

Bureaucratic Empowerment and Organizational Overlap: How the European Commission entrenches its European security actorness

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Abstract. What is the role of international bureaucrats in organizational overlap, and more precisely in the politics of inter-organizational cooperation? We argue that negotiating cooperation between two IOs not only creates new coalition-building opportunities among member states and international bureaucrats, but that it also empowers bureaucratic actors that are more accessible than others. Member states that have been interested in principled reciprocity between both organizations can look to bureaucratic actors to push for inter-bureaucratic coordination while at the same time pushing these actors to go beyond their limits to overcome the political obstacles. Our argument does not end here. We pay particular attention to one institutional feature: how streamlined the international organizations' bureaucracy is; or said otherwise, how clear-cut competences are distributed among bureaucratic actors. In inter-bureaucratic relationships, bureaucrats will look for counterparts that are "easy to talk to" with many resources and a good understanding of their own IO rather than pure expertise. This can empower some bureaucratic actors that have not been dominant in a certain policy domain before.

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Organizational overlap has become a ubiquitous feature in many policy domains. Alter and Raustiala (2018) observe “the signature feature of twenty-first century international cooperation, in short, is arguably not the regime but the regime complex”(Alter and Raustiala 2018, 18.17). Some organizations constituting these complex structures are more formal than others (Vabulas and Snidal 2013) and vary a lot in the amount of personnel they occupy (Gray 2018), but most if not all of them rely to some degree on bureaucratic support to keep the multilateral endeavors running.

Scholarship has paid attention to the phenomenon regime complexes (Raustiala and Victor 2004; Alter and Meunier 2009) as well as tackled questions on the different roles international bureaucrats can play in the multilateral policy cycle (Johnson 2013; Haftel and Thompson 2006; Mérand, Hofmann, and Irondelle 2011). Many scholars who argue from different theoretical vantage points have observed that international bureaucrats are interested in protecting their organizational turf, if not even expand it (Allison 1969; Littoz-Monnet 2017; Haftel and Hofmann 2017).

To our knowledge, little attention has been paid to the role bureaucrats can play when organizations overlap. However, when thinking about situations of organizational overlap, what is considered “turf” is less straightforward. Bureaucrats could be willing to protect their relative autonomy vis-à-vis member states and expand their policy-making power. Alternatively, they could seek to defend “their” own home organization against another IO that might encroach on their activities, and building coalitions with member states in the process. Or else, they could promote the values and interests of their professional peers of their shared policy field, whether they are conceptualized as networks or communities. In this paper, we are interested in shedding light on the role of international bureaucrats in organizational overlap, and more precisely in the politics of inter-organizational cooperation.

We want to take a first stab at this question by looking at a particular organizational overlap, the one between the EU and NATO in the field of international crisis management. To date (but not much longer), both organizations share 22 member states out of 28 (EU) and 29 (NATO) respectively. Furthermore, both organizations are active in crisis management, a policy domain which requires the coordination or even sharing of scarce and expensive material resources and military and civilian expertise. To function effectively, both IOs not only need these resources but also their member states’ commitments to send these resources into the field. However, as in many instances of organizational overlap (K. Alter 2009; Busch 2007; Gehring and Faude 2014; Hofmann 2009), inter-organizational relations are not smooth. In the case of the EU-NATO overlap, both organizations have only been able to meet on very specific issues on the formal level since Cyprus joined the EU. This is so because NATO’s member state Turkey does not diplomatically recognize Cyprus and hence blocks formal EU-NATO encounters, while Cyprus vetoes any significant Turkish involvement in the EU’s CSDP. Not only this, while the EU’s External Action Service (EEAS) should be the prime interlocutor for NATO to discuss inter-organizational cooperation potentials, what we observe instead that next to the EEAS, the European Commission presents itself as the main bureaucratic actor to speak to.

Recent scholarship has emphasized that despite formal blockage, there actually has been cooperation through what they identify as communities of practices (Græger 2016, 2017;

Bueger 2016) constituted out of EU and NATO bureaucrats. By emphasizing cross-organizational communities, this scholarship has made a strong case against looking at inter-organizational cooperation through the lens of rationalist and institutionalist perspectives. These insights are extremely valuable to identify cooperation *below* politics and explain why more has been done than the formal level lets on. The communities of practices approach does not aim and is not equipped to explain how the overlap is dealt with politically and institutionally at a higher level, that is, with the politics of inter-organizational overlap. It therefore speaks very little to the interactions between bureaucrats and member states and how the shaping of inter-organizational cooperation is influenced – or not – by (power- or norms-oriented) battles over organizational turf. Do communities of practices erode all competition between IOs and/or member states, or even, within themselves? In other words, are all actors within this community of practice “equals”? Or are some bureaucratic actors more empowered than others and if so, why?

We argue that negotiating cooperation between two IOs not only creates new coalition-building opportunities among member states and international bureaucrats, but that it also empowers bureaucratic actors that are more accessible than others. Politics does not stop at the bureaucratic level. Member states that have been interested in principled reciprocity (Keohane 1986) between both organizations can look to bureaucratic actors to push for inter-bureaucratic coordination while at the same time pushing these actors to go beyond their limits to overcome the political obstacles. Our argument does not end here. We pay particular attention to one institutional feature: how streamlined the international organizations’ bureaucracy is; or said otherwise, how clear-cut competences are distributed among bureaucratic actors. Bureaucratic actors are not homogeneously endowed with resources, nor do they necessarily share a same agenda or strategy (Knill et al 2019). While some may want to privilege their community, others may promote their IO or may go solo to enhance their own competences within an IO. In inter-bureaucratic relationships, bureaucrats will look for counterparts that are “easy to talk to” with many resources and a good understanding of their own IO rather than pure expertise. This can empower some bureaucratic actors that have not been dominant in a certain policy domain before.

With regards to the EU-NATO relationship, these dynamics have empowered the European Commission. We explain this by two factors. First, at the level of states-bureaucrats relationships, political obstacles have pushed some member states such as the UK or Germany to encourage bureaucratic actors in the EU and in NATO to talk to one another on a multitude of issues. However, given the EU’s complex bureaucratic structures in the realm of foreign and security policy, where the EEAS, the Council, the European Defense Agency and the Commission have competencies, NATO bureaucrats often look for the path of least resistance, i.e. the bureaucratic actor that has the least involvement with member states, i.e. the European Commission. This means that while foreign and security policy should officially be handled by the EEAS which formally bridges the Council and the Commission, in practice, the Commission has taken on a much more active role in the field of European security policy formulation.

These insights contribute to the international cooperation literature in several ways. First, they address the roles international bureaucrats can play under conditions of regime complexity. Building on recent studies on EU-NATO cooperation (Græger 2016, 2017; Bueger 2016), we

question the relationships between these bureaucratic actors. Second, they draw our attention to how international bureaucracies are built up within international organizations (homogenous, heterogenous, hierarchical or vertical) and how this can have an impact on inter-organizational relations. Third, we contribute to linking European security studies with the analysis of interorganizational cooperation's impact.

Our analysis is built on insights from primary and secondary literature as well as some interviews with EU and NATO practitioners. We will first discuss some of our theoretical building blocks before we move to the empirical discussion.

Theoretical building blocks

We draw on the literatures of regime complexity, international bureaucracy and EU security studies to develop our argument. From regime complexity, we take away that the political relationship between overlapping organizations is often tense, from the literature on international bureaucracy, we build on insights of bureaucratic agency and the EU studies literature provides us with a more in-depth understanding of institutional constellations and relationships.

Regime complexity

Over the last two decades, the scholarship on international cooperation has paid attention to “an array of partially overlapping and nonhierarchical institutions governing a particular issue-area [...] marked by the existence of several legal arrangements that are created and maintained in distinct fora with participation of different sets of actors” (Raustiala and Victor 2004: 279). Often, these complexes come about through the proliferation of new organizations or the scope expansion of existing ones (Haftel and Hofmann 2017).

Primarily located within rational choice institutionalism, the research program initially demonstrated how different cooperation and coordination problems explained nested, overlapping, or parallel dyadic relationships between international institutions in the realm of environment (Young 1996) and trade (Aggarwal 1998). Based on insights drawn from dyadic organizational relationships, scholars have since turned their attention to investigating different strategies available to actors (mainly states or governments), and in particular the strategy of forum shopping (Alter and Meunier 2006; Busch 2007).

Once established as a concept, scholars have turned to unraveling the consequences of crowded institutional spaces. Most scholars have pointed to tensions across organizations though some scholars examine what conditions can lead to improved cooperation and division of labor (Bayer, Marcoux, and Urpelainen 2014; Gehring and Oberthür 2004, 2006; Gehring and Faude 2014; Pratt 2018). Others stress that regime complexes create legal and regulatory uncertainty, increase transaction costs for states to cooperate multilaterally and empowers powerful states (Arel-Bundock 2017; Benvenisti and Downs 2007; Biermann et al. 2010; Zelli and van Asselt 2013). Either way, in crowded institutional spaces, most if not all states face new additional coordination and cooperation challenges.

Although significant progress has been made in the regime complexity research program, several gaps exist. To this date, this research program has given ample consideration to

member states and their choices and constraints without looking at the bureaucratic level. The literature on international bureaucrats, pointing to their agency, is therefore helpful to fill this gap.

International bureaucracy and member states

To make sense of actors other than states operating in regime complexes, it is therefore useful to turn to the scholarship on international bureaucrats. With the proliferation of international organizations and their increased scope expansion, more international bureaucratic actors have emerged that are not located within national governments.

Existing scholarship has demonstrated that international bureaucrats, that is, bureaucrats that are located within international organizations and working for them, have taken on an active role in multilateral policy-making (Haas 1964; Hawkins et al. 2006; Nielson and Tierney 2003). However, their independence varies (Haftel and Thompson 2006) not only when focusing on the formal organizational level but also on the informal one (Mérand et al. 2011). While not all international organizations have big established international bureaucracies, many have received some delegated authority to contribute substantively to the setting of the policy agenda and its implementation, which has given them impact in the overall policy-making process. While different theoretical perspectives provided us with insights into the causes for agents' autonomous role and their influence over policymaking, they share the observation that bureaucrats are actors on their own behalf.

Scholars who base their reasoning on principal-agent approaches are interested in understanding under what conditions states delegate authority to IO agents and how agents with autonomy or discretion can engage in actions not anticipated by their state principals (Hawkins et al. 2006; Pollack 2003; Nielson and Tierney 2003). In other words, the *degree* of autonomy and the discretion that these agents take to act then becomes their main focus. When states initially design international organizations, they try to address control via various mechanisms; the most common of those are the management of resources, institutional oversight, or decision-making practices. But states cannot wholly control international bureaucrats.

International bureaucrats are understood as strategic actors; their goals are material security, legitimacy and advancement of policies they deem fitting. The variation in agent's agency is often explained with variation in staff size and resources at disposal from the agents' side as well as salience that states attach to the particular issue and the capabilities that states devote to controlling their agents. While most principal-agent approaches have argued that international bureaucrats carve out autonomous spaces over time, recently authors such as Tana Johnson (2013) have observed that even in the initial design stage of international organization, international bureaucrats have actively contributed.

Practice scholars have taken a different stab when looking at diplomats and international bureaucrats. Based on sociological insights, and in particular Bourdieu, they have shown that bureaucrats with similar professional backgrounds can share a common understanding of the world around them (Mérand 2008). This helps explain how national prerogatives are not always important in transnational or transgovernmental relations. In the case of EU-NATO relationship, recent scholarship has shown the existence of a community of practice,

cooperating behind the formal political blockages “where staff have found informal ways of engaging each other, seeking practical solutions, as well as developing shared repertoires of practice (e.g. informal information exchanges, meetings, and briefings, be it in offices or between military vessels at sea) across organisational and professional boundaries as part of their daily work” (Græger 2017, 345).

Insights from both principal-agent and practice analysis are valuable to our paper as they point to mechanisms and dynamics based on which bureaucrats can cooperate with one another: based on their strategic preferences and their common habitus, they are likely to act independently of member states. Either because these are focused on one single actor or because they tend to stress professional rather than the organizational locus, these studies tend to obscure differences among international bureaucrats. In a bureaucratic field as dense as EU security, this is problematic for not all actors are on equal foot. So what are the actor constellations within the EU and NATO?

European security studies

Embedded in larger debates revolving around the evolution of European governance across different policy fields, European security studies have questioned who is *really* governing CSDP. For good reasons, member states have been considered the primary actors in this domain: after all, sovereignty lies in their hands and competence in this domain has not been transferred to the EU. Departing from what seemed to be (too) obvious an answer, many scholars started to question and identify other patterns in European security governance. Sometimes labelled “supranational intergovernmentalism” (Howorth 2014), many authors have shown how, while still important, national representatives’ have no monopole and are increasingly dependent upon international bureaucrats (Mérand et al. 2011). In these accounts, European security is not (or no longer) obeying intergovernmental patterns (Norheim-Martinsen 2010): national governments’ representatives are embedded in a configuration of multiple European actors, more or less “supranationalized”: the EU Military Staff, the Political and Security Committee, the Politico-Military Group, the European Defense Agency, the OCCAR armament program-management agency, the EEAS, the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability, industrial lobbies, the new headquarter, and of course, the European Commission and its various DGs (RELEX in the days, GROW, Comm, Connect, Home, etc.).

More specifically, authors have focused on the somewhat unexpected rise of the European Commission in CFSP (Kostadinova 2013; Dijkstra 2014) and more specifically in CSDP and its defense industrial dimensions (Blauberger and Weiss 2013; Lavallée 2017). Chou and Riddervold (2015) have shown how in variegated contexts, the Commission either bargains, influences through learning or enters coalition-building with other actors to gain influence (Chou and Riddervold 2015; Riddervold 2016). This gain of influence is explained mostly by its resources (early position in the policy process, its extensive expertise and centrality in policy networks), but also by issue linkages that help expand its power. In these accounts, the Commission has gained influence in security and defense issues mostly because it has been able to tie these issues with its own competences, by framing and institutional coalition-building. For instance, the Commission has started to touch upon defense issues through its competences on internal market and competition (Mörth 2000; Hoeffler 2012), that it expanded successfully onto defense industries. But the Commission’s influence did not include only defense industrial matters, which may be the most obvious domain to infringe upon given

its link to the internal market and competition, two core Commission's competences. The Commission has also tried to influence and be included in the planning and conduct of CSDP operations, such as the Naval Mission Atalanta, the EU Maritime Security Strategy (Riddervold and Rosén 2016), Althea and the military operation in Chad (Dijkstra 2012). For instance, in the case of Atalanta, Riddervold and Rosen argue that while France and other member states are put forward to explain the launch of this operation, the Commission was an additional player in this story

cooperation between the institutions [Commission and Parliament] and with particular member states helped realise such common goals. This is particularly the case for the Commission, who was more than an agent of the member states. When Atalanta was launched in 2008, France held the EU Presidency, and used the geopolitical situation and the piracy threat to put an autonomous EU naval mission on the negotiating table (Riddervold 2014). To launch the mission, however, France needed the Commission's help: only through the use of the Commission's development budgets could France and the Council secretariat establish third country agreements with countries in the region on the transfer of suspected pirates. This was a necessary condition for getting the support of all the EU member states (Riddervold and Rosén 2016, 7).

Except for the notable exception of the study of communities of practice in European security issues, none of these works have taken into account the EU-NATO relationship. As hinted in the introduction and on our discussion on international bureaucrats, while we build on these insights, we argue that the interplay between the various state and bureaucratic actors across organizations has not received sufficient understanding yet.

Theoretical synergies

These discussions have shown that international bureaucrats can have a significant influence on IOs. Their strife for bureaucratic autonomy is likely to be a constant. However, the opportunities to push for more autonomy change over time, for example, depending on preference heterogeneity among member states and political pressures/crises. Seen from the macro perspective, this weakens member states' institutional power vis-à-vis international bureaucrats. However, this does not foreclose the possibility that some member states will look for bureaucratic allies to push their agenda. The Cyprus issue has thus not led to bureaucratic, staff-to-staff cooperation despite political blockage but rather has constituted an opportunity for bureaucrats.

In instances of organizational overlap, the relationship between member states and international bureaucrats becomes more complicated as new sets of relationships can come about. Inter-organizational cooperation is not shaped by member states' preferences only: in our case, EU-NATO cooperation cannot be fully conceptualized and made sense of through the political blockages at the formal level. Political obstacles provide impetus for bureaucratic actors in both the EU and NATO to push for more turf vis-à-vis their member states. They can do so through staff-to-staff cooperation across IOs and by providing "practical" solutions and new ideas. But they can also do so by entering coalitions with some MS on certain issues. That is, international bureaucrats can defend "their" IO together with like-minded member states: EU bureaucratic actors might defend a "EU" security model v. NATO for instance. Second, bureaucratic actors can defend and promote the values, solutions and/or material interests

(e.g. turf, competences) of their community of practice, thereby transcending their IO formal frontiers and looking for bureaucratic allies in the other IO. Third, bureaucratic actors can work for their own organization within their IO, e.g. for the European Commission.

This insight does not explain who gets empowered and why – questions which we would like to contribute to in this paper. International organizations, with large bureaucracies are not monolithic: not all bureaucratic actors within one IO are equally empowered (if empowered at all) for example by political blockages. Here we take a meso-perspective and consider international bureaucracies at the level of their formal organization, e.g. the European Commission, the EEAS or EDA on the EU side, the Political Affairs and Security Policy Division or the Secretariat on the NATO side (Dijkstra 2015). We contend, at this stage, that which bureaucratic actor within an IO (e.g. Commission and/or EDA etc.) gets empowered depends on two factors: first, on governance dynamics within the IO; it is not necessarily the actor which is treating the substantive policy area that makes the most proposals to solve inter-organizational blockages but the bureaucratic actor that has the most resources available and is familiar with the intra-institutional set up. In our case, the European Commission is a much older actor than the EEAS and resents EU member states for not having included the EEAS within the Commission. It also can rely on its bureaucratic expertise and funds. We expect that these governance dynamics entice the Commission to push for presenting itself as interlocuter for NATO. Second, we need to look at the inter-bureaucratic and -organizational relationship to see whether this self-presentation is accepted on the other side or not. We argue here that bureaucratic actors that have resources on their own and do not need member state consent for each and every move are the more attractive partner to establish inter-bureaucratic relations. If this resource-rich bureaucratic actor is not solely responsible in a given policy domain, this will create tensions within an IO.

Playing chess with many actors

Ever since the EU moved into the realm of international security policy, it faced NATO functionally (not to speak of the fact that both organizations' HQ are in the same city). National ministries and international bureaucrats alike had to strike a fine balance between their different – sometimes opposing – demands towards both organizations. We will first go back to the genesis of EU-NATO relations, to see how staff-to-staff relations developed to address political hurdles and the weaknesses of this bureaucratic cooperation. We will then deal with the renewal of EU-NATO cooperation since 2016 to see how both IOs' bureaucrats have used their relative (and varying) autonomy to create cooperative channels. A third subsection will shed light on how these processes empowered the various EU actors differently, and more specifically how the EU Commission has become more influential throughout this EU-NATO cooperation.

Ups and downs of bureaucratic cooperation in times of inter-organizational political blockages

During the first years of CSDP's (then called ESDP) existence, the institution was not fully operational. It was still building up structures to formulate crisis management strategies and policies as well as conduct civilian and military operations/missions. It was during this time that EU member states and bureaucrats such as Javier Solana negotiated with the EU how to have access to NATO resources. Negotiating a viable inter-organizational relationship was very cumbersome as both the American and Turkish government did not appreciate that NATO's

EU member states had ventured into creating an autonomous security institution from NATO. They delayed any solution to the problem and left bureaucrats frustrated.

When Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, the already tense relationship between both organizations worsened. Now no more formal meetings (outside the ALTHEA framework) between both organizations could take place as Turkey did not recognize the EU's membership composition. This has not changed to this day. Bureaucrats were left with the task to implement ways of how EU and NATO could nonetheless discuss issues of strategic importance such as the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, Darfur, Libya or the Ukraine.

On the strategic level, bureaucrats help ambassadors in particular from the UK, Germany and the US to establish and implement package deals which would allow the NAC and the PSC to meet informally in exchange for holding one formal meeting which Cyprus would not attend. This happened on Turkish insistence. Following this procedure, EU and NATO ambassadors were also able to informally discuss the Ukraine crisis in 2014. However, Turkey does not always agree to these package deals; it blocked informal meetings in 2016.¹ And when Cyprus was holding the EU presidency in 2012, even these informal meetings did not take place. Hence, the possibility of exchanging strategic information at least informally remains at the whims of the Turkish and Cypriot governments. While bureaucrats were crucial in enabling EU and NATO member-states to discuss issues of mutual interest, a NATO official says that the current arrangements are 'sub-optimal, to put it mildly'². Even organizing informal meetings can be an arduous task and requires high-level pressure in order to obtain the consent of the Turkish and Cypriot governments. This occurs despite the preference of major powers, such as the U.S., UK, Netherlands, and Germany, to improve cooperation in the interest of efficiency and community (EU 2010: E/69).³

EU and NATO bureaucrats were kept on a short leash in headquarters because member states did not want to offend Cypriot and Turkish national prerogatives. Graeger provides ample examples of staff-to-staff cooperation, showing that in Brussels, "at the staff level, cooperation in HQs happens in offices, over meals, on the phone, by email, or on the fringe of formal meetings" (Græger 2016, 484). However, while these informal communication channels existed, not much could be done to improve the situation between the EU and NATO in terms of inter-organizational cooperation. One EU bureaucrat complained to a NATO diplomat "you exchange more documents with Russia than with us".⁴

In the field, things were slightly better. With less member state supervision, national officials and EU and NATO staff were able to forge some means of coordination that avoided formal channel (e.g. Germond and Smith 2009). "At the operational level, EU and NATO staff have found ways of working alongside each or together both in crisis management operations, support missions (e.g. handling refugees), and anti-piracy operations" (Graeger 2017: 348). Græger observes that

¹ Interview with NATO official #3, Brussels, 30 March 2017.

² Interview with NATO official #1, Brussels, 6 February 2007.

³ Interview with NATO official #4, Brussels, 13 July 2017.

⁴ Interview with NATO official #3, Brussels, 30 March 2017.

below the head of mission level, ad hoc, informal interaction takes place between the heads of the different sectors and chiefs of staff. EULEX and KFOR officials also meet officially and informally when hosting delegations to Kosovo. NATO has a liaison officer in the EULEX operational centre in Pristina and the EU has a liaison officer to KFOR, who attend meetings and report back to their respective missions. Political staff in both missions meet informally to discuss topics of common interest, including the content of political messages to be sent back to Brussels, to national capitals, and to the embassies in Pristina (Græger 2016, 487).

Overlapping organizations in crisis: strengthening inter-organizational bureaucratic cooperation

First formal steps

The beginning of the unfreezing relationship and the increased reliance on international bureaucrats to maneuver political obstacles happened around 2014 with the Ukraine crisis. Both organizations developed conceptual definitions and doctrine with regards to hybrid threats and warfare and realized (once again) that neither the EU nor NATO had enough resources (in terms of expertise, money and capabilities) – after all both organizations rely heavily on national resources and member states only have one set of everything that they can commit to both the EU and NATO. For member-states to contribute to these institutional developments, a minimum of coordination was needed.⁵ This is when the international staff of both organizations was tasked to get together, i.e. they needed the initial support of member states to do so.

Another event pointed in the same direction. When NATO decided to have a presence in the Aegean more or less overnight while FRONTEX was already there, this put additional pressure onto negotiating with the EU. Not only that, given the nature of FRONTEX, NATO international staff did not turn to the Council Secretariat or the EEAS to discuss both maritime operations but instead to the European Commission (DG Home). Until then NATO had no dealings with the Commission to speak of. An exchange of letters needed to be set up to discuss how NATO could relate to FRONTEX – what often is called a technical matter.

These two episodes created a momentum that laid the ground for the Warsaw meeting in which the EU and NATO would sign the first joint declaration in July 2016. It is important to stress here is that the declaration was signed by NATO's Secretary General and the EU's Council President as well as the President of the European Commission. When EU and NATO staff got together, first the idea was to focus on hybrid threats only. However, soon the international staff realized that it can expand inter-bureaucratic coordination and, in the end, included seven issues. Hybrid was the obvious first choice and maritime security was added because of the ongoing activities in the Aegean Sea. As both organizations had just signed a technical arrangement on Cyber, this issue was included as well. Then bureaucrats added issues that were old issues between the organizations: operations and exercises; military capabilities were included with view to member states; and defense industry was included as the EU insisted on it (NATO has no industrial policy).

⁵ Interview with NATO official #2, 30 March 2017.

Given their knowledge of the political obstacles in both organizations, they also agreed with one another that their bureaucratic heads need to sign such a declaration. If member states would cosign it, Turkey and Cyprus would never agree to any proposed language. They furthermore were working towards a short text to highlight what will be done without much “diplomatic language” or technical details, giving them space to work on those later.⁶

What started as an email exchange soon turned into meetings – sometimes more than once a week. The initial negotiations between the EU and NATO staff that would establish a first draft were conceived as an isolated process keeping everyone at bay. NATO staff from DPA and the Secretary-General’s Private Office met with European Commission President Juncker’s as well as with Council President Tusk’s cabinets during the period of early May until July 8 – the final declaration was negotiated until one hour before it was signed.

Working on the same draft, EU and NATO bureaucrats went back to their member states to include them in the process and ask for comments. This way member states stayed involved in the process but they were not required to formally endorse it. The Cypriot and Turkish governments delayed the process and threatened to make public statements condemning the declaration. On the last day, Turkey for example vetoed language that read “with all EU member states”. A compromise was found that mentions “the EU member states” to avoid too much attention to the declaration.⁷

Moving from joint declaration to parallel and coordinated interaction

Given the shortness of the text, the bureaucrats gave themselves the most leeway to identify common projects. Once the declaration was signed, the Council Secretariat and the Commission included the EEAS and EDA to identify concrete proposals. In late October, the proposals from the EU and NATO were merged to a common document.

It was only at this stage the member states needed to get officially on board, or as one NATO bureaucrat said that bureaucrats “needed to sell” it to them.⁸ Unsurprisingly, their approval was a challenge. NATO bureaucrats made their way to Ankara – to the dismay of the US and Greek governments – and readjusted proposals accordingly. At this stage, the EU and NATO staff passed the message that they should not open the proposal again, they were as good as it gets. The NAC and the Council then made and produced political separate statements and documents, where Council members could stress their pet projects – however, some national ministers used this opportunity to vent their frustration as they felt that the staff had forced them to agree to such a common project.

Since then both staffs try to implement the declaration and the proposals. Member states, wary that international bureaucrats will take the cooperation too far, insisted on having two implementation reports a year which was not what the international staffs wanted, they only had proposed one. Member states realized that these reports are a way of controlling staff activity.

Empowering the European Commission

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Interview with NATO official #3, 30 March 2017.

When NATO staff approached the EU in 2014 on their own, they were not aware of the bureaucratic complexities of their counterpart. While the Lisbon Treaty set out that EEAS is the EU's diplomatic service, headed by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, it is far from being the only or even most significant actor in the European security's institutional framework. The European Commission, a bureaucratic actor that consistently insists that it is the guardian of the treaties and that national matters should slowly but surely become supranationalized, has been finding its inroads to the security domain. In CSDP, the Commission has become influential through its competences in the internal market, competition, industrial regulation, but also more recently through issues such as dual-use goods, or air traffic controls.

We argue that the Commission has become an influential actor within the inter-organizational bureaucratic cooperation because of its own strategies within the European security field, and because NATO interlocutors have given it importance among European bureaucratic actors. First, the Commission has been very influential through its work on military capabilities, research and defense markets. It had been very active in the last decade on these issues, increasingly tying its economic competences to defense issues. In 2009 it issued the 2009 Defense Package with the two directives on defense markets and transfers, followed soon by the 2013 Communication "Towards a more competitive and efficient defense and security sector", its 2014 Implementation Roadmap and eventually its 2015 Report on it, feeding the June 2015 European Council's conclusions. All these initiatives led to tangible proposals very quickly in the wake of the EU Global Strategy and the Warsaw Declaration in June and July 2016 respectively. In November 2016, the European Commission led out the European Defense Action Plan, followed by the adoption of the Defense Package on June 7, 2017. Through these actions, the European Commission has set the plan for the creation of a massive investment into European defense capabilities, through the creation of the European Defense Fund (EDF), financing both R&T and development programs. The EDF aims at making defense cooperation among EU Member states financially attractive, in order to incentivize Member states otherwise going national or buying foreign – oftentimes American – weapons. This is unprecedented action from the Commission, and is considered as the first potential "game-changer" for the development of EU military capabilities by many, even by national representatives⁹. The creation of the EDF is but going without rivalry among EU bureaucratic actors, mostly between the EDA and the Commission. The EDA has been in charge of triggering more cooperation in defense capabilities, and its role in the EDF is unclear at best.

But such endogenous factors are not the only ones explaining the Commission's influence: the latter is also influenced by inter-organizational bureaucratic influence itself and namely how NATO partners' strategies and preferences. Coming up with its own proposals to present to the Council, irrespective of whether they will eventually see the light of day, makes the Commission a bureaucratic actor that is not only visible but also looks responsible. This makes it easier for NATO staff to discuss with the Commission than with EEAS¹⁰: the EEAS is sidelined even though it is the main implementer of the joint declaration on the EU side. The EEAS is still very chaotic and a young bureaucratic actor. And it is also an actor where member states still have the final say. NATO has turned to the Commission even for discussion points that were

⁹ Interview with French official, 15 March 2017; Interview with EDA official, March 2017 & August 2018.

¹⁰ Interview with EEAS official, 17 August 2018.

not under its responsibility (e.g. protecting critical infrastructure). And the Commission is not really willing to share what its competencies are. Hybrid threats are a case in point.

Conclusion

Organizational overlap creates institutional configurations where member states do not face one but two sets of bureaucratic actors. While these actors can be kept on a short leash, the creation of informal channels is unavoidable. Organizational overlap can even empower international bureaucratic actors. Consultation among staff has become easier but it is not easy: joint cooperation is not possible, instead EU and NATO staff have to orchestrate parallel and coordinated action. But this inter-organizational bureaucratic cooperation does not lift all actors equally. As we have seen with the EU-NATO overlap, some bureaucratic actors have taken a crisis situation as an opportunity to present themselves as the appropriate bureaucratic counterpart to the other IO's staff. EU bureaucrats in the security field now have to interact more and more with European Commission staff, empowered by its own strategies and by its relationships with NATO within the cooperative framework.

However, this empowerment remains confined to coordination activities and has not managed to trickle up to the formal political level (yet). Security policy is a sensitive portfolio for states and bureaucratic innovativeness and entrepreneurship has its limits. While the joint declaration had the “potential for a sea change”¹¹, NATO officials claim that “not much progress”¹² has happened and EEAS officials have observed that “at least half of this is paper exercise”¹³. Classified NATO documents (approx. 90%) cannot be shared with EU member states that do not have a security agreement with NATO. Cyprus is the only EU member states which does not have such an agreement. Turkey does not move a finger and instead slows down implementation where it can.

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¹¹ Interview with NATO official #2, 30 March 2017.

¹² Interview with NATO official #4, 13 July 2017.

¹³ Interview with EEAS official, 17 August 2018.

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