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A Critique To: Raunio's *Why European Integration Increases Leadership Autonomy within Political Parties*

Fisnik Korenica * Dren Doli¹

A critique to the paper of: Tapio Raunio, Why European Integration Increases Leadership Autonomy within Political Parties (Party Politics 2002; Vol. 8, no. 4; pp. 405-422)

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ABSTRACT. This review article is aimed at criticizing the logic of argumentation brought up by Raunio at the above-shown paper. In general, the idea of finding the logics on which the party elites' centralization takes place is more than a general conception, rather than a strictly or narrowly measured one. Therefore we will be criticizing the strict way of considering the phenomenon that Raunio has chosen to follow; instead we argue that the way of explaining the phenomenon in discussion can only be built if choosing a multi-dimensional approach. As a result of our critique we conclude that Raunio's argumentation lacks both organizational but also functional understandings, whereas we propose and argue on the methodological approach that should be followed if intending to explain this phenomenon, in addition to the critical explanation upon the theoretical model that Raunio builds.

KEYWORDS. *Centralization of authority * Leadership autonomy * Governing system * EU institutions * Decision-making * Party politics * National institutions.*

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INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses a critique to the supposed-scientific findings of Raunio. As a general concern, it might be said that the European Integration process and the functioning of the EU as a whole does and might precondition internal party politics transformations. We do acknowledge the same – namely, the EU affairs might bring

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national party changes, either in terms of organization or in terms of functioning. However we do not agree that it is pretty easy to measure those changes, furthermore we do disagree with the way Raunio found to argue his thesis. As a result, we presume that the straightforwardly presumed argument chosen by Raunio might end as a tautology.

Admittedly, the EU affairs is a basis that might precondition changes in the national party politics structures, therefore the EU affairs might also centralize and increase the autonomy of the leader towards the party on internal-basis. That is in fact the objective of the Raunio's research. As such, this article initially explains the Raunio's main arguments and the hypothesis that the latter pretends to build. Subsequently, we counter-argue on the model chosen by Raunio to explain this phenomenon. After that, we consider the institutional misconceptions that Raunio has methodologically neglected, in addition to an explanation on such dilemmas. Following that, we describe the institutional but also functional aspects that should have been considered while intending to reach the objectives of the Raunio's research. As such, we build two hypotheses, the one of Raunio, shown by a figure, and the 'accurate one', arguably considered so by us. In the end, as a general conclusion, we show the prerequisites that Raunio's research should have, prior to build presumed hypothesis.

A CRITICAL ACCOUNT

Generally, the Raunio's argument follows the idea that the party leaders are becoming more independent from their parties. At such a context, the idea that the European integration increases the independency of party leadership is rooted. Raunio's paper aims to argue that the 'European integration consolidates the centralization of decision making through strengthening the agenda-setting powers of party leaders' (p. 406), as a form of centralizing the top-down decision-making by addressing party leadership in a way where, the parties themselves do not provide an EU affairs business (p. 410). In addition the paper intended to 'introduce a model for understanding why and under what circumstances EU increases leadership autonomy within national parties' (p. 410). In the way it is proclaimed, the European Integration is meant as the common decision-making undertaken in the EU level – a decision making that might have preconditioned the internal party leaderships' strengthening towards their parties. In that line, Raunio's focus, as addressed above, should have been finding an explanation for the European Union's politics as a whole, taken as an independent variable, and the national parties leadership strengthening as a dependent variable. We do absolutely agree that there is a lot to be argued about that, however let us initially present the Raunio's thesis construction.

First of all, Raunoi fails to determine the relationship - described as an affair between an independent and dependent variable – which is specifically aimed to be researched, given that the scrutiny of the ‘national parliaments’ over the EU affairs’ (p. 411) does not stand in the same line with the aims of the research *per se*. However, apart from that, Raunoi claims that the central point that makes sense in terms of the national parties’ leadership strengthening due to the EU affairs is: ‘when a party is in government, its ministers are members of the Council of Ministers and, in the case of the prime minister and foreign and finance ministers, participate in the summits of the European Council. Party representatives back home, even vice-chairs or ministers in charge of less ‘Europeanized’ portfolios, are thus restricted in their ability to scrutinize Council meetings. Effective control would require scheduling the work of the party executive or other party organs so that they would meet in advance of summits or important Council meetings’ (p. 411). Following that, Raunoi further argues that ‘leadership autonomy depends on the extent to which the national parliament controls its government in EU affairs. The structure of the EU policy process disadvantages national parliaments. No matter how tightly MPs control their governments in European affairs, their input is always indirect, involving a delegation of authority to governments that represent member states in the EU political system. Therefore the main problem facing national legislatures is how to reduce informational asymmetry in order to ensure effective parliamentary accountability so that the government behaves according to the preferences of the parliamentary majority’ (p. 412). As a consequence, Raunoi affirms that ‘what makes the *EU effect* different is that here centralization is reinforced by exogenous, cross-national factors – the political dynamics of the EU policy process. Through their regular participation in the Council and the European Council, the leading party figures as ministers gain access to a decision-making arena where the rest of the national party exerts little if any control. While electoral considerations naturally limit the autonomy of party leaders, they nevertheless possess considerable discretion to make agreements at the European level. National parliaments have started to invest more resources in holding governments accountable in EU matters, and this benefits MPs who acquire policy expertise in EU issues. Nevertheless, despite occasional voting instructions issued in the weekly meetings of European Affairs Committees, national parliaments are at a disadvantage because their contribution is always indirect, involving a delegation of authority to governments that represent member states in the Council’ (p. 414).

Even that there is a lot of confusion in Raunio’s paper, we do choose to consider his arguments by stages. Indeed, firstly, Raunio claims that the ‘centralization’ trend comes from the impossibility of the national party structures to scrutinize what a minister or prime minister deliberates in a meeting of the EU Council. The second argument provided by Raunio sends the arguing trend in another way, by saying that the level of

centralization is amounted from the volume of national parliament's scrutiny over the government towards the EU affairs. Finally, Raunio argues that the EU political affairs interfere into the national party politics, thus making the party leaders prevail autonomy towards the respective internal party. Taken as a whole, it can not be specifically said where the basis of Raunio's argumentation stand, however let's make the critique multi-dimensional given that the argumentation of Raunio is multifarious.

At the outset, we argue that Raunio fails to locate the political affairs of the European Union. Indeed Raunio sees the EU politics simply as a product of the "EU Council", which is the only institution composed by the national governments' representatives. We argue that the politics of the European Union is a product of at least three institutions, the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission. As such, generally considered, the whole three institutions have more or less a balanced power towards each other. In that context, to consider only one such institution as the political factory of the Union is absolutely wrong. Thus we counter the argumentation of Raunio basically due to: first, since the Council's affairs might not be seen as the only line of interference of EU towards national politics, second, the role of the European Parliament and the European Commission is absolutely important in the interference towards the states' politics, and thirdly, the setting of the EU agenda is absolutely not a sole competence of the Council, moreover it is an obvious competence of the Commission due to its *initiative right*.

For such reasons we claim that, if the Council is in one side the representative of the national governments, in the other side, the exclusive right of the Commission to initiate legislation inside the European Community is in place. Therefore Raunio's suggestion is wrong even when he claims that, supported at Moravcik ideas, intergovernmentalism offers to the national governments' representatives the ability to make policies, freed of scrutiny from the national parliaments. The Moravcik idea first of all, is a liberal intergovernmentalist theory, which is not said to bring the result that Raunio expects, and secondly, the Council is in fact just one of the three institutions which all together have a complementary role in the EU policy making process. The Raunio's claim that 'the European integration centralization of DM through strengthening the agenda setting powers of party leader' is again a tautology, given that, first, the agenda of the policies in the European Community is in most of cases set by the Commission (due to the legislative initiative right), while secondly, the policy willing to be produced should at any case have the preference access of the whole three institutions (only in some specific procedures the DM can take place with the Council and Commission only).

What should be countered pretty much is the thought that the taking of decisions in the European level, due to the Council's composition, weakens the role of the parties in the national context, given that the minister or PM representing the country in the

Council does not pay any responsibility to the national party (Raunio's argument). We do deeply counter this idea, provided that, the Council is not the sole decision maker in the Union, whereas the European Parliament is composed of MEPs who in fact come from the same national parties. Related with the latter, the Council's work, and as a consequence the latter's members, is constrained with that of the European Parliament, among others, provided that in most of the legislative procedures the consent of the European Parliament should follow a legislative act. In that respect, the European Parliament is composed by deputies who come from the national parties – commonly those parties whose ministers and PMs represent the country into the Council. As such, the decrease of the role of a national party, or the increase of party's leader autonomy, might not be the case, if based on Raunio's argument. It is arguable therefore, that the European Parliament deputies do constrain or source the bargaining power of the Council as well, thus the argument that these deputies have no role that a national MP might have at the national context does not stand. Therefore the MEPs role at the EU level towards the Council's members is roughly the same with that of the national MPs towards the national government, except that in the EU level the MEPs have only a decision-making role, while they have no confidence motion rights.

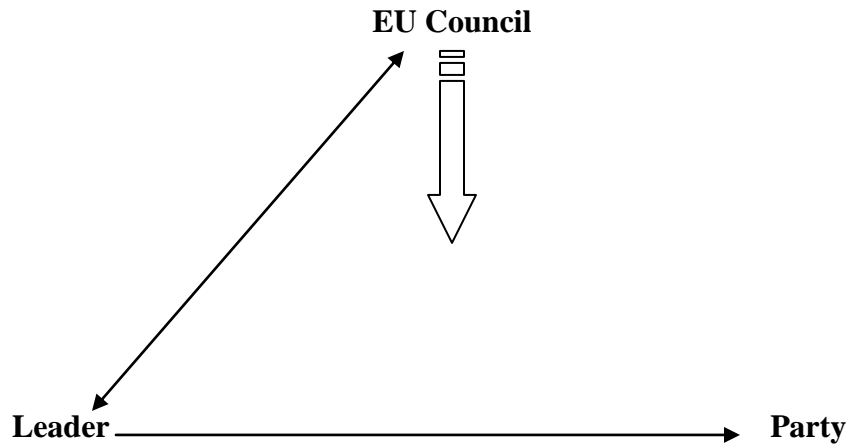
The second part of our critique is related with the claim of Raunio, that the EU affairs do influence the party position of the leader, contributing to a more centralized position of the latter. We do criticize the argument of Raunio and the way he builds it, due to a lack of observation on the national governing systems organization. We argue that, first of all, the centralization of the party on the hands of the party leader, as a consequence of the EU intergration, is first of all a matter of the style of power separation between branches of government. If we have to deal with a semi-presidential or presidential system, it is itself the system that chooses to centralize the role of the president in the whole political life, and that not simply because of the EU affairs. In addition, if we deal with a parliamentary governing system, the style of the government is again important. If there is a coalition government in place, of course that the centralization does not happen so fragiley as Raunio puts it, given that coalition members do constrain and control each other rigidly – as a result it is not necessarily true that the party gets centralized. The electoral system plays a major role also, since if there is, say a proportional system, the party leader is preconditioned to have a centralized role, given that he/she builds the electoral lists, while in majoritarian electoral systems the party leader is constrained with the candidates who use to be the bests.

Finally, the Raunio's failure on description is due to a huge mistake made with the lack of consideration upon the party leaders' responsibility. Indeed, if we ideally take true all the Raunio's claims, considering the Council as the only policy-maker in the EU (even that it is wrong), the question we do raise is, whether the result of the work in Council is

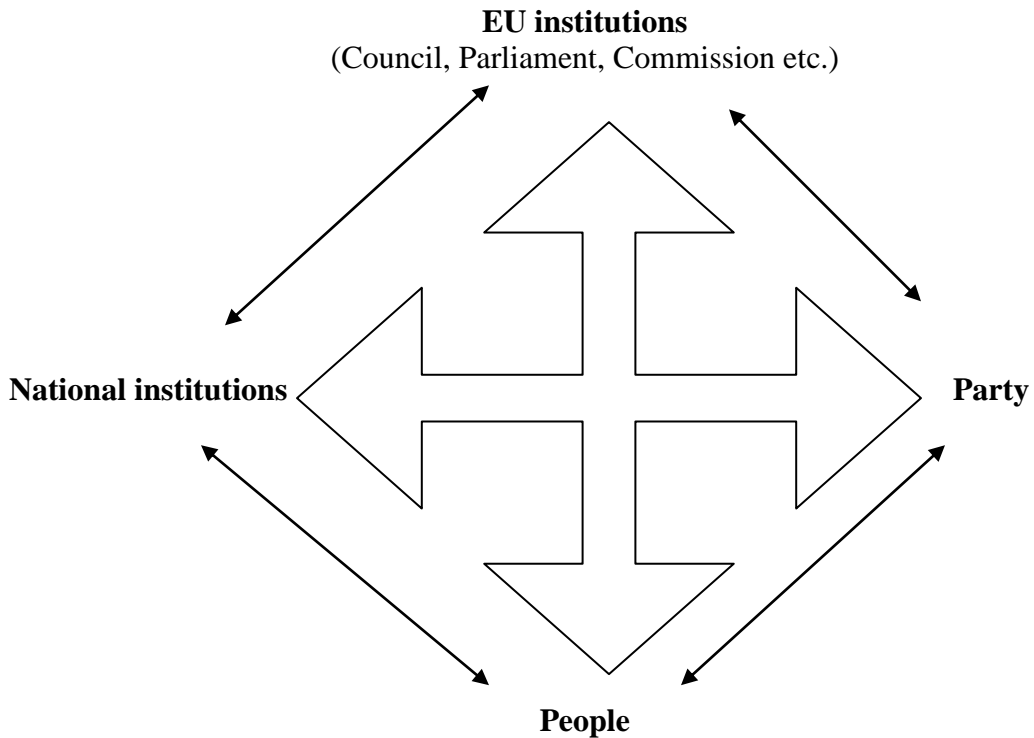
always positive so as to be able to legitimate a centralization in the internal party context? We do argue that, in fact, the Council's approach towards many issues might not be appreciated internally; either in the party level or in the national level, thus the disagreement of the party or the people does in fact bring as a result the delegitimation of that respective leader. At such a context, the position of the party leader gets weakened. Therefore, even if taken ideally, as Raunio did, there are two possible effects that might come from the position of a leader in the Council, first, the leader's position might be worsened due to the unsuccessful work of the latter, thus the demand for responsibility from the party among others, comes into place, and secondly, the leader's work in the Council might be successful thus his role might be increased internally. It is again wrong to consider that 'centralization and leadership autonomy should be greater in countries with weak parliamentary scrutiny' (p. 411). However, the latter claim of Raunio is criticized due to its impossibility of considering the phenomenon of responsibility-sharing. Therefore we counter-argue by considering that, the level of parliamentary scrutiny does not always bring the centralization of the party leaders, given that, in a country where the scrutiny is weak, then the responsibility of the leader towards the party and parliament is higher. As such, the impossibility of the leader to reach intentions on the EU level makes him loose autonomy and take responsibility. Whereas if the scrutiny from the parliament, as a consequence of the party also, is strong, the responsibility of the leader is shared with the latter, therefore the unsuccessfulness to reach any given objective brings the sharing of responsibility also (towards the party and parliament). In addition, as Raunio claims, 'the penetration of EU issues into domestic party competition has led – particularly in Denmark, France, Great Britain and Norway – to losses in elections, back-bench rebellions, factionalism, leadership resignations, and the formation of new parties' (p. 415). The latter in fact is a counter argument even that is used as an argument by Raunio, thus we judge that the unsuccessfulness of a party leader to reach national objectives in the EU level, has instead decreased their power internally, as a result they might have lost autonomy towards their party. Therefore we argue that, as a political behaviour, party leaders do not always seek to centralize the autonomy towards their party, as a result of the involvement in EU affairs, given that the latter brings a concentration of responsibility on them – which is a risky political action.

In the end, we argue that Raunio's argumentation can be figuratively shown by figure A. He considers the EU politics made by the Council of the EU only, therefore the leadership of a given party, which is holding the government, is the sole linker with the Council. Thus the power derived to the Council comes from the national party leadership, while the Council's power comes nationally only through the party leadership. At that context, it is only the party leadership who might link the Council with the party, thus making the latter be in need for the authority of the leader. For such reasons the

axis that links the Council and the Leader is a bi-trend one, while the axis that links the leader with the party is a one-tend one.



Raunio's way of explaining the phenomenon in discussion
Figure A



Our model of explanation, as a ground for the methodological approach to the
intended research of Raunio
Figure B

Related with the latter, our critique to the Rauni's claims is shown in figure B. Therefore it is arguably defined that the EU affairs is in fact a product of at least three institutions (Council, Parliament, Commission), thus the statement that the EU affairs get built through the Council only is wrong. It can be seen in figure B, that the EU institutions have a bi-trend linkage with the national institutions and the political parties, meanwhile the national institutions and the national parties have a bi-trend linkage with the people. As we argued, the link of the national institutions with the EU institutions goes mainly through the Council, while the linkage of the national parties with the EU goes mainly through the European Parliament (where the MEPs come from the national parties candidatures). In the meantime, the national institutions, hold a responsibility towards the people for any policy-line objective supported inside the EU, while the parties hold the same responsibility towards the people (for the national institutions but also the MEPs work). As such, our model, as shown in figure B, dramatically excludes the Raunio's argumentation, meanwhile builds a realistic but also methodologically correct ground, upon which the aims of the Raunio's research can be searched upon. Lastly, we consider that a research upon the EU affairs interference into the centralization or autonomy increase of a national party leader towards his party can only be explained if the four variables shown in figure B are considered complementarily.