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The Role of Expertise in the Development of European Defence Capabilities

Antonio Calcara¹

Abstract

European defence- industrial cooperation is characterised by complex inter-organisational dynamics between the EU and NATO. While academic literature has largely focused on the lack of formal cooperation between the two organizations, in the field of capabilities-development there are continuous interactions between the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the NATO Allied Command Transformation (ACT). However, the everyday formal and informal interactions among experts that work in and collaborate with the EDA and ACT remain to be studied systematically. In this article, I highlight how the relationship between the two staff is producing two main effects: on the one hand, informal cooperation is facilitating a more efficient division of labour in their day-to-day activities; on the other hand, exchanges of information and best practices are leading to a convergence in EDA and ACT working methods. However, contrary to the previous literature on EU-NATO institutional isomorphism, in this case the EDA has taken the lead and it is shaping ACT institutional adaptation in this area.

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Introduction

The development of interoperable military capabilities is one of the most debated topics in the inter-institutional EU-NATO relations (Valasek 2011; Giegerich 2012; Mölling 2015, Drent and Zandee 2016). The cutbacks of European defence budgets, as well as the duplication and inefficiencies in equipment procurement, have strongly impacted on the inability of the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) to tackle the most important security challenges of the Union (Menon 2011; Briani 2013). At the same time, in the NATO context, US authorities are discontent about “burden-sharing” of military costs between European and US partners (Traynor 2011). In this evolving landscape, defence-industrial cooperation in Europe is characterised by complex inter-organisational dynamics between the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the NATO's Allied Command Transformation (ACT). These two organisations are in charge to manage, respectively, Pooling and Sharing (P&S) and Smart Defence (SD), two different capabilities-development initiatives that overlap geographically and functionally (Faleg and Giovannini 2012).

¹ Ph.D. Candidate, LUISS “Guido Carli” - Department of Political Science, Viale Romania 32, 00197 IT Roma, Italy. Email: acalcara@luiss.it

Academic literature has largely focused on how EU-NATO cooperation has been hampered by inter-organizational “turf-battles” and by the political “quagmire” produced by the diplomatic frictions between Turkey and Cyprus (Missiroli 2002; Howorth 2003; Cornish 2006; Ojanen 2006; Hoffmann 2013). Recently, some scholars have shown how EU-NATO “informal” cooperation practices are trying to overcome formal poor cooperative arrangements between the two organizations (Graeger and Haugevik 2011; Graeger 2014; Gebhardt and Smith 2015; Graeger 2016).

However, there are not, to my knowledge, systematic analyses of the recent developments related to military capabilities. This is certainly surprising, given that this issue is a priority for both organizations. The everyday formal and informal interactions of the experts that work in and collaborate with the EDA and ACT remain to be studied systematically. This article aims to answer the following research questions: What is the relation, on a formal and informal level, between EDA and ACT staff? What are the effects of this interaction on EDA and ACT day-to-day activities and working methods?

To preview the conclusion, this article shows that there is a growing informal interaction between the EDA and the ACT staff. This relationship is producing two parallel effects. On the one hand, informal relationships are helping EDA and ACT to develop a more efficient “division of labour” in the development of military capabilities. On the other hand, exchanges of information and good practices between the two organizations are leading to a convergence in EDA and ACT working methods. However, while the literature has strongly emphasized the “isomorphic” impact NATO has had on the EU (Juncos 2007; Reynolds 2007), in this case, the EDA has taken the lead and it is shaping ACT institutional adaptation in this area.

The article is organised as follows: first, I will conceptualize EDA-ACT inter-organisational relations, with a particular attention to the role of socialization among experts and how it impacts on security and defence governance dynamics. Second, I will highlight how EDA and ACT have developed two different working methods in their efforts to develop military capabilities. In the third part, I will focus on formal and informal relations between the two organizations, discussing the extent to which inter-organisational dynamics are producing concrete results in defence-industrial cooperation. In the last section, I will show how the EDA is shaping ACT working method and other NATO's recent institutional reforms.

1. Socialization in Inter-Organizational Relations

EU-NATO is one of the most densely institutionalised inter-organizational relations in the world (Koops 2009). NATO and EU defence structures converge in their mandate, tasks, resources and

membership and they overlap in their geographical and functional competences (Biermann 2009; Hoffmann 2009; 2011).² In order to analyse EU-NATO relations, a number of scholars have considered “inter-organizational” dynamics, namely the links, relationships and modes of interaction between two or more international organizations. Those links can be formal (based, for example, on the institutionalization of agreements or joint declarations) or informal (resulting from staff to staff contacts and ad-hoc interactions in the field) (Koops 2012:17-18). The EU-NATO inter-organizational literature has mainly focus on patterns of cooperation and rivalry among the organizations and on the factors that “discourage” or “encourage” cooperation (Albright 1998; Warwick 2005; van Ham 2006; Cornish 2006; Koops 2012). It is natural that there are mechanisms of rivalry between two organizations that occupy a similar political and institutional space. Biermann (2009) highlights that there are “enabling factors” that induce “reluctant organizations” to cooperate. In particular, he focuses on two main elements: first, inter-organizational cooperation is facilitated by resource dependence as the main endogenous motivation inducing organizations to cooperate (Biermann 2009:159). Second, cooperation is not purely motivated by rational cost-benefit considerations. Intangible resources such as reputation, legitimacy and effectiveness of a given organizational culture can have an impact in spurring inter-institutional cooperation (Biermann 2009:160). However, academic literature on EU-NATO relations, so far, has been primarily focused on the formal aspects of this relationship (Howorth 2003, 2013, Cornish 2006, Ojanen 2006, Biermann 2008, Warwick and Koops 2009, Smith 2011, DursunOzkanca and Crossley-Frolick 2012, Hoffmann 2013). Specifically, there are not studies that have specifically tied the study of inter-organizational dynamics to the processes of socialization among experts at the bureaucratic level.

In contrast, the concept of socialization has been largely used in the European foreign policy literature. In particular, a number of scholars have investigated mechanisms of socialization within European institutions in the security and defence sector (Juncos and Reynolds 2006; 2007; Cross 2011; Howorth 2012). One of the key criteria for judging the internal working of EU institutions is the extent of socialization which takes place. Juncos and Reynolds (2006:3) define socializations as “adaptation of certain rules of behaviour, ways of doing things, stemming from interaction with members of the same group”. In general, socialization research usually concentrates on (1) group features (e.g., dense and regular interactions) that socialize members and novices, and on (2) the features of the novices which make socialization more likely (social background, academic training, professional experience, social distance vis-a`-vis the group) (Bayers 2010: 910-911; Cross

2 Since 2009 NATO has 28 Member States, including 22 EU countries, Albania, Canada, the US, Iceland, Norway and Turkey. The EU has six non NATO-members: Austria, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden. Austria, Finland, Ireland, Malta and Sweden belong to NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP). Only one EU Member State (Cyprus) has no formal links with NATO.

2011:28-29).

In order to structure my empirical analysis on EDA and ACT relations, I will focus on three scope conditions to “capture” potential socialization dynamics:

- 1) *Informal Venues*. EU-NATO relations are characterized not only by a series of formal mechanisms for cooperation, but also by relations developed in informal venues. Previous research shown that the creation of informal channels of communications is a crucial aspect in the relations between EU and NATO (Biermann 2009:161; Graeger 2016:484).
- 2) *Interpersonal relationship and professional background*: Experts that work in the same policy area and that have the same educational and professional background are more inclined to socialize. Checkel (2007: 12), for instance, highlights how “agents with extensive previous professional experiences in regional or international policy-making settings are more likely to internalize supranational role conceptions”. Other studies have shown how good interpersonal relationship in the EU-NATO framework facilitate the creation of informal practices of cooperation (Graeger 2016:484).
- 3) *Staff-To-Staff contacts*. Meeting frequency, regular intense contacts and formal and informal rules of behaviour have been considered as key drivers for socialization (Cross 2011:28).

Academic literature has previously highlighted two direct effects of socialization on different levels of analysis: the individual level (élite socializations) and the organizational level (changes in organizations' bureaucracies) (Smith 2004:746). The interaction between the individual and the organisation has remained a critical stand in organisational learning studies. Crossan et al (1999) detail how the transmission process moves from the individual to groups and organisations. Once individuals have internalized a number of insights and ideas, they are embedded in the organization and made routines. Case studies from the EU context suggest that relatively homogeneous and frequently interacting group of professionals are more likely to accentuate problem-solving perspectives among their organizations (Zito and Shout 2009:1107; Bossong 2013:522). Specifically, security and defence practitioners interact in non-hierarchical forms and are empowered to use new forms of governance and working methods to generate innovative and effective solutions for complex policy problems (Sabel and Zeitlin 2010:297-324; Ekengren 2015). The concept of “institutional isomorphism” - which describes the homogenisation of institutional structures across organizations that inhabit the same policy field - will be used as a theoretical lens to investigate if and how informal practices are shaping institutional changes (Di Maggio and Powell 1983:148).

The three isomorphic processes laid out by DiMaggio and Powell (1983:150) provide three testable propositions:

- 1) *Coercive isomorphism*: NATO – for its legacy as the primary security institution in Europe - pressures EDA to imitate its organisational structures in an effort to secure political influence and legitimacy.
- 2) *Mimetic isomorphism*: Institutions may imitate the institutional features of functionally-related organisations legitimated by their success. As emphasized by DiMaggio and Powell (1983:151), “when goals are ambiguous, or when the environment creates symbolic uncertainty, organizations may model themselves on other organization”. In this case, EDA hypothetical “successes” in managing European defence-industrial cooperation may pressure NATO's adaptation or vice versa.
- 3) *Normative isomorphism*: Policy actors that operate within transgovernmental networks/epistemic communities across the related organisations facilitate institutional imitation. This is due to a sharing of professional norms, identities and personnel turnover (Beckert 2010:156). Even in this case, institutional isomorphism can be led both by NATO and by the CSDP.

2. Methods and Data

It is worthy to note some methodological challenges when trying to apply theory into practice and conduct empirical research on socialisation (Juncos and Reynolds 2006:12). This article is based on a triangulation of different sources. Primary sources such as official declarations, statements, and speeches provided important information about the discourse of EDA–ACT cooperation set by the organisations themselves. Secondary sources were useful for accessing scholarly and political debates on inter-organisational relations and EU-NATO security cooperation. These sources were combined with qualitative, in-depth interviews with EDA and ACT staff and seconded experts. Moreover, in order to have a clearer picture of their work, I made also some semi-structured interviews and informal discussions with representatives of EU/NATO member states' defence ministries.

Finally, some words on the availability of data. The political and military sensitivity of the defence domain made it difficult to easily access to the EDA and ACT documents. This was particularly difficult in the NATO context, whose most documents are kept secret and not available to researchers. In order to enrich my knowledge on ACT, I relied also on several informal conversation with “National Liaison Representatives” to NATO.

3. ACT and EDA: Same Goal, Two Different Working Methods

Budgetary pressures have strongly impacted on EU defence and NATO performances. Several studies have analysed data on European member states' defence budgets, highlighting how they are experiencing a significant contraction, which has lasted since the end of the Cold War (Giegerich 2010; Schilde 2017:3). This trend is further aggravated by the amount of equipment duplication among platforms and weapon systems currently in use and in production across Europe (Briani 2013).

In order to reverse this trend, EU member states have promoted a shift in their approach to defence cooperation: in 2010 the German and Swedish defence ministers launched the “Pooling and Sharing” (P&S) initiative at their informal summit in Ghent (Belgium). P&S initiative covers the full spectrum of capability-development, from the identification and harmonisation of military requirements to through-life management and support (including certification and standardisation) (Mölling 2015:10). In the NATO context, the 2012 Summit in Chicago highlighted the importance of military development and interoperability through a specific “Smart Defence” (SD) initiative. The SD initiative promotes and supports Allies to identify and pursue multinational capability development opportunities to address both member states and NATO's military priorities (Giegerich 2012:72-73). ACT plays an important role in this regard, because the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT) has been appointed as NATO Secretary General's Special Envoy for SD. The two capabilities-development initiatives overlap geographically and functionally. The EDA and the ACT play a similar role and have very similar goals. The two organizations, however, are characterised by two very different approaches to tackle the problem of European and NATO's defence capabilities shortfalls.

3.1. *The European Defence Agency*

The EDA, in spite of its strong intergovernmental nature³, is developing a working method that is based on two main principles: first, a constant involvement of governmental and non-governmental experts; second, a system based on flexibility and transparency, especially with regard the relationships with member states and defence industries.

The EDA has a unique organizational structure in the European institutional framework. It organises its Research & Technology (R&T) priorities in different Capability Technology Areas (CapTechs), which are networking fora for experts from governments, industry, small and medium enterprises

³ The Agency is governed by a Steering Board that meets at the ministerial level (the only case in the European institutional framework) through the member states ministries of defence.

(SME) and academia, moderated by the EDA staff. These experts have a fundamental role in the daily work of the Agency. Indeed, if - on the one hand - they report directly to the Steering Board directives, on the other hand, their daily work and their expertise are crucial on a “bottom-up” level (Ekengren 2015:274).

The EDA has deliberately chosen to work directly with national authorities, and not through permanent representations in Brussels (as NATO does). The working groups of national experts constitute the basis for the EDA's activities: they enable it to reach a higher technicality than it would get with only administrative personnel and they are able to ensure the member states' commitment to cooperative programmes under the umbrella of the EDA. Despite governmental experts remain anchored to national strategic guidelines, once the state has adhered to a specific project; they - thanks to their technical competences and to their knowledge of agency's internal discussions - can get a very large room of manoeuvre in the development and implementation of these projects (Calcara 2016:8-9). In addition, EDA recognizes and institutionalizes the important role that industry has in the definition of its executive strategy. They have an autonomous capacity to influence Agency's activities, especially in the initial phase of the development of EU cooperative programmes. For instance, the programme on Force Protection – one of the flagship project of the Agency - had no apparent linkage to any identified capability shortfalls and “the project came directly from Witney's office, lacking any interface with capabilities” (Oikonomou 2015:51). According to a senior EDA official, the European defence industries have been the EDA's chief partner when it has come to develop codes of conduct and other forms of ‘soft’ regulation (Hammarström 2008:91-92).

In order to improve European defence procurement transparency, the EDA has established a Collaborative Database (CODABA), with the aim to provide an overview of all existing national collaborative opportunities”.⁴ Furthermore, under of the “Code of Conduct of Defence Procurement”⁵, the EDA has the task of monitoring contracts to ensure to the suppliers fair and equal treatment, mutual transparency and accountability. These data are published in the “Procurement Gateway” of the EDA website.⁶ In this way, European governments and industries can immediately have a clear vision of the existing opportunities in another European country without any territorial discrimination.

The Agency's work has produced mixed results: the projects in which EDA is or has been involved in are too small to influence the general mind-set or the structural determinants of the defence

4 EDA website: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/what-we-do/activities/activities-search/collaborative-database> last access: 15/05/2017

5 EDA (2005): “The Code of Conduct on Defence Procurement of the EU Member States Participating in the European Defence Agency”, <https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/documents/CoC.pdf> last access: 15/07/2017

6 EDA website: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/procurement-gateway> last access: 15/05/2017

sector. With a few exceptions, such as Air-to-Air Refuelling (AAR) or Medical Support, these projects tackle technical and regulatory issues, instead of concrete P&S of capabilities and large-scale projects (Mölling 2015:6). In the R&T domain, there have been more positive signs. Experts that work together into Captechs structures have started to develop joint working methods, capable of generating processes of spill over into national defence planning arrangements. As confirmed by a national defence official: “*We have daily interactions with our peers that work for the agency, and we are, of course, inspired by their initiatives in European defence research*”.⁷ The EDA has now passed the 185 mark in terms of projects facilitated and managed since its inception, representing almost €1 billion in R&T investment by the contributing Member States.⁸

Research cooperation at the EU level is influencing national R&T priorities. EDA's work in RPAS (Remotely Piloted Air System) and FP (Force Protection) is used by individual member states as a starting point for future national developments (Dahlmann, Dickow and Tisserant 2015:102-103). Italy's Air Forces - thanks to the activities implemented at the Amendola Air Base, the headquarter to the RPAS Centre of Excellence - have acquired strong expertise in the sector of RPAS employment in operations.⁹ The Agency is also a central player in the development of remote pilot aircraft UCAV (Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles). The EDA MIDCAS (Mid Air Collision Avoidance System) programme, led by Sweden (with the participation of France, Germany, Italy and Spain) has already completed several steps and it is considered as the basis for a future “Eurodrone”. In the context of UCAV, the agency is contributing to the “Neuron” project demonstrator, led by the French company Dassault. Germany, Greece, Italy, Netherlands, Poland and Spain have already signed an agreement – under the aegis of the Agency - to invest jointly in research into various drone components, including collision avoidance technology and automatic take-off and landing.¹⁰ European countries are using the agency as a platform to develop their research activities in new important technological areas. According to the last EDA report, there has been a significant upward trend regarding the evolution of the R&T portfolio in 2016, thanks to the initiation of new Ad-Hoc projects the current portfolio, under negotiation, includes 25 new projects value of €120 million .¹¹

3.2. *The Allied Command Transformation*

7 Interview with an Italian Defence Ministry Official 21/09/2016

8 EDA Annual Report (2016). Available at <https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-annual-reports/eda-2016-annual-report-final> p.5

9 Italian Defence Ministry website:

http://www.difesa.it/EN/Primo_Piano/Pagine/20140317_IntergovernmentalSummitbetweenItalyandGermany.aspx
last access: 07/06/2016

10 EurActiv website: <http://www.euractiv.com/video/seven-countries-join-forces-build-european-drone-307324>
20/11/2013

11 EDA Annual Report (2016). Available at: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-annual-reports/eda-2016-annual-report-final> p. 26

The Allied Command Transformation (ACT) is one of two military commands of NATO (the other is the ACO Allied Command Operations). Despite its importance in the Atlantic alliance's organizational structure, academic literature on this institution has been relatively scarce and few studies have analysed its role and its main functions.

The ACT was institutionalized at the NATO Summit in Prague in 2002. The Secretary General Lord George Robertson and the US Secretary of Defence Donald Rumsfeld proposed that NATO should be able of promoting interoperability among NATO's military assets (NATO 2015:1).

More specifically, the ACT functions can be divided into three main tasks:

- 1) provide support to operations
- 2) lead NATO's military transformation
- 3) engage, interact and cooperate with partners and other organizations

In the efforts to lead NATO's military transformation, the ACT is concerned with identifying the necessary capabilities for successful future operations. In this case, it works in synergy with the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP), which is a 4-year cycle that aims to harmonize national and Alliance defence planning activities. ACT provides expertise and analytical support, through the Defence Planning Staff Team (DPST), in order to assess those military factors which could impact on the development of the required capabilities.¹² The internal structure of the ATC is composed by four directorates. These comprise three output directorates: Strategic Plans and Policy, Capability Development and Joint Force Trainer and one management directorate, Resource and Management (NATO 2015:27).

Despite its extensive functions, ACT's impact has been very limited. First of all, it was not easy to delineate the activities of the ACT, considering the wide range of assigned domains (ranging from NATO defence planning process to partnerships, from strategic foresight to capability building). One of the official ACT documents is very clear in this regard: "When Allied Command Transformation (ACT) was established in 2003, much effort was expended in articulating the *raison d'être* for what was to relatively often narrowly understood organization and mission" (NATO 2015:1).

For what concerns the capabilities-development domain, the ACT has proved unsuccessful. This is because, as stated in an ACT internal document, "the nations and other stakeholders began to view things from a slightly different perspective" (NATO 2015:1). The uncoordinated cuts of European defence budgets, in fact, do not take into account the requirements of the Alliance, promoted by the NDPP. In particular, the ACT Capability Development Directorate has not been able to develop structural relationships with member states and defence industries. In particular, the ACT has been

12 NATO Website: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_49202.htm last access: 15/05/2017

regarded as overly coercive in its activities. How admitted by Johnstone-Burt, American deputy for capabilities development, about the relationship between ACT and the European NATO member states: "There's a series of negotiations underway at the moment where my team is going around each capital saying, 'All right, Country B, here are your targets ... are you happy to accept those? [Then] we need to come to a compromise".¹³ The imposition of standards for all member countries did not take account national specificities. As indicated in a statement of the Sub-Committee on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation: "One officer even mentioned a "communication" problem with NATO HQ in Brussels, and indicated that people in the International Staff (IS) or in the International Military Staff (IMS) felt that ACT was trying to "impose" solutions, while in reality it was only offering contributions to find solutions which the IS could elaborate for final NAC decisions".¹⁴ Furthermore, the ACT has been perceived by European countries as a substantial US defence ministry propagation within NATO. As expressed in its own website, the relations between the ACT and the Pentagon have always been excellent, as the ACT is the only NATO headquarter in North America.¹⁵ As summarized by Ekengren (2015:279): "NATO's work continued to be based on long-established territorial defence thinking and the dominant role of the US, which implied a top-down approach where central institutions in Brussels adopted directives addressed to member states without much dialogue with national authorities".

Moreover, in defence-industrial relations there have been some tensions between EU and US governments and defence industries, especially for what concerns the lack of technological transfer between US and EU industrial partners (Fiott 2016:29; Simon 2016:418-419). European defence firms perceived that the principles of SD may have a negative impact on their activities. The SD program was actually intended to manage the diminished Allies' military resources and it was not specifically created to develop new defence-industrial capabilities. In addition, the emphasis on "interoperability" favoured the US military products, given that most European armed forces are strongly integrated with US forces or aspired to do so. For this reason, European defence companies have opted for a privileged relationship with EDA (Barrinha 2010; Oikonomou 2015).

4. EDA and ACT: Formal Non-Cooperation

In the context of the 2003 "Berlin Plus" agreements, the NATO-EU Capabilities Group is the main forum to address common capability shortfalls and to ensure the coherence and mutual reinforcement of NATO and EU capability development efforts (Piquer 2010:81). The NATO-EU

13 Breaking Defence Website: <http://breakingdefense.com/2012/12/can-nato-get-its-act-together-alliances-only-us-based-command/> 14/12/2012

14 NATO website: <http://www.nato-pa.int/Default.asp?SHORTCUT=1099> 7-8/12/2016

15 NATO website: <http://www.act.nato.int/who-we-are>

Capabilities Group meets approximately every 4 to 6 weeks alternating between NATO HQ and the Council Justus Lipsius building in Brussels (Sturm 2010:1). Each level of organization is not fixed but it is decided unilaterally by the Military Staffs involved in the Group's meeting (Piquer 2010:81-82). The EU is usually represented by the Permanent Representations' counsellors to the Political-Military Group, the EDA's Strategy and Policy Unit and the Council Secretariat CMDP (Previously Directorate). On the NATO side, meetings are attended by Defence Policy and Planning; the International Military Staff, the Defence Investment Division and defence counsellors and advisors from the missions and capitals (Sturm 2010:2).

In 2004, the accession of Cyprus in the EU caused great problems in the EU-NATO relations. Following the attempted coup d'état of 1974 and the subsequent Turkish invasion, the island has been divided between a Greek-majority South (which is the only government recognized by the international community) and a Turkish-majority North. Although the south of Cyprus joined the EU in 2004, Turkey continues to refuse to recognize the Cyprus' government, leading to a strained relationship between Ankara and Brussels. Hoffmann defined the stalemate situation among Cyprus, Greece and Turkey within the EU and NATO as a technique of “hostage taking”, for which “members of just one of the institutions can use their membership to obstruct the relationship between both institutions, holding them hostage in pursuit of narrow interests” (Hoffmann 2009: 46).

The activities of the EU-NATO Capability Group have been also greatly limited by several individual factors. In particular, Sturm (2010) highlighted a problem of mutual trust between the two staff. Indeed, they do not exchange briefing content prior to the meetings: “the Capability Group is hampered by a growing reticence on the part of the EU to fully engage without participation of all its member states. A common lament on the EU side is that formal EU-NATO frameworks are essentially unbalanced negotiations between a unified and cohesive Alliance and individual EU member states” (Sturm 2010:3). The interactions between EU and NATO staff have not contributed to solving the problems of standardization, interoperability or enhanced capabilities. Rear Admiral Jorgen Berggrav – a former NATO Supreme Allied Command Transformation Representative in Europe, for instance, noted that the “joint meetings have not added much real value to the capability process” (SDA 2008:20).

5. EDA and ACT: Informal Practices

As specified in the previous paragraph, there is no formal agreement between EDA and ACT. However, experts that work in the two organizations have started to cooperate informally on a large number of issues. The most frequent practices - cross-briefings, cross-invitations, staff-to-staff

cooperation and informal exchanges of information on matters of common interest - take place on a regular basis on a number of sites. In this analysis I will consider three main elements:

- 1) Informal Venues
- 2) Interpersonal relationships and professional background
- 3) Staff-to-staff cooperation

5.1 Informal Venues

ACT and EDA staff meet as part of the two organisations' regular and ongoing contacts on topical issues. There is mutual attendance of EDA and NATO staff at each other's conferences, seminars, workshops and meetings. These contacts are particularly intense not only among lower-level officials but also at the top level of the EDA Chief Executive and the Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (SACT).¹⁶ Cross-invitations of the EDA and ACT leaders to ministerial meetings and summits have been hosted regularly by both organisations. Especially since 2009, EDA Chief Executive Alexander Weis and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Transformation General Abrial have had several informal contact, including a visit by Abrial to EDA HQ in mid-2009 and another in November 2011 (Sturm 2010:3).

This aspect is clearly visible in the EDA annual conferences, which are considered as events able to involve the major actors and stakeholders in the European defence and security domain. The ACT has been a regular guest of all the conferences organized by the Agency. In these events, both ACT and EDA staff emphasized the need for more cooperation. Invited to speak in a panel on "Lessons from Defence Cooperation", the former SACT, French Air Force General Jean-Paul Paloméros, declared: "To be very pragmatic, the alternative is clear: either we cooperate by the force of the will, or we will lose our capabilities by default of courage. That is why I'm very supportive of the cooperation between ACT and EDA, getting the best synergy and complementarity and trying to elaborate on the lessons learnt from the past".¹⁷ In the 2012 EDA Annual Conference, both Claude-France Arnould and the SACT Stéphane Abrial assured the audience that the two organisations have gone to extraordinary lengths to make their respective capability initiatives – pooling and sharing and smart defence – compatible. General Abrial noted that "Not only have individual projects been de-conflicted and made fully complementary, but because both initiatives identified similar challenges, they reinforced each other's message of urgency" (EDA Annual Conference 2012).

At the same time, in the context of the annual "NATO Industry Day", a high-level conference with

16 EDA Annual Report (2009). Available at: https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/documents/Annual_Report_2009 last access 15/05/2017

17 NATO website: <http://www.act.nato.int/sact-participates-at-annual-eda-conference-developing-synergy-between-organisations> last access: 15/05/2017

the participation of senior executives from industry-leading companies and national ministries, there is a regular presence of the Agency's staff.¹⁸ Moreover, the NATO Industry Day and the EDA Annual Conference are now organized as two back-to-back events.¹⁹ The attendance of the two staff, as well as of national defence experts and defence industries, have been enhanced by the greater synergy between these two events. Member states' national experts regularly attend both EDA and ACT events. This practice, according to the interviews, is expected to continue in the coming years and to receive some form of institutionalization. Both ACT and EDA staff participate in meetings of the NATO Defence Planning Process (NDPP) and both have been regularly invited together by the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and by the European Parliament Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE).²⁰

Finally, EDA and SACT staff participate on an ongoing basis to many initiatives organized by the security and defence think tanks in Brussels. Particularly relevant, according to the interviews, are the events organized within the framework of the Security and Defence Agenda (SDA). The aim of the SDA is to raise awareness of how EU and NATO policies can complement one another and its activities span from monthly roundtables, reports and discussion papers, international conferences and press-dinners.²¹ The events of the SDA are particularly important because they are also attended by ACT and EDA lower-level officials. As noted by a member of the EDA staff: "The events organized by the Brussels think tanks do not contain any formal elements of the institutional conferences. In these events we can speak clearly about the differences and similarities between our organizations. Often there are also some very frank discussions".²²

5.2. Interpersonal relationships and professional background

One element that was particularly emphasized by all respondents was the common professional background and the mutual respect that each staff member has of the other. Both from the point of view of the institutional representatives and among lower-level experts, they refer to each other as "colleagues". Nina Graeger (2016: 484) has pointed out that "the quality and frequency (of cooperation) usually depend on personal relations". She emphasized, for instance, how relations between EU and NATO have improved thanks to the good interpersonal relations between Mogherini, the High Representative of the EU, and the NATO's Secretary General Stoltenberg.

18 NATO website:<http://www.act.nato.int/industryforum> last access 15/05/2017

19 NATO website:http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/media/speeches/160616_sede.pdf last access 15/05/2017

20 See NATO website: http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/media/speeches/160616_sede.pdf last access: 15/05/2017
EDA website: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/info-hub/press-centre/latest-news/2017/02/20/deputy-chief-executive-addresses-nato-parliamentary-assembly> last access: 15/05/2017

21 SDA website:<http://www.secdef.eu/2011/sda> last access 15/05/2017

22 Interview with an EDA Civil Servant 09/03/2016

Their personal friendship, evolving from their participation in the Party of European Socialist (PES) in the European Parliament, was crucial in this sense. As pointed out by Mogherini (2014 quoted in Graeger 2016: 484): "we know each for a long time, and I personally think that also we can go very well together which is going to be very important for our respective constituencies". The same kind of commitment to cooperate seems visible also in the relations between the current SACT General Mercier and the EDA's Chief Executive Jorge Domecq. As confirmed by an EDA civil servant: "the relations between Mercier and Mercier are excellent. They have a common strategic vision".²³ This factor has been also facilitated by the fact Domecq has a very detailed knowledge of the dynamics (and obstacles) of NATO. Indeed, he worked from 1988-1993 at the Spanish delegation in NATO and from 1996 to 1999 as a director of the Private Office of the NATO Secretary General.²⁴

Graeger highlights, in addition, how NATO and EU defence practitioners have similar professional values and the same type of training and education (Graeger 2016:492). Both staff members share, in fact, two main professional routes. On the one hand, there are those who have pursued a military career that included national military academies and mid-level education at staff colleges and increasingly also NATO-sponsored international schools such as the NDC in Italy and the NATO School Oberammergau (NSO) in Germany. Some European officers also attend US joint military schools (e.g. the National Defence University, the National War College, and the National Staff College) or branch-specific schools (e.g. the US Army War College and the US Naval War College) (Graeger 2016:492). The common culture among the military and the long-standing military ties across both organizations acts as a facilitator factor for socialization (Biermann 2015:34)

On the other hand, there are the civilians. They share a certain set of specific skills and they, often, have studied in the same universities. They usually begin their careers in vocational schools at the college level and then pass to periods of intensive courses in national defence ministries. Among the lower-level experts, in fact, all respondents confirmed that they had previous experience in national ministries, but also in NATO or in the European sphere. The EDA experts, in particular, have had, in general, a past experience in the Atlantic Alliance. To give just one striking example: Peter Round, former Director of the EDA's Capability, Armament & Technology Directorate was a former UK National Liaison Representative to NATO ACT.²⁵ However, in the ACT staff I did not find a similar experience in the European institutions. The NATO staff built a large part of their careers in other Alliance's structures or departments. In contrast, a common professional background is easy to envision among national experts. Each country, generally, has a National Liaison Representative to NATO and a representative for the EU defence policy. It is very common that national officials in NATO shift to EU institutions and vice versa. The detailed knowledge of both multilateral

23 Interview with an EDA Civil Servant 11/03/2016

24 <https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/documents/cv-emb-jorge-domecq-en.pdf>

25 EDA website: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/news/2014-03-17-cv-peter-round.pdf>

framework is, in fact, a common feature of the professional background of all respondents.

5.3. Staff-to-Staff

Both EDA and ACT experts confirm that there are continuous interactions between the two staff. Both also report that continuous interactions provide great opportunities for discussing issues and challenges with other defence experts, in order to address NATO and EU capabilities shortfalls. As stated by an expert from the ATC: "I believe that - despite all the obstacles - the relations between the two staff are characterized by mutual respect and willingness to cooperate. It is certainly not always easy, especially because our contacts are mainly based on informal channels. Personal relationships among some of our members are a key asset".²⁶ They exchange information when they believe that the counterpart should be aware about some developments or when there is a need of synergy between the two organizations. As declared by an EDA civil servant: "When, through the impulse of the member states, we decided to focus on a particular project, it is logical to consult our counterparts. Unfortunately, it is not usual to exchange documents or written information".²⁷ The interaction between the two staff takes place on a regular basis, but more intense contacts coincide with the EDA Annual Conferences or the NATO Industry Day or when there are high-level events. One of the EDA's civil servants declares: "Our contacts are more common when there are periods of strategic redefinition or political discussion between EU and NATO. EDA conferences and ACT events are essential to do so, partly because they are able to gather also national politicians, representatives of the defence ministries and industries".²⁸ EDA and ACT staff share information and experiences with their colleagues who conduct similar scientific-technical tasks and have comparable professional concerns. "We do similar stuffs and we focus on similar initiatives. The mechanism is natural: when two professionals meet, they usually try to learn as much as possible from those who have similar skills" declares a representative of the ACT.²⁹ Other studies have already shown how EU national experts shared their experiences with their colleagues responsible for NATO in the corridors of MoDs and armed forces, who in turn brought the new insights to bear "upwards" in the Alliance's hierarchies (Ekengren 2015:279). Their goal is therefore to promote efficient working methods to involve member states and industries. The exchange of information is based on the mutual awareness of been part of a large professional expert field.

6. Division of Labour and Tangible results

26 Interview with an ACT Representative 15/09/2016

27 Interview with an EDA Civil Servant 09/03/2016

28 Interview with an EDA Civil Servant 11/03/2016

29 Interview with an ACT representative 15/09/2016

The EDA and ACT have developed a practical "division of labour" in military capabilities development, which have already led to tangible results.

EDA- ACT cooperation is based on the following principles:

- Avoid the unnecessary duplication of effort between our organizations,
- Operate without prejudice to the specific character of the defence policy of any ally or member state
- Mutually benefit from the respective strengths of each organization.³⁰

Based on these general principles, the two organizations have identified several areas where the respective staff are working together.

One of the main points of harmonization between the Agency and NATO activities has been armaments standardization. In this domain, the EDA has followed the NATO lead and relied upon the Alliance standards for its work (Webber, Sperling and Smith 2012:166). The EDA does not seek to reinvent the wheel if the Alliance has applicable military standards and concepts that are transferable (DeVore 2015:176-177). For example, in defence material standardisation practices, the EDA advocates the use of NATO's Allied Environmental Conditions and Test Procedures for environmental testing.³¹ Both NATO and EDA have managed a joined-up approach in protecting against CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats) – in which the Agency has focused on biological threats and NATO on chemical ones.³² In this sector, the informal relations and exchanges of information between EDA and ACT have been important. As noted by an EDA's civil servants "in the CBRN area, our relations are very good and are characterized by an honest and effective collaboration".³³ A major factor behind the good relations between EDA and ACT in the CBRN sector is certainly linked to the lessons learned from military operations involving NATO and European armed forces. Indeed, the area of countering improvised explosive devices was the greatest single threat to ISAF personnel and is perceived, both in EU and NATO, as a vital area of cooperation (Michel 2012:263).

The lessons learned from these missions were also an important driving force in the cooperation between EDA and ACT in the helicopter field. The experience in Afghanistan and Libya exposed critical problems in the use of helicopters. Simon and Mattelaer (2011) for instance, argue that

30 NATO website: http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/media/speeches/161107_eumc.pdf last access 15/05/2017

31 NATO website: <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2010/lisbon-summit/NATO-EDA/EN/index.htm> last access:15/05/2017

32 NATO website:<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2010/lisbon-summit/NATO-EDA/EN/index.htm> last access 15/05/2017

33 Interview with an EDA Civil Servant 18/10/2016

EDA-ACT cooperation was crucial in the development of an air-to-air refuelling tanker capacity. In order to address the mutual helicopter availability problems the two organisations have harmonised their work with member states by developing additional airlift capabilities. While technical issues about the helicopters themselves were addressed by NATO, EDA focused on the lack of training of the pilots by organising training programmes focused on the specific technology and conditions of operations. As highlighted in the 2009 EDA Annual Report, personal networks and relationships of the EDA staff play an important role in identifying the areas where the agency can provide solutions, enabling them to concentrate on the areas where they can make a difference.³⁴ Moreover, the EDA assisted the Czech Republic's Mi-crews advance their skills for more challenging terrains by conducting tactical training lessons for the helicopter crews. The EDA's 'Gap 09: Multinational Mountain Exercise,' which included experts from the Joint Air Power Competence Centre (JAPCC/NATO), balanced NATO's 'HIP Helicopter Task Force' Initiative. The multinational NATO project led by Czech Republic is expected to increase coalition airlifting capabilities during in-theatre deployments, by sharing helicopter resources with countries that do not possess them.³⁵

Another area in which the cooperation between EDA and NATO has led to tangible results is in improving medical support for deployed personnel. The EDA's M3U (Multinational Modular Medical Units "is perfectly integrated to the "Pooling and Sharing Multinational Medical Treatment Facilities Role" developed in the NATO's SD framework. The Italian leadership in both framework has certainly facilitated this connection.³⁶

Moreover, recently, the activities of the two organizations have focused on the creation of forum in which to discuss military interoperability. A clear example is the EDA forums MAWA, aimed to develop a common approach to military airworthiness. The MAWA Forum liaises closely with the NATO Airworthiness Working Group (NATO AWG) to ensure that work undertaken by the MAWA Forum does not duplicate activities of the NATO AWG. Much activity has also been undertaken to ensure that outputs from the MAWA forum can be used by the NATO AWG and vice versa.³⁷ As confirmed by an Agency's representative: "We cannot have a single framework for military airworthiness, but we are creating practical synergies".³⁸

Finally, the EDA and ACT are harmonizing their activities in two other important areas. Given the effective work that the agency has done on Remotely Piloted Air System (RPAS), the ACT is

34 EDA Annual Report (2009). Available at: : https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/documents/Annual_Report_2009 last access: 15/05/2017

35 NATO website: <http://www.nato.int/docu/review/2010/lisbon-summit/NATO-EDA/EN/index.htm> last access 25/05/2017

36 Italian Defence Ministry website: http://www.difesa.it/EN/Primo_Piano/Pagine/20140407_DefenceMinisterPinottimeetssherFrenchcounterpart,JeanYvesLeDrian.aspx last access: 07/04/2014

37 EDA website: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/experts/airworthiness/mawa-forum> last access: 15/05/2017

38 Interview with an EDA's civil servant 18/10/2016

developing a Joint Air Power Strategy for NATO, which would offer another area for complementarity.³⁹ The EDA and ACT staff are developing a high degree of cooperation, even in the field of drones. NATO is looking at how drones can fit into the Alliance's future C2 architectures and operational standards, while EDA is working on the integration of drones into the European Single Sky. EDA facilitates the interaction between NATO and the SESAR Joint Undertaking to ensure mutual reinforcement at technical level.⁴⁰

7. EDA and ACT: From Rivalry to Transformation

In the previous paragraphs I focused on the informal interactions between the EDA and ACT respective staff, taking into account how, thanks to growing interaction patterns, they have been able to harmonize their day-to-day activities. In this section, however, I will focus on how informal relations and the exchange of best practices between the two staff are also producing important changes in the working methods and institutional structures of both organizations.

ACT and EDA are two dynamic organizations, which share best practice and push their "principals" (i.e. member states, European institutions and NATO) to make substantial organizational changes in order to better perform their tasks. Academic literature has largely focused on how the EU has imitated NATO structures in terms of institutional design, policies and performances (Juncos 2007; Reynolds 2007; Koops 2012). This pattern has been clearly visible in the first years of the Agency's activity. The EDA was built on the "lessons learned" from failed attempts to fill the gap in the European military capabilities (DeVore 2013:22). The contribution of the ACT has been crucial in the definition of the EDA's strategic guidelines. The EDA Long-Term Vision 2025⁴¹, the strategic base for the development of European military capabilities, was drawn up with the advice of NATO's ACT and it has been closely coordinate with the NATO's Future Vision, published in 2007 (Cornish 2006:19-20). Founding on 2010 Headline Goals, the Capability Development Plan (CDP) was strongly influenced by the processes of harmonization of national defence planning within NATO. Recently, the EDA was inspired by NATO in the search for fiscal incentives in equipment production and development (Kunz 2015:93). The European Council has invited the EDA to "examine ways in which member states can cooperate more efficiently in effectively and pooled procurement projects".⁴² The EDA has itself called for VAT exemptions for projects it managed.⁴³

39 NATO website:http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/media/speeches/161107_eumc.pdf last access 15/05/2017

40 EDA website:https://www.eda.europa.eu/docs/default-source/eda-publications/cb_eda_web last access: 15/05/2017. p.22

41 An Initial Long-Term Vision for European Defence Capability and Capacity Needs (2006). EU Council website: http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/esdp/91136.pdf last access 15/05/2017

42 European Council, 19-20 December 2013. Available at: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/140214.pdf p.7

43 EDA website: <https://www.eda.europa.eu/info-hub/press-centre/latest-news/2015/11/04/vat-exemption-new->

As confirmed by an EDA civil servant: "Our work, especially in the early years, was based on the choice of what effective mechanisms we needed to fulfil our missions. Some NATO tools were already there and we used them".⁴⁴ The early years of EDA's activities were also strongly influenced by the British activism in the agency and by the work of the first chief executive, Nick Witney. "Led by the UK, some states have call for contacts and links between the EDA and NATO: given that there is less and less money for defence, we need to share information" confirmed an official of the UK Permanent Representation to the EU (quoted in Leroux 2009:62-63). Over the years, however, the Agency has developed a unique working method for the development of military capabilities. The EDA's hybrid working method, with the constant involvement of national authorities and non-governmental experts from industries and research centres, is developing a comprehensive approach that is very appreciated in the EU/NATO context. For instance NATO experts report that they were positively surprised by the EDA's way of working. As noted by Ekengren (2015:274): "the EU's long-term vision (2025) was created in a period of six months, an exercise that took more than three years for NATO. Moreover, the concept of 'pooling and sharing', based on exchange of best practices, was first developed within EDA and only later taken up by NATO". The choice to work directly with governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the EU defence field, makes the agency's system more flexible than the one developed within NATO, which has traditionally been based on the institutionalized interactions between permanent representations in Brussels. In the words of an official of the EDA Policy Planning Unit: "the advantage of the EDA is that we can move very fast with qualified people" in contrast to big international organizations such as NATO, with more power but slow progress" (quoted in Leroux 2009:68).

The ACT, thanks to the informal interactions with the agency's staff, started to imitate the EDA's working methods. This pattern is clearly visible in the ATC relationship with industry, an area in which it has experienced serious difficulties (Heidenkamp 2012:16). In this domain, the ATC experts confirm that they were largely inspired by the Agency. ACT has developed the Framework for Collaborative Interaction (FFCI), whose aim is to enable collaborative work to be carried out between ACT and industry.⁴⁵ This framework is clearly based on the Agency's activities, in order to rationalise points of contact, managing information flow and offering clear business opportunities (Aronsson et al 2012:2). The FFCI procedures will be openly advertised to prospective collaborative industrial opportunities. ACT will provide industry with timely, accessible and accurate information and must also keep the nations and other relevant actors informed of the nature

[incentive-for-defence-cooperation](#) last access 15/05/2017

44 Interview with an EDA Civil Servant 18/10/2016

45 NATO website: <http://www.act.nato.int/ffci> last access 15/05/2017

and content of the information shared with industry and of the progress of the work being done.⁴⁶ French General Abrial has highlighted how the ACT needs a different relationship with the industries: "On one hand, ACT needs to share with its industry perception of the future, centred on the need for efficient and interoperable forces (...) In return, industry should tell us if technology is already available to match our vision; or if it has to be developed specifically, and if so, what would be the risks, the timeframe - and of course the costs (...) the 2009 conference also made clear that the concept of interoperability was not necessarily contrary to the interests of the defence industries".⁴⁷ The process of defining a new relationship with industry was heavily based on the advice and research of scholars and researchers who had previously collaborated with the EDA (Atonsson et al 2012). As an ATC representative declares: "there is no doubt that the agency is doing a good job. The agency has developed a system of interaction with the European defence companies that is, from my point of view, extremely effective".⁴⁸

The EDA also influenced NATO's adaptation in defence procurement management. The NATO Procurement Organization (NPO), for instance, was strongly inspired by the Agency's institutionalization and best practices (Ekengren 2015:280-281). The EDA has a permanent resident staff of expertise that provide independent analysis, retain institutional memory and pursue long-term objectives. The NPO was aimed to have a permanent staff of experts, rather than the ad-hoc collections that populate the disparate procurement program agencies. The NPO was also created to replicate the agency's ability to produce transparent data on defence expenditures. The current lack of easily accessible data on multinational and national procurement expenditures has hampered the SD Agenda (Breitenbauch et al 2013:40-41). These aims have been part of the EDA's *raison d'être* ever since its creation in 2004 (Bogzeanu 2012:35). Moreover, a long-term vision, an exercise that the EDA has already done, was the basis of the 2013 NATO strategic commanders commissioned a Framework for Future Alliance Operations (FFAO). Their intent was to complement the Strategic Foresight Analysis conducted by ACT with a detailed assessment of the military demands that future operations may pose (Mattelaer 2014:32).

There are many signs of an increasing influence of EDA on NATO's working methods in capability-building. In the words of an EDA high-ranking official: "NATO is learning more and more from us" (quoted in Ekengren 2015:280). Even the process of definition of the CDP, repeatedly revised and updated by member states, the Council Secretariat and the EU Military Committee according to the revision of the former CSDP operations, is gaining a lot of attention in the NATO. Contrary to the EDA's system, the NDDP mainly focuses on the short-term, mirroring the national four to five year national defence plans. Where NATO is involved or leads longer term procurement projects,

46 NATO website: http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/events/2010/id/ffci_booklet.pdf last access 15/05/2017

47 ACT Industry Day 2009: http://www.act.nato.int/images/stories/events/2009/id/Abrial_Remarks.pdf

48 Interview with an ACT representative 15/09/2016

basically these take place outside the NDDP context on an ad-hoc basis (Drent and Zandee 2014:17). Currently, there are the ongoing discussions on how the EDA approach could inspire and steer the NDDP adaptation. The aim is to transform the NDDP from its current bean-counting character to a real defence planning coordination mechanisms, capability-based and focused on the synchronisation of plans between member states rather than on individual member state efforts (Drent and Zandee 2014:17-18).

It is difficult to assess if direct informal relationships have been the driving force for convergence in EDA and ACT working methods. The repeated failure of NATO to promote collaborative defence projects among European countries has also facilitated this process (DeVore 2015:179). However, there is no doubt that there has been a mutual transfer of best practices between the EDA and the ACT.

In this case, the “emerging” isomorphic institutionalism between EDA and ACT can be settled in the middle between “mimetic” and “normative” institutionalism. If, on the one hand, informal network of experts across the related organisations have facilitated institutional imitations (normative isomorphism); on the other hand, this process is shaped by the ACT “strategic calculation” that the EDA working methods have been more successful in dealing with procurement and defence-industrial matters (mimetic isomorphism).

Conclusions

This study has offered important insights into the nature of socialization process in the EDA-ACT relationships. After identifying the main characteristics of EDA and ACT informal cooperation, I highlighted how the continuous interactions between the two staff are producing two main effects on their inter-organizational dynamics. While informal interactions are facilitating a more efficient division of labour and cooperation in day-to-day activities; on the other hand, exchanges of good practices and professional working methods are leading to an emerging “institutional isomorphism” process. This can be described as a hybrid process that possesses some characteristics of “mimetic isomorphism” and some of “normative isomorphism”. There is no doubt that the growing informal interactions between the two staff and their working relationships have been decisive in this process (a case of normative isomorphism). However, it seems that the ACT has adopted the agency's methods because they are considered most effective in dealing with member states and defence industries. In this case, the two types of “institutional isomorphism” reinforce each other. Moreover, while other studies have shown that EU defence institutionalization policy has been strongly influenced by the previous NATO structures and practices; in the field of capabilities development, the EDA has strongly influenced ACT internal working methods and some of the recent NATO's

institutional reforms.

This article is important both from an empirical and from theoretical point of view. Empirically, it fills an important gap in the literature on EU-NATO relations. While academic literature have largely focused on the EU-NATO formal relations, no analyses have investigated the informal relations between EDA and ACT and their effects in the military capabilities domain. However, this is only a first effort towards a more detailed picture of informal venues, inter-personal relations and staff-to-staff cooperation between the two organizations. From a theoretical point of view, this article highlights how inter-organizational dynamics may be shaped by informal patterns of socialization. While most of the literature has focused on material, formal and political aspects as key drivers in the evolution of inter-organizational dynamics, this article draws a causal relationship of socialization among individuals and changes in the day-to-day activities and working methods of international organizations.

Finally, an important caveat: this article has deliberately left out any reference on how member states interact with the two organizations. This definitely gives us a partial analysis of the EDA and ACT activities. It is important to keep in mind that inter-organizational relations are also determined by a variety of factors and processes at the individual, member state and international system level (Koops 2011). Political and institutional changes, both at the NATO or at the European level, as well as shifts in the preferences of member states, could have a decisive impact on EDA and ACT future relationship.

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