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Does European Integration Lead to a ‘Presidentialization’ of Executive Politics?

Ministerial Selection in Swedish Postwar Cabinets

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we address recent claims that executive–legislative relations in parliamentary democracies are undergoing important changes owing to either a ‘presidentialization’ or a ‘Europeanization’ of domestic political systems. Therefore, we test empirically whether parliamentary democracies are indeed experiencing changes in executive–legislative relations and whether these developments can, in part, be explained by an increase in European integration. Using data on ministerial selection in Swedish cabinets during the years 1952–2006, we find that there appears to be a slight tendency towards ‘presidentialization’,...
which is indicated by a decrease in ministers with a parliamentary background being appointed, and that there exists some support for the notion that Sweden’s political and economic integration into the European Union is part of the explanation for this change.

Introduction

According to recent debates in political science, executive–legislative relations in parliamentary democracies are undergoing important changes. Some scholars have detected a trend towards ‘presidentialization’ within contemporary parliamentary politics, where more power resources are concentrated on prime ministers (PMs) whose autonomy vis-à-vis parliamentary groups is increasing (Poguntke and Webb, 2005). In a similar manner, ‘Europeanization’ researchers assume that one important consequence of Europe’s impact on domestic political systems is that national parliaments will lose influence over national executives as European integration proceeds.

These hypotheses do not simply represent descriptive statements about contemporary changes in parliamentary systems but involve a set of interrelated claims about the driving forces of changes in executive–legislative relations. Among these factors, European integration is deemed to be the most important. Accordingly, the political and economic integration of European Union (EU) member states has placed more power in the hands of prime ministers (PMs), who are the key participants in the increasingly important political bargains made in the Council of Ministers and the European Council. Regrettably, however, few systematic efforts have been made to assess the validity of the claim that executive politics are becoming increasingly ‘presidentialized’ or ‘Europeanized’.

Therefore, this article has two aims: In order to assess the validity of claims about an increase in executive autonomy, we (1) study the development of a quantitative indicator of Swedish executive–legislative relations (ministerial selection) over the years 1952–2006 and (2) statistically analyse whether any changes in this indicator can be attributed to the increased economic and political integration of Sweden into the European Union.

The article proceeds as follows: First, we contrast the ‘presidentialization’ and ‘Europeanization’ concepts and develop hypotheses to be tested. We then discuss the data used here. After examining trends within Swedish executive–legislative relations, we evaluate the impact of European integration on ministerial selection. Our conclusions are that there does indeed appear to be a slight tendency towards a ‘presidentialization’ of Swedish politics and that EU integration is part of the explanation for this.
European integration and national executive–legislative relations

As stated above, two strands of research within political science claim that parliamentary democracy in Europe is experiencing far-reaching changes in executive–legislative relations. Whereas some researchers speak of a process of ‘presidentialization’, others depict these developments as a ‘Europeanization’ of the domestic political systems of the EU member states.

Presidentialization and executive politics

Although the alleged concentration of powers around heads of government is hardly new, Michael Foley’s (1993) book on *The Rise of the British Presidency* sparked off a debate on ‘presidentialism’ that suggests a strengthened role and status of the prime minister’s position in relation to other political players without changes in formal, constitutional structures. Yet, in spite of the general appeal of this term, there is a general vagueness in the public and academic debate about notions of ‘presidentialism’ (Helms, 2005). Poguntke and Webb (2005: 5) define ‘presidentialization’ as ‘the development of (a) increasing leadership power resources and autonomy within the party and the political executive respectively, and (b) increasingly leadership-centered electoral processes’. Thus, growth of resources along with more formal and informal powers at the disposal of the chief executive is believed to indicate a trend towards presidentialized executive politics.

Although the president-like domination of the political executive by individual leaders is often explained by short-term contingent or idiosyncratic factors, Poguntke and Webb (2005) affirm that there is some – although not statistical – support for the claim that ‘presidentialization’ can be explained by four factors. Besides the factor that is the principal focus of this article – the internationalization of politics (of which European integration is one important aspect) – they contend that macro-societal factors such as the erosion of cleavage politics, the changing structure of mass communications and the growth of the state all account for ‘presidentialization’.

The ‘presidentialization’ concept combines several empirical trends into a coherent theoretical explanation of current power shifts within parliamentary democracies, but the thesis suffers from a number of conceptual and empirical problems.

First, the thesis obviously poses serious difficulties of system definition and classification, because the definition of parliamentary systems remains contested in comparative politics (see e.g. Verney, 1959/1992; and Sartori, 1997). It nevertheless seems fruitful to rely on Lijphart’s (1999: 117–8)
definition of parliamentary systems which states, first, that the government must be responsible to parliament (it is dependent on the parliament’s confidence and can be removed from office through a vote of no confidence), second, that the head of government (normally the PM) is selected by parliament and third, that parliamentary cabinets are collective or collegial. Consequently, ‘presidentialization’ has to be defined as a trend towards (a) more autonomy of the executive vis-à-vis parliamentary parties, (b) increasingly leadership-centred electoral processes and (c) decreasing collegiality/collectivity within the executive.

Second, the presidentialization hypothesis implies a convergence of political systems even though PMs in many parliamentary systems are more powerful than their presidential counterparts (Heffernan, 2005). Therefore, the suggestion that ‘presidentialization’ makes parliamentary and presidential systems more similar has to be treated with caution. Furthermore, we believe that it is insufficient to use simple indicators of power resources to measure the ‘presidentialization’ of parliamentary systems.

Finally, it is empirically unproven that the several trends mentioned in the presidentialization framework actually combine or correlate in the way the framework suggests. Public debate and research have focused mainly on the electoral dimension of the thesis (Mughan, 2000), and it is not clear whether and how these changes in electoral processes actually translate into increased power of the PM vis-à-vis parliamentary groups and other ministers in cabinet.

Thus, the theoretical argument of the presidentialization concept needs to be unpacked and subjected to empirical scrutiny. In order to gauge the extent and sources of current power shifts in parliamentary democracies, we claim that it is necessary to take the longitudinal implications of the concept seriously, to construct valid indicators of actual power shifts and to conduct a multivariate analysis with the objective of assessing the impact and the relative weight of the explanatory factors mentioned within the presidentialization framework.

**Europeanization and executive autonomy**

The claim that European integration is one of the main driving factors of presidentialization trends is highly compatible with hypotheses developed in Europeanization research asking how EU politics affects the domestic political systems of the member states. Although Europeanization scholars have mainly dealt with the more easily malleable policy dimension (Börzel and Risse, 2007), Europeanization research has brought important insights into the dimensions, mechanisms and outcomes of domestic change. These
insights can be used for a refinement of the presidentialization hypothesis regarding the way EU integration affects executive politics in member states.

In a manner similar to that of presidentialization research, Europeanization scholars expect far-reaching changes in executive–legislative relations in response to EU integration, resulting in a weakening of parliamentary democracy within the member states (Maurer and Wessels, 2001). This claim is based on the insight that the national executives represent the most powerful member state institutions in European affairs – playing a central role as architects of EU integration and key policy brokers (Hoffmann, 1982; Milward, 1992). The simple logic of two-level games implies that the transfer of domestic issues to a supranational level strengthens core executives and increases their autonomy from domestic political and societal pressure. Accordingly, EU integration inevitably increases the autonomy of national governments in Council negotiations. In addition, the difficulty of scrutiny, owing to the lack of transparency at the Union level, and the lack of parliamentary resources at the national level create even greater information asymmetries in executive–legislative relations. Thus, national executives are increasingly unconstrained by legislatures, interest groups and other domestic actors (Moravcsik, 1998; Anderson, 2002).

In comparison with the presidentialization framework, Europeanization research is more versatile when it comes to the causal mechanisms at work (see Bauer et al., 2007) and this results in slightly different predictions about the EU’s impact on executive politics. According to the presidentialization idea, EU integration works exclusively in favour of the PM because national chief executives are provided with additional power resources and autonomy vis-à-vis potential sources of domestic political dissent (Poguntke and Webb, 2005: 350). In a similar vein, Europeanization research has interpreted Europe as an emerging opportunity structure offering some actors additional resources to exert influence while constraining the opportunities of others (Héritier et al., 2001). EU integration redistributes domestic political resources, shifts control over domestic agendas, modifies who can participate in domestic decision-making, increases information asymmetries and alters perceptions of legitimacy (Moravcsik, 1998). Thus, European integration enables national executives to push for a power shift vis-à-vis other domestic political actors by exploiting the executive’s key role in the integration process. As a result, the integration process may indeed benefit the PM.

Yet, in contrast to the presidentialization thesis, Europeanization research has also stressed the role of adaptational pressure arising from the EU as a source of domestic change. According to an institutional misfit approach, functional incompatibilities between EU institutions and policies can
challenge domestic rules and procedures (Börzel and Risse, 2007). Such functionalist reasoning implies that national executives or the PM do not try to exploit the integration process in order to shift the domestic power balance in their favour. Rather, European integration can work as a new constraint on executive politics since integration increases the complexity of policy-making and requires national governments to present a united front in supranational negotiations. Thus, the integration process and the very nature of the EU as a system of continuous negotiations confront national governments with strong functional pressure to reorganize the executive branch of government in order to meet the increased needs for coordinating domestic policy-making (Kassim et al., 2000). Accordingly, the coordinative and bureaucratic challenges of EU integration may give rise to a kind of technocratic cabinet government (see Kassim, 2003).

Thus, by refining the presidentialization concept on the basis of ideas derived from Europeanization research, it becomes evident that the impact of European integration on domestic executive politics is controversial and should be subjected to more rigorous empirical investigation. Although both concepts yield a number of observable implications, we focus on the particular dimension most loaded with normative implications, the executive–legislative one (for an analysis of the intra-executive dimension, see Bäck et al., 2007). The next section discusses the central role of ministerial selection in parliamentary democracies and our decision to use it as our indicator of power shifts within these systems.

Ministerial selection as a two-stage delegation problem

We elaborate here on the implications of the presidentialization and Europeanization approaches by using the analytical tools provided by principal–agent theory (PA theory). PA theory enables us to demonstrate why ministerial selection plays a central role as a control mechanism in parliamentary systems and why changing patterns of ministerial selection come with serious normative implications.

According to Strøm (2000: 268–70), in parliamentary democracies, citizens indirectly control the cabinet, through their control over the parliament. This definition allows for sound reasoning about the normative implications of the shifts in domestic power relations and for the application of the analytical tools of PA theory because, within this framework, ‘the Prime Minister is both the agent of the parliamentary majority and the principal of the line ministers in his cabinet’ (Strom 2003: 64). Thus, in the second step of the delegation chain, the legislators are the principals and the PM and the
ministers are the agents whereas in the third step, the PM is the principal and the line ministers are the agents. Thus, when discussing ministerial selection in PA terms, we need to take this two-stage delegation problem into account.

PA theory has identified two principal threats to the principal’s ability to control the agent: adverse selection and moral hazard. The problem of adverse selection arises when the principal does not have access to relevant information (e.g. preferences and competencies) about potential agents. Moral hazard problems, on the other hand, arise when agents, once they have been selected, have motives to act in ways that are contrary to the principal’s interests (Strøm, 2000: 270–1). According to PA theory, there exist a number of mechanisms that mitigate the threat of agency loss. PA theory usually distinguishes between ex ante mechanisms, which apply before power is delegated (such as efforts to sort out good agents), and ex post mechanisms which represent ways to contain agency loss after delegation (by rewarding or punishing the agent for his/her performance).

Parliamentary democracies often lack ex post mechanisms providing credible oversight, while the ex ante control mechanism of screening and selecting candidates plays a central role in aligning the preferences of the candidates for key political offices. This extensive screening of prospective parliamentarians as well as potential cabinet members is performed by centralized, cohesive, policy-oriented political parties (see Müller, 2000; Strøm, 2003). Accordingly, the best way for parliament to mitigate agency loss is to place a subset of its own members in the cabinet since members of parliament (MPs) are likely to be better informed about ministerial candidates taken from the parliament, and the latter’s preferences are also in all likelihood more similar to those of the MPs, thereby as well reducing the risk of moral hazard. For these reasons, ministers in a stylized parliamentary system are political insiders, i.e. members of parliament with some party background (Verney, 1959/1992; De Winter, 1991).

Whereas the selection of MPs helps to mitigate the delegation problem for the parliament as principal of the PM and the cabinet, the PM might have different preferences for the composition of the cabinet. Yet, as long as political parties continue to fulfil a central role in screening and selecting ministerial candidates, parliaments are able to reduce the potential additional agency loss associated with the double role of the PM as an agent of the parliament and as a principal with his/her own preferences regarding the composition and policy profile of the cabinet. By restricting the set of choices of ministerial candidates for the PM to political ‘insiders’, possible agency loss resulting from the two-stage delegation problem is reduced because the PM is forced to apply selection criteria that coincide with the parliament’s interest in controlling the government.
For these reasons, if EU integration weakens parliamentary control over the executive, we can make the following general claim about its impact on ministerial selection:

**H1:** As European integration increases, fewer ministers are likely to be recruited from the pool of political insiders (the parliament and the parties).

This general hypothesis implies that the delegation problems faced by the parliament become more serious because more weight is given to the PM’s preferences in selecting ministers. As a result, parliamentary control is weakened.

Moreover, we can qualify this general hypothesis with two different causal mechanisms derived from Europeanization research. According to the first mechanism, EU integration changes the political opportunity structure in favour of the PM. A PM who is now less constrained might choose to apply his/her own independent selection criteria in order to minimize agency loss. Thus, as European integration makes the PM less dependent on parliamentary and party support, he/she can ‘afford’ to select ministers from outside these traditional reservoirs. Empirically, in presidential systems, non-partisan ministers are frequently recruited (Amorim Neto and Strom, 2006) while the opposite is true in most parliamentary systems (Blondel and Thiébault, 1991). For example, expertise from different societal sectors may be more valuable for the PM since, in presidential cabinets, ministers are more like expert advisers to the president (Lijphart, 1999: 118). Alternatively, the PM might act as a pure office-seeker whose primary goal is to stay leader of the government. Therefore, he/she could decide to select unknown outsiders in order to raise his/her political profile.

Of course, the PM also faces problems of adverse selection when aiming to appoint competent, dependable and loyal ministers (Indridason and Kam, 2008). Therefore, even a more powerful PM might continue to recruit ministers from parliament because of extensive screening during their political career. However, a more powerful PM is not forced to rely exclusively on ex ante control to align cabinet members with his/her wishes but can also rely on cabinet reshuffles to punish ministerial drift. Therefore, a less constrained PM might nonetheless choose to appoint outsiders because their lack of political power resources makes it easier for the PM to deal with agency problems ex post facto; i.e. outsiders are simply easier to dismiss if there is evidence of ministerial drift (see Bäck et al., 2008). Therefore, we hypothesize that:

**H2:** If European integration changes the political opportunity structure in favour of the PM, we expect more outsiders (with or without an expert background) to be recruited as ministers, whereas fewer ministers will be selected from parliament and parties.
Yet, our reasoning about different mechanisms derived from European-
ization research has shown that EU integration might not work exclusively
as a change in the political opportunity structure; it might also act as an
incentive for domestic executives to adapt to the requirements of the EU
system. When the PM is depicted as a policy-seeker whose primary interest
lies in effective policy-making, he/she has to intensify the coordination of
his/her government’s policy-making from the centre. Moreover, it is likely
that the PM prefers recruiting technocrats in order to meet the higher needs
for policy expertise and to facilitate policy coordination. Accordingly, we
hypothesize that:

**H3:** If European integration creates an incentive for the PM to improve policy
coordination and policy expertise within the cabinet, we expect more experts (with
or without an insider background) to be recruited as ministers, whereas fewer
ministers will have a pure political insider background.

To sum up, our general prediction drawn from presidentialization and
Europeanization research is that, as European integration increases, we will
see a decrease in political insiders being recruited as ministers (H1). In
addition, the two hypothesized mechanisms (H2 and H3) make predictions
about the other types of background that are likely to become more important
as integration increases. If European integration benefits exclusively the
PM, outsider status is likely to become more important (H2). If integration
creates new constraints, the importance of an expert background is likely to
increase (H3). For these reasons, we will investigate if other types of experience
become more important for ministerial selection as EU integration
increases.

**Research design and data**

**A Swedish case study**

A systematic analysis of presidentialization trends and the effects of EU
integration in parliamentary democracies should preferably include a number
of countries. Since there is no comprehensive data set on ministerial selection
across a large number of countries covering the entire postwar period, we have
chosen to analyse the Swedish case in depth even though this limits our ability
to generalize our empirical results. However, we believe that Sweden is a case
where we are most likely to find support for the presidentialization thesis.

One of the main indicators of leadership power within the executive
suggested by Poguntke and Webb (2005: 19) is ‘a growing tendency of chief
executives to appoint non-party technocrats or to promote rapidly politicians
who lack a distinctive party power base’. Although the applicability of this type of measure varies across countries, in Sweden the power to select ministers (especially in single-party cabinets, typical of postwar Sweden) resides completely in the hands of the prime minister to be. Therefore, Sweden is a suitable candidate for gauging presidentialization trends since an increase in PM power is likely to be reflected in the selection of ministers without a parliamentary background (see Goetz, 2006: 85). Moreover, there already exists some evidence of a trend towards higher PM autonomy and power in Sweden (Aylott, 2005).

Nevertheless, we are also interested in gauging the effect of European integration on our indicator of presidentialization. Although case studies are in general less powerful means of measuring effects (Bäck and Dumont, 2007), in one respect our study is a large-n study since we are studying Sweden across time, giving us a large number of units within this case. Because Sweden was a late member of the EU (it joined in 1995), there should be substantial variation across time in European integration, our main explanatory variable.

**Data on ministerial appointments**

Our main data source is a data set comprising all ministerial appointments made in Sweden between 1917 and 2006. Here, we focus on the period after the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), i.e. from 1952. The data set consists of 178 individuals who were appointed to a ministerial post in any of the 14 cabinets during the post-1952 period. Since a minister can be appointed several times, our unit of analysis is portfolio-year (for each year, the longest-serving minister for each portfolio is included). In total, our data consist of 956 portfolio-years.

In the analysis of ministerial selection, we include a number of dummy variables measuring the background of ministers: Parliamentary experience, Held party office, Union representative, Held private sector position and Held public sector position. These variables allow us to measure the general pattern of recruitment in parliamentary cabinets in terms of the political professionalization literature, but do not allow us to account for policy-area-specific experience, which would require a number of highly contestable coding decisions (but see Beckman, 2006).

**Indicators of European integration**

In accordance with Europeanization research, our explanatory efforts consider European integration as the independent variable exerting a causal
influence on domestic political systems. We employ several indicators to account for Sweden’s integration with Europe.

First, we include an indicator to account for Sweden’s economic dependence on the EU, in part because economic dependency and the threat of capital flight were a central concern for Swedish elites in finally driving forward the project of EU membership (Ingebritsen, 1998). It is also a common view among Europeanization researchers that economic integration, which is at the very heart of the EU project, affects the political, cultural and social domains. Furthermore, the abolition of national trade barriers can create adaptational pressure on member states and even on non-member states through mechanisms of ‘regulatory competition’. Institutional change is then stimulated by the need to improve the effectiveness of states’ institutional arrangements in comparison with those of other participants within the common market (Bauer et al., 2007). Although this case might be made mainly for regulatory policies, adaptational pressure could spill over to the realm of executive politics.

We also include measures of political integration within the EU, although it seems even more controversial to expect political integration to have had an impact on Sweden’s executive politics before accession. There is agreement that the EU can have a profound effect on candidate states, but the causal mechanism at work is usually ‘conditionality’ of membership (Schimmelpfennig and Sedelmeier, 2004). Although Sweden was long regarded as a ‘reluctant European’ and continued to sustain one of the largest anti-EU membership minorities, Europeanization research has shown that even non-members without membership aspirations can be affected by EU integration because supranational regulations create regulatory and economic pressure and constrain national policy options (see Mach et al., 2003). Therefore, we assume that increased political integration and the growing international importance of the neighbouring political system are likely to affect even non-member states. There is evidence that Swedish political elites were very aware of the political pressures emanating from the EU and, therefore, at various points considered the option of ‘open’ or ‘associate’ membership in the EU project (Kite, 1996; Miles, 2001).

Concerning political integration, we focus on the legislative activity of EU institutions. The assumption is that increasing political integration results in a transfer of law-making authority that is reflected in an increase in legislative activity at the EU level. Therefore, the data set includes two variables on legislative activity: Annual legislative activity and Cumulated legislation, which reflects the number of lasting valid legislative acts. Moreover, since the literature has depicted the European Court of Justice as an engine of integration, we also specified a variable called Judicial activism, measuring the
annual number of European Court decisions in order to account for such integration effects.

**Control variables**

As mentioned above, Poguntke and Webb (2005) argue that the power shifts in parliamentary democracies discussed under the label of ‘presidentialization’ could be caused by factors other than European integration. They claim that macro-societal factors such as the erosion of cleavage politics, the changing structure of mass communications and the growth of the state all account for a presidentialization trend. Since such features may also be correlated with our EU integration measures, we control for these three alternative explanations in our analysis.¹

As a measure of the declining significance of cleavages, we here include a time series of the commonly used *Alford class voting index*, based on data from the Swedish Election Studies (Oscarsson and Holmberg, 2008). In accordance with research on political communication, we assume that the development of new election campaign models is closely tied to the development of television, particularly commercial TV, as the lead medium (Swanson and Mancini, 1996) shifting political opinion formation from political parties to media organizations (for Sweden, see Nord, 2007). Therefore, we include an indicator of the quantitative supply of TV (*TV channels*). Finally, the growth and the increased complexity of the state are supposed to have an impact on executive politics because these developments create a need for greater coordination from the centre. We therefore include a measure of state growth, i.e. public consumption as a share of GDP (*State quota*).²

Besides our main independent variable, *European integration*, and the variables measuring alternative explanations to ‘presidentialization’, we include three other independent variables in all models. Two of these variables are government attributes that we expect will influence ministerial appointments: coalition government or a single-party government (*Coalition = 1*) and majority or minority government (*Minority = 1*).² Coalition governments may systematically include a higher proportion of ministers with parliamentary experience because each party has fewer executive positions to fill (than if it formed a single-party cabinet) and may therefore tend to select its parliamentary heavyweights. In minority governments, most ministers are likely to have a parliamentary background because they must have both socializing skills and expertise in parliamentary techniques to build majorities in parliament. Lastly, we control for the fact that Sweden was a member of the European Union during only part of the studied period (since 1995) by using a dummy variable (*EU membership = 1*).
A descriptive analysis of presidentialization trends in Sweden

One of the main results in previous comparative research is that a parliamentary background is the main career path for becoming a minister. De Winter (1991) shows that, on average, 75% of the West European ministers (1945–85) were members of parliament before joining government. However, this proportion varies substantially across countries. Sweden, for instance, has a relatively low proportion of ministers with an MP background (about 60%). Moreover, many ministers belong both to the party leadership and to parliament and, according to De Winter (1991), a smaller group can be defined as true ‘insiders’, being parliamentarians of long standing and belonging to the leadership circles of their party (on average 17% among West European ministers).

In Sweden, there are no restrictions on which and how many posts can be appointed. Also, there are no formal requirements on ministers’ background or competence. However, there are of course informal requirements constraining the PM’s autonomy in selecting ministers. For example, for a Social Democratic government it has long been common practice to appoint some ministers who have a background in a labour union. In addition, as in other countries, PMs may have some representative requirements in mind when composing their team (Dowding and Dumont, 2008).

In our data set, we find that, on average, 65% of the ministerial posts appointed were held by a person who had been an MP. We also find that almost 80% of the ministerial posts were occupied by an individual who had held office in parliament or in the party. Defining political insiders less strictly than De Winter, as individuals who have some parliamentary and party background, we find that nearly 60% of the cabinet posts were held by insiders. We also present information on ‘expert’ background, defined as a background within the labour union or a high private or public sector position. A very large share of the ministers have some form of expert background, most notably by having held a high position in the public sector. We also find trends towards a declining political background of ministers in more recent years: a clear drop in MPs during the 2000s from 67% to 52% and a decrease in ministers with a party background from 78% to 69% (see Table 1). These figures are therefore very much in line with the presidentialization thesis.

However, when examining the variables measuring expertise, we find a pattern that does not square well with the presidentialization thesis: For union background, there is a trend towards the PM hiring fewer individuals with this type of experience, not more. Instead, union background was more important in the previous periods, especially during the 1960s and the 1970s.
Moreover, looking at high positions within the private and the public sector, we see similar decreases from the 1980s onwards. The overall level of expertise is clearly more important now than it was in the 1950s, but the peak occurred in the 1980s. For the sake of completeness, we also present the distribution of parliamentary, party and expert background for each cabinet in Figure 1. Looking at parliamentary background, there is a trend towards fewer ministers with this kind of background since the bourgeois coalition governments in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

This trend of decreasing parliamentary background is, however, not accompanied by a similar decrease in ministers with a party background; in fact, this feature reaches one of its highest points in the latest 2006 government. All in all, there is some, but no clear-cut, evidence in favour of the presidentialization thesis, in the sense that PMs to a somewhat higher extent appoint ministers without parliamentary experience.

### Table 1 Backgrounds of ministers in Swedish governments, 1952–2007 (%)

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<td><strong>Political background</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Member of parliament</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held party office</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP or held party office</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MP and held party office</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expert background</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Union representative</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held private sector position</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Held public sector position</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some expert background</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of observations</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>166</td>
<td>956</td>
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**Note:** The data were gathered by Ludvig Beckman, Hanna Bäck, Jörgen Hermansson and Thomas Persson, at the Department of Government, Uppsala University. All analyses use portfolio-year as unit of analysis.

A multivariate analysis of the effect of European integration

**European integration and ministerial selection**

We now turn to investigating the effects of different European integration measures on our indicator of presidentialization, i.e. ministerial selection, and
more specifically the background of ministers. In the analysis performed here, the dependent variable describes the type of background that the appointee to this position has. In order to gauge the trade-offs between different types of ministerial background, we here categorize an individual as belonging to one of four exclusive categories: having an insider background, which is defined here as having held party office and a seat in parliament before being appointed; having an expert background, defined as having held a high position in the private or public sector or a labour union; having both an insider and an expert background; and having neither an expert nor an insider background. Since we are dealing with a dependent variable with more than two categories that cannot be ordered, a multinomial logit model, or some similar model aimed at estimating the effects of features varying across units on a multiple choice, is an appropriate statistical model. Conceptually, the multinomial logit model is like simultaneously estimating binary logits for all possible comparisons among outcome categories (Long, 1997). The coefficients should be interpreted in comparison with the base category which we choose here to be the political insider category.3

In Table 2, we present the results from four multinomial logit models, each including one measure of European integration, measuring annual EU
Table 2  Multinomial logit of ministerial background and four different types of integration measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ministerial background (1)</th>
<th>Ministerial background (2)</th>
<th>Ministerial background (3)</th>
<th>Ministerial background (4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither insider nor expert</td>
<td>Expert only and insider</td>
<td>Neither insider nor expert</td>
<td>Expert only and insider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU integration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual legislative activity</td>
<td>3.704 (2.425)</td>
<td>4.891** (1.944)</td>
<td>6.890*** (1.720)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulated legislation</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>6.250** (2.868)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1.355 (2.600)</td>
<td>0.697 (2.373)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial activism</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5.862** (3.867)</td>
<td>5.359*** (2.008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6.704*** (1.615)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU trade share</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>5.660 (4.271)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8.347** (3.373)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11.063*** (3.012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition government</td>
<td>1.172 (0.895)</td>
<td>–0.804 (0.510)</td>
<td>0.157 (0.530)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.874 (0.757)</td>
<td>–0.479 (0.423)</td>
<td>0.922* (0.523)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.922* (0.523)</td>
<td>0.628 (0.840)</td>
<td>–0.980* (0.513)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.043 (0.556)</td>
<td>0.703 (0.806)</td>
<td>–1.296** (0.614)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.201 (0.439)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority government</td>
<td>1.474* (0.724)</td>
<td>–0.024 (0.422)</td>
<td>0.701 (0.444)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.352** (0.660)</td>
<td>0.580 (0.385)</td>
<td>1.920*** (0.369)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.813 (0.721)</td>
<td>–0.195 (0.454)</td>
<td>0.669 (0.432)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.255** (0.600)</td>
<td>–0.216 (0.427)</td>
<td>1.013*** (0.395)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU membership</td>
<td>–1.978 (1.708)</td>
<td>–2.078 (1.283)</td>
<td>–3.286*** (1.137)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–4.062** (1.137)</td>
<td>0.155 (1.174)</td>
<td>–3.157** (1.175)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.426 (1.175)</td>
<td>–2.281** (1.175)</td>
<td>–3.152 (1.259)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–3.152 (1.259)</td>
<td>0.858 (1.022)</td>
<td>–0.767 (0.858)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–0.767 (1.022)</td>
<td>0.874 (1.054)</td>
<td>–0.631 (0.874)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–0.631 (1.054)</td>
<td></td>
<td>–1.166 (0.744)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-(R^2)</td>
<td>0.080</td>
<td>0.047</td>
<td>0.068</td>
<td>0.062</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * significant at the 0.10 level, ** at the 0.05 level, *** at the 0.01 level. Entries are unstandardized multinomial logit coefficients from four multinomial logit models where type of ministerial background is the dependent variable and political insider (party and parliamentary background) is the base category. Entries in parentheses are robust standard errors (clustered on portfolio).
legislative activity, cumulated EU legislation, judicial activism in the European Court of Justice and EU trade share. Studying the coefficients for the first political integration variable, measuring annual EU legislation (model 1), we can see that the coefficients are positive and significant for two categories: having a pure expert background and having a combination of an insider and expert background. As mentioned above, these coefficients should be understood in comparison with the base category which is the political insider category. Thus, as annual legislation increases, the ministers who are appointed are more likely to have an expert background (either only this type of background or in combination with a political background) than a purely political insider background.

Similar results are found when we look at the variable measuring economic integration, i.e. EU trade share (model 4). Here again, we see that, as European integration increases, there is an increased likelihood that ministers will have an expert background as opposed to a purely political background. These results are completely in line with our hypothesis that we should see a decrease in political insiders as European integration increases (H1). These results suggest not only that EU integration matters but also that functional needs may be the most relevant mechanism triggering changes in ministerial selection (H3) since the significant results found (in models 1 and 4) concern the two categories of ministers with an expert profile. Hiring ministers with neither an insider nor an expert profile would be another tempting possibility for PMs if EU integration increasingly frees them from domestic constraints without imposing new, supranational ones.

Looking at cumulated EU legislation (model 2) and judicial activism (model 3), the results are slightly different. For cumulated legislation, this variable exerts a significant effect for only one of the categories, namely ministers without expert or insider background, suggesting that PMs are hiring individuals without a strong political or expert background as EU integration increases. For judicial activism, we find a positive and significant effect for all categories, suggesting that ministers with any type of background other than the purely political insider background are more likely to be hired when European integration increases. A more cautious interpretation of the results thus suggests that we can only say that, as EU integration increases, there is a decrease in ministers hired with a purely party or parliamentary background (H1), but we cannot clearly say that only individuals with an expert background are more likely to be hired. This may, of course, also be owing to the fact that our measure of ‘expert’ background is not optimal, i.e. we are not able to measure policy-area-specific expertise, which may characterize some of the individuals now falling into the non-expert/insider category.
We also find some interesting results for our variables measuring government type. The coalition government coefficient for the expert category is negative for all four models and significant in two of them (3 and 4), suggesting that experts are less likely to be appointed in coalition governments. The minority cabinet coefficient is positive and significant for two categories in two of our models: the categories ‘not insider or expert’ and ‘expert and insider’ (models 2 and 4). Thus, looking at minority cabinets, individuals with a combination of political and expert background and individuals without a background as an expert or as a political insider are more likely to be appointed than pure political insiders. Although the former finding was to a certain extent expected, the latter may be explained by the fact that line ministers are not the sole policy-makers in minority cabinets. Outside the reservoir of political insiders, PMs and parties may therefore fill some positions with personnel who lack both political and expert background, knowing that expertise may be found in parliament which is bound to have veto power over the proposed policies of the minority government.  

Controlling for alternative explanations

In Table 3, we present our models including the additional control variables aimed at gauging alternative explanations presented in the presidentialization literature, measuring the state quota, the number of TV channels and the Alford class voting index. All of our EU integration features are highly correlated with these three control variables, which can lead to problems with multicollinearity, suggesting that the results presented in Table 3 should be interpreted cautiously.  

Looking first at the effects of our EU integration variables, we can see that only some of the coefficients that were significant in the models presented in Table 2 are significant here. In three of the models (5, 7 and 8), EU integration exerts a positive and significant effect on the expert and insider category, suggesting that there is indeed a significant influence of EU integration on the selection of ministers with expert background. In only one model (6), when we measure EU integration as cumulated legislation, do we find no significant influence of this feature. In one model (7), when studying judicial activism, there is also a significant increase in the likelihood that ministers will have an expert-only background. In none of these models, the coefficients of the EU integration variables for the category of ministers without insider or expert background are significant. Since the only significant results found here concern the two categories of ministers with an expert profile (and not the non-insider/expert category), this further supports our previous conclusion...
Table 3  Multinomial logit of ministerial background, different types of integration measures and controls for alternative explanations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministerial background (5)</th>
<th>Ministerial background (6)</th>
<th>Ministerial background (7)</th>
<th>Ministerial background (8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neither insider nor expert</td>
<td>Expert only</td>
<td>Neither insider nor expert</td>
<td>Expert only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expert and insider</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expert and insider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU integration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual legislative activity</td>
<td>3.388</td>
<td>4.904</td>
<td>7.765**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4.509)</td>
<td>(4.509)</td>
<td>(3.510)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulated legislation</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7.641)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(3.873)</td>
<td>(4.068)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judicial activism</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3.716)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(2.062)</td>
<td>(2.000)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU trade share</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(5.512)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control variables</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State quota</td>
<td>-18.378</td>
<td>1.148</td>
<td>-9.197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV channels</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>-0.053</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.116)</td>
<td>(0.095)</td>
<td>(0.089)</td>
<td>(0.271)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class voting index</td>
<td>-0.106</td>
<td>-0.015</td>
<td>-0.038</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0.090)</td>
<td>(0.055)</td>
<td>(0.053)</td>
<td>(0.079)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>912</td>
<td>912</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pseudo-$R^2$</td>
<td>.088</td>
<td>.082</td>
<td>.088</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * significant at the 0.10 level, ** at the 0.05 level, *** at the 0.01 level. Entries are unstandardized multinomial logit coefficients from four multinomial logit models where type of ministerial background is the dependent variable and political insider (party and parliamentary background) is the base category. Entries in parentheses are robust standard errors (clustered on portfolio). In each model, the control variables EU membership, Coalition government and Minority government are included (not shown).
that functional needs are the most relevant mechanism triggering changes in ministerial selection (H3).

The results for the variables measuring alternative explanations to ‘presidentialization’ are not completely clear. If the hypotheses are correct, the variables measuring state quota and the number of TV channels should exert positive effects on the expert categories, and the variable measuring class voting should exert a negative effect on the expert categories. Only the variable measuring class voting exerts a consistent effect in line with the hypothesis (negative) across our models and in some cases the effect is also significant for the expert and insider category, giving support to the hypothesis that, as class voting declines, there will be an increase in expert ministers.

**Changes in predicted probabilities for different integration measures**

Since the unstandardized multinomial coefficients do not tell us much about the size of the effects of our different measures of integration, we also present discrete change coefficients that indicate the change in the predicted probability of a specific outcome when we move from the minimum to the maximum on the independent variables. The discrete changes for each measure of integration and each category of ministerial background are presented in Figure 2.

Looking at the political insider category, we see that the results for this category are quite clear since all coefficients are negative, suggesting that, as European integration increases, there is a decrease in political insiders being appointed. When we move from the minimum to the maximum on the variables measuring annual legislative activity and judicial activism in the European Court of Justice, ministers are roughly 80 percentage points less likely to have a political insider background. When we look at EU trade share, the effect is also substantial: Political insiders are 41 percentage points less likely to be appointed when we move from the minimum to the maximum on the trade share variable. The smallest effect recorded is that of cumulated EU legislation which decreases the probability of a political insider being appointed by 5 percentage points only.

The results for the second category – measuring whether the minister has both an expert background and a political insider background – are also clear, with all integration measures exerting substantial, positive effects (36–57 percentage points), again with the exception of cumulated legislation (which here exerts a negative effect). Thus, as integration increases, there seems to be an increase in ministers with an expert background, again giving support to the idea that integration comes with a functional need for expert ministers. In general, the effects for the expert-only category are not as large as the effects
for the combination category (8–25 percentage points), but these results again
give support to the conclusion that integration leads to an increase in experts.
For the last category, ministers without insider or expert background, three
out of four integration measures record a positive – albeit very limited (3–12
percentage points) – effect while the effect of EU trade share is slightly
negative (−1).

**Conclusions**

According to recent comparative research, parliamentary democracies are
experiencing shifts in domestic power balances. It is assumed that European
integration has an effect on domestic executive politics, either by modifying
the domestic political opportunity structures in favour of the executive, thus
freeing the PM from domestic constraints, or by creating functional needs that
subject executive politics to new restrictions. We argue that, if European
integration has an impact on domestic political systems, it should be reflected
in the cabinet appointments made by the chief executive.

Our findings suggest that there is some evidence in favour of an ongoing
shift in executive politics in terms of a decrease in the appointment of
political insiders and an increase in expert ministers. It appears that today’s PMs, to a somewhat higher extent, reward expertise, rather than parliamentary experience, when filling cabinet positions. In our multivariate analyses, we assess to what extent the variation over time can be explained by European integration. The results indicate that, as European integration increases, there is a decrease in ministers hired with a purely party or parliamentary background. Moreover, some of our findings support the claim that, with increased European integration, the ministers who are appointed are more likely to have an expert background, either as pure experts or in combination with a political background.

First and foremost, our results are therefore in line with the idea that presidentialized chief executives tend to govern past their parties rather than through them, even in a ‘traditionally partified parliamentary system’ such as that in Sweden (Poguntke and Webb, 2005: 338–9). Regardless of increases in power resources, PMs appear to have gained autonomy from parliament and from their parties as European integration has increased. This change is reflected in less constrained choices of ministerial personnel since PMs are no longer obliged to recruit political insiders to mitigate potential agency loss.

Our results thus come with some important implications since they provide further empirical support for the argument that the emergence of a supranational polity weakens national parliaments (see Raunio and Hix, 2000). We have depicted ministerial selection as one of the most important mechanisms by which parliaments can mitigate agency problems when delegating to governments. Consequently, any weakening of that mechanism implies a weakening of parliamentary control and a disturbance of chains of delegation, with the effect of increasing risks of agency drift on the part of the PM and his or her cabinet. Thus, European integration has a problematic impact on parliamentary democracy within the member states. However, ministerial selection represents just one mechanism of parliamentary control. Thus, there might be alternative strategies for parliaments to deal with the requirements of EU policy-making and to hold governments accountable.

Furthermore, seen from the perspective of Europeanization research, our contribution supports the claim that European integration has an impact on domestic executive politics by creating a two-level game that increases the autonomy of the national executive. In contrast to the presidentialization literature, then, Europeanization scholars do not expect that these changes will benefit the PM alone. Instead, European integration may well change the political opportunity structure in favour of the PM, but it might also impose new constraints on executive politics. Thus, whereas Anderson (2002) finds that the core features of domestic polities are quite immune from the pressure of European integration, our results show that integration affects not only
member states’ policies but also the institutionally more entrenched dimension of executive politics and executive–legislative relations. In particular, the research presented here is in line with the idea that the technocratic and bureaucratic nature of EU policy-making is having an impact on executive politics (Laffan, 2007). Our analysis therefore suggests that European integration exerts an adaptational pressure that creates a functional need for expert ministers.

Yet, in order to make such a far-reaching claim about changes in executive politics, more empirical evidence is needed. In particular, measures of policy-domain-specific expertise have to be used and the intra-executive dimension has to be addressed in order to account for possible changes in the relationship between PMs and their cabinets. Additionally, the hypotheses developed here have to be tested against a larger number of cases. From a purely methodological perspective, such an undertaking is necessary if we are to be truly confident that we have managed to separate the impact of European integration on executive–legislative relations from the impact of those factors that appear to have moved in tandem with the integration. Moreover, to state that European integration has had an impact on executive politics in one member state does not imply that all national executives will show similar patterns. In contemporary research, it is commonplace to expect a ‘differential impact of Europe’ owing to the relevance of national settings (see Börzel and Risse, 2007). Accordingly, the impact of European integration on executive politics could well be mediated by national legacies of accountability relations or by the divisive potential of European issues amongst voters and parties.

Notes

A previous version of this article was presented at the ECPR General Meeting in Pisa, 2007. We are very grateful for the helpful comments made by the participants at this meeting as well as by three anonymous referees. We also wish to thank the Swedish Research Council and the Jan Wallander and Tom Hedelius Foundation for providing funding for the research presented here. The data set and do-file for the empirical analysis in this article as well as a web-appendix containing *inter alia* information on several variables and Sweden’s economic integration can be found at http://eup.sagepub.com/supplemental.

1 We included the *Alford class voting index*, *TV channels* and *State quota* following the comments of an anonymous reviewer. Note that these three variables are highly correlated with our measures of EU integration. Thus, the standard errors of the EU integration measures might be overestimated in those analyses where these three variables are controlled for, biasing the results against our hypotheses.

2 The two government features are highly correlated, i.e. most minority governments are single-party cabinets. However, there are some majority single-party cabinets and some minority coalition cabinets which makes it possible
to include both of these variables in the same model. We also tried to control for the partisan colour of the cabinet by including a non-socialist dummy in our models. When running the models with the non-socialist dummy included, we find similar results regarding the effects of our EU integration measures as presented in Table 2.

Since we are here dealing with a time series data set, we may, of course, have problems with autocorrelation and, in order to account for dependence across categories of the dependent variable over time, we have also run our models including dichotomous indicators measuring the background of the minister holding the ministerial post during the previous year. Since our dependent variable is non-linear, the standard approach of including a lagged dependent variable is slightly modified by instead including three dummy variables (‘neither insider nor expert’ at $t-1$, ‘expert only’ at $t-1$ and ‘expert and insider’ at $t-1$). See Hafner-Burton (2005: 615) for a similar approach. When including the lagged dependent variables, our results for the effects of our EU integration measures are qualitatively similar to those presented in Table 2.

The results for the EU membership dummy, which is included here as a control variable, are less clear. For some models, the effect of EU membership is negative and significant for some of the displayed categories, suggesting that EU membership has increased the likelihood of an individual in a political insider category being hired. However, when including the EU membership variable only (i.e. when we do not include any EU integration measures), these effects disappear and for all models the coefficients for the displayed categories are positive and non-significant.

The correlations between EU trade share and the three control variables are: 0.75 (State quota), 0.69 (TV channels) and −0.78 (Class voting index). The corresponding figures for annual legislation are: 0.71 (State quota), 0.69 (TV), −0.86 (Class voting); for cumulated legislation: 0.35 (State quota), 0.97 (TV), −0.68 (Class voting); and for judicial activism: 0.67 (State quota), 0.84 (TV), −0.88 (Class voting).

Specifically, and as mentioned in note 1, including variables that are highly correlated with our main explanatory variables of interest raises the possibility that the standard errors of the latter will be overestimated. Indeed, if we compare the models in Table 3 with those in Table 2, where the Alford class voting index, TV channels and State quota were not included, we do see that the inclusion of the controls either leaves unchanged or increases the coefficient estimates for our EU integration variables, and, at the same time, the standard errors of these estimates increase dramatically. This suggests that multicollinearity biases the results against our hypotheses.

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