

Inter-organisational relations as a factor shaping the EU's external identity

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1. Introduction: A gap in the understanding of relations between organisations

Among the EU research community, the general consensus of opinion is that the Union is an actor in international relations, and that it wields some kind of power over its member states, in some cases even over outsiders, at least in its near abroad, be that power structural (Rynning 2003) or normative (Manners 2002). What is debated, however, is the nature of the Union's identity. Typically, the debate often centres around the EU's external profile being that of a 'civilian power' versus a military one, or something in between.

The question of what kind of identity the EU has is closely linked to another basic question, namely, why the external identity of the Union is what it is, and what are the factors shaping it. What does the external identity of an entity such as the EU actually depend on?

Most often, the EU's external identity is studied as a function of its member states' wishes, or alternatively, as a function of the Union's internal features, of the process of integration, the nature of its institutions and decision-making mechanisms. Yet, external expectations by third states are also a widely acknowledged factor, as is public opinion. These factors can be employed, for example, to explain the limits of possible consensus on the EU's external action, or, as is often the case, to elucidate why something is not happening, the absence of certain features, and the difficulty of certain moves, such as the EU's *not* emerging as a powerful international actor using a single voice.

This paper, however, will turn its attention to other factors shaping that identity, and more specifically, to the role of other international organisations. The scant scholarly interest in this topic to date can be explained by at least three facts. Firstly, the EU is often defined beyond comparison by emphasising its *sui generis* features. For many, in fact, it is akin to heresy to call the EU an 'international organisation'. Since the abandonment of the early attempts at systematic comparative analysis of regional integration in the 1960s, the *sui generis* approach has been predominant. Unfortunately,

however, it is a somewhat unhelpful standpoint: inhibiting the use of comparison as a method, it renders the understanding of the particularities of the EU, including those regarding its interaction with other organisations, more difficult, rather than easier. Even though the Union undoubtedly has state-like capacities and goals, and a territorial dimension that is of greater importance when compared with most organisations of a ‘functional’ nature, it nevertheless seems useful to revert to general literature on international organisations to gauge some of its specificities more clearly.

A second reason for the existence of a gap in conceptual and theoretical analysis of inter-organisational relations is that a lot of work on international organisations gets caught up in the controversies regarding the question of whether international organisations can be considered independent actors in the first place. Thirdly, in the empirical world, international organisations might only be starting to face up to a real need for, and the ensuing problems of, interaction with other organisations.

In this paper, the central claim is that international organisations exist and function in an environment which not only comprises states, but also other organisations. Organisations influence each other and shape each other’s identities and functions; there might be competition and cooperation between them, but also a conceptual and methodological innovation exchange. These phenomena are exemplified in the paper through the relationship between the EU and NATO. In this regard one can perceive a subtle rivalry over tasks and decision-making modes, and ultimately over the degree of power they wield over their respective members.

2. Theoretical underpinnings

2.1 The study of international organisations

Positing relations between organisations requires that organisations are actors, capable of interaction with each other. This cannot always be taken for granted, however. In particular, the idea that they are *independent* actors is contested. In many theories, with

different shades of meaning, there is a tendency to reduce the international organisations to their member states.

Archer (2001: 112-173) defines the now classic approaches to international organisations as the realist approach, the reformist approach and the radical approach. The first would concentrate on the state-organisation relationship; the second sees states as not the only actors and the international system as relying on different institutions, among them organisations; and the third understands institutions as reflecting divisions of peoples, of power, as a reflection of a current unsatisfactory state of affairs or perhaps as vehicles for change.

Of central importance in the literature is the question of why international organisations have been created in the first place. The three approaches would provide different answers, of course. Perhaps predominantly, it is seen that they have been created because of specific needs: as a response to, for instance, problems of incomplete information, transaction costs, and for an improvement in the welfare of their members (Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 699). Basically, it is claimed that international organisations help states to further their interests; they are instruments the states have created for that purpose (*idem*: 703).

Interestingly, partly because of this supposition and partly because of an optimistic view of classical liberalism according to which international organisations are a peaceful solution, a remedy for problems of the system of states, Barnett and Finnemore (1999: 701) note that a critical evaluation of whether the organisations actually succeed in doing what they are supposed to do is often lacking. The organisations, if they were analysed in terms of whether they actually deliver, might fail the test. Similarly, one could argue, organisations could be assumed to be capable of cooperation and division of labour among themselves, in a rational way, but might, on closer inspection, lack that capacity.

On the other hand, international organisations can also be created not for what they do but for what they are: what they represent symbolically (Barnett and Finnemore 1999:

703). Therefore, their existence might also be perpetuated even though they are in reality not corresponding to any claims of utility, even when they do not do anything. For instance, NATO might be seen as existing because it represents a common good – for instance the ‘transatlantic community’ – which should not be endangered (cf. Sjørnsen 2004: 701). Similarly, the successful non-function of the WEU between 1973 and 1983 is, for Jørgensen (2004: 47-48), a striking example of negative “collective intentionality”; there was a strong inter-subjective understanding among the members that the WEU was a “no-go organisation”.¹

Another variation puts it that, besides being created in the interest of the states, international organisations can also be created because of the narrower self-interest of governments, going against the interests of societies within the states. The government would, thus, be a self-interested actor aiming at maximising its own room for manoeuvre. Following the ideas developed by Andrew Moravcsik, for instance, the governments, or executives, of a state may considerably improve their relative position at home *vis-à-vis* other actors in the national political arena, such as parliaments, through international cooperation. This is because the government may elude parliamentary control by referring to the high costs for the country if the parliament rejects the agreement negotiated by the government, taking advantage of the complexity and lack of transparency of the international arena, and of the (even alleged) need for secrecy and dependence on information provided by the government (Koenig-Archibugi 2004: 150, 153).²

However, pursuing the course that international organisations may escape the control of their creators, and advancing the idea that organisations can achieve something that the

¹ Jørgensen adds (*idem*) that the absence of a European defence policy and a European army during the Cold War might have been the result of a very conscious political will to avoid such initiatives, as they might risk a severe de-stabilisation of international relations in the bipolar world.

² Interestingly, this view also embraces some potentially problematic features of international cooperation: for instance, a democratic deficit might be expressly created. The author goes on to formulate conditions on which a particular government is likely to engage in international cooperation, seeing that this willingness depends on the degree of its domestic autonomy: in policy areas where the executive faces particularly tight domestic constraints, the incentive to delegate authority to the international level is strongest; in general, weak executives would be more integrationist (Koenig-Archibugi 2004: 154, 175).

member states cannot, perhaps by virtue of their greater weight or resources, also brings us closer to the theories that explain how the international organisations actually wield power over their constituent member states and how they come to be independent actors.

Onuf (2002: 211) sees that most scholarly work on organisations concentrates on theorising about how institutions matter to states; understanding the ways in which they possibly matter by looking at how they come about, how they come to have the properties they have, and how they come to be used. He points out that realists would actually *fear* that institutions might matter (*idem*: 220). Others *hope* that they do.

As Erskine (2003) remarks, for both neorealists and neoliberal institutionalists, intergovernmental organisations are not agents in their own right as they lack ontological independence (from the states). She sees, however, that institutions in the sense of formal organisations can be considered agents, as they possess the capacity for purposive action and the decision-making structures needed for it (Erskine 2003: 3-6).

Barnett and Finnemore make the case that international organisations have power independent of the states that created them. They see this power as emanating from the legitimacy of the rational-legal authority the organisations embody, and from control over technical expertise and information (Barnett and Finnemore 1999: 707). Thus, this source of power would no longer really belong to the governments (even though they might claim so), but to the organisations themselves. Moreover, the organisations have their own agendas when using this power (*idem*: 704-705). More than only facilitating cooperation among states, they actually create actors, specify responsibilities and authority among them, and define the tasks of these actors; they exercise power in that they constitute and construct the social world (*idem*: 700). They fix meanings, create categories, articulate and diffuse norms, and justify their interventions in member states on these grounds (*idem*: 710, 712). In some cases, organisations might even radically shape their member states. For example, one of the functions of NATO expansion would be to inculcate “modern” values and norms into the Eastern European countries and their

militaries (*idem*: 714). Indeed, even the (Waltzian) homogeneity of states could be institutionally reproduced (Onuf 2002: 221).

If, then, organisations shape states, one might also argue that organisations shape each other, perhaps even beyond the states' influence, on their own. This raises the question of how they actually accomplish this.

A first prerequisite for mutual shaping is interaction between organisations. There are a couple of reasons why there is, in fact, growing interaction between different international organisations: the increase in their number and in the overlap between their functions and their membership. If international organisations were initially created as separate entities, each with a specific function and, even on a limited regional basis, comprising states from a certain geographical region, the increase in the number of international organisations has to some extent become over-expanded, as exemplified by the Baltic Sea region in the 1990s where numerous new international organisations with largely similar tasks were created. Further, the internal growth of the tasks of the organisations and enlargement to new members has led to increasing overlap, and therefore to a greater need to coordinate and perhaps cooperate. This has been visible notably in the tendency of many of them to redefine their tasks after the end of the Cold War. There was a rush towards what were deemed necessary but also legitimate and easily acceptable new tasks: crisis management, and the spread of democracy. Notably, the WEU, NATO and the EU have been approaching the same field, crisis management by both military and civilian means.

Yet, this interaction does not necessarily run smoothly. Coordination of the work of similar and overlapping organisations has been shown to be difficult in practice, as has cooperation between organisations. There seems to be little theorising on this. Yet, some answers could include: organisations have not been created with that purpose in mind in the first place; they lack, in a way, explicit "connecting pieces", and are not sufficiently similar to facilitate the location of functional equivalents within them. They might not be prepared to cooperate, either: there might be competition, entailing their having self-

interest in their own preservation and seeking new tasks to legitimise themselves; they are not prepared to relinquish their functions.

2.2 The EU as an actor

Literature on the reciprocal influence between an organisation and its members is well-developed; we see how the members influence the organisation, and how the organisation and interaction within it shapes the members' preferences and even their identity, as well as influencing their capabilities.

The above approaches to international organisations apply to the EU as well. Jørgensen maps different approaches in the analysis of the relationship between states and system: the second image approaches, which confer privilege to influence from states to institutions, the second image reversed approaches that look at the impact on domestic structures and institutions ('Europeanisation', 'socialisation'³); and finally, the constitutive approaches in which one studies how social structures, internal and external, constitute an actor like the EU with certain identities and interests, the recognition by other actors, and the consequences for the interests and identities of member states, for their interest formation (Jørgensen 2004: 40-44).

There is also a growing literature on the EU as a global actor, on its nature as an actor (civilian, military), on the restrictions to its action (by the member states, or by third countries that might insist on using the bilateral level with EU members discarding the EU's 'corporate' international form). White (2004) sees that there are two dominating approaches in the analysis of the EU's international role. Firstly, there is "the EU as an actor" approach which concentrates on the EU's impact on world politics, focuses on outcomes and sees the EU as a single actor. A second approach is one in which actor behaviour is explained as a function of the international institutions or other structures in which they are located. Here, the emphasis would be more on decision-making, the EU

³ Implying in practice, for instance, that one would be looking at member states' ministries and embassies, too, to reach a comprehensive understanding of EFP.

institutions' agendas and capabilities, and different policy processes, examining the way in which member states adapt their behaviour (White 2004: 16-19).

The EU seems to function equally well as an agent and a structure – both influencing and being influenced in international relations. However, its international actorness is uneven, varying in different policy sectors due to the various legal bases and competences as well as different decision-making mechanisms. There is quite a clear common external trade policy, but it has been questioned whether it makes sense to speak about EU foreign policy, or European foreign policy (cf. Carlsnaes, Sjursen and White). Whether or not the EU can be said to have a foreign policy leads us then to ask whether this policy should be analysed by novel tools or by using old foreign policy analysis tools (Jørgensen 2004). Adopting the standpoint that the EU is *sui generis* a unique type of international actor, White argues that its foreign policy, when analysed, should comprise both the economic and political activities of the Union as well as those of the member states (White 2004: 16).

Quite obviously, the EU is a foreign political actor. The scope of the foreign political activities of the Union equals or exceeds that of any single national policy, including the United States (White 2004: 15). One could even ask whether member states still have any foreign policies left. Jørgensen (2004: 46) argues that the foreign policy traditions of most EU member states have been undermined in the past decades; their spatial reach, substantial volume and instruments for conducting foreign policy have been significantly reduced, and a range of instruments has been transferred to the EU toolbox.

The states themselves would resist this interpretation, and cherish the idea of their own foreign policies. So would outsiders, when it is in their interests. Even though international organisations, and notably the EU, are independent actors, another question is whether they are treated as such, and allowed to be such by other actors. States, inside and outside alike, might in fact consider it to be in their interests purposively to discard there being any corporate identity or entity (since it might be too powerful for them).

One concrete manifestation of the transfer of tools and competences to the EU is the idea of the EU replacing its member states in international organisations – joint representation, in effect. This has met with mixed reactions. The possibilities of the EU's common representation in other international organisations, like the possibility of a single seat for the EU in the UN Security Council, have been pondered for a long time.⁴ Moreover, the discourse is not limited to the UN; discussions are also ongoing on the IMF, for example; it is a generally held view that a pooled European presence would increase Europe's influence (see Frieden 2004).

Another question is whether the Union is a *unique* actor somehow. Karen E. Smith (2003)⁵, in aiming to conceptualise the EU's external identity, identifies five foreign political objectives of the Union (promotion of regional cooperation; promotion of human rights; promotion of democracy and good governance; prevention of violent conflict; the fight against international crime), and asks whether there is an internal reason for the EU to pursue these. The answer is that it is effectively the member states that provide the impetus. In Smith's view, the Union is unique not so much in what it does but in how it does it.⁶

The EU Security Strategy of 2003⁷ gives indications of the Union's willingness to profile itself if not as unique, then at least as an actor with a pronounced character of its own, and one that speaks for effective multilateralism. The strategy underlines the importance of commonly agreed norms and institutions, and preparedness to take action against such actors that break the norms or insist on being 'outlaws'. It also acknowledges the need to work in cooperation with partners: groups of states, states, global, regional and functional organisations.

⁴ Note here also the steps towards an increasing use of one voice, that of the High Representative of the CFSP and eventually of the EU Minister for Foreign Affairs, in the Draft Constitutional Treaty.

⁵ Smith's central research questions include: how unique an international actor it is; how important its objectives are, and how effective an international actor it is.

⁶ One might claim that deciding to approach the EU as an international actor by definition reduces its uniqueness.

⁷ A Secure Europe in A Better World. European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003.

This, again, invites an analysis of how this partnership and interaction works in practice. One could see that there is already a mutual shaping process going on. Organisations are affected by other organisations, not least by their mere existence and ideas about what they might be doing, or should do (division of labour). Increasingly, they have to take each other into consideration.

One concrete way in which other organisations influence the EU's actorness has been identified by Frieden (2004), who gives an example of the extent to which they provide incentives or possibilities for the EU to act as a unit. The member states' considerations and calculations as to their possible pooling of international representation are seen to depend also on the characteristics of the organisation within which such pooling would take place. Whether or not the member countries are likely to agree on a common representation depends on the distribution of preferences, both inside and outside the EU, as well as on the voting rules. Thus, the conditions created by other organisations influence the willingness to proceed to joint EU representation (Frieden 2004).

Interesting further examples of inter-organisational relations could include the EU and the UN, and notably the choice between autonomous crisis management capacity, unrestricted by other actors, and the need for a UN mandate or for a clear expression of the recognition of the fundamental importance of the organisation for the EU. The EU's cooperation with subregional organisations in the Baltic Sea region, in the framework of the "Northern dimension" of the EU, could be a second example, and the relations between the EU and the African Union a third.

This paper tackles these questions through the example of the EU-NATO relationship. Important for the analysis of this relationship are the differences and similarities between the organisations. It would seem that the two have been growing increasingly similar in many respects. Certainly, basic differences remain: NATO is not as much of a structure as the EU; its functional domain is limited and it has no supranational power or possibility of sanctioning its members. At the same time, they share similar goals. Here, one should be aware of the fact that their own self-projection may not correspond to what

they do in reality. Organisations may promulgate a specific view of themselves; it is in their best interests to have, for instance, tasks that are perceived as legitimate. As an example, NATO seems to be pursuing the goal of democratisation. Sjursen (2004: 689) points out that there is a growing literature on NATO, not only as a form of collective security organisation but as a form of community based on liberal democratic values. Yet, she argues that NATO is not necessarily a democratic community.⁸ It has its own need to present its purposes and forge a basis of legitimacy for itself. For Sjursen, the fundamental goal of NATO remains security, while enlargement, too, has served the overall strategic and political interests – more than any goal of democratisation (*idem*: 693, 696).

The images the organisations may want to convey might, thus, not be empirically accurate. However, it is clear that both the EU and NATO have been looking for new tasks, and for a new identity, the EU opening itself to a military dimension, NATO becoming (partly) more of a multi-functional organisation. The extent to which this development is a result of their growing interaction and their increasing “contact surface” is a question that this paper aims to address.

3. Inter-organisational relations in practice: The EU and NATO

3.1 From no relations to a cooperation agreement

For a long time, there were no direct links between the EU and NATO – as a matter of fact, contacts between officials of the two organisations were forbidden. Still, one could say that NATO was a central background factor, part of the context in which the EU (or the EEC) grew. It can even be seen as a necessary condition for the EU to have proceeded – in realms other than defence. As Andréani et al. put it, with the commitment of the United States to the defence of Europe, and with NATO providing a ‘security umbrella’,

⁸ Sjursen sees that NATO itself does not necessarily have a democratic identity: there is no direct legitimacy in it, no democratic mandate nor a democratic structure of decision-making such as majority voting, and the organisation is inconsistent as to the importance of its members being democratic (Sjursen 2004: 694-695).

the EC could develop as a peaceful entity, focused on economic and political goals; it was at the same time spared the more demanding and divisive dilemmas which defence would have entailed. For these authors, there was a negative side to this, too: developing its identity as a “civilian power” had negative effects on the European mindset: it narrowed strategic horizons, weakened the sense of responsibility, and resulted in the lack of experience that is now experienced with regard to foreign policy as power politics or the use of force (Andréani et al. 2001: 17-19).

After the end of the Cold War, the EU, the WEU and NATO alike looked for new tasks. The EU and NATO approached the same field of activities from two different directions: both were now interested in crisis management, by both military and civilian means. For the EU, the capacities for such tasks were to come from the WEU. The latter, in turn, defined the Petersberg Tasks in 1992 as its new field of activity, a field in which it would lean on NATO capabilities. A merger of the EU and the WEU had been discussed at least since 1990. In the Maastricht Treaty of 1991, the WEU was made into an “integral part of the development of the Union”, and in 1997, the crisis management tasks were transferred to the EU as a first concrete step. The WEU received a dual identity in that it was also a “European pillar” of NATO. Since the decision at the end of 2000 that the WEU had fulfilled its purpose,⁹ direct relations between the EU and NATO had to be organised.

Negotiations for direct relations with NATO had been conducted since 2000, leading, after several complications, to a cooperation agreement (“Berlin +”) at the end of 2002.

The declaration of December 2002 of the principles that govern EU and NATO relations¹⁰ confirm on paper the equality of the two organisations. They are as follows: partnership, ensuring that the crisis management activities of the two organisations are mutually reinforcing, while recognising that the organisations are of a different nature;

⁹ This is perhaps a rare case among international organisations. Yet, the WEU did not disappear completely, as the Parliamentary Assembly has remained, as well as the Brussels Treaty itself.

effective mutual consultation, dialogue, cooperation and transparency; equality and due regard for the decision-making autonomy and interests of both; respecting the interests of the member countries of both organisations; respect for the principles of the UN charter and coherent, transparent and mutually reinforcing development of military capability requirements common to the two organisations. To this end, the EU ensures the fullest possible involvement of non-EU European (!) members of NATO within ESDP, while NATO supports ESDP, and gives the EU assured access to NATO's planning capabilities.

However, different images of the relationship emerge from different documents. The EU treaties, including the draft Constitutional Treaty, strongly reflect NATO's traditional position and role as Europe's only real defence organisation: NATO obligations have primacy over any EU arrangements (Cf. Ojanen 2004, 35-36). But when looking at the European Security Strategy, even though NATO is praised as an "important expression" of the transatlantic relationship, more concretely, the document mentions a mere "strategic partnership between the two organisations in crisis management". Cooperation and talk of avoidance of duplication and possible division of labour seem to some degree to be a smokescreen for competition.

3.2 A complex relationship

Complementarity, avoidance of overlap and cooperation are in a sense the official mantras of the EU-NATO relationship. They can be seen as wishful thinking, but they also find a basis in deep-seated views on the respective roles and domains of the two organisations. Analysts may be bound by conceptions stemming from their theories, notably those that claim that integration will not proceed to the realm of security and defence policy at all, or by conventional calculations pointing to NATO as a more effective or more cost-effective defence organisation.

¹⁰ European Union – NATO declaration on ESDP, Brussels, 16 December 2002. Reprinted in 'From Laeken to Copenhagen. European defence: core documents'. Volume III. Compiled by Jean-Yves Haine.

These ideas are magnified when NATO is viewed through, as it were, the shortcomings of the EU – which NATO in this instance supposedly has no part of. When the EU’s possibilities of developing a military capability or a strategic culture are analysed, it is often claimed that it is not capable of creating a strategic culture because of its nature. As Rynning (2003) puts it, in order for it to become capable of military action, it would need to give up the goal of EU defence policy, and delegate it to smaller, flexible coalitions outside the EU framework. In his view, this would also help the EU focus on its “benevolent, liberal foreign and security policy, and shelter the construction from the bruising world of defence” (Rynning 2003: 493).¹¹ The EU’s decision-making compromises are suited to the process and culture of negotiation but not designed to optimise European executive authority; the Union, accordingly, can exercise structural but not coercive power. Coercive power demands the executive authority to make decisions and command resources, so the EU paradigm of multilevel, complex governance, centralising power in foreign policy matters, is not conducive to that. Thus, the EU would need to be ‘modern’, like NATO, not ‘postmodern’ (*idem*: 487, 488).

Such analyses may be implicitly saying that NATO does possess the features that the EU lacks. NATO may be “modern”, but does it centralise power in foreign policy? Or does it possess, for instance, the capacities for intelligence-gathering and analysis that the EU lacks (Rynning 2003: 489)? NATO should not be immune to scrutiny as to whether it actually does what it is supposed to do (see Barrett and Finnemore 1999). Is NATO actually working as well as presumed, and does it serve the needs of its member states?

Schake (2001) argues that the adequateness and sustainability of NATO’s practices might be exaggerated. Sjursen (2004) points out that the Europeans might also change their calculations on its cost-effectiveness, that is, its ability to ensure security functions at a lower cost than other organisations or than member states on their own (Sjursen 2004: 701). She points out that they have certain expectations of NATO, notably about its

Chaillot Papers n. 57, February 2003. Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies. (Pp. 178-179.)

¹¹ Cf. Jørgensen’s point on the Cold War above.

multilateral nature, which might not be fulfilled. The United States' break with the principles of multilateralism would challenge the value consensus through emphasising "coalitions of the willing" and the idea that "the mission defines the coalition", moving away from the indivisibility of security (*idem*: 702). Thus, NATO might not be truly multilateral.¹² Besides, it has no possibility of sanctioning the norm-breaker (*idem*: 699-700). Insofar as these features might not characterise NATO, membership might not be that attractive either. Yet, as Sjursen remarks, the persistence of NATO might be linked not to its usefulness but to a sense of common history, its being taken for granted as a 'common good', as well as to indebtedness and loyalty (*idem*: 701-703).¹³

From these premises, cooperation between the two organisations becomes an interesting object of analysis. Should there be specialisation of roles and division of labour in keeping with the best abilities of both organisations? Specialising too much may make organisations less responsive, less flexible, and actually decrease their capacity for cooperation (cf. Howorth 2003: 234). Larrabee (2004) explains why a division of labour between the EU and NATO (in the sense of assigning peacekeeping and stability for Europe, and high-intensity combat operations for the United States) is not a good idea: it would leave Europe dependent on the United States for global security, and reduce Europe's ability to influence US policy and global events; it would also remove the incentive for Europe to develop deployable forces capable of conducting high-intensity combat operations beyond Europe, thus perpetuating the current capability gap (Larrabee 2004: 68-69).

However, what is at stake is the EU's autonomy, established as a goal – and difficult to accept for NATO, which is trying to secure its own position and self-interest. Yet prestige is also at stake here. Neither organisation would like to give up areas of activity, and

¹² Here, multilateralism would equal indivisibility of threats and the expectation not to discriminate between aggressions on a case-by-case basis; this, in turn, entails an acceptance of costs for individual states that might be far higher than the immediate gains (= diffuse reciprocity).

¹³ Equally, one should ask whether the EU is able to use its famously wide array of instruments at all or in any efficient way.

functions, let alone decision-making rights. Competition might be most evident in the case of planning.¹⁴

Difficulties are magnified by the fact that the two organisations are very different from each other. In essence, the EU is more capable of “deepening”, of reform and change, partly thanks to its supranational features, than NATO (for one, because of the negative attitude towards supranationalism of its largest member state). NATO is only a military alliance, with no aspirations towards common policies in other fields. Moreover, the two can only begin to understand each others’ functioning: the role of the Commission and other supranational features of the EU are alien to NATO, while NATO’s routines in information security, for instance, might be foreign to the EU.

The results of close cooperation might also be surprising. It has been generally thought that NATO would have, even naturally, the upper hand in security and defence policy in relation to the EU. Intensive cooperation with NATO might threaten the distinctiveness of the EU external profile, provided this is a result of its internal features such as supranationalism or its peculiar variety of tools. Combined with the member states’ potential wishes to regain control of security policy, NATO’s “superior” practices in decision-making might thus be an inspiration for increasing intergovernmentalism within the EU as well.¹⁵

Yet, it would seem that the reverse might also occur. The EU could, in a sense, also have the upper hand in shaping NATO. Larrabee (2004: 67) gives a concrete expression of this when arguing that the only path to increased European military capability is a greater degree of European defence integration; this is the only way to free up the investment funds needed for the transformation of European forces. Similarly, de Wijk (2004: 71, 76) argues that the survival of NATO depends largely on the development of credible

¹⁴ An autonomous EU planning capacity has been perhaps the single most worrying aspect in the development of an EU defence dimension for NATO and the United States. After several different initiatives, an end result achieved in December 2003 was that the EU would establish a planning cell at SHAPE, NATO’s military headquarters; NATO would establish a liaison team at the EU Military Staff, and the Military Staff would be enlarged with a military planning unit that could be linked to deployable elements of national headquarters for an EU-led operation (de Wijk 2004: 79).

European military capabilities.¹⁶ As increases in national budgets are unlikely, the money can be found only by striving for a common defence: for example by removing defence bureaucracies by developing a centralised defence bureaucracy in support of supranational decision-making. Secondly, role specialisation and commonly owned capabilities are needed. Without supranational authority, a country unwilling to deploy its capabilities could effectively block the entire operation, and a supranational approach is only possible through the EU.

Other concrete instances of NATO following the example of the EU might include the realisation, before the Prague Summit, that enlargement was not enough to keep NATO alive: the agenda of the organisation needed to be broadened à la EU. For enlargement to be effective, it needed a new mandate,¹⁷ more capabilities, and a reform of its structures and governance (Serfaty 2004: 86). Such a reform might, in turn, concern decision-making: unanimity having been the rule, the expansion of members and of tasks makes it increasingly cumbersome to reach consensus. This leads to proposals of inserting some form of flexibility, such as constructive abstention, into NATO decision-making – following, again, the example of the EU (Kardaş 2004).¹⁸

Whether or not one thus sees NATO becoming dependent on the organisational capacities and innovations that the EU has created – mainly on its supranational features – one could say that both organisations have been influenced by their shared international environment, which has been conducive to adding new elements for their definition of tasks, such as crisis management or the emphasis on democracy. At the same time, the two organisations have also shaped each other. NATO has inspired the EU as regards the new committee structure for the handling of military crisis management, and its standards aimed at facilitating military cooperation. The EU, in turn, may have spurred NATO

¹⁵ See more on such reasoning in Ojanen 2004: 44.

¹⁶ Investments would be needed in particular in software and C4ISTAR (command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance).

¹⁷ Such as waging a global war on a new enemy.

¹⁸ Koenig-Archibugi also mentions the work by Igor Leshukov, discussing lessons derived from the EU to the UN Security Council. One could add, as perhaps an even clearer example of innovation exchange, the discussions (that did not lead to measures taken, however) at the Nordic Council of Ministers on introducing a “unanimity minus one” type of decision-making system, in the 1990s.

towards the decision on the NRF (NATO Response Force) through its own plans for rapid reaction capability – which NATO had to beat somehow.

All in all, the relationship can be seen as a question of organisational innovation-spreading. Interestingly, even innovations that are not operational may spread. One could say that the EU has not in practice reached the goal of, for instance, majority decision-making in security policy, and that in reality, member states are provided with good possibilities of blocking a decision that is not to their liking. Yet, the mere possibility or option seems sufficient reason for others to consider following suit. Similarly, the image of NATO ‘spreading democracy’ might encourage others to adopt such a goal.

4. Conclusion: Who shapes who?

Inter-organisational relations is a new and relatively undertheorised field in international relations studies. The reasons for this include the persistence of the debate on the actor capacity of international organisations, and the fact that it is only during the past decade or two that the increase in the number of organisations and the spread of their functions and memberships have brought them into increasing, and unavoidable, contacts with each other. There might be a tendency for the organisations to try to “cover” the international arena, dividing it among themselves, and competing over it.

Thus, inter-organisational relations matter. The example of EU-NATO relations provides several concrete examples of a mutual shaping process between the organisations. One could claim that the EU would not quite be the international actor it is without the interaction with NATO. NATO has been shaping the EU by providing it with an example of organising and handling military matters, as well as with concrete standards aimed at making international military cooperation possible in the first place. NATO might also encourage military thinking and increased investment in defence, including, perhaps, the use of military force. Yet, the EU has also been shaping NATO. Even considerations of reform in decision-making have been presented in discussion over NATO’s future, again

taking as a point of reference the EU's (presumed) practices. In the end, when asking who is at the cutting edge of organisational innovations, the answer seems to be the EU – even though it was seen to be the underdog in the realm of security and defence, some would now say that the EU's efforts in defence policy are crucially important for the continued survival of NATO.

In conclusion, one might argue that the fate of any given organisation is not dependent only on what its member states think, nor on what its internal functioning or structures allow, but also on the room or space or role left (or even assigned) to it in the international arena by other organisations. Indeed, as Barnett and Finnemore (1999: 74, footnote 19) note, organisations actually create other organisations – to the extent that most international organisations nowadays are created by other international organisations. The problems that organisations run into today – division of labour, assignment of duties and rights – stem to a considerable degree from characteristics of the organisations themselves, such as the difficulty in not being omnipotent, and the unstructured nature of their relations with each other: the ambiguity of the question of authority and hierarchy between organisations, or of authority above them.

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