Foreign Policy Making Transformed:
Modern Statecraft and Displacement in the
Direction of Swedish Foreign Policy

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Abstract
There is a tendency for prime ministers and their offices to become more centrally involved in the making and direction of foreign policy. This paper analyzes political and organizational changes in foreign policy making at the level of the core executive, which has to adapt to the changing international environment and political realities. The case selected for analysis is the direction of foreign policy in Sweden. Emphasis is placed on the organization for foreign policy, in terms of structure as well as staffing arrangements, and on mechanisms of change. The paper reintroduces the complex interdependence paradigm, most notably multiple channels which include transnational relations such as political party links and activity across nation-state boundaries. The paper maps out and inquires into the nature of direct personal contacts and networks of heads of government. Such direct and personal lines of communication may feed back into foreign policy formulation in national governments. Coordination through leadership is one ideal type or approach of foreign policy coordination. In the Swedish case the relationship between the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs has changed fundamentally over time. The Prime Minister and his office have become increasingly central in the foreign policy process. This centralization can partly be explained by the ongoing internationalization and Europeanization. In sum, a transformation and displacement has taken place in the making and direction of Swedish foreign policy.

Key words: coordination, core executive, displacement, foreign policy, organization

Introduction
The Swedish Prime Minister (PM) devotes about half of his working time to international affairs, and half of that time to EU affairs. Except for the repercussions of globalization, Europeanization has resulted in a new approach to foreign policy coordination where the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO), which has grown considerably over the years, now is much more centrally involved than it used to be in the handling of government relations across state borders. The sheer extent of the international activities of the Swedish PM and of the numbers of his foreign policy and EU advisers mean it is worth raising questions about the direction and management of foreign policy. The current PM stands at the centre of a decade-long transformation of the Prime Ministership and its role and place in the Swedish system of government, including foreign policy making. All in all, this spells divided authority and the possibility that the PMO could rival or displace the Ministry for Foreign Affairs (MFA) in the direction of foreign policy. Fuzzy lines of authority could result in poor coordination and inconsistency in policy and national positions.

Governments face similar international pressures and almost all core executive administrations recruit ‘diplomats, technocrats and politicians’ (Peters et al. 2000: 16). Questions arise as to who the ‘real’ principal is for the diplomats in the field (Jönsson and Hall 2005: 109), and ‘who governs’ in foreign policy (Hill 2003: 53). It does seem as if foreign policy more generally, at least amongst EU member states, has fallen increasingly to prime ministers and their offices to the detriment of foreign ministries. This situation may reflect a general waning of influence and prestige for

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foreign ministries as government leaders deal with each other directly through various networks or on a one-to-one basis. Partly, this is also a matter of personalities and relative interests. In any case, heads of government build up networks of relationships and communications with other leaders through multiple channels. Direct contacts between government leaders have mushroomed. This trend is exacerbated by the summity and multilateral diplomacy that take place over and above the bilateral diplomacy of classical state-to-state relations, not to mention the transnational relations of heads of government who are also party leaders.

Introducing the instruments of foreign policy, Holsti (1995: 134) points out that much diplomacy, bilaterally as well as multilaterally, is of a direct nature and that, therefore, ‘high-ranking officials and policy makers can bypass the traditional diplomatic intermediary and maintain direct communication among themselves.’ As a notable example, he gives the ‘personal fraternization’ that takes place among the EU leaders and more broadly between government officials of the leading industrial countries (now G8). Such settings bind a set of people to one another. The state/government leaders socialize together. They might be much closer to each other in their cognitive understanding about perceptions of reality and solutions than traditionally has been presupposed in international relations theory in general and particularly in research, based on classical realism, into the question of how to achieve international cooperation under anarchy (see, e.g., Axelrod and Keohane 1986: 247).

In any event, governments and their heads at the centre have to organize to be able to handle the growing pressures of international affairs. EU adds significantly to the attention heads of governments in EU member states have to pay to matters related to international or supranational cooperation and decision-making. The growing importance of EU policy making has substantially strengthened the power of the national core executive (Moravcsik 1994). This situation applies especially when the logic of intergovernmental relations/negotiations prevails.

In his book on the changing status and nature of the British Prime Ministership, Rose (2001) emphasizes the repercussions of EU membership and the increase of various transactions across national boundaries. In this connection, Rose (2001: 166) sees new-style prime ministers as well as diminished collegiality and collective responsibility, resulting in a decline of Cabinet. Rose’s analysis is similar to that made by them who see a tendency for parliamentary governments to change their nature and become increasingly personalized and presidential. This phenomenon is the result of a set of factors. Except for the increasing focus on personality by the media, ‘the demands of international summity’ is a major factor behind the general presidentialization and personalization of politics (Peters et al. 2000: 7). The emergence of presidential or prime ministerial government is driven by the ‘exigencies of security, defence and diplomacy’, including the policy coordination demands in EU countries (Peters et al. 2000: 7–8). Poguntke and Webb (2005: 13–4) argue that where issues are dealt with via intergovernmental negotiation ‘this shifts power to the heads of governments and some of their key advisers or governmental colleagues. Increasingly, parliaments and even cabinets can only ratify the decisions which have been taken elsewhere’. National chief executives are strengthened by their informational advantage over parliaments, and even over other parts of the government. The international trend of presidentialization applies in Sweden too (Aylott 2005). Except for more general factors, presidentialization in Sweden is
usually explained by the contingent personality factor of the current PM, who took office in 1996. However, this tendency can be traced back to earlier times and has to do with the centralization of policy coordination more generally and also with institutional and structural factors. Former PMs, most notably Olof Palme with reference to his foreign policy activism, also faced accusations of being presidential.

This paper places an emphasis on the changing dynamics and background conditions of foreign policy making today (cf. Hill 2003). The paper is about modern statecraft and organization for foreign policy as well as the displacement in the direction of foreign policy within the context of the core executive in Sweden. I had two main aims in writing this paper. A first aim has been to inquire into general political and organizational changes of foreign policy making at the core executive level and to explain the nature and sources of such changes. A second aim has been to describe and analyze the evolving role of the Swedish Prime Ministership in foreign policy, not least as a consequence of the mushrooming of activities related to foreign affairs' broadly speaking. Such activities at the top level will be mapped out in the paper. It represents a sustained effort to achieve a general as well as a deeper understanding of the organizational dynamics behind foreign policy, of the displacement in foreign policy making and of the system it epitomises.

The paper draws on formal elite interviews (over thirty to date) and on informal conversations with informants. Some interviewees/informants have requested anonymity and will remain anonymous. To some extent, the analysis is also based on hard primary sources, including government documents and partly political-party documentation compiled through archival research. As for Swedish foreign policy making, I have gained an increased understanding from quite a few memoirs and biographies. This wealth of insights provides useful background knowledge.

There is a huge literature on aspects of politics, polities and policy dealt with in this paper and I have been inspired by a host of writings on foreign policy, diplomacy and statecraft. As for Sweden, I draw especially on a comparative study of foreign policy management/coordination in Finland and Sweden under the influence of internationalization and interdependence (Karvonen and Sundelius 1987). Just like Karvonen and Sundelius, I want to make a contribution to our general understanding of the organizational dynamics behind foreign policy. They called attention to the organizational framework within which foreign policy evolves and the ‘constant

2 The interviewees include two former Prime Ministers, five ex-foreign Ministers, one former Deputy Foreign Minister, one former Minister for Trade and Europe, one former Deputy Minister of Finance, one former Minister for International Development and Migration who, after the murder of Anna Lindh, was acting Foreign Minister in September–October 2003, five former and one current State Secretary to the Prime Minister (the current also State Secretary for EU Affairs), the current State Secretary for Foreign Affairs and four of his predecessors in this position, two former State Secretaries for Trade (and EU Affairs) and Heads of the Swedish Permanent Representation to the EU, the current and one former State Secretary for Nordic Cooperation, foreign policy and political advisers as well as senior officials at the Prime Minister’s Office and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, including Ambassadors as heads of foreign missions or of intra-ministerial departments. In addition, six persons who have served as International Secretary (two of them as Deputy International Secretary) and one as Nordic and Baltic Secretary of the Social Democratic Party have been interviewed (for this and other research projects).
tension between resilience to structural pressures and adaptation to a fluid environment’ (Karvonen and Sundelius 1987: 157). Theoretically, they primarily based their work on the complex interdependence paradigm (Keohane and Nye 1977, first edition). Complex interdependence also provides a theoretical basis for this paper, especially the notion of multiple channels, that is, the differentiation between interstate/intergovernmental, transgovernmental and transnational relations (Keohane and Nye 1977: 24–5; see also Risse-Kappen 1995). Another theoretical basis for this paper is related to the different ideal types or approaches of coordination in the foreign affairs sector outlined by Karvonen and Sundelius. Whilst their survey did not include the PMO and their study excluded transnational relations, my research deals with both.

The paper is organized along the following lines. The next section focuses on foreign policy coordination through leadership, which is based on the authority of the Prime Ministership. The subsequent two sections deal with the arrangement of foreign policy advisers to the PM as well as with his activities related to foreign affairs. In the concluding section I summarize the main findings and draw out what I see as major implications for the development of theory and for future research.

**Foreign Policy Coordination through Leadership**

In the policy sectors of security, defence and diplomacy governments have ‘to speak with one voice – that of the head of the government who forges an agreed line with the respective ministers’ (Peters et al. 2000: 7). Coordination through leadership emphasizes the central role of the prime minister, and his or her office, as ‘coordinator of all official policy, including foreign policy’ (Karvonen and Sundelius 1987: 84–5). Even though the survey in the study by Karvonen and Sundelius on internationalization and foreign policy management did not include the PMO they did not refrain from commenting on its role as an actor or domestic agency involved in international dealings. As noted by them, the international orientation of this Office can become very pronounced. From the early 1970s PMs have experienced heavy workloads, including international trips, meetings and policy deliberations, and the head of government ‘must participate in the formulation of foreign policy and often represents the state abroad at summit meetings or international conferences’ (Karvonen and Sundelius 1987: 64).

As for the question ‘who governs’ in foreign policy, Hill (2003: 60) ponders upon the length of the time the head of government has been in office and upon the importance of political culture. He writes that ‘some political cultures are more resistant to the cult of personality than others’ and suggests that ‘the Scandinavian states have generally produced neither dramatic foreign policies nor charismatic leaders’. He could be challenged on this, at least partly. However you define charismatic leader, it must be said that Olof Palme (PM 1969–76 and 1982–86) shared some of those characteristics normally attributed to a charismatic politician. If not charismatic, Carl Bildt (PM 1991–94) made personal contributions to Swedish foreign policy change. A month after he took office Bildt redefined the Swedish security policy doctrine. In a speech in Bonn in November 1991 Bildt said the term ‘policy of neutrality’ no longer adequately describes Sweden’s foreign and security policy within a European framework. Just like he did in the Government Declaration, the PM emphasized that Sweden will pursue a policy with a clear ‘European identity’. Hill (2003: 60) points
out ‘that many governments simply do not last long enough to provide the time an individual leader needs to make a major impact.’ However, even during a tenure lasting for only three or four years a foreign policy activist at the helm can definitely make an impact. In any case, heads of governments are at the centre of media attention and more so than in the past.

The primary task of the PMO and of the PM personally is to provide strategic coordination and political leadership, based on the authority or virtue of the office of Prime Ministership. This also applies to foreign policy. Amongst other things, the PM delivers a Government Declaration to parliament every year. Nowadays, the corps diplomatique supposedly attaches greater importance to the section on foreign policy in this Declaration than to the Foreign Policy Declaration delivered annually by the Foreign Minister (and subject to common deliberations with the PMO). The PM is also a member (and chairman whenever the King cannot attend) of the Foreign Policy Advisory Committee, which according to the Constitution is required to meet, if it can, for deliberations in urgent matters related to foreign relations.

EU membership has meant that the PMO must have a capacity for, and be operative in, foreign policy. The tendency for the PM to involve himself in international dealings has become even more pronounced. The current PM, Göran Persson, in office since March 1996, has argued that EU more generally is not foreign policy that has to be handled by diplomats in the MFA – ‘the palace of cut-glass chandeliers over there’ – and gives this as a major reason for why it makes sense that EU issues are coordinated from the PMO (Persson 2003: 211–2; my translation). Implicitly, at least, he thereby claims a leadership role for himself and his office in matters related to the EU. The reframing of EU policy and the alterations of the institutional framework for EU coordination may well be interpreted as an instrumental way for actors at the PMO to strengthen themselves and the Office as such. It could also be seen as an attempt to seize the initiative from the diplomatic service, on the basis of the argument that politics should have primacy over diplomacy.

In the EU, the PM is the principal representative of Sweden at European Council summits. He himself presided over the European Council during the first half year of 2001, and performed as EU leader in meetings with world statesmen including the Presidents of the U.S. and Russia. The Swedish EU Presidency was directed from the so-called Situation Room (Lägesrummet), located in the PMO (and apparently inspired by the Situation Room in the White House). The Situation Room was engaged in daily issuing by email throughout the Government Offices, including the embassies, and thus served as a central information provider. Ekengren (2004: 217) points out that the coordination effects of this central system can hardly be overestimated and that the informal influence and steering functions of the Situation Room were great. Despite the fact that on paper the Swedish Presidency coordination was a relatively flat organization, the information and ‘order’ relationships were often of a vertical and hierarchical nature. The PMO coordinated the work of the government and was responsible for the working programme consisting of policy statements and agendas for each meeting in the Council of Ministers, and the direct role and involvement of the State Secretary for EU Affairs ‘was extremely important’ (Ekengren 2004: 215; see also Ruin 2002: 50). The State Secretary emerged in practice as the Minister for European Affairs. He got his authority from the PM. They were in permanent contact. In short, the Swedish EU Presidency serves as a perfect
example of foreign policy coordination through leadership. Ekengren (2004: 213) analyzes the Swedish EU Presidency as an instance of European foreign policy and notes that it was highly centralized ‘traditional’ foreign policy and that ‘foreign policy reflexes’ were strong in the Swedish administration. The overall priority of running a good Presidency meant that centralized coordination was accepted in the name of the national interest. The political truce and overwhelming consensus between the Social Democratic Party in government and the non-Socialist parties in the opposition was also based on a concern about the national interest.

Karvonen and Sundelius (1987: 64) emphasized that the PM, in addition to the overall responsibility for government policy, has special authority in the area of national security and that it is not always certain that the Foreign Minister or the Minister of Defence ‘will be included in the inner circle of national security decision makers. Instead, the Prime Minister may shoulder his responsibility as head of the government and work directly with a few trusted assistants.’ Leadership is called for when there is a sense of urgency and national emergency. The state is there to provide security for the citizens. In the aftermath of the tsunami disaster, the massive earthquake that occurred in the Indian Ocean in the early hours of 26 December 2004 and caused the death of a great number of Swedish citizens, the PM came under fire and was accused of weak leadership. A public commission looked into the matter in 2005 and the Committee on the Constitution in parliament did so in 2006. The division of labour between the PMO and the MFA was also subject for review, not for the first time.

**Foreign Policy Advisers to the Prime Minister**

In their study on internationalization/complex interdependence and foreign policy management, Karvonen and Sundelius (1987: 64) took notice of the expansion of PMO staff and commented that it ‘has been customary for some time to assign a professional diplomat to this staff, for personal assistance and for a smoother liaison with the Foreign Ministry.’ They also noted that the expansion of the PMO since the 1960s has diminished the role of the MFA. The PMO underwent significant growth in the 1970s. The remarkable growth of the PMO is partly caused by the increasing number of PMO staff that deal with foreign policy, or with international and EU affairs in broad terms. The staffing arrangement of appointing a foreign policy adviser to the PM is not new; what has been novel is the number of such advisers as the PM’s right hand and their direct role in overseeing foreign policy on the key issues.

The foreign policy advisory arrangement was institutionalized in 1982, and closely connected to this institutionalization is the politicization of the office of the State Secretary for Foreign Affairs (in the MFA) the same year. At the PMO, the number of officials for the handling of foreign policy issues numbered only one or two. A special foreign policy division at the PMO was established in 1984. However, it was small and in organizational terms it could not really be considered a proper division. At the time, it consisted of the chief foreign policy adviser, one additional foreign policy adviser and one assistant. In 1990, another official was recruited from the MFA. Along with a secretary they were three people who worked at the foreign policy division at the PMO, including the head, his deputy and one additional official. Initially (until 1987) foreign policy advisers remained employed by the MFA, not by the PMO. This arrangement reflected the view that the PMO should not grow and
have too many permanent positions. That foreign policy advisers to the PM have later been on leave from the MFA can be seen as a sign of further institutionalization.

During the years of the non-Socialist government, 1991–94, there was a security policy analysis group at the PMO (as of January 1992). (It obviously drew inspiration from the National Security Council, NSC, in Washington.) In addition, there was a special foreign policy adviser to the PM but without a division of his own.

The foreign policy division was re-established when the Social Democrats returned to government in October 1994. This division also got responsibility for issues related to the EU. The former chief foreign policy adviser, from 1983 to 1991, Hans Dahlgren was appointed State Secretary to the PM, and Lars Danielsson took over as Ambassador and head of the division for foreign affairs at the PMO. Danielsson had served as foreign policy adviser from 1989 to 1991. He was not politically appointed but an official recruited from the MFA. At first, Danielsson also only had one aide but the division was enlarged with the times.

In March 1996, Göran Persson became PM. In 1997, he appointed a new State Secretary, Pär Nuder (since Minister of Coordination and Minister of Finance). Nuder, who has Estonian family background, shared Persson’s concern with the Baltic States. A Baltic Group was established at the PMO (Elder and Page 2000: 141). Nuder would also represent the PM, as a kind of special envoy, in the Middle East. It seemed as if the government sounded out the possibilities to play a kind of mediating role, as it did in the 1980s. At the time, the mediating activity was run from the MFA and involved mainly the Foreign Minister and a few trusted diplomats.

It was only in 1999 that the senior foreign policy adviser was elevated to the position of State Secretary; the first ever at the PMO designated to handle matters related to international affairs and now also EU affairs. This appointment was directly related to the forthcoming Swedish EU Presidency 2001. In an interview, Danielsson said he maintained his role as ‘general foreign policy adviser’, but that he got ‘a new hat’ and another one after the 2002 general elections when he became the PM’s State Secretary (after Nuder). Danielsson continued to serve as State Secretary for EU affairs and to some extent also as the PM’s foreign policy adviser.

The numbers of staff at the division for foreign policy and at the PMO’s EU Department, which had responsibility for policy formulations concerning EU issues and cross-ministry priorities, increased significantly in the early years of 2000, especially in the context of the Swedish EU Presidency. This trend was exacerbated during the years of the European Convention 2002–03 and the Intergovernmental Conference 2003–04. (The government representative to the Convention, former Foreign Minister and Deputy PM Lena Hjelm-Wallén, reported directly to the PMO.) A former foreign policy adviser at the PMO, Stefan Noreén, served there again (2000–02), now as political adviser and Ambassador and on leave from the MFA. He was asked to keep together the work with matters related to Russia, and Eastern Europe more broadly, during the Swedish EU Presidency.

The staff member at the PMO responsible for liaison with the MFA can either be a political adviser, that is, politically appointed, or a foreign policy adviser with a background in the MFA. From 1998 until 2003 a political advisor (Roger Hällhag)
served as liaison officer in relation to the MFA, to all parts of it. He was a political appointment and had previously served at the international department of the Social Democratic Party and as political adviser to two Ministers of Defence. At the PMO, he was based in the political secretariat, with a staff of seven or eight people. (The numbers of this staff have only increased by one since then.)

With the exception of matters related to security policy, defence has been regarded as a domestic policy area and therefore coordinated by a political adviser at the PMO liaison organization. Today, however, some policies falling under the jurisdiction of the Ministry for Defence is also coordinated from the division for international and EU affairs and increasingly so in that defence is becoming an integrated part of the security and defence policy of the EU (ESDP). We are dealing here with matters such as crisis management, conflict prevention and also military missions.

The International and EU Affairs Division (Utrikes- och EU-enheten) was established in July 2004. It provides liaison with the MFA. Division staff numbers seven. In April 2006 they were as follows: Head/Director, one special adviser and one political adviser for matters related to internal EU affairs, one political adviser for the Lisbon process and the Economic and Financial and Budget Council (Ecofin) in the EU, one political adviser for external affairs and protocol, one desk officer for external affairs, and one administrative assistant handling office management and protocol. A political appointment, and placed in the same division, was that in October 2005 of a Special Emissary for Baltic Sea Issues (Kent Härrstedt, Social Democratic MP).

The Head/Director (Helen Eduards) is responsible for overall coordination in external relations, under the State Secretary. She was recruited from the MFA and took up a position at the PMO in March 2003. At first, she dealt exclusively with the foreign activities of the PM, like visits abroad. Later in 2003 she got responsibility for liaison with the MFA. She still serves in both capacities, that is, to accompany the PM on his journeys abroad and to liaise with and be a contact point vis-à-vis the MFA.

In an interview, Eduards said that her (primary) task is to ‘create an organization that is coherent’ and with a ‘functioning leadership’ (management). Previously, there were those who worked with EU affairs and those who worked with foreign affairs and they were separated, like ‘satellites’. The Division has two main functions. One is to assist the PM (and the Deputy PM) in all foreign activities, including journeys and visits, and ‘keep him informed’ about world affairs and possibly to ‘take initiatives’, for example for a speech. In this function, the Division provides service and advice. The Division orders briefs from the MFA in order to prepare the PM for his different foreign activities. The second function is liaison with the MFA. In this function, the Division engages in common deliberations and operates as ‘the extended arm of the Prime Minister’ by following the work of the MFA and how it feels. Eduards emphasizes that since the Division is so small it is ‘quite dependent on the MFA’, for achieving policy coherence. Since she has a background in the MFA she can relate to its officials ‘on their own terms, so to speak’. Here, she notes the ‘independence and pride’ of the MFA traditionally and its integrity. Eduards takes part at the weekly meetings of heads of MFA departments, and the PMO is represented in other constellations but these meetings are not frequent because of lack of time.
The EU Coordination Secretariat at the PMO (established in April 2005) prepares the PM’s participation at European Council summits. The PM is presented with two files of dossiers; one containing reports about the domestic politics situation in each country (25), and one containing information about the positions of every government on the issues on the agenda. The Ambassadors at the Swedish foreign missions are responsible for this reporting, whereas the EU Coordination Secretariat puts together the different dossiers for the PM. The Secretariat shall be alert to overarching policy concerns and secure policy coherence in its coordination work, but is (usually) not into the substance of foreign policy. Political issues, strictly speaking, shall be ‘cleared’ with the Director of the International and EU Affairs Division, which in reality (if not formally) is in a superior position to the Director-General of the EU Coordination Secretariat. This Secretariat consists wholly of public officials, most of them recruited from the MFA. The International and EU Affairs Division shall look after the political aspects of everything related to the EU and is closer to the PM politically (also physically in the location in the PMO), and its head can be expected to be protected by the PM and his State Secretary. The State Secretary, the Director and the Director-General form ‘a managers’ group’. Eduards has daily contact with the MFA and is therefore more operative than the State Secretary.

Whereas the EU Coordination Secretariat is a civil service organization, with a majority of staff recruited from the MFA, it operates in an intrinsically political environment. Staffing at the International and EU Affairs Division is a mixture of political appointees or civil servants, illustrating the hybridization of staff at central governmental level (cf. Peters et al. 2000: 15, 21). More generally, this hybridization of staffing at the core executive administration could result in tensions between political appointees and civil servants. The line between the roles of political, policy and administrative is blurred or fluid and these roles may be inconsistent or incompatible ‘as political appointees assume administrative tasks and civil servants are drawn into the murky waters of partisan politics’ (Peters et al. 2000: 21).

A former political adviser at the PMO attests to the different perspectives of political appointees compared to public officials. The politically appointed advisers think of how to ‘package’ policy and are concerned about ‘the party-political dimension’ in the context of domestic politics, including the (government) party’s standing in opinion polls. Policy is seen through the prism of party politics.

Significantly, foreign policy is the only sector where liaison with another ministry at the Swedish core executive is provided by a special division outside of the Political Secretariat. The International and EU Affairs Division deals more with advice on technical issues and with coordination than with policy formulation compared to the Political Secretariat where issues tend to have greater salience from a party-political perspective. Essentially, the framing of foreign policy as a distinct field in need of a special organization implies that foreign policy and to some extent also EU affairs remain somewhat separate in the policy process and politically as well as organizationally. That the PMO continues to recruit foreign policy advisers from the MFA suggests there is a need for special expertise in this area. It is also interesting to note that the PMO staff member who liaises with the MFA, Helen Eduards, is not a political appointee unlike the other liaison officers. In the interview, she said she is non-partisan but serves in a political capacity by being loyal to the government and the PM. She remarked that this is ‘somewhat of an anomaly’.
State Secretary Danielsson, originally no political appointee, clarified that you do not have to be a party member to be recruited to the PMO to handle international issues and that these people have usually been officials and not political advisers. At the same time, however, a prerequisite for being recruited in the first place is that the individuals are ‘loyal to the values of the government’. In principle, this applies to all who work in the Government Offices but clearly the demand for loyalty is larger still at the PMO.

Stefan Noreén, who has served at the PMO both as foreign policy adviser and political adviser, said in the interview that when he was first recruited in 1983 it was on his ‘diplomatic merits’ and no one asked if he belonged to a political party. Given the requirement for loyalty to the government, it is in practice unthinkable to belong to any other political party than the governing party according to Noreén (who held a position as State Secretary at the time of the interview, in June 2006). However, unlike a Minister, the foreign policy adviser must not be a party member.

Former foreign policy advisers at the PMO have moved on to become Ambassadors, State Secretaries and now even to the top post as Foreign Minister (from April 2006). Most of them have been seconded from the MFA and returned there after their tenure at the PMO. They have been promoted rather than demoted in their diplomatic careers. There is a kind of norm implying that their careers in the diplomatic service should not suffer. Nevertheless, foreign policy advisers at the PMO (and also political advisers to the Foreign Minister) traditionally have a bad name amongst diplomats in the MFA line organization and are seen as a sign of growing politicization of the civil service, including the diplomatic service.

It does seem as if foreign policy advisers to the PM do more than only serve in an advisory capacity but are also influential in policy formulation and thus could make an impact on policy substance. These advisers, although usually seconded from the civil service, are not in practice subject to the same rules of political neutrality. Whilst the same standard of neutrality could not be applied to an adviser to the PM as to civil servants, or career diplomats, in foreign ministries, foreign policy advisers to the PM (in Sweden and elsewhere, including Britain) have redefined the role of adviser. In reality, they are no longer just advisers but are also operative in policy-making and frequently overstep the line between the official and the political domains. These abilities and activities are not entirely to accord with traditional civil service norms and the situation may be unhealthy from a constitutional point of view. At the same time, however, the PM is there to govern the country and needs professional advice and these experts are often unelected civil servants, who may be diplomats.

Lars Danielsson has been especially instrumental in giving political advice on European matters and in formulating Swedish negotiation positions and to ensure consistency and coherence in national positions in the EU. It is essential here not only to be able to identify Swedish national interests but also to take account of domestic political concerns and priorities, not least in view of how groups inside the party may react. The chief foreign and EU policy adviser to the PM can place himself on the frontier between the PM and the outside world. In his memoirs, former PM Ingvar Carlsson writes that his (competent) foreign policy adviser Lars Danielsson made ‘a great effort’ when policy was shaped during the first years of EU membership and
that he ‘played an important role’ behind the scenes at the Cannes European Council summit (in June 1995). On this occasion, the Swedish government was pressing for the EU to take initiatives in the area of employment policy. This was an issue of high political salience for the Swedish Social Democrats.

Danielsson attended every European Council summit where Sweden was represented from December 1994 to March 2006, and has ‘held the pen’ on numerous occasions. In 2005, Danielsson was the Swedish chief negotiator on the financial perspective in the EU, including the long-term budget. Officials reported to him on a number of issue areas in the EU. He effectively provided leadership for the so-called Friday Group, which emerged into the major grouping engaged in coordination of EU issues. In connection to this, it has happened that the State Secretary has summoned individual Ambassadors from key EU countries such as Britain, France and Germany for meetings at the PMO and supposedly issued instructions to them.

Danielsson had no direct experience of party politics when he was recruited to the PMO in 1989, as a civil servant seconded from the MFA. At least from 2004, until spring 2006, Danielsson seemed to have a more profound influence than individual ministers and in reality served as Minister for European Affairs and to some extent even as Foreign Minister. It is beyond doubt that the influence of Danielsson, as chief foreign and EU policy adviser to the PM, goes far beyond that of a neutral civil servant. The State Secretary’s closeness to the PM and his influence with him can be seen as a threat to the balance within the Government Offices and even to the constitutional division between politicians/ministers and civil servants in terms of accountability. Overall, the strengthening of advisory arrangements introduces further centralization of policy. It also increases the risk of conflicting relations with individual ministers.

In an interview with the author (in September 2005), Lars Danielsson said that the PMO has a role as arbiter whereas the MFA cannot place itself above the other ministries. Therefore one could of course say, as there is a ‘tendency’ to do, that ‘the power increases’ (of the PMO, over the MFA). However, this decision-making does not take place ‘in a vacuum’, but, not least in the foreign policy area, in the way that we ‘listen enormously carefully to those who work with these issues’. Danielsson emphasized that they at the PMO are only a few people who are occupied with foreign policy and try to avoid creating ‘a foreign policy of our own’. This is more or less self-evident, according to Danielsson: ‘It almost goes without saying that we cannot sit and have a foreign policy of our own, that will not do, but we base ourselves on what the MFA is doing and the people who work with these issues almost always come from the MFA’ (like himself and Helen Eduards). Danielsson said that ‘our role’ (at the PMO) is to give the PM a personal touch in foreign policy, adding that he is pretty good at this himself. The PM talks more about economy, especially in the EU, and therefore has a broader perspective: ‘The worry we sometimes have is that it can be a bit difficult for the MFA to understand that the Prime Minister talks about foreign policy in a somewhat different way than the Foreign Minister does.’ Danielsson remarked that the organization (for foreign policy) at the PMO has grown from the fact that the PM today has such great needs in foreign policy, that he ‘does so much today in foreign policy that he must have a more clear direct link...’ It is to the extent and the nature of these activities that we shall now turn.
Foreign Activities of the Prime Minister

As was noted above, Swedish heads of government already in the 1970s and 1980s to an increasing extent made trips abroad to represent the state at summit meetings or conferences (Karvonen and Sundelius 1987: 64). Since then, the extent of such international activities has increased further still. The term of foreign activities (utrikes aktiviteter) is used by the PMO itself, also with regard to the European Council and bilateral summits in the EU. The PM’s foreign activities, broadly speaking and including direct contacts, have mushroomed.

While it is hard to be precise about numbers, to measure, all Swedish PMs since the 1970s have spent a significant portion of time dealing with international issues, including those within the policy areas of energy and trade. It goes without saying, really, that this could take up more time during certain periods than others. Possibly, the time spent on such issues could very well increase as prime ministers grow into the office and develop an international network. The international summitry, in particular, gives state leaders high visibility as well as presence, potentially also influence.

As was noted in the introduction, the current PM, Göran Persson, devotes about half of his working to international and EU affairs, half of which is related to the EU. It was even more during the Swedish EU Presidency the first half of 2001 (Ruin 2002). The foreign activities during that period included a visit to Pyongyang and Seoul, meetings with President Putin at the EU summit in Stockholm in March and with President Bush at the EU summit in Gothenburg in June.

From the day Göran Persson took office in March 1996 until May 2006, for over a decade-long period, his recorded foreign activities number about 800. All activities in Stockholm are personal conversations and the total number of foreign activities does not include informal contacts, which are numerous and take place through meetings or phone calls to and from the PM. Activities abroad, which occasionally last more than one day, include visits, talks, deliberations, usually bilaterally, and often during a working breakfast, lunch or dinner, most commonly at 10 Downing Street. Göran Persson has met with Tony Blair in London twelve times (officially) and meetings between them have also been held at other places in Britain (such as Bournemouth and Liverpool) and they have met in Sweden too.

Persson has been in Paris seven times for meetings with the President at the Elysée and/or with the PM at the Matignon. As his self-confidence grew, he started to approach those at the top like President Chirac. One senior official in the Swedish diplomatic service said that this relationship to France reflected a concern about the relative balance of relations between these two states, and that the Swedish PM was determined to redress the balance and to upgrade relations to a more equal level to those with Britain and Germany.

Persson has paid visits to the German capital, Bonn or Berlin, six times (and also been to other German cities such as Hannover, the residential town of Gerhard Schröder, and Stralsund). Furthermore, Persson has met with successive U.S. Presidents (Clinton and Bush) at the White House. Bilateral talks with political leaders reveal
that the Swedish PM has targeted – or been the target of – regional powers in the world such as Brazil, Chile, Canada, Nigeria, and South Africa.

In the Nordic and Baltic Sea region there are both bilateral and multilateral Nordic and Nordic–Baltic meetings. The latter include two different constellations: NB 6, consisting of the three Baltic and the three Nordic EU member states; NB 8, which also includes Iceland and Norway. There are regular Nordic–Baltic meetings of heads of governments prior to European Council summits. The PM’s foreign policy adviser, Helen Eduards, said these Nordic–Baltic meetings are not formalized but very useful.

The Swedish PM has visited the Baltic States on numerous occasions. These trips have usually been short and not necessarily planned long in advance. A former Latvian PM (1997–98), Guntars Krasts, a Conservative, said in an interview that Göran Persson on one occasion made a short trip to Riga to give ‘advice’ on how the EU works and ‘what friends you can rely on’. Krasts said this advice was ‘very valuable’ and that he ‘learned’ from Persson (and from the then Danish PM, Poul Nyrup Rasmussen). During his visit to Riga on 15 April 1998 Göran Persson met with PM Krasts and also with the Latvian President, Ulmanis. Persson and Krasts had met in Stockholm in October 1997 and also at Nordic–Baltic meetings of heads of government and at a Baltic summit. Later, as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Latvian parliament, Krasts met with Göran Persson at his office in Stockholm. They had dinner together and a ‘bilateral’ conversation.

The Swedish PM has clearly aspired to a leadership role in the Baltics, at least in the 1990s when he involved himself intensely in Baltic Sea cooperation at the level of heads of government. After a summit in Visby in May 1996 the PM set up the Baltic Sea States Support Group to coordinate Baltic Sea cooperation at the level of heads of government in the region (Elder and Page 2000: 141). Meanwhile, the Social Democratic Party set up the Baltic Sea Group (Östersjögruppen). The main aim of the group was to coordinate cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region, including links between political parties transnationally and at different levels. Significantly, the first chairman of the group was the State Secretary at the PMO (Pär Nuder). The appointment, in October 2005, of a Special Emissary for Baltic Sea Issues, based in the PMO, suggests that the PM wants to regain momentum in this area. The appointment must be seen in view of the forthcoming Swedish Presidency of the Council of Baltic Sea States (CBSS).

At the multilateral level, there are also the regular meetings both in the EU and in the UN. Foreign activities include all the European Council summits, where the PM meets with his fellow leaders from the other EU countries. In October 2003, the PM said (at a press conference in the context of a summit) that he meets more often his colleagues in the European Council than the executive of the party he chairs in Sweden. Arguably, this is a sign of prime ministerial detachment from the political party (similar to that of Tony Blair in Britain).

Moreover, the PM has attended, more than once, the Asia–Europe Meeting (ASEM, which holds a summit meeting every two years and in which Japan, China and South Korea also participate). ASEM too has provided a forum for bilateral talks in the fringe of a summit, for example with the PM of Thailand (Thaksin Shinawatra).
In the UN, the PM has attended sessions of the General Assembly and held bilateral talks with political leaders from different countries and with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who has been to Sweden several times. At the high level meeting in the UN in September 2005, the Swedish PM served as chair (and was assisted by the new President of the General Assembly, Jan Eliasson, since appointed Sweden’s Foreign Minister). Persson also took on the chairmanship of a group that shall come up with proposals for UN reform. This UN network consists of personal representatives who stay in regular contact with the Swedish PM, and his senior foreign policy advisers, in his capacity as chairperson. UN reform, notably the composition of the Security Council and a possible seat for Japan, was a subject raised in talks between the Swedish PM and the PM of Japan, Junichiro Koizumi, in Stockholm on 4 May 2006. They had met in Tokyo two years earlier.

In addition to the intergovernmental/interstate relations, there are the relations that are more transnational in character and which serve as further instances of multiple channels. The Swedish PM, as leader of the Social Democratic Party, has attended regular meetings of the joint committee of the Nordic labour movement (SAMAK). He has also taken part in different activities under the auspices of the Socialist International (SI), such as meetings of its Council, and of the Party of European Socialists (PES). Göran Persson has attended PES congresses, such as the one in Milan in March 1999. The Swedish member party hosted the PES congress in Malmö in June 1997 and its leader, Göran Persson, met there with Tony Blair, Lionel Jospin and other political leaders. This was a perfect photo opportunity for the Swedish PM. PES leaders also meet prior to European Council summits, usually at a pre-summit dinner, to discuss items on the agenda and, if possible, to hammer out a common line. The PES network includes EU Commissioners, such as European Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström, and the EU’s High Representative Javier Solana. Göran Persson also belongs to the Progressive Leaders Network/Progressive Governance, which is partly party-political. It was initiated by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton and also included Gerhard Schröder and other so-called progressive/reformist political leaders.

In February 2006, Göran Persson took part at the Progressive Governance summit held in South Africa and had a bilateral there with the PM of New Zealand. (The month before, he was in South Africa on vacation.) As PM, he was engaged in a number of foreign activities from January until May 2006. He made trips to Ukraine, Georgia and Finland. He held meetings in Stockholm with the Presidents of Armenia, Serbia, Botswana and Namibia, with the PMs of Poland, Morocco and Japan as well as the EU High Representative. He was in London for a breakfast meeting with the British PM, and in Stralsund for a meeting and dinner with the German Chancellor. In the EU, there was the European Council summit in March.

The PM has carved out a role for himself in international and EU affairs. The Swedish PM has today an international network of his own which he could avail himself of in his exercise of power. In a hearing before the Committee on the Constitution in parliament in February 2006, Göran Persson said that he, in the context of the Tsunami disaster, of course uses his ‘international net of contacts’ in a situation like this. In the aftermath of the disaster, which occurred in late December 2004, the Swedish PM was in contact with the PM of Thailand several times, with the PMs of other Nordic countries, the German Chancellor, the British PM, the President of the European Commission, and, three times, with the UN Secretary-General. The
Swedish PM also made a trip to Bangkok and Phuket (in mid-January 2005). For her part, the then Swedish Foreign Minister (Laila Freivalds) also visited Phuket. Significantly, however, she personally had only one international contact in the immediate aftermath of the Tsunami disaster. It was with her German counterpart, Joschka Fischer, and it was he who phoned her.

The PM’s State Secretary, Lars Danielsson, said that the direct contacts of the PM internationally have grown enormously and ‘are incredibly frequent’. This is a ‘new’ reality and not unique to Sweden but quite typical. Danielsson pointed out that ‘it has been accentuated by the EU membership’; that the regular interaction at the highest political level ‘requires that the prime ministers get to know the big foreign policy dossiers’. What has happened and ‘disturbs the apparatus’ [MFA] somewhat is that the PM, especially in the EU and when you have such a durability of tenure, ‘has developed a network which is pretty rich and those of us working here have a pretty strong network of our own.’ According to Danielsson, the development is about the same in all countries. Offices of prime ministers and of presidents have become more qualified in handling international affairs and can accomplish quite a lot today considerably faster without going through the embassies. Danielsson said that this could cause some ‘irritation’ in the MFA. A lot happens today through heads of governments/states ‘calling each other at the highest level and it is clear that often it goes fast and we cannot order information from the MFA’. There is simply not enough time. To prepare for every conversation we therefore must maintain a certain level here (at the PMO) where ‘we can manage things on our own’, Danielsson said. He added that they at the PMO rely on the MFA for information and do their best to report. But sometimes there is not sufficient time and everything should not be reported as some of the contacts are exclusive and have the character of private conversations. (He himself or Helen Eduards are usually present during the PM’s conversations.) At the MFA some think that ‘we try to be superior’ and do not share (information) with us, and so on, Danielsson said. They had discussed this with the MFA at a meeting of all heads of departments, to make them understand that it is not a matter of bad will but simply that they (at the PMO) cannot manage to report everything.

The State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Hans Dahlgren, who has worked for three Swedish PMs (Palme, Carlsson and Persson), said that a very considerable ‘change’ during the last thirty years is related to the activities of PMs in international affairs and that is has very much to do with the membership of the EU. ‘It is a dramatic development’, Dahlgren said. He referred to the increased contacts, including direct contacts, of PMs. He said that the PM asks for support, through his aides, from the MFA, which prepares briefs before trips abroad, meetings, etc, and relies very much on the embassies. Against this background and in this way, it has been ‘more interesting tasks for the MFA also to be able to assist the PM himself to a greater extent than what you used to do earlier when most of the foreign affairs and the international issues only were dealt with by foreign ministries.’ During visits in Stockholm, officials from the MFA are usually present and the ministry almost always receives reports from the PMO when there are conversations in a very limited circle so this sharing of information works well, according to Dahlgren. Overall, however, the relationship has changed over the years: ‘If you see it in terms of who it is that really handles foreign policy, then it is clear that a displacement has taken place so that the Prime Minister and his collaborators do an important part, over and above
what the Foreign Minister and the MFA do.’ The PM is our ‘principal political representative’ and will therefore have ‘the greatest weight’ in representing Sweden, for example in the European Council, ‘together with the Foreign Minister’, and it is ‘perfectly obvious that it shall be in that way.’

Concluding Remarks
A displacement has clearly taken place in the direction of foreign policy in Sweden. Over the years, the relationship between the PMO and the MFA has transformed and gone from equal to subordinate. That the MFA has become increasingly subordinate to the PMO has a lot to do with the transformation of the Prime Ministership itself and its role and place in the Swedish system of government, which has become more prime ministerial or even presidential. Arguably, the PM and his most trusted advisers have restructured state institutions to satisfy their own interests and ends. Partly, the leadership style of the current PM as well as the strong powers given to the PM in the Constitution must be brought into the equation. Just like Tony Blair, Göran Persson has been accused of eroding collective cabinet decision-making. Except for such contingent and contextual factors, however, there are more general and structural factors at work. The nature of the national core executive has changed in other countries too. Governments everywhere face increasing international pressures, which result in a centralization of authority and policy coordination in the core executive. Whether they want or intend to or not, heads of government are drawn into foreign affairs and spend a large proportion of their time on it.

The PMO in Sweden has grown stronger and not least in the handling of international and EU affairs. EU membership, as of 1995, has strengthened further the operative role of the core executive in foreign policy. Except for the expanding staff at the PMO, the displacement in the direction of foreign policy has a lot to do with the direct contacts of the PM, through multiple channels established across nation-state boundaries. PMs operate at a different level today and develop networks that range from ad hoc to well organized. International summitry and the mushrooming of direct contacts of and between government leaders constitute a major factor behind the shifting lines of authority in foreign policy. These contacts also epitomise modern statecraft and the changing nature of central government, in Sweden and elsewhere. The ‘foreign activities’ of PMs have consequences for the power balance within governments, most notably for the relationship between heads of government and foreign ministers.

A series of questions for further single case or comparative research emerge from the main findings and conclusions of this paper: Has the core executive and head of government a dominant position in foreign policy? Who governs and is the principal in the foreign policy executive in the issuing of instructions to foreign missions? What is the relationship between different domestic agencies in foreign policy making and how and, if so, why has this relationship changed? Is agency or structure the primary driving force behind such changing relationships? What is the relative importance of personalities and constellations of individuals on the one hand and of institutions on the other in the making and possible displacement of foreign policy? What is the role of advisers on foreign policy and international affairs more broadly, including the EU? Does the strengthening of core executive foreign policy advisory arrangements lead to further centralization of policy? What are the implications of hybridization of
staffing arrangements for the constitutional line between public and political domains? These questions are of relevance also for our understanding of the relative roles and importance of politicians and civil servants in the policy process.

Future research should take into consideration that heads of government, many of whom are also party leaders and may get together in this capacity, are not as distant from each other as is usually assumed in theories of international politics. Many state leaders meet frequently, socialize, and may get to know each other well, which certainly must not mean that they come to think and act similarly or be in total agreement cognitively or strategically.

Availing oneself of multiple channels internationally, as head of government, is a central feature of modern statecraft. Research into foreign policy management and coordination must recognize the multiple channels that connect societies as well as governments to each other. In the analysis of foreign policy, channels other than the interstate/intergovernmental are usually omitted or unspecified. Alongside such channels, there are the transnational relations of personal contacts and exchanges of ideas, experience and information. Contacts and exchanges of this kind are often informal and therefore more difficult to chart than official interstate channels, through public diplomacy. This is probably the main reason why transnational relations often tend to go unnoticed in research on foreign policy making. In any event, they ought to be reintroduced in foreign policy analysis. In short, there is still much to gain from applying the complex interdependence paradigm.

References


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