

# **Understanding European Integration: A Decision Making Approach**

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The recent shift in Swedish policy toward the European Community forms the empirical focus of this paper. Traditionally, the official Swedish position has been that membership of the Community would not be compatible with the long standing Swedish security policy based on the doctrine of no alliances in peace aiming for neutrality in the case of war. As late as in May 1990, the then Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson articulated this restrictive government position in an authoritative article in the leading Stockholm daily. In October 1990, the government, as part of an economic reform bill, declared its ambition to join the Community as soon as the contextual circumstances would allow. In December, this position was reaffirmed in a parliamentary declaration, which also shifted the wording from ambition to intent. During the spring of 1991, an internal Foreign Ministry group examined the potential membership issue in great depth. On June 14, the Prime Minister read to Parliament a statement outlining a new government policy on the membership issue. On July first 1991, an application for membership was submitted to the Chair of the Council of Ministers of the Community in the Haag. Following the September 1991 election defeat of the Social Democratic government, the Conservative party leader, Carl Bildt, assumed the position of Prime Minister. In his October 1991 cabinet declaration to the new Parliament, he reaffirmed the Swedish intent to seek membership of the EC. On February 1, 1993, formal negotiations commenced in Brussels.

This remarkable policy transition represents one of the most fundamental shifts in Swedish postwar foreign policy. How this national decision in favor of participation in European integration can be explained is the subject of this paper. Such an examination would seem to be a prerequisite for any understanding of the impact of a potential future Swedish role inside the European Community. It remains today an open question if the then crucial decision to apply for membership, which is analyzed here, will in fact lead to Swedish membership of the European Community, turned European Union following the still pending ratification of the Maastricht Treaty.

### **Structural Approaches**

The recent Swedish reorientation toward membership of the European Community can be explained in terms of an adjustment to the drastically shifting power balance in Europe. Building on the premise, first articulated by Annette Baker Fox (1959:186-87), that small states tend to go with, rather than move against, the international power balance, the dramatic redirection of Swedish EC-policy during the 1990-91 season can be understood in terms of the impact of the international structure. As long as the European, postwar balance of power was defined by two relatively equally endowed military blocs, the traditional Swedish posture of avoiding any open military-political entanglements with either side was widely regarded as a prudent national security position. Maintaining an international appearance of independence also visavi the (West) European Community was one element of such a balancing security posture.

After the emergence of a more dynamic European Community, the sudden collapse of the Warsaw Pact, and the rapid and peaceful reunification of Germany, the defining international power constellation shifted. With a militarily and financially strong Germany at the center of the envisioned European Union, Sweden could best enhance its national interests through a closer affiliation with this new and unrivalled power pole in its vicinity.

The "power of attraction" of Germany became highly visible once again to the small state on the Northern fringe. Still, the very real possibility of highly chaotic political developments within the former Soviet empire required that the new Swedish commitment to the German centered EC also included a caveat, in case of a sudden power balance reversal. Russia could return to a position of power projection along the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea and in the far north. Thus, the enduring value of the traditional Swedish neutrality posture was emphasized by the Prime Minister in the June 1991 announcement of the decision to apply for membership.

It seems that the new Swedish EC-position can be explained as a national policy adjustment to the European power balance emerging after October 1990. In this explanatory approach, the altered international political structure is seen as the primary force behind this new commitment to European integration. The logic of this type of analysis is strikingly common sense based, i.e. it permeates journalistic and practitioner accounts of these developments. This explanation also fits well within the realist and neorealist school of international politics. It seems to capture the essence of the dynamics behind the national policy shift in a parsimonious manner.

At the same time, the relatively simplistic, structurally focused approach sidesteps any examination of how the readily observed international changes filter inside the national policy making processes behind the subsequent shift toward Europe. By stressing the direct linkage between the international, situational context and the resultant policy action, the analyst dismisses other pertinent but also more complex elements behind a major redirection of established governmental policy. If a logic of international structure bearing down upon nation-states was uncritically accepted, one would not be able to explain the domestic political agony, the considerable internal party bargainings, and the organizational strife experienced during this season of movement toward a new policy formula. Observers of these events in Sweden have noted that the domestic dimension must be included in order to explain adequately the eventual policy outcome on this important issue.

This observation in this recent Swedish case is reinforced by the more generalized conclusion by two of the foremost international relations theorists working on the relationship between international structure and process and, on the other hand, foreign policy. Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1987:753), reflecting on their previous landmark book *Power and Interdependence*, argue that "we have paid too little attention to how a combination of domestic and international processes shape preferences....research at the systemic level alone may have reached a point of diminishing returns." Obviously, one must penetrate more deeply inside the Swedish national setting to be able to explain why the recent shift in EC-policy occurred.

National attributes, such as domestic structures, form another well established focus for students of the international relations of Europe. Peter Katzenstein (1984; 1985) in his celebrated works on how small states "confront the dilemma of how to balance their quest for autonomy with the fact of interdependence", concludes that their "economic and political successes derive from their capacity to combine economic flexibility with political stability" (1984:256). The pivotal role of close-knit elite networks across the traditional state-society divide is emphasized. These European small state success stories have been built on these crucial domestic structures. Katzenstein's academically influential thesis parallels arguments presented by native scholars about the foundations of public

policy making in Sweden.

The positions of the major Swedish interest groups underwent significant changes during 1989-91. Until this period of rapid European transformations, even the Federation of Industry held on to the established policy line, in spite of its previous advocacy in favor of Swedish membership. The leading unions, such as the Federation of Workers (LO) and the Federation of Salaried Employees (TCO) representing blue and white collar workers respectively, traditionally have been sceptical of the European integration effort. To them, the EC has lacked a social dimension and has shown an inadequate interest in the concerns of workers and consumers. Significantly, the positions of these leading unions began to shift during 1990. It then became evident that Swedish industry would join the anticipated European Internal Market with or without any government membership of the Community. Leading firms invested heavily in the EC nations to the possible detriment of their Swedish based production and service operations and research and development facilities. A clear risk of massive capital flight and eventual loss of employment among the members was at hand.

Considering the traditionally intimate relationship between interest group heads and the leadership of the Social Democratic party, this growing union concern would soon also affect the deliberations inside the party and within the cabinet. At the Social Democratic party congress of September 1990, some discreet and vaguely phrased signs of a possible change of party policy on the EC issue surfaced through the media. In October, the balance of payments conditions seemed to require not only a major domestic economic reform package but also a public commitment toward a formalized involvement in the Community. The resulting statement by the Ministry of Finance was met with approval by the leaders of the major interest groups, such as the LO, TCO, and the Federation of Industry. It was not cleared in advance with the professional leadership of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The recent Swedish policy redirection toward Europe can be explained through an internal structural shift as national elite networks redefined their positions on how to handle the classical dilemma between autonomy and interdependence. According to many observers, domestic economic constraints, and even panic, formed the contextual background to the shift in preference by industry, labor unions, political parties, and eventually to the October 26, 1990 governmental announcement of a revised view on the membership question.

In the terminology of the Katzenstein thesis, the domestic network supporting the traditional policy line, emphasizing autonomy, were eroded in favor of a new constellation of interests promoting a different solution to the acute challenge of economic dependence. The subsequent commitment to European integration is in this perspective seen as the logical outcome of an internal adjustment process. It was triggered by international developments, but it can only be explained through an analysis of the shift in domestic structures.

Yet, the traditional focus on international and domestic structures, interests, and realignments in the prevailing European integration literature is not a sufficient analytical departure point if one holds to the belief that individuals make decisions and shape governmental policy. Governmental policy does not simply evolve from structural features abroad or in the domestic setting. Like other forms of human or social behaviors, it is the result of some purposeful act. Certainly, agents of change or stability are affected both

positively and negatively by the structures surrounding their problem definitions, comprehensions of goals and alternatives, as well as their choice and implementation mechanisms. Occasions for national decisions are defined through complex and often drawn-out structuration processes. These include a varying degree of consciousness of this cognitive dynamics among the individuals involved. Accepting this agency driven view of foreign policy making, the analyst must proceed beyond the two traditional structural perspectives outlined above.

## **A Cognitive-Institutional Approach**

The holistic view of the influencing forces behind the new Swedish commitment to EC membership used above, tends to diverge sharply from the experiences of the involved participants. These officials were mainly concerned with how to handle specific and immediate problems perceived as relevant to their areas of public and partisan responsibility. Considerations of finding a national grand strategy for the European future were less prevalent than more pressing concerns over the immediate issues on the political and organizational agendas. As an astute student of foreign policy decision making suggests: "The decision process does not appear to be particularly oriented towards long term outcomes; far more attention is paid to the problem of what to do next." (Anderson 1987: 298).

In their seminal work on foreign policy analysis, Snyder Bruck and Sapin (1963:6) raised a number of research programmatic questions which are as interesting today as when they were first formulated more than thirty years ago:

"How do structural and process factors determine policy and action decisions? How do tasks, problems, and situations affect who will be involved in a decision, structure of the decisional unit, and the modes of arriving at choices? Interest in these interrelations is age old; yet we do not have a set of propositions or hypotheses that embrace the significant elements on each side of the equation."

One of the most significant disciplinary developments of the past decade is the emergence of a reformulated institutional approach to the study of politics and policy (March & Olsen, 1989; Pedersen, 1991). This analytical focus promises to be of great value in embracing the challenge posed long ago by Snyder and associates. The institutional approach opens up a middle ground between utilitarian rational choice perspectives and structural deterministic approaches to the study of public policy. It is an approach which respects the autonomy of social agents while recognizing the important enabling and constraining effects of the institutional milieu within which policy takes shape. This orientation also fits well with a number of recent social and political psychological findings emphasizing the central role of interpretation in coping with the typically ill-structured problems associated with foreign policy-making.

An institutional approach acknowledges the pervasiveness of rules and routines in the modern governmental apparatus. Roles and social identities, along with rules, are central concepts of this recently widely recognized perspective on policy making. As March and Olsen (1989: 22-23) observe:

"Action is often based more on identifying the normatively appropriate behavior than on calculating the return expected from alternative choices...To describe behavior as driven by rules is to see action as a matching of the situation to the demands of a position. Rules define relationships among roles in terms of what an incumbent of one role owes to incumbents of other roles..."

There is an emerging consensus among students of comparative foreign policy that one can make significant gains in the field by moving away from simple input-output models of foreign policy. Rather, the central empirical task is increasingly viewed to be to penetrate the traditionally closed institutions, processes, and practices of government decision making in the foreign policy area. The researcher is urged, in an echo of Snyder, Bruck and Sapin's (1954; 1963) appeal, to "open the black box" and analyze "...how decision makers achieve an understanding of a problem, make choices, and justify those decisions to client groups" (Powell, Purkitt, & Dyson, 1987: 203).

In other sectors of public policy, significant strides have been made in this regard by scholars who have breached, to an impressive extent, the walls of secrecy and silence which have shielded politicians and civil servants from scrutiny. We must be open to the possibility that a better understanding of the settings for and processes of policy formulation and implementation may well exist today in policy areas other than in foreign policy studies, where the analyst has been encumbered by obstacles to research erected in the name of national security. Findings from these other policy realms should be taken seriously and their relevance to foreign policy processes explored.

The first step in developing such an analysis is to find a relevant conceptualization of the processes of foreign policy. Several valuable conceptualizations have been presented over the years, beginning with the seminal contribution by Snyder, Bruck and Sapin (1954; 1963:72). Other significant reformulations of this fundamental analytical concern have been made by Brecher (1974), East et. al. (1978), and Carlsnaes (1986).

After reviewing the scant scholarly literature dealing with foreign policy change (George, 1980; Goldmann, 1982, 1988; Holsti, 1982; Hallenberg, 1984; Väyrynen, 1987; Hermann, 1990), it was found that the framework presented by Charles Hermann (1990) constitutes the most comprehensive attempt to focus on the processes of foreign policy change as an agent driven activity. This abstract scheme is worthy of empirical application in a specific case as a means to evaluate the wider utility of a cognitive-institutional approach to European policy making.

Charles Hermann (1990:5) defines foreign policy as a goal-oriented or problem-oriented program by authoritative policymakers directed toward entities outside the policymakers' political jurisdiction. Four graduated levels of change are suggested: Adjustment change, programme change, problem/goal change, and international orientation changes. What type of foreign policy change does the chosen case represent? It can not be said to represent a redirection of the entire Swedish orientation toward world affairs, i.e. the last type. Likewise, the 1990-91 shift involved much more than an adjustment in the level of effort or in the scope of recipients, i.e. the first type.

The purposes or goals behind the established policy line were not replaced by new objectives. A concern for the goal achievement of the fundamental national objectives of prosperity and physical security could be seen as one motive for the dramatic change in

foreign policy. The traditional doctrinal relationship between EC membership and the requirements of credible neutrality had to be redefined. This was necessary in order for this established policy doctrine to enhance also in the future these basic policy goals. This recent Swedish case would not seem to fit Hermann's definition of a problem or goal change. Rather, a redirection was made in the means by which the long standing policy goals were addressed. A qualitative shift occurred as a new formula for combining neutrality and prosperity was found, i.e. a program change. The new official line was articulated in the statement to Parliament on June 14, 1991.

The observed policy change is assumed to be initiated by some activity external to the decisionmaking process within the government. The primary focus is upon understanding the activities inside the so called black box. However, before one digs into the decision making process proper, one must consider the external stimulus activating these internal mechanisms. Four such sources are identified by Hermann (1990:11-13). The so called change agent can be leader driven, based on bureaucratic advocacy, brought on by domestic restructuring, or stimulated by external shock. It is also noted by Hermann that these types of stimulating sources may work in tandem. The next task is then to identify the primary change agent in the Swedish case under examination.

According to many accounts of the developments leading up to the final policy shift in the summer of 1991, this process was not initiated or driven forward by the cabinet leader or by any strong advocacy segments inside the relevant bureaucracy, i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In fact, one can find several conflicting public statements on the doctrinal issue over the 1990-91 year. In some announcements by government leaders, such as the Prime or Foreign Minister, openings toward a membership were made. In other comments, the many remaining obstacles for such a new course were stressed.

Inside the Foreign Ministry, considerable confusion was evident at mid- and junior career levels. Several leading diplomats testified privately to their frustration over the uncertainty surrounding this essential element of their professional core d'esprit. A sense of disappointment and even betrayal over the politically opportune slide at the top level of the ministry was also articulated in private by some career officers with intense personal stakes in the traditional definition of the core of Swedish security policy. In their view, the neutrality doctrine became secondary to the perceived partisan necessity to safeguard prosperity and domestic political tranquility. Neither the leader driven nor the bureaucratic advocacy sources seem to have served as primary change agents in this case.

External shocks are large events in terms of visibility and immediate impact on the recipient. Several such case relevant events unfolded during the traumatic years of 1989-91. The collapse of Soviet dominance in Central and Eastern Europe became a clear reality during 1990. The new importance of German strength was evidenced by its speedy unification already in October 1990. In that same month, the first Swedish official articulation of a change toward EC membership was made. In November, this historical German event was followed by the symbolic signing of the Charter of Paris indicating the promise of a new European security order. The following month, the Swedish Parliament went on record supporting the previously announced plan to join the Community.

In the fall of 1990, a sense developed in Swedish public debate, as well as inside some relevant policymaking circles, that the traditionally strict interpretation of the requirements of credible neutrality was becoming irrelevant to the foreign policy problems of the 1990s.

In fact, the persistent pursuit of a seemingly outmoded neutrality doctrine could lead to unnecessary material sacrifices without any matching security gains. The changing international setting made previous policy increasingly obsolescent. A significant policy adjustment would be the logical step following the momentous international transformation, it was argued. A static position on neutrality and EC involvement in the face of such overwhelming European developments could very well lead to a significant future policy failure. Thus, the proposed policy change was not driven by a sense of failure due to the previous posture between the blocs, as stressed in the Hermann scheme. Rather, new realities abroad required a revised national policy for the now approaching significant national issues.

The confidential deliberations inside the Foreign Ministry during the spring of 1991 largely concerned the possibilities for various alternate developments in the European security setting. Were the changes permanent? How likely and severe could a set back be? Could Sweden credibly shift position again if the emerging European peace order did not materialize or collapse? How likely was an upsurge of violence across the Baltic Sea? These difficult questions did not concern primarily the situation of the day. They focused more directly upon the plausibility of various, more or less threatening futures. Naturally, such discussions were driven by considerable uncertainty also among specialists. Disagreements over the most likely future, and over the most proper Swedish policy course in these possible scenarios, would seem a natural consequence of the structure of the situation. The externally driven source must be included as a significant primary change agent in this case of policy redirection.

Hermann's fourth primary change agent is labelled domestic restructuring. It refers to the politically relevant segment of society, whose support a regime needs in order to govern, and the possibility that this segment of society can become an agent of change. This rather ambiguous category in the applied scheme is further narrowed for the purposes of this case examination. Here, it will be limited to considerations of any apparent shifts in the domestic political support of the established policy position. Such shifts could be evidenced through the positions of opposition parties and public opinion surveys. Assuming that a government prefers to pursue policy positions which have domestic support, or at least try to avoid antagonizing significant segments of society, it may be useful to examine any recent shifts in domestic support for the traditional government rejection of EC membership.

It has been well documented that the parties in opposition, particularly the Conservative and the Liberal parties, were well ahead of the party in government, the Social Democrats, in adjusting their views on the matter of EC membership. Until the summer of 1991, both of their leaders could claim special roles as enthusiastically pro-Europe. They could also label their main rival, Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson, as much less serious on this issue. With a national election scheduled for September 1991 and with the clear possibility that the opposition parties would turn the EC membership issue into a major campaign theme, it would make good sense for the party in office to defuse well in advance this potential election problem.

Surveys of the public support for the political parties are regularly conducted in Sweden. Over the 1989-91 period, the party in office suffered historically low support rates. The parties to the right with more active, pro-Europe positions fared better in the polls. If these survey results were to be manifested also in the election of September 1991, the Social



Democratic government would have to leave office. Considering this precarious political base, it would seem important for the survival of the cabinet to avoid creating additional targets for attacks from the right prior to the forthcoming election. In September 1990 for the first time a majority of the surveyed in a public opinion poll expressed a preference for membership. By then, both the Conservative and the Liberal parties had come out in favour of eventual membership. The Social Democratic government still held to a more traditional position regarding the restrictions inherent in the neutrality posture. A similar survey in December 1990 indicated that two thirds of the public then favored Swedish membership of the Community. These trends in domestic support for a revised government position suggest that one factor motivating considerations of a policy change was the anticipation of a domestic restructuring at the polls, if the current official line were retained in the face of an opposition offensive in favor of membership.

It seems that the primary change agent category of domestic restructuring was of significance in this case. However, the resulting decision making process in favor of a policy change was not initiated by an actual restructuring of society. More appropriately, the decision making process was stimulated by the anticipated restructuring of domestic preferences against the government and in favor of a different position than the one officially articulated. Naturally, this domestic drift was related to the external shock of a radically different European security scene. As suggested by Hermann, the primary agents of external shock and domestic restructuring interacted in this case to serve in tandem as the primary sources of the initiation of decisions to change direction in foreign policy. It was previously noted that the resulting policy output can be characterized as an example of program change.

Intervening between agents of change and the actual foreign policy change is decisionmaking. The next step is then to outline the phases of the decisionmaking process through which information about possible policy failure is transformed into new government policy. The seven proposed stages are (Hermann, 1990:14):

1. initial policy expectations
2. external actor/environmental stimuli
3. recognition of discrepant information
4. postulation of a connection between problem and policy
5. development of alternatives
6. building authoritative consensus for choice
7. implementation of new policy.

Initial policy expectations, generated either by the policymakers themselves or imposed upon them, create standards for subsequent judgments of success or failure. Policy can be changed for various reasons but policymakers must accept some kind of causal connection between what their policy will do and the state of the problem of concern to them. The traditional definition of the EC problematique in Sweden was based on the assumption that economic benefits were possible without formal membership. It had been argued that the hoped for European Economic Space (EES) agreement, like previously the free trade agreement from 1972, could provide the necessary prosperity inducing connection to the European Internal Market.

It was also assumed that a primary consideration in this, superficially an economic, issue must be the implications for credible neutrality between East and West. The traditional

problem structuring was to a large degree defined as a national security matter. Although membership would yield greater economic advantages, this opportunity was considered foreclosed due to its negative consequences for the critical core of established security policy. For example, the 1972 free trade agreement was negotiated by Sverker Åström, who at the time had no particular expertise in international trade issues. However, he was considered well in tune with relevant thinking on the requirements of neutrality and Western entanglements. His preceding posting had been as Swedish ambassador to the United Nations.

During the rapid transformation in Europe, the empirical foundations for this well entrenched national problem definition began to crumble. According to Hermann, when explaining a decision to change policy, one must understand the characteristics of the environmental stimuli in terms of how they are perceived by policymakers. It appears that the relevant Swedish policymakers only slowly picked up on the new developments in Europe. These did not fit well with their schemata for understanding world politics or the Swedish role in superpower relations. As one foreigner observed, a certain nostalgia for the more well structured bloc conditions of the Cold War era seemed evident in Stockholm at that time. This reluctance to redefine the basic premises behind Swedish security policy in the light of the rapid transformations abroad can be understood as an effect of the weight of a domestic decision regime built around the doctrine of neutrality (Sundelius, 1989).

One crucial external stimulus behind the eventual movement toward a restructured Swedish problem definition was the October 1990 reunification of Germany without any apparent Soviet protest. This fundamental alteration of the security and economic structures of Europe may have triggered the subsequent Swedish cognitive commitment to an application for EC membership. Prior to this event the government leaders articulated ambiguous caution regarding the compatibility between membership and credible neutrality. After the German reunification, the public declarations became more precise. The spring 1991 internal Foreign Ministry group assessing the plausibility of a return to the traditional superpower frost in Europe decided in its conclusions to emphasize more the opportunities to be seized in the new Europe rather than the possible setbacks and risks.

Hermann argues that for major foreign policy change to occur it is necessary for authoritative policymakers to conclude that their prior formulation of the problem, their mode of dealing with it, or both, no longer accommodate information received from the environment. After the critical German settlement, it became obvious that a new mode of dealing with the classical dual Swedish problem formulation of prosperity and security was required. One had to find a revised policy formula for achieving the still important joint objective of continued prosperity and adherence to the deeply entrenched security posture. In the terminology of the applied scheme, the policymakers concluded that their traditional policy was ineffective in dealing with the problem, as presently defined, making the problem worse, generating new problems (i.e. in the domestic election arena), and costing much more than anticipated. The impression from media reports is that a painful decisionmaking process took place within the Social Democratic government during the 1990/91 parliamentary session.

The next suggested stage of the decision process leading to foreign policy change is the development of alternatives. In this particular case, the focus was on the possible means

by which the fundamental, and still intact, policy objectives could be fulfilled. One of the traditional obstacles to any deep Swedish involvement in the European integration process, with its potential economic benefits, had been the perceived costs to a credible neutrality posture. Also during the initial years of the recent European transformation period, this limiting aspect was stressed by authoritative government leaders and Foreign Ministry officials. In his May 29, 1990 article in the leading Stockholm daily, *Dagens Nyheter*, the Prime Minister reaffirmed this restrictive, official position on the boundaries for credible neutrality:

“Should the EC choose to proceed toward such a far-reaching coordination (of foreign and defense policies) it will become impossible for Sweden to consider membership. The definitive limit lies here. The credibility of our policy of neutrality would be called into question if we were to adapt to a binding cooperation of the kind that an EC membership appears to presuppose.”

Following the dramatic 1990-91 year of European transitions, the government could solve its Community membership problem by declaring that this traditional restriction was no longer relevant. It could be argued that the preferred policy line of the Social Democratic government could now be realized as the international setting had significantly changed. With the favorable prospects for a European order of common security, the Swedish government could join in this important regional enterprise. According to this logic, the government line was not manifesting any radical shift in preference. Instead, it realized a long standing Social Democratic ambition, which had been hampered due to the unfortunate security restrictions imposed by the requirements of credible neutrality.

In Swedish politics, building an authoritative consensus behind major policy initiatives is an important ingredient of successful decisionmaking. In this particular case, the elaborate process of consensus building involved finding support and analytical rationales inside the government machinery for the new position. It required considerable effort to get the Social Democratic party leadership behind the more offensive posture toward participation in European integration. Both within the relevant government bureaucracy and party machine considerable resistance to a swift policy change was encountered. Some internal critics articulated their scepticism toward a potential redirection of policy through the media. Within the cabinet, the Minister of Environment voiced some concerns over the relevant Community record. To some Social Democrats, the unique Swedish international role, including its progressive development assistance profile, would be endangered through a membership of the EC.

Outside the government and party in office, a primary target for consensus building was the Centre party, one of three nonsocialist parties forming the loyal opposition. Traditionally, the Centre, formerly Agrarian, party has safeguarded the primacy of secure neutrality, when confronted with schemes for international entanglements. The Left party, former Communists, and the Green party were also opposed to the pro-EC policy line. However, it was not seen as necessary to bring also these two small fringe parties behind the planned policy shift. Their parliamentary votes were not required to pass a bill on the EC issue.

In order to reach a consensus based formula for the pro-EC position, which could include the Centre party, references were made to the continued importance of the well established policy of neutrality in any great power conflict. This aspect was also important

to the guardians of security policy inside the government machinery. In May and early June of 1991, such commonly agreed upon language was found within a select working group composed of the Prime and Foreign Ministers and the other major party leaders. The subsequent letter of application by the Kingdom of Sweden of July 1 was based on a multi-party consensus of both the left and the right. Only the small Left and Green parties remained opposed to the new formula, in which it was claimed that "a Swedish membership of the EC is compatible with the requirements of neutrality".

On June 14, 1991, the policymakers were locked into a new mind set of almost equal rigidity as the one which recently had been abandoned. For example, Ingvar Carlsson's spontaneous comment during the early phase of the August 1991 Soviet coup attempt is illustrative of this new analytical closure. He then claimed that also with this setback the favorable superpower conditions allowing a Swedish membership, with retained neutrality, had not changed sufficiently to reassess this recent commitment to integration with Western Europe. The policymakers were soon fortunate enough to see the domestic military intervention fail. No sudden change in the Soviet domestic political system shattered the newly found formula for Swedish prosperity and security.

One motivating factor behind the prolonged consensus building effort was to diffuse a potentially difficult election campaign issue. The EC membership question did not figure prominently as a divisive issue in the September 1991 election. All major parties declared their support for the agreed upon, pro-Europe line. The Conservatives tried to take the credit for pushing the Social Democratic government forward on the issue, while the latter asked for a renewed mandate to work for a better people's Europe. The two small parties opposed to the EC suffered election losses together with the party in office. The Conservative party as well as two new, pro-EC parties gained parliamentary seats. The new Prime Minister, Carl Bildt of the Conservative party, is recognized as strongly favoring a Swedish return to its European economic, political, and cultural base. Soon after assuming office, he coined the term "a foreign policy with a European identity" as a more suitable characterization than the outmoded neutrality label.

The final stage in the decision process behind policy redirection, as suggested by Hermann, is implementation of the new policy. In one sense, this step was completed through the June 14 public declaration and the application for membership on July 1, 1991. However, the implementation stage could enter into this case in more complex ways in the future. For one, the Constitution must be altered prior to entering the Community, as this step involves transferring some sovereign powers to this larger entity. Constitutional revisions can only be enacted through two legislative steps with a national election in between these parliamentary decisions. A special commission of parliamentarians and relevant experts in February 1993 presented a controversial recommendation for the necessary constitutional revisions. A government bill in the matter is forthcoming later this year.

Further, it has been agreed that following the planned negotiations, a referendum on the membership issue should be conducted prior to accepting formally a new treaty relationship with the Community. To hold such a national campaign on the issue was decided long before the divisive Danish and French referenda on the Maastricht Treaty were conducted. It is said that this Swedish referendum must be held in 1994 if a possible membership should take effect on January first 1995. One likely date is in connection with the next scheduled parliamentary election in September. The level of public commitment

to the new formula will thus be tested before the nation is locked into a qualitatively new international relationship with obvious implications for its economy, social structure, foreign policy profile, and traditional neutrality posture.

If placed in opposition for the entire 1991-94 parliamentary period, the Social Democratic party may in the September 1994 election and referendum take a different line toward the ensuing negotiation results than it may have done as the party in office. Possibly, its commitment to European integration is precarious. The support of the party leadership for this position could crumble if partisan gains were likely among voters still opposed to a deeper Swedish involvement with the Community. After all, considerations of the implications for the domestic political context seemed to be one important stimulus behind the previous pro-Europe shift in official policy. Recent public opinion polls show very modest support rates for EC-membership, in sharp contrast to the uninformed but enthusiastic sentiments registered during the 1990-91 season of redirection of the traditional party line. The anti-membership voices inside the Social Democratic party have gained sufficient momentum to block any further leadership guidance to its rank and file on this critical issue. A party congress is scheduled for the fall of 1993. At that time, the internal strife over the EC issue may have reached such proportions that the party position favoring membership may be in jeopardy.

The Left party has continued its opposition to membership as has the now ousted Green party. The Centre party is a member of the present coalition cabinet, but it remains a more reluctant proponent of the official pro-EC line. Also among its voters, the resistance to the Community is widespread. The party leadership may have great difficulty in mobilizing its rural supporters behind an affirmative vote in the referendum. If this high priority issue were to become a subject of intense domestic controversy and even open cabinet conflict, the government of Carl Bildt could fall well before the next national election in September of 1994.

Considerations of domestic partisanship are likely to enter into the Community relevant calculations of the central decisionmakers again. Over the next few years, the Swedish government faces at least three sets of negotiations relevant to the membership issue. In addition to the technical proceedings in Brussels, the four party coalition must come to terms on many matters involving specialized party interests and traditions. Further, the Social Democratic opposition must be convinced of its interest in staying onboard the increasingly controversial pro-membership drive. Finally, the public at large has been asked to respond to the information campaign planned as a prelude to the decisive 1994 referendum. The implementation stage of this case of foreign policy redirection is not yet completed, but it will remain a subject of analysis for some years to come.

## Lessons of Wider Significance

According to Charles Hermann (1990:20), we “need a perspective that views major change not as a deterministic response to large forces operative in the international system, but rather as a decision process”. His scheme was constructed to aid the scholar wanting to characterize the conditions that can produce decisions for dramatic redirection in foreign policy. At the same time, it is clear to Hermann (19-20) that “a characterization of the analytical stages of the decision process that may be necessary for the emergence of a new direction in foreign policy does not provide a theory explaining such changes.” Rather, the intended contribution of his essay is the presentation of “a scheme for interpreting decisions in which a government decides to change policy direction”.

For a scholar with an interest in mapping the evolving events and involvements of the principal actors in a specific case of foreign policy redirection, the analytical scheme used here proved to be of considerable value. The primary purpose of this effort was to illuminate a chosen case rather than to generate explanations of decisions for policy change, which would be valid across time and space. The scheme brought several insights into the dynamics of the Swedish decision processes during the eventful 1990-91 policy transformation. It could very well form the basis for a research program on the recent foreign policy redirections in Europe, including the ups and down in the national positions toward further European integration.

The strength of the Hermann framework is its penetrating focus on the so called black box between problem recognition and decision outcome. In contrast to other prevalent modes of analysis dealing with foreign policy adaptation, Hermann has recognized the voluntaristic basis for decisions to alter or to retain established policy. The surrounding international or domestic structures do not compel any redirection in a deterministic fashion, in his scheme. They may however serve as strong stimula toward a decision to change policy. The important analytical distinction, recognized by Carlsnaes (1992:254), between the intentional, dispositional, and structural dimensions of foreign policy explanations can be maintained, when using this broad scheme. One shortcoming is however that the threat or opportunity, which triggers deliberations within the black box is treated as a given. The decision maker enters a rather passive mode of adaptation in an input-output type of processing chain after the given occasion for decision is identified.

Hermann also notes that in the foreign policy field one often faces ill-structured problems. This element of the triggering setting complicates the processes behind decisions for or against policy redirection. Picking up on that observation by Hermann, one may assume that decision makers frequently have considerable latitude in their interpretations of the so called occasion for decision. As these are ill-structured, they can be defined in various ways by alert decision makers or policy advisors. Thus, threats to be met and opportunities to be seized are largely created through the process of interpreting a complex and ambiguous operational setting. In the Swedish case at hand, the leaders of the Social Democratic government initially saw little of particular policy interest in the evolving Community. The continental developments seemed to be outside of the parameters for meaningful foreign policy action. In contrast, the party leaders on the right noted the opportunity to batter the government over its inability to take a lead on an issue, which could be said to concern the economic survival of the nation. Two competing schemata of the European future, and its consequences for Sweden, were constructed out of one ill-structured occasion for decision.

One lesson of this case application seems to be the existence of an active problem definition mode among the Swedish decision makers. They recognized the enabling character of any given occasion for decision, as well as its manipulative potential. When engaged in considerations of policy change, one is also actively involved in choosing an image of the future. This process begins prior to the point where the so called triggering occasion enters the black box, as outlined in the Hermann scheme. This early phase of the dynamics behind policy redirection is not included in the framework used here. It appears to have been an important part of the processes of the examined Swedish case. This problem formulation phase involved many aspects, such as prediction, wishful thinking, and one part active manipulation of the image of the future.

Looking beyond this Swedish case of policy redirection in 1990/91, it is striking how Europe over the last few years has become an arena for competing visions of the future. During the second half of the 1980s, two European models confronted each other. Delors' view of the Internal Market after 1992 was one important, and highly influential alternative. Gorbachev's notion of a "European home" became for a time another preferred future structure for the Continent. Both concepts served as instruments of manipulation in the processes of forming the evolving new political context. The Delors perspective proved more enduring than the aspiration for a European home.

Today several such images of the European future compete for dominance in the mindsets of national political leaders and publics at large. One is reminded of the classical and still pertinent observation of Snyder and associates (1963:5):

"It is difficult to see how we can account for specific actions and for continuities of policies without trying to discover how their operating environment is perceived by those responsible for choices, how particular situations are structured, what values and norms are applied to certain kinds of problems, what matters are selected for attention, and how their past experience conditions present responses".

The obvious conclusion from this short pilot study is that in order to be able to explain the fundamental transformations now underway in Europe, one must examine in depth the processes behind decisions for or against any significant policy innovations. Neither a focus on the restraining and enabling international structures, nor on the various European domestic structures, can sufficiently account for such policy changes. The readily observed contextual features merely serve to trigger complex cognitive-institutional processes inside the so called "black box". Only a decision making perspective can illuminate this critical dynamics and show how the European leaders choose to move their countries. Several such distinctive, and at times pivotal, decision occasions at the national and collective European levels make up an evolving reality, which by observers in academe and in the media is referred to as the elusive European integration process.

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