# Agents as Broker: Leadership in Multilateral Organizations

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## Abstract:
In exploring the leadership practices of chief executives of International Governmental Organizations, this article finds that IGO leaders recognize themselves as agents and as brokers. The paper produces findings from a multiple case study of the executive leadership of NATO from 1995 to 1999 and of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy from 1999 to 2009. The relationship between member states and the IGO leader can be conceived as a Principal-Agent (PA) relationship where the agent plays a central role in framing a common vision and strategies, facilitating member states’ involvement in the strategizing process, and mobilizing external and internal support. I depart from a restrictive PA conceptualization of the relationship since I do not envision it as conflictive, but rather as collaborative.
Agents as Broker: Leadership in Multilateral Organizations

Angel Saz-Carranza, ESADE - Ramon Llull University

Abstract

In exploring the leadership practices of chief executives of International Governmental Organizations, this article finds that IGO leaders recognize themselves as agents and as brokers. The paper produces findings from a multiple case study of the executive leadership of NATO from 1995 to 1999 and of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy from 1999 to 2009. The relationship between member states and the IGO leader can be conceived as a Principal/Agent (PA) relationship where the agent plays a central role in framing a common vision and strategies, facilitating member states’ involvement in the strategizing process, and mobilizing external and internal support. I depart from a restrictive PA conceptualization of the relationship since I do not envision it as conflictive, but rather as collaborative.

Introduction

This study explores executive leadership in multilateral organizations. Intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are central pieces of the system of global governance. Understanding how these are best led is of crucial importance if the system is to function adequately. An IGO’s functioning depends on, among other things, how its chief executive behaves, in particular vis-à-vis member states, and what practices he or she executes. Few studies exist of how such leadership figures behave (some related exceptions are historical biographical works of a few former chief executives of the most renowned UN and Bretton Woods institutions: (Boughton 2001; Kille 2013; Kraske et al. 1996)). This is the gap this paper wants to
contribute to filling by addressing the question: what specific leadership practices do IGO chief executives adopt?

Principal Agent Theory (PAT) has been frequently used in conceptualizing the relationship between an IGO chief executive and the member states (Hawkins and Lake 2006). PAT assumes principals have clear and ranked preferences, and agents are strategic, as they try to substitute the principal’s preference with their own. Simultaneously, principals must balance the trade off between costs of monitoring and aligning agents with costs of strategic gaming by agents. PAT conceptualizes the principal-agent relationship as conflictive.

Yet, bounded rationality common to all organizational actors, combined with the IGO’s principal being collective in nature, composed by multiple sovereign members states engaged in politics, call for a relaxation of the premises that the principal’s preferences are clear and ordered. This, together with the idea that agents do not necessarily nor solely behave strategically and narrowly in their self-interest, demands better conceptualizing and understanding executive leadership.

The research design uses the case-study approach to explore how IGO chief executives lead. I study two historically relevant cases: the leadership practices of (i) NATO Secretary General—together with his personal team—during the organization’s first post-cold-war enlargement process to the east, and (ii) the EU High Representative leadership during the institutional creation of the EU’s Common Foreign and Security Policy (EU-CFSP). The two cases imply clearly distinct contexts but both are considered as successful. To analyze the interview transcripts and documentation, I used content analysis.

I find that chief executives of IGOs recognize the member states as their collective principal and themselves as agents, but that the executive leaders are nevertheless
very proactive in framing vision, strategizing, and facilitating interaction among member states. Beyond the IGO mission and general goals, principals do not have explicit, detailed, ordered, and shared preferences. Similarly, while the chief executive has personal preferences, he/she does not solely nor primarily seek to substitute the principal’s preferences with his/hers. Our results show how the agent brokers the network of equal-standing sovereign member states, trying to clarify and define shared goals and strategies, in such a way that the member states act as a collective principal. Findings complement the principal-agent approach in that I show how IGO leaders actually fill the void between formal mandates and missions specified by the IGO collective principal and action with the development of specific implementable strategies. The IGO executive is thus a collaborative broker of IGO members, who tries to help principals identify what they should do and how.

The paper thus extends, rather than contradicts PAT, by turning the PA relationship from conflictive to collaborative, And by relaxing the rationalistic and individualistic characteristics that PAT ascribes to both principal and agent. The agent, IGO chief executive, recognizes his/her principal but also is active in generating common ground among member states and defining courses of action for the organization. In this sense, the IGO executive leader behaves similarly to a network broker.

The paper proceeds as follows: in the next section I review both PAT as applied to IGOs and network leadership. Thereafter I describe our design, methods, and cases. The qualitative analysis follows. The paper concludes with a discussion on the policy implications of my argument.

The Leadership of IGOs
As Hawkins and Lake (2006) point out, a PA approach to IGO delegation allows for agents to enjoy autonomy and discretion. And it is precisely how such agents use their discretion and autonomy which is the focus of this paper on IGO leadership. Agency theory has been applied to corporate governance for a few decades now (Fama & Jensen 1983) and, more recently, to the member states/IGO relationship (Hawkins 2006). Agency theory assumes that both principal and agent are self-interested, and thus their goals are partially in conflict (Eisenhardt 1989). The contract binding agent and principal is thus the central focus. Yet, complete contracts are impossible to design under bounded rationality and uncertainty (Williamson 1979; Simon 1948). In particular, monitoring performance is difficult in the policy fields IGOs operate in, and because the specialization (of the agent) exacerbates the information asymmetry between agent and principal (Hawkins et al. 2006; Kiewiet & McCubbins 1991).

Additionally, IGO principals are collective in nature, which make traditional PAT less applicable to IGOs because of the often conflicting and diverse preferences and goals of the member states\(^1\). Moreover, complex principals only make autonomy of agents even greater, as the latter can play one member state against another (Lyne et al. 2006). Lastly, unanimity decision rules—common in IGOs—allow the agent greater autonomy as principals have more difficulties in agreeing detailed and binding monitoring mechanisms of the IGO chief executive (Hawkins et al. 2006). Our research question is therefore: what specific leadership practices do IGO chief executives adopt?

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\(^1\) In fact, principals may intentionally grant the agent with discretion to solve coordination, collaboration, and collective decision-making dilemmas (Milner 2006; Lake & McCubbins 2006).
The IGO leader as a goal-directed network leader

While there is scholarly work on heads of states and their foreign policy (e.g. Nye 2013), little is known on individual behavior of IGO top executives (with the exception of a few biographical studies of UN Secretary Generals and Presidents of the World Bank). I look precisely at an IGO chief executive’s behavior. (For the purpose of this study, I use the terms IGO leader and IGO chief executive as synonymous.) At this level of analysis, I follow Northouse (2010) and define leadership as ‘a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (p3).’

In focusing on the practices of the chief executive of IGOs, I specifically draw on the literature on goal-directed networks to explore IGO leadership. Such inter-organizational collaborative contexts imply a diffuse and varying concept of the leader/follower relation, without clear hierarchical authority between leader and follower. Leadership behaviors in such circumstances tend to fall under the relational behavior type. I use this literature because I contend that the non-hierarchical relationship between the IGO chief executive and its member states is similar to that of a network broker (i.e. the leader) and its organizational members. This is why received knowledge on network leadership may be a useful starting point when exploring IGO leader behavior in relation to the member state’s representatives.

I use the term network neither as a metaphor (as opposed to hierarchy or market) nor as a sociological model (social network analysis) but rather as a term defining a goal-directed inter-organizational phenomenon (Isett et al. 2010). Following Provan and Kenis’ (2007), I define goal-directed networks as: ‘groups of three or more legally autonomous organizations that work together to achieve not only their own goals but also a collective goal’ (Provan & Kenis 2007). As is the case with network
members, IGO member states are both resource interdependent and legally sovereign simultaneously, making the network perspective intuitively useful.

Precisely because leadership behaviors are contingent on the amount of power held by the leader (Northouse 2010; French & Raven 1959), who lacks authority over the IGO members, goal-directed network leadership may fit IGO leadership. IGO leaders lead with low (if any) formal authority over member states. Goal-directed network brokers, similarly, do not have formal authority over their network members. (For the purpose of this study, I use the terms network leader and network broker as synonymous.)

Other contributions to this issue support the similarities between IGO leadership and network leadership. For example, this special issue’s introduction views leaders as ‘political entrepreneurs who bring together actors with different preferences and interests with the objective to facilitate the collective pursuit of a common agenda.’ Additionally, Heritier and Prakash (this issue) state: ‘Collective action typically has to be organized and orchestrated. Leaders are the organizers and orchestrators of collective action.’ Tallberg (2004) already identified the EU Presidency (Council Chair) as a broker—although in his study the Presidency is held by one of the members, not by the chief executive.

I propose that a network leadership approach to IGO leadership is complementary—rather than contradictory—with a relaxed principal/agent characterization of the IGO member states/executive leadership relation. Figure 1 illustrates how NATO’s Council can be conceived as a network.

Figure 1 here

Leading goal-directed networks
Network leadership is similar to traditional intra-organizational leadership but tends mostly to focus on people-oriented behavior—to create a common vision, to generate sufficient buy-in, to secure resources—rather than task-behaviors. McGuire and Silvia (Silvia & McGuire 2010) survey 417 network leaders and find that the leadership of networks overlaps with intra-organizational leadership but that the former involves more people-oriented behavior. It is not that network leadership entails different types of behaviors as compared to intra-organizational leadership, rather the behaviors most used to achieve these collective goals are those people-oriented (Chris Silvia & McGuire 2010; Northouse 2010) and build heavily on soft power (Nye 2013).

Network leadership research has produced consistently over the past decade a set of practices which network leaders seem to execute (Agranoff & McGuire 2001; Huxham & Vangen 2005; Kickert et al. 1997).

**Framing** is a key network leadership practice aimed at generating a common vision and shared goals. (Agranoff & McGuire 2003; Kickert et al. 1997; Huxham & Vangen 2005; Ospina & Saz-Carranza 2010; Müller-Seitz 2012). In networks, members come together with quite different frames of reference, which makes formalized and rational decision-making rules less effective (Salancik & Pfeffer 1974). The WTO, for example, has been incapable of reaching new trade agreements, not only due to conflicting interests, but also due to conflicting principles such as whether developing member states are allowed to subsidize rural farmers. Actors in a network have distinct mental frames of reference. However, to accomplish joint decision making regarding solutions to social problems, a mutual adjustment of perceptions is essential. Thus, framing is an important unifying practice.

**Facilitating** (Erik-Hans 2004) or synthesizing (Agranoff & McGuire 2001) is the quintessential practice aimed at communicating with and aligning network members
(Müller - Seitz 2012). It is about easing interaction among diverse participants. In communicating with members and aligning them with the collective goals, specific organizational rules are important. Thus, it is important to create the necessary network infrastructures, formal and informal communication channels, and proper interaction procedures.

*Mobilizing*—probably the best known of these practices—deals with capturing the necessary resources and support for the network. Mobilizing essentially builds network power by securing resources, external legitimacy, knowledge, and access from the network’s external domain as well as building support and commitment among network members.

*Activating* deals with supporting actors who want to become network members and with attracting needed partners. Activating plays an important role in managing the network, since it allows for selecting and attracting members, who may most contribute to and best fit with the network.

Armed with this conceptual framework, I set out in exploring two cases to answer our research question *what specific leadership practices do IGO chief executives adopt?*

**Methods**

Our inquiry consists of a comparative interview study (Rubin & Rubin 2005), using two cases. The behavioral nature of the topic and the exploratory quality of the research justify in-depth qualitative research as the most appropriate methodology to address the inquiry (Agranoff & Radin 1991; Marshall & Rossman 1995).
The chosen cases represent a purposive, theoretically driven sample: I looked for access to IGO leaders who had successfully lead the IGO. This sampling frame satisfies three theory-driven and replication criteria (Miles & Huberman 1994; Yin 1994). First, both cases look at the executive leadership of an IGO. Second, both IGO addressed security issues, which makes analytic generalization (Firestone 1993) more robust within the security policy sector (but arguably also lessens external validity, reducing possible generalization to other contexts). Third, in both cases, the IGO had achieved certain positive outcomes, had been successful.

The two cases are: the North Atlantic Treaty Organization 95-99 (5/12/95-6/10/99), in particular the process conducing to the signing of the Founding Act with Russia (1997) and the integration of Hungary, Czech Republic, and Poland (1999); and the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy 99-09 (18 October 1999 – 1 December 2009), in particular the creation of the new organizational structures. Importantly, in both cases, Javier Solana was the chief executive. Another similarity between the two cases is that the EU’s Council, which brings together EU member states, and the North Atlantic Council, which brings together NATO members, the two governing units of the respective cases, work through the unanimity principle. Additionally, in both cases, military operations fall under oversight of a military committee, composed of the member states’ Military Chief of Staff, who report directly to the council, not to the chief executive, to whom they have an advisory relationship. The cases are described at the end of the Methods section.

Both cases also differ in important ways. Perhaps, the most important difference is membership. In the EU, there is clearly no absolute military hegemon as in NATO’s case, where the US is the undisputed overpowering actor. A second difference is that in the EU, unlike NATO, member states are accustomed to interact intensively on a
whole range of issues. Lastly, in the EU-CFSP case, the chief executive (the CFSP’s HR) does not chair the Council, while in NATO’s case, the SG does so.

Given the uniqueness and rareness of identifying and studying successful IGO leadership, both cases should be considered as “exceptional” cases (Miles & Huberman 1994; Stake 2000). The impact of this qualitative design for drawing causal inferences has been widely discussed (Brady & Collier 2010). In particular, the low variability caused by the selection of only successful IGO demands special consideration during cross-case and within-case analysis (Brady & Collier 2010).

However, given the novelty of research looking at IGO executive leadership and considering our theory elaboration purpose, our goal was to attempt positive replication and to identify preliminary patterns (Yin 1994) for future exploration. As Yin (1994) states, replication logic is equivalent to investigating repeated “cases of a rare, clinical syndrome in psychology and medical science . . . in which the same results are predicted for each of the [. . .] cases” (45).

King, Keohane, and Verba (1994, p.159) nuance the usefulness of such research designs:

[s]ocial science researchers sometimes…notice a particular “political cluster”…in which there is a [specific] characteristic and seek to find what it is that is “special” about [it]. If such a study turns up suggestive correlations, I should not take these as confirming the hypothesis, but only as making it worthwhile to design a study that selects on the basis of the putative explanatory variable while letting the dependent variable…vary.

**The Cases**
The first case deals with how the secretary general of NATO successfully lead the IGO’s enlargement eastwards, which took place between 1995 and 1999. The enlargement had two central issues that had to be resolved. First, the members had to agree which countries were to join NATO in the first post-cold-war enlargement. There were five candidates: Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Slovenia. The second major issue was how NATO should proceed in relation to Russia who did not like the idea of seeing NATO coming closer to its borders (as has been made clear by the 2014-ongoing Ukraine crisis). Related to both these issues, the SG had to contribute to generate unity and support among member states for both selecting the new member states and, simultaneously, signing a partnership with Russia. Hence, the major achievements are: (1) NATO and Russia sign the Founding Act in May 1997 and the Formal entry of Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland in March 1999.

The second case looks at how the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy’s High Representative institutionally developed such an intergovernmental initiative from 1999 to 2009. Here the issue revolved around how to create from scratch a supranational institutional framework in a sector considered to be nuclear to state sovereignty and in a moment where support for transnational institutions started to stall. In such a time, the HR had to be capable of collectively engaging the members and getting their member states’ buy-in in defining the specific courses of action of the new collective endeavour as well as to set up the necessary institutional structure. In addition to start integrating an EU foreign policy, the HR was actively involved in designing and implementing a military structure in an IGO (the EU) who had pacifism engrained in its DNA.
Data and Analysis

The study is based on several face-to-face individual interviews with the chief executive of NATO (the SG) from 95 to 99 and the chief executive of the CFSP from 99 to 2009 (the HR).

Additionally, I also interviewed the chief executive’s chief of staff and director of communication for each of the two cases. The motivation behind this interviewee selection was that I wanted the interviewees to identify and describe key practices that the IGO leader, supported by his team, executed and were perceived as conducive to success.

Interviews were complemented with document analysis. For the EU-CFSP case I had access to the complete archival record of the chief executive, including meeting memos, agendas, and internal communications. I used published records for the NATO case. In both cases the documentary analysis was used to confirm and detail the data collected through the interviews. The appendix lists the documents consulted.

The interviews elicited the interviewee to narrate his/her experience and achievements. When asking the chief executive’s team members, I asked them to reflect on what were the key achievements of the IGO and how had the IGO chief executive and his team contributed to them. Key milestones were identified during the interview and the interviewee was asked to describe and explain in detail the precursory action executed by the chief executive and his team. Each case was treated separately in individual interviews. First the NATO case was researched, thereafter the EU-CFSP case.
Analysis

Coding was the key interpretive tool for our data analysis. Interview detailed transcripts were coded using the above framework. The author of this paper was the sole coder. Excel was used to organize the quotes and the codes (Meyer & Avery 2008). The leadership framework presented became coding scheme of the study. But I remained open to new, grounded codes (Strauss & Corbin 1998). I coded the transcripts for leadership behaviors, starting off with the four practices detailed above: framing, facilitating, mobilizing, and activating.

Transcripts for the first case were analyzed continually to adjust the protocols and refine data collection in the second case. Both cases were first analyzed independently of each other. To build a tentative explanatory model, draft narratives were created for each case. Lastly, as is often the case in qualitative research, a final iteration of data analysis took place during the writing stage.

Figure 4 shows the initial scheme used to code the transcripts and the final set of findings reported in the following section.

Insert Figure 4 here

Results

I here present the results, showing how the IGO leader brokered and collaboratively lead the IGO collective principal by framing vision, strategizing, facilitating interaction, and mobilizing support.

Framing: agent, broker, or both?

Our qualitative data shows how defining specific courses of action, goals, and strategies are an interactive and dynamic process between the IGO executive and the
members. The data point to a blurry and fuzzy distinction between principal (the member states collectively) and the agent in setting courses. Indeed, the executive resembles, at moments, a network leader at work in framing vision and supporting strategy development, yet recognizing the member states’ role as principals.

The executive is well aware that the member states are obviously the principals. In the EU-CFSP case, the HR’s chief of staff recalls: ‘The first truly brilliant decision he made was… [becoming] aware that… behaving like a [European] Secretary of State… would never work [56-EM-EU].’ This shows how the executive was aware of the fact that the HR could not treat the member states’ foreign services as subordinate units under him. Similarly, the HR himself states: ‘Being at the service of the institution means convincing those who hold the power, staying one step ahead, a small step and not 20 kilometers in front because then you become irrelevant [5-JS-EU].’ Clearly referring to the council’s member states as ‘those holding power.’

However, the above quote already points to the proactivity of the executive in framing a common vision and strategy among member states, when the HR talks about being ‘one step ahead.’

The HR’s Communication Director describes how the two contradictory poles of recognizing the member states as principals in charge but simultaneously playing a major role in framing and strategizing are combined in practice:

There’s a consultative element [in] intergovernmental policy... and there is a non-consultative element –you can’t be consulting at every moment. But, if you have extremely up-to-date information about the different countries’ positions… you already know… on what issues you’ll act and on which you won’t as well as on how far you can go…
Obtaining mandates was very important, because if you were given a mandate, you were somehow on the frontline… Normally, you weren’t given a mandate if you didn’t seek it out [T]he objective then… was to put proposals on the table for a European policy.

We sought mandates from the European Council this way… That meant having to develop complicity with the Presidency… the rotating’ presidency’s joint work which had to help for mandates. You thus had to be subtle so that the minister in charge felt comfortable… In other words, it was a very sophisticated circle [63/5-CG-EU].

While the EU-CFSP had a grand vision and a mission (as does NATO—see Table 1 above), it had to be landed into some specific and concrete action that would be accepted and supported by the members.

Solana realized he was becoming a political mediator —he’s very good at it— and then he was capable of dragging the European Union member states with him— and, at times, putting soldiers into play, at other times judges, at other moments prison guards, other times customs agents, whatever was needed in each specific moment —because [the EU] was beginning to be on the map [48-EM-EU].

Contributing to setting a direction for EU-CFSP is far more obvious than in NATO’s case due to the former’s newness. Nevertheless, NATO’s executive was very proactive in fine-tuning the enlargement strategy by calling for an agreement with Russia. NATO’s SG recalls: ‘I argued that we had to do something to reach an understanding with Russia. We had to explain it to them and reach some type of agreement [103-JS-OTAN].’ The quote underscores how the SG proposed and
supported a specific course of action. What I find, thus, is that the IGO leader plays a key role in collectively framing a vision and setting strategy. In other words, the void existing under the IGO vision or strategic goal was filled by the IGO leader by proposing and, once accepted by the Council, executing the specific course of action.

*Communicating with members and facilitating their interaction*

Setting the adequate structure to operate, and for managing, upwards, the members, was of great importance in the EU case due to the novelty of the intergovernmental endeavor. However, interestingly the HR focused not only on operative structures, but in particular in structures that allowed him to align and communicate with members.

The structures—procedures and organizational processes—set in place to communicate with members were both formal and informal. In both cases, keeping proper and frequent communication channels with members was crucial. An important part of the HR’s initial priorities was to help set up the formal structure of the CFSP. In particular, during the first semester after the HR’s appointment, he worked with the EU’s rotating presidency to set up a permanent committee—the Political and Security Committee (COPS)—separate from the permanent Council committee [Permanent Representatives Committee (COREPER)]. These decisions were formally taken by the Council but were strongly advocated by the HR. He recalls:

> The problem was that there was no degree of trust in the discussions within COREPER: Everything was leaked out. The first doubt, consequently, was creating a permanent representation, COPS, or abandoning COREPER. To me, the most reasonable thing would have been a permanent representation to be able to face any crisis or emergency situation [17/8-JS-EU].
While no new formal governance structures were created in NATO during the period studied, the SG’s team was very sanguine in how they formally kept the Council informed rigorously during the negotiations with Russia. The SG’s chief of staff recalls:

After each session with the Russians, the Secretary General immediately informed the Council about the results and distributed the document for the states to give their opinions, ‘this yes’ and ‘that no’. And that’s how it worked during, I think, 106 sessions …And that worked, it worked, and was important because there was a meeting and always super-detailed minutes[.] We often wrote up those minutes on the plane, returning at dawn or whenever, so that the states would have them the following morning. All ambassadors received the minutes at the same time; there was no type of preference or favoritism towards the United States [116/9-JD-OTAN].

Informal, multiple, and indirect channels of communication with the principals, became paramount both in the EU and NATO case. The HR’s Chief of staff describes:

The first thing Solana did was tell everyone in the [newly created] Policy Unit that, “you’re my link with your government, with your Minister of Foreign Affairs”. You say that to any diplomat… and they’ll be charmed… It transforms an analyst into a political liaison, a source of information about everything the different governments do, a collaborator between him and another minister [2-EM-EU].
The HR then uses a unit designed for analysis and planning also as a second communication channel with the members. Similarly he uses the Military Committee (MilCom) chair, who is formally only an advisor to him, to build a common strategy (the MilCom was ultimately responsible for making any military decision). Importantly, the HR has no authority over the MilCom nor its chair. The HR’s chief of staff recalls:

You are my military adviser. In principle, you’ll have lunch with me every week, you’ll have to give me your advice, and we’ll share our thoughts”.

That’s the type of leadership Solana exercises, he wins over the Chair of the Military Committee. The latter begins to be the conveyor belt for political ideas, and, since the Military Committee is the one that decides and makes the military decisions, the European Union follows its path [7-EM-EU].

Even in NATO’s case, its executive engaged in informal relational activity, to align the members and advance towards agreement. The SG’s chief of staff recalls:

[He built] contacts in every capital, nurturing relations with the governments, prime ministers and presidents and heads of state. He knows how to listen [and is] very receptive to opinions from members… He avoided being identified with a specific group of countries, whether big or small, from the East or West, and had a knack for absorbing information [122-JD-OTAN].

Facilitating unanimity

The NATO case gives a rare glimpse into the efforts of the IGO executive and the closure of decision-making by unanimity during summits—when the National Atlantic Council convenes the heads of states of members. The SG recalls the summit
of March 1999, where the new NATO members—Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland—were accepted as the new members.

France and Italy were very keen on Romania joining. [They were] interested in others joining besides the three German “classics”. Consequently, the fight during that entire session was if those three entered or if Romania did as well [88-JS-NATO]. The meeting dragged on [90-JS-NATO].

I said: “I’m going to present a proposal in two minutes, and it’s going to be the definitive one. I won’t allow any more debate.” I took a leap then without consulting anyone…I read the meeting’s conclusions in which we only accepted Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland to join. I didn’t even allow for a vote. I took the microphone and said, “the motion is passed” [84/5-JS-NATO].

The above shows two points: first, that giving sufficient time and space for discussion seems necessary. Second, that giving voice to dissenting members may be necessary to call thereafter a decision that may not satisfy those dissenting.

**Mobilizing support**

In particular, the EU foreign affairs and security strategy required the US’ acceptance if all Council members were to adopt the strategy. The HR recalls:

It took many trips to Paris, London and the United States. NATO’s break-up was the US’ biggest fear. They were afraid of a European lobby within NATO and that NATO would somehow break up. I always had to talk with them to convince them [the US] that that wasn’t going to happen [9-JS-EU].
Internal resources and support were also crucial. The HR recalls how the EU-CFSP set up an intelligence center, called the Situation Center, with a few key intelligence officers seconded by a handful of member states’ intelligence services. He recalls:

I picked the team after talking with the most powerful countries’ intelligence services. The first fight was due to not all of them being present, rather, just a few —the more powerful ones in terms of intelligence didn’t want to share what they knew with the least powerful ones— and I chose those few. I named a wonderful Englishman to lead this unit [3-JS-EU].

Generating the internal support and resources was also salient in the NATO case. For example, in order for NATO to take on the negotiations with Russia, the US’ support was key. Without the US’ refusal to talk directly with Russia on this issue, Russia would have never negotiated with NATO. The SG recalls:

Strobe Talbot, number two to then US Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, was who told Solana that he had to negotiate with Russia, not the US, fearing that bilateral negotiations would delegitimize NATO [97-JS-NATO].

**Conclusion and Policy Implications**

The paper, in addition to providing detailed accounts of how those at the executive summit of IGO experienced their leadership, contributes to better understand how IGO executives use their discretion as agents of the collective principal. Our findings suggest a more nuanced and relaxed usage of the principal–agent model (Hawkins), and complements it with more behavior-based and experiential account of executive leadership. As opposed to PAT tenets, however, the IGO leader does not maintain a conflicting relationship with his/her principal, but rather sustains a collaborative
stance. The IGO leader effectively brokers and leads the multiple principals as a network.

In particular, I find that the IGO executives frame vision and goals and strategize (Bryson 1995; Saz-Carranza 2012). Particularly interesting is to find great involvement by the IGO leader in developing a strategy to achieve the collective vision. Collective principals usually are united around a grand agreement or general mandate but may not have a shared and specific mid-term course of action. The void between vision and action is filled by the executives. This, however, is far more visible in the EU-CFSP case, probably due to the novelty of this intergovernmental effort, hence it has a far greater room for framing a grand vision.

With respect to facilitating member interaction (Agranoff 2007; Steijn & Klijn 2008), a central practice of the executives was to set formal structures and processes to keep members well informed and communicated. In particular, the EU-CFSP chief executive used formal structures—intended for planning and analysis—composed of seconded personnel from the member states’ ministries, as secondary informal channels of communication with members. Essentially this is about setting up multiple channels of communication between the executive and the members (Saz-Carranza 2012).

The informality found in facilitating and communicating with members speaks to recent scholarship on the informal dimension of global governance (Stone 2013). However, that incipient literature has mostly stayed at the state level of analysis—rather than individual (Chwieroth 2012; Tallberg 2010).

The informal communication, and one-on-one communication with members, allows the IGO leader to discern the different members’ preferences and thus better broker an agreement (Tallberg 2004). Reaching closure of decisions in situations of
diverse preferences requires distinguishing between non-negotiable objections and negotiable ones. In the case of the latter, giving sufficient space to divergent members to ‘voice’ (Hirschman 1970) their opinions—on negotiable items—may be enough to reach consensus. This may avoid ‘exit’ (Hirschman 1970): while IGO abandonment is uncommon (Pevehouse et al. 2004), blockage via vetoing does occur.

I also find how in both cases the IGO leader mobilizes both external and internal support in line with Resource Dependence Theory (Hillman et al. 2009). In the EU-CFSP case, the need to have the informal acquiescence of the US was also essential. Internal resources, such as key member support, were important in both cases. But, again, in the EU-CFSP case, other resources, such as intelligence, had to be assured by creating the adequate structures.

Lastly, the network practice of activating was not found to be relevant. This may be due to the fact that membership in such international institutions as the ones studied here is very rigid and usually closely ruled by its statutes.

This research has clear implications for practice: IGO executives should view the sum of member states as a network which needs to be brokered to allow for collective action and avoid division. Central to such endeavor is to gauge the different member states’ preferences and try to generate a collective strategy around the main powers’ interests. The executive should use all channels available to communicate with member states—both formal and informally—to frame a common strategy and keep communications flowing continually. Finally, even in the cases of disagreement, allow for dissatisfied members to sensibly voice their dissatisfaction.

This research is exploratory. Thus, further research should explore, for example, how would these findings compare to the executive leadership at the WTO or the International Telecommunications Union—active in distinct policy sectors and with
markedly different governance and executive structures? Further research is necessary, in particular studies designed to test these findings. Additional caution may be called for since, in both cases, the individual chief executives were the same person. How specific are the findings to Javier Solana’s personal traits? Nevertheless, relational leadership theories seem useful in further deepening our detailed understanding of the behaviors of IGO chief executives.
Notes

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References


Figure 1: Two approaches to the relationship between secretary general and member states in NATO

A principal/agent approach to NATO

A goal-directed network approach to NATO

Figure 2: Structure of NATO

North Atlantic Council (incl. subcommittees)

Secretary General (General Secretariat)

Military Committee (incl. MILREP)

Allied Command Transformations

Allied Command Operations
Figure 3: Structure of the EU-CFSP by 2002
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial scheme</th>
<th>Final scheme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>Recognize members as principals. Assure mandates from Council.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Framing</td>
<td>Setting vision (more relevant in novel IGOs)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Setting course of action (≈ strategizing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitating</td>
<td>Formal communications w/ members</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Informal communications w/ members</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Brokering agreements among members</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobilizing</td>
<td>Securing external support</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assure external hegemon’s support (relevant when hegemon is not member)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Securing internal support</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assure internal hegemon’s support</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create internal institutional capacities (more relevant in novel IGOs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Activating</td>
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<tr>
<td>Case</td>
<td>Interviewee</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATO '95-'99</td>
<td>Secretary General</td>
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<td>Chief of Staff of Secretary General</td>
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<td>Director of Communication of Secretary General</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU-CFSP '99-'09</td>
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<td>Chief of Staff of High Representative</td>
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<td>Director of Communication of High Representative</td>
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