordance with the set of conditioning factors developed in this piece of work. The SC President's role well exceeds the formal tasks stipulated in the Rules of Procedure. Although mainly procedural in nature, these tasks may have important political implications, stressing the informal component of Presidential intervention. The examination of particular cases with which the UN SC President has dealt in the past illustrates the magnitude and direction of influence of the conditioning parameters.

The particular institutional features of the SC Presidential office and of the SC more generally accredit some conditioning parameters over others. The rotational scheme of only one month hampers Presidential continuity, the build-up of experience and expertise, and socialization effects. These features have a negative effect on the SC President's effectiveness. In the same direction, the relatively narrow and specific mandate and the veto power of the permanent SC members also affect the SC President's effectiveness negatively. Furthermore, given the SC's political nature, the issues handled by the Council are most of the time of the utmost salience and entail a great deal of controversialism, which also impede the President's capacity for intervention. By and large, these two characteristics cancel out the positive (or negative) effects of the international environment. For example, even in periods

upsetting the upcoming meeting, he had to act with extreme prudence in handling applications for UN membership from South and North Vietnam and the Republic of Korea (South Korea) in 1975 (S. Saito, 'The Vietnams and South Korea', in Nicol (ed.), *Paths to Peace*, pp. 272-278). See also S/PV.1834 of 6 August 1975; S/PV.1835, 11 August 1975; and S/PV.1836, 11 August 1975.

of polarization and international enmity, the SC President was effective in some cases, whereas even in conditions of amity, tensions even among allies may escalate and obstruct the President's capacity for intervention. Having said all that, personal skills and county-of-origin attributes, especially a country's legitimacy and authority, emerge as the most important parameters with a positive effect on the SC President's role.

It is important to stress that these conclusions on the role of the SC President are based on the particular set of cases looked upon here. However, given that the sample transcends quite an extensive period of time and has a large scope of issues, our contention is that it leads to quite valid conclusions about the role of the SC President. Still, these conclusions cannot be generalized to cover other institutional bodies within the UN, let alone other international organizations. This paper should be considered only the beginning and not the end of the necessary research on the chair's role in international negotiations. Further analytical and empirical research should focus on the examination of Presidential activities developed in other multilateral settings (whereby different policy-making rules and control mechanisms apply) and at periods of different systemic power configuration (potentially reflected in institutional variation).

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