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ABSTRACT: Studies of the relationship between the EU and NATO often focus on the limitations of cooperation, be it at the political or operational levels. However, little is known about the functioning of the political institutional linkages between the EU and NATO. This article therefore studies the main decision-making bodies of the two organisations at the political, ambassadorial level, namely the Political Security Committee (PSC) of the EU and the North Atlantic Council (NAC) in NATO, as well as their joint meetings. The article employs an inductive Grounded Theory approach, drawing on open-ended interviews with PSC and NAC ambassadors, which reveal direct insights from the objects of analysis. The findings emphasise the impact of both structural and more agency-related categories on decision-making in these three fora. The article thus addresses both the paucity of study on these bodies more broadly and the complete lacuna on joint PSC-NAC meetings specifically, warranting the inductive approach this article endorses.

Keywords: European Union; North Atlantic Treaty Organisation; decision-making; international security organisations; grounded theory;

Introduction

Much has been written about the political and strategic blockages limiting the EU and NATO cooperation more generally. However, the two organisations are interwoven politically and historically, not least through the extent to which memberships overlap.¹ Therefore, it is somewhat surprising that the institutional linkages between the two organisations at the political and strategic level are under researched. Joint consultations between the EU and NATO at this level are particularly neglected in the literature, which is why a closer investigation into the key bodies facilitating any political institutional linkages is justified. Institutional linkages between the EU and NATO currently exist at the level of the Political and Security Committee (PSC) of the EU and the North Atlantic Council (NAC) of NATO in the form of joint meetings.

As principal decision-making bodies within NATO and the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) respectively, one would expect that the NAC and the PSC also play a central role in the shaping and direction of the relationship between the two organisations.² Despite their obvious centrality within each organisation and for the relationship between them, no scholarship has thus far engaged in the combined study of the NAC and the PSC, or attempted to look more closely at their similarities and differences.³ This makes for a gap in the literature that this article seeks to fill. Arguably, understanding how decisions are made in each forum can shed light on the organisational conditions of cooperation and help contextualise the political deadlock that has characterised the relationship between the EU and NATO over the last decades, in particular the puzzling nature of the joint PSC-NAC meetings. This is especially salient at a time when the Strategic Partnership between NATO and the EU is under renewed pressure to offer a more workable and responsive *modus operandi*.

The NAC and the PSC share a number of features that make a comparison both analytically viable and relevant. In terms of rules of procedure, both the NAC and the PSC are set up as intergovernmental bodies that operate according to the principle of consensus.⁴ They both deal with the issue areas of security and defence and *de facto* take on a key role in shaping the policies of their respective organisations. To some, therefore, the two bodies constitute each other's counterparts in two organisations that differ in nature and functioning but converge in the way they approach and govern matters of security and defence, which is, intergovernmentally, with each member state retaining a veto (or constructive abstention) and consensual decision-making in place.. Most importantly, however, any formal meetings between the EU and NATO are held at the level of the NAC and the PSC, making the relationship between these two particular bodies one of the focal points of the oft-cited political deadlock between the two organisations.

Given the dearth of literature on this inter-organisational relationship, work that develops and adopts particular conceptualisations or theoretical explanations for it has also been relatively limited. Anecdotal evidence from the personal environment of the EU's first High Representative (at the time, double-hatted as Secretary General of the Council of the EU), Javier Solana, has suggested that the PSC was originally modelled on its more dated NATO counterpart, which may indeed explain some of the parallels between them: Solana had formerly served as Secretary General of NATO, so when ESDP/CSDP structures had to be set up within a short time frame, there has likely been plenty of incentive for him to draw on the *modus operandi* and organisational culture he had worked in previously. Therefore, together, the NAC and the PSC, including the advisory bodies around them, indeed produce a seemingly neat case of institutional isomorphism ('copying') or mimesis (imitation of an established model) (Reynolds 2010; Juncos 2007) where the design of one, the PSC, was clearly informed by previous experiences with a similar structure, the NAC.

Some advanced a historical institutionalist approach to capture the dynamic between the PSC and the NAC, placing more emphasis on the structural factors but essentially also pointing at the way in which the institutional design of one had influenced the other (e.g. Reynolds 2010). Others have highlighted the role of epistemic communities in shaping the institutional environment of each the NAC and the PSC and the two in comparison with each other (e.g. Cross 2011). A broader body of literature has dealt with the NAC and/or PSC from a socialisation perspective, focusing on social interactions as a constituting factor of particular forms of security governance (Juncos and Reynolds 2007, Juncos and Pomorska 2011). One of the broader findings of this work is that the NAC and PSC, while similar in setup and structure, have developed different political logics.

Howorth (2012) noted that the PSC had developed some form of supranational strategic culture that would transcend the intergovernmental dynamics coming from the member states – what he called “supranational intergovernmentalism”. Puetter (2014) advanced a similar argument and proposed that the PSC was an example of “deliberative intergovernmentalism” because of its particular way of decision-making. Bickerton (2011) also stated that the intergovernmentalism in the PSC was of a “peculiar type” given that its function was “not simply to maintain national vetoes” but to act as a “consensus-generating machine”. This would effectively make the PSC differ from the NAC, where the latter is (relatively understudied but) predominantly still perceived as intergovernmentalist in the traditional sense; arguably, it is consensus-oriented but at the same time also a venue for hard inter-state bargaining.

This article speaks to these theoretical propositions and findings while at the same time departing from the deductive approach that tends to dominate this literature (and much of the literature on security institutions in general), i.e. an approach that rationalises empirical observations based on specific theoretical premises. We adopt a somewhat unorthodox methodology in that we derive generalisable findings from empirical observations instead of applying a particular testable theoretical approach to make sense of data. We propose a framework based on Grounded Theory (GT) with the aim to develop the research agenda on the EU-NATO relationship further, and to investigate some of the mainstream claims about the NAC and the PSC more specifically. Thus, we advance an inductive approach to analyse the two bodies, each for themselves and in their relationship with each other. We expect this to reveal idiosyncrasies that can bear fruit for further theorisation and analysis and, as such, inform the development of a research agenda concerning the comparative study of the NAC and the PSC. The article complements the

contributions of Koops (2017) and Græger (2017) in this special issue in the way it extends the theoretical discussion through dense empiricism.

The following section addresses the question of the comparability of the NAC and the PSC, and outlines GT as a methodological framework that can be meaningfully applied to the study of the NAC and the PSC. We proceed with a discussion of the material gathered in two rounds of interviews, from which – in line with the GT approach further outlined below – three main “conceptual categories” emerged: (1) “*established procedures*”, (2) “*driving consensus*” and (3) “*the rhythm of work.*”⁵ The conclusion of the article then summarises the possible linkages between these categories and offers insights into the workings of the PSC, the NAC and their joint meetings. After a reflection on the usefulness of the GT approach, the article situates the findings into a broader perspective of EU-NATO cooperation.

Analysing the NAC and PSC in a Grounded Theory framework

To develop a framework for the comparison we propose, we first outline more specifically where the NAC and the PSC differ, not least to not least to problematise and illustrate their comparability. One key difference lies in the institutional context and hierarchy that they each find themselves in. The NAC consists of all the permanent representations of the NATO members⁶ and can be convened at the level of heads of state, foreign ministers, defence ministers or, more regularly, at ambassadorial level of permanent representatives. No matter at what rank it meets, all decisions of the NAC have the same level of authority (Medcalf 2006, p. 34). It is the only decision making body that is referred to in the North Atlantic Treaty and does therefore not have any superseding decision-making body within the organisation that it needs to take into account.

The PSC was established by the Treaty of Nice (article 25) and an EU Council Decision of 22 January 2001 (The Council of the European Union 2001),⁷ originally, as a

decision-making body that considers all aspects of the CFSP. In practice, however, it has tended to spend ‘most of its time on CSDP matters’ (Howorth 2012, p. 6). It is made up of ambassadors that represent the member states of the EU.⁸ The Permanent Representatives of the EU Member States, usually more senior ambassadors, sit in the COREPER, which, along with the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) and the European Council, formally outranks the PSC. Since the Lisbon Treaty in 2009, the PSC has been chaired by an official from the European External Action Service (EEAS), giving the supranational institutions influence with regard to agenda-setting.⁹

This difference in authority between the NAC and the PSC could be construed as a reason not to view them as each other’s counterparts. Arguably, however, as will be demonstrated further below, the PSC is still more comparable to the NAC than the COREPER, not least in terms of its remit, and its particular focus on security and defence. It has developed a reputation as the “linchpin” (Duke, 2005) and “working horse” of the CSDP (Meyer 2006, p. 116) “that really runs foreign policy” (interview cited in Puetter 2014, p. 196), effectively making it the institutional equivalent of NAC within the EU. That said, the strongest argument in favour of a comparison is that formal meetings between the EU and NATO involve exactly these two bodies.

As Koops (2017) illustrates in his contribution to this special issue, researchers of international security organisations have been able to draw on a variety of theoretical approaches including most notably, the dominant foundationalist theories, Realism and Liberalism, and more recently, post-foundationalist theories like Sociological Institutionalism and Social Constructivism more generally. Each approach prioritises certain concepts over others and thereby almost naturally excludes some aspects of a problem to enable focus on another. The resulting parsimony and analytical focus are of course key currencies in social science; they are “seen as a measurement of the maturity of

a research area or the ‘normalisation’ of otherwise dispersed research efforts” (Lynggaard, Löfgren and Manners 2015, p. 8).

For some time now, deductive reasoning has been the gold standard in mainstream scholarly work. However, in line with the epistemological literature on theorisation and inductive causal discovery (see Blagden 2016 for a recent overview), we point to an obvious limitation of the deductive research process: as the interested scholar is given a range of options to make *ex ante* choices about their analytical focus and line of reasoning they are free to model their approach around convenience (access to data/the organisation in question, capacity to undertake field work, time frame, personal preference) and fit to the perceived issue or puzzle (confirmation bias). As a result, this theory-driven kind of scholarly work is potentially self-referential and truth-preserving, and therefore, biased towards the explanation it sought to prove.

This kind of dynamic can be relatively limiting when a research area is not yet readily developed (see also Aggestam 2004). What is more, the nature of studying security organisations also conditions the research design: the confidentiality of primary data and the general volatility of the international security environment (for discussions on the latter in this special issue, please see Duke & Gebhard 2017) make a foundationalist ontology and positivist epistemology, which rely on *ex ante* assumptions and “facts” (in Social Constructivism, as naturalised by social agents; Pouliot 2010, p. 58), difficult to follow and realise.

That all being said, we are not proposing a general dismissal of deductive research or of the general ambition in the field to produce cumulative knowledge that way. Our overall message is a more pragmatic one: as research on the NAC-PSC relationship is still in its infancy, and studies on the NAC in particular are few and far between, a direct, inductive and case-oriented approach can yield more comprehensive insights for this

burgeoning research agenda than an overly studious deductive approach that invites somewhat of a feedback loop between theoretical premises and empirical evidence.

Apart from our case-specific interest, we would like to reinforce Blagden's (2016, p. 195) proposition "that it is only once we accept that induction is an intrinsic and unavoidable component of IR theory building that we can truly seek answers to the most important questions of international politics" and that "IR scholars should strive to use the two in tandem as they set about developing new theory."¹⁰

We employ GT to provide a framework for our analysis, in part to counter common criticisms of inductive reasoning as lacking focus (data is relevant to start with) and being biased towards the researcher's existing knowledge (Stadler 2004). Although a 'theory' in terms, GT is a methodology that specifically aims to render an inductive approach more scientific and methodical (Glaser and Strauss 1967); it has as such found wide application across the social sciences including in the study of intergovernmental organisations (see e.g. Howell 2000, Panetta 2013, Peters 2015; Richards and Farrokhnia 2016). It provides an analytical road map for generating explanatory theories that are quite literally 'grounded' in empirical data about social processes, gathered in most cases, through interviews, participant observation or ethnographies.¹¹

The process of data collection is seen to bring about repeated arguments and ideas that are tagged with codes, which are grouped into concepts, and then into categories and sub-categories, as more data is collected and reviewed. These categories and sub-categories then serve as points of reference for further empirical exploration, and ultimately, preliminary inference of generalised conclusions. GT prescribes a "constant comparative analysis" of the data and simultaneous and continuous collection and analysis of data. Data collection (or in GT terms, theoretical sampling) is "*controlled* by the emerging theory" (Glaser and Strauss, p. 45, original emphasis), which then guides

towards further refinement through “research questions suggested by previous answers” (p. 47).¹² In short, the main methodological proposition is to identify different levels of regularities and patterns in the data, and generate codes, concepts and categories on that basis.¹³ It encourages constant reflexivity and transparency of the theory generation process in the form of memos, which also formed part of the research documentation for this article. The output can come in the form of “well-codified set of propositions or in a running theoretical discussion, using conceptual categories and their properties” (p. 31), the latter being the ambition in this study.

In accordance with GT, data was collected in more than one round of interviews, with each round informing the next one in terms of empirical focus and scope.¹⁴ Our interlocutors were all ambassador-level representatives (or deputies) of each the NAC and the PSC.¹⁵ The first round of interviews started with general open-ended questions about decision-making within each organisation and how, in the view of each interlocutor, this would compare to the other organisation. Questions relating to the inter-organisational relationship were included as appropriate in the context of each interview (or as raised by the interviewees themselves).

This is to note that all points of comparison and coding in this study were inspired by the practitioners themselves; rather than merely serving as objects of study, they were active contributors to the research process. Their positions, perceptions and preferences influenced the course of our data collection without any *ex ante* analytical shaping or hypothesising from our part. Through careful coding of the transcripts and direct guidance from the interlocutors, the data laid bare three key themes that interlocutors repeatedly homed in on, both in reflection of their own organisation and in their counterpart. These constitute the key ‘conceptual categories’ developed at this analytical instance: (1) “*established procedures*”, (2) “*driving consensus*” and (3) “*the rhythm of work*”.¹⁶ The

following analytical sections present our data in a running theoretical discussion according to these categories. We present these as preliminary findings that invite further refinement. More empirical exploration will be necessary to reach – in GT terms – theoretical ‘saturation’ (Bowen 2008).

Synopsis of empirical findings

“Established procedures”¹⁷

One cluster of themes raised by our interlocutors included iterations about the *frequency of meetings, the preparation of the agenda* and the *consensus rule*. We categorised this cluster as ‘established procedures’ and took the emerging sub-categories as a point of reference for a comparison between the NAC and the PSC, before turning to a detailed account of the joint NAC-PSC meetings along similar lines.

The PSC and the NAC in comparison

One sub-category that emerged from the data was the *frequency of meetings* and the way it indicates comparative levels of activity. The NAC meets most often at the ambassador level, usually at least once a week. However, as the ambassadors and their delegations are situated within the NATO HQ in Brussels, the body can meet more often and at short notice, for informal meetings (Interview 3, 2012). The NAC also convenes at the ministerial level on average four times a year, and at the level of heads of state when urgency requires; however, more often than not, this only happens when a major summit takes place. Formal Council days are Wednesdays, with Thursdays normally reserved for meetings with NATO Partners.

The PSC is a body that meets regularly if not “all the time” (Interview 2, 2012). The PSC meets increasingly more often than the NAC having at least two formal meetings per week,¹⁸ usually on Tuesdays and Thursdays. In the week before a Foreign Affairs Council,

they may also meet formally on a Friday and even, occasionally, on a Sunday. These meetings tend to last all day “until 6pm”, usually including a working lunch when invited guests visit the PSC (ibid, 2012). Compared to the frequency of the ministerial meetings at both the EU and NATO that are months apart, weekly meetings at ambassadorial level somewhat blur the lines between formality and informality, which, in addition to tighter deadlines and intensified interaction, shapes the preparation of the agenda.

Before any formal meeting at both organisations, the *agenda* is prepared in both formal and informal consultations.¹⁹ In NATO, the Council Secretariat is the principal organiser of the NAC meetings. The agenda is a “working plan” that is updated weekly and driven substantially by the (at least) four ministerial (Foreign and Defence Ministers) meetings per year (Interview 13, 2016). The NAC meetings are permanently chaired by the Secretary General or the Deputy Sec/Gen. The formal NAC agenda therefore tends to be much more driven by the Sec/Gen (and various allies lobbying behind the scenes) than the agendas for informal meetings, which are more directly driven by the ambassadors.

The NAC and the issues on the agenda are supported and prepared by the various committees that the Council has created over the years. Before anything goes to ambassadors, issues are discussed at committee level. If agreement cannot be reached or a higher degree of political consensus is required, it is then passed on to the NAC ambassadors (Interview 13, 2016).

In the PSC, an indicative agenda is created and circulated by a dedicated PSC team within the EEAS, at the end of each month for the subsequent month. This calendar agenda is subject to change and is usually in a bullet point format. A more formal agenda is sent out on a Friday for the following Tuesday. This gives PSC ambassadors the time they need to assess whether a given agenda will be “challenging” or whether they will need to make an ‘intervention’ on a certain issue (Interview 17, 2016). This would then also be discussed

with the relevant teams in the capitals. The time between the Tuesday and Thursday PSC meetings is tighter, but ambassadors usually have an understanding of the Thursday agenda by the previous Monday. The Nicolaidis Group convene on the days previous to PSC meetings in order to further prepare the agenda for the PSC meetings. The capitals will also use this draft agenda to inform the speaking points for the ambassadors at these meetings.

Besides the draft agenda, the EEAS also sends both the Member States and the Nicolaidis Group draft “internal” PSC conclusions (Interview 17, 2016), which contain a note on each of the formal agenda items with an indication of the EEAS’s desired outcome after discussions. According to one PSC interlocutor, the intended benefit of this process is that there will be no “surprises” and that PSC meetings run more smoothly (Interview 12, 2016).

The sub-categories above are preconditions for the written and unwritten rule of decision-making at the PSC and the NAC – the consensus rule. Formal decision-making follows the logic of consensus, meaning that no actual votes are taken, but decisions are instead deemed approved if there are no further interventions by any of the ambassadors. This is an “established procedure” and a firm part of the decision-making process; while any tangible or proposed changes to these formal rules of decision-making were of key interest to the researchers, discussions with NAC ambassadors suggested that any “creative thinking” on the formal decision-making procedures was somewhat “cyclical”, with ideas re-emerging very occasionally, usually, when Allies feel the acute need for more flexibility, e.g. in the case of a particular issue being blocked (Interview 7, 13: 2016).

However, a central argument in the interviews was that this would probably never happen with some even suggesting that any changes to the consensus rule would mean “the end of the Alliance” (Interview 13, 2016). Even proposals to eliminate consensus at some of the lower level committee stages are deemed unworkable. Eventually, the Ally in

question normally reconsiders and reverts to the established procedures, out of an understanding that this formal process benefits the Alliance more generally (ibid).

Since the adoption of the Lisbon treaty, a possibility exists in the PSC for qualified-majority voting (QMV) on procedural issues. However, as no case of QMV voting could be confirmed; unanimity and consensus remain the preferred rule of decision-making. The reserve of trust is still an “absolute precondition for getting anywhere in the PSC” (Interview 8, 2016). Even with permanent structured cooperation (PESCO, Article 46 TEU), a shift to QMV seems unlikely, certainly in the short term. The common position of those ambassadors questioned was that there is still “a real reluctance to go down the route of QMV in CSDP and external relations” (Interview 9, 2016). One interlocutor suggested that in the current political climate, there is a risk that Member States that would not vote for a particular agreement in a potential QMV situation could walk away from agreed positions, as they may feel “less bound by that decision” (ibid).

Given that the consensus rule appears to be sacrosanct, both organisations developed the formal and informal procedures described above to assure decisions can be reached in practice. Interestingly, as we will illustrate next, although the consultation procedures in PSC-NAC meetings are similar, no formal or actionable decisions are usually reached (due to the current agreed framework).

PSC-NAC meetings

Concerning the frequency of these joint meetings, a “loose formula” exists whereby two informal meetings for every one formal (Berlin Pus)²⁰ meeting is the goal. The meetings rotate between the Justus Lipsius building (Council of the EU) and the NATO HQ.

Working groups also meet informally before these NAC-PSC meetings. Consequently, they are important as an event but the experience itself is, at least from the point of view of some of the ambassadors involved, “dull”, “highly scripted” and “uninspiring” (Interview

7, 12, 13: 2016). Given the well-known political blockages that stymy EU-NATO writ large, it should be noted that both Turkey and Cyprus do have representatives in attendance at the informal PSC-NAC meetings.

Some interlocutors articulated that all NAC-PSC meetings are “equally dull” (Interviews 1, 7, 9, 21: 2016). The majority of member states intervene (but not always) although they tend to read from prepared scripts. The common EU and NATO member states and those with Partnership for Peace (PfP) representatives will usually have two presenters. In such cases, there would be “no contradictions” between the two speakers, just internal agreements on how to split the work for a particular meeting regarding EU-applicable aspects or NATO-oriented aspects, respectively. After a tour-de-table, the chair sums up the presentations “to make it look like there was some outcome” (Interview 9, 2016). The Berlin Plus arrangements are still used for the CSDP operation ALTHEA, but most interlocutors suggested these meetings are not very significant either (Interviews 7, 9, 12 13: 2016).

The agenda is prepared two or three months in advance, by the EEAS and the NATO Secretariat respectively, and thus, not by the member states. Most interlocutors also suggested that it was the most complicated aspect of these meetings. The discussions are topical and relevant, so can be interesting in that regard, but what is missing are formal and operational NAC-PSC agreed conclusions, decisions on ALTHEA notwithstanding. “Some” member states would like to have the EU-NATO Declaration,²¹ for example, discussed at a formal meeting and then to have the NAC-PSC jointly review progress. However, our data suggested that this was not currently tenable (Interview 12, 2016).

Moreover, even if the participation problem regarding Turkey and Cyprus were to be alleviated “closer institutional and decision-making cooperation would not happen” (Interviews 9, 12, 13: 2016). There was a sentiment that “other problems” would arise and

that the two bodies would not take decisions together as they would not be “applicable” or would need to be “executed differently” (Interview 10, 2016). Beyond the obvious political blockages, the NAC and PSC would never be likely to take joint decisions because there are no formal “rules of procedure” or the “authority” to take decisions in that format (Interview 8, 2016).

As one interlocutor explains, the only real possibility would be “for the NAC to take a decision first”, and the PSC a corresponding supportive decision the next day (or vice versa). The current system of “talking to each other” through occasional informal meetings, NATO summits or EU Councils is “clumsy” (Interview 12, 2016). For example, the Bratislava Declaration (European Council 2016) notes that the EU should “start implementing the joint declaration with NATO immediately” (p. 5). While it took the EU till September to even consider implementing the “joint declaration” signed on 8 July 2016, NATO civilian and military staff planners already started to generate ideas on how to implement the declaration on 9 July, which indicates that the sense of immediacy differs between the two bodies (Interview 12, 2016).

As these findings have shown, while there is no formal decision-making between the NAC and the PSC (in the current agreed framework) and, therefore, no real consensus is needed, the established consultation and agenda setting procedures still apply to the common meetings, both at the institutional level (coordination between the EEAS and the NATO General Secretariat) and the member state level (coordination between the common EU and NATO/PfP members). “The objective of NAC-PSC meetings is just to have them” (Interview 9, 2016), and the consultations are not “crisis driven but process driven” (ibid). The same interlocutor went as far as to say that when it comes to NAC-PSC meetings, “anyone who tells you that they are very useful is not telling the truth” (Interview 9, 2016). They could thus essentially be looked at as an attempt to convey that there is cooperation,

and that meetings can occur without controversy with regard to the non-common member states (in particular, Cyprus and Turkey). A smooth public record is created for this particular meeting formation, one that in practice, however, does not change anything substantive in the relationship between the two organisations.

“Driving consensus”²²

A second cluster of issues emerged from iterations about *organisational design*,²³ *informality*²⁴ and *socialising*,²⁵ which we took to constitute sub-categories of a wider category of “driving consensus”. In line with the previous section on “established procedures”, the following discussion develops a comparison between the NAC and the PSC alongside these sub-categories before turning to a discussion of related perspectives on the joint NAC-PSC format.

The PSC and the NAC in comparison

While both the PSC and the NAC may differ on procedural matters, both seemingly share a similar consensus-seeking *organisational design*. The respective ministerial meetings in both organisations are the important “driver” that forces each decision-making body to find agreement (Interview 5, 2016). No ambassador likes to “expose themselves to be preventing a committee from getting an agreement or consensus” on important issues that may be brought before ministers (ibid). That is an important “enforcing element”, even more so for a NATO Summit or a European Council (ibid).

Interviewees pointed to a logic of “if you accept my position, I will accept yours” (Interview 1, 2012), which, on our part, spurred further investigations into procedural issues. On Tuesday mornings, NAC ambassadors “regularly” meet *informally* in a “reduced format” with just a very small number of collaborators, normally 28 ambassadors plus one or two support personnel (Interview 3, 2012). In this format, they discuss in-depth

some of the difficult issues in an attempt to clarify any differences that exist among the Allies before the official NAC meeting on the Wednesday.²⁶

These informal lunches, hosted by individual ambassadors, are seemingly fundamental to the informal decision-making process. The general practice is that each ambassador will host a couple of two-hour lunches per year, either at their residence or on site at NATO HQ (Interview 13, 2016). These events are informal discussions, usually focused on a single issue, without note takers or any decision sheets. The agenda is shaped by the hosting ambassador but is quite obviously also influenced by international developments (ibid.).

The data suggested two common trains of thought on the informal consultation process within the NAC. The first can be conceptualised as “decision-driven” as it urges swift agreements whenever possible (Interview 13, 2016). However, this often neglects to fully consider that decisions, once taken, must also be implemented. The second way of looking at these consultation processes is more “process driven”; the consultation process, even when protracted, is assumed to ultimately lead to resilient consensual decisions that “stand the test of time” (ibid).

PSC ambassadors believe that the committee is designed to reach consensus. Another argument is that it is instinctual for the majority of colleagues to seek broad agreement due to frequent *socialising*. Beyond that, the capitals actually expect the PSC to “sort issues out” before matters reach the ministerial level where the politics “can get difficult” (Interview 9, 2016). That said, informal negotiations will often be stopped by ambassadors if they feel the formal setting of the PSC will provide its “own dynamics” or room for the “unexpected” to help shape decision-making; for example, unexpected support from a fellow member state (Interview 8, 2016).

Interestingly however, between the first and second rounds of data collection, one topic did stand out as particularly discordant within the PSC: migration. Multiple ambassadors intimated that the issue of migration had fractured unity within the EU and for some, the room for ambassadorial manoeuvre had been reduced. Furthermore, this “new dynamic” is said to have also worked its way up to the FAC which, in turn, ties the hands of the EEAS because, on some issues, FAC ministers have sent instructions that they prefer no ‘official’ agreement in the PSC if their interests are not met (Interview 8, 9, 12: 2016).

PSC-NAC meetings

As our data above shows, both the PSC and NAC ambassadors convene frequently to consult both formally and informally. When they do, they do not just see their role in presenting and defending national positions but also, and often regardless of specific preference, in persuading others to reach an outcome. However, at the informal PSC-NAC meetings this does not arise because, under the agreed framework, no agreed actionable outcomes are permissible. As such, seeking consensus in the narrow sense is less relevant in this forum, and is reflected only in the preparation of the agenda and for scheduling future meetings.

Once the agenda has been agreed, views are exchanged but no decisions can be taken. The purpose of these joint meetings is not merely for the PSC to update the NAC on how it views a particular issue or vice versa. The joint NAC-PSC meetings are also a platform for the member states to individually announce their preferences on a given issue and express how they see the two organisations best perform towards common interests. National delegations express their position as states, not as members of either the EU or NATO (Interview 10, 2016). What points in that direction is also that many ambassadors found hearing the views of non-common member states to be the most useful outcome of

these meetings (ibid.), although the general sense prevailed that the meetings were not as fruitful as they should be.

It was also clear from the data that this forum was not the setting of choice for the “usual suspects” or others to protest their various grievances with respect to the political blockages that restrict further EU-NATO cooperation. For the most part, the ambassadors tend to be “on their best behaviour”, meaning that there are normally no “direct confrontations” (Interview 10, 2016). In short, they do not seek consensus on the key EU-NATO blockages or sensitivities in these informal NAC-PSC meetings.

The role of the ambassador – “the rhythm of work”²⁷

Consensus-seeking is not just a property of the general behaviour within the PSC and the NAC specifically, but is of course also a property of the role of the ambassador in general. In the interviews, most of our interlocutors referred to the abovementioned processes as part of their job of ambassador, and therefore, not as anything necessarily unusual. We found this aspect of the argument to serve as a useful variable in the exploration of decision-making mechanisms in these entities, and therefore derives a specific set of sub-categories in this context: *professionalism*²⁸, *expertise*²⁹, *freedom of manoeuvre*³⁰, and *personality*³¹. The following sections compare the PSC and the NAC along these sub-categories and their impact on decision-making, before turning to an assessment of ‘the rhythm of work’ at the joint PSC-NAC meetings.

The PSC and the NAC in comparison

In both the NAC and the PSC working environment, *professionalism* is demonstrably seen as a key factor in the interlocutors’ working lives. A strong sense of friendship was also discernible with “away days” being part of the job in both, the NAC and the PSC (Interview 10, 2016). Most described an atmosphere whereby a level of “fundamental

respect and consideration” existed in both institutions (Interview 5, 2012). In both the PSC and the NAC, efficiency and completing functional tasks is the driving force behind consensus. This is more often than not a basic determination to, in the PSC, get to conclusions before the COREPER ministerial at the end of the month, “so everybody will be happy”. In the NAC, it is intended to close a dossier or a particular issue. “Once a topic is tabled here in the NAC, it is concluded”. “Always, even if we can’t take a decision then you sense at all times the will of all to come to a conclusion. [...] I can’t think of any dead files” (Interview 3, 2016).

While there is a sense of professional collegiality and treating others with equal respect and consideration, one can infer from the data that there are important differences within their respective groups regarding the ability of specific ambassadors to guide discussions and negotiations. A sub-category that emerged from the data is the *expertise* conveyed by the ambassadors in each forum. One understanding of expertise relates to the specific national interests the ambassadors appear to represent. One particular reflection from a PSC ambassador illustrates how particular national priorities appear to stir particular diplomatic representatives into certain directions, which is often expressed in particularly well-founded positions:

Austrians will always make the point of involving NGOs [...] and people will listen, because [Austria] know[s] NGOs. [...] Spain, Sweden, Finland will always bring forward the role of women in peace and security matters, and if they want something in, some may think [this is not crucial], but they will let them. They know their stuff [...] they will not come up with nonsense. So expertise matters (Interview 12, 2016).

Besides the expertise based on states’ special interests, the data also conveys that expertise matters in the sense of experience and seniority of the ambassadors themselves. In many cases there is a “common understanding” between the capital and the delegation of the issue, “the national position, and a common understanding of the red lines” (Interview 5,

2012). If it becomes “serious”, then the ambassador [...] has to go back to the capital. and this very much depends on the “personal weight and reputation of the ambassador” (Ibid).

There are two types of ambassadors in the EU; only the junior ambassadors in the PSC deal with political-strategic issues and pol/mil issues. The senior level ambassadors reside at the COREPER and the Council level. In the PSC, ambassadors, on balance, tend to also be more junior vis-à-vis their NAC counterpart; although this can vary between member states (Interviews 2, 3, 5, 11: 2012-2016). Discussions with ambassadors who had experience working in both bodies were especially revealing. One PSC ambassador who had extensive previous experience as a NAC ambassador was particularly candid:

You cannot really compare the two, they are completely different worlds. NAC ambassadors are the bosses, they are gods. [...] Decisions in NATO are made by NAC ambassadors, with the instructions from governments of course. [...] In the EU, even permanent representatives are small fry. The EU institutions, the bureaucrats believe they are the bosses (Interview 10, 2016).

Due to this relative lack of decision-making autonomy and the particular position of the PSC within the organisational hierarchy of the EU, the role of the ambassadors there differs somewhat from that in the NAC. The PSC ambassadors do not just defend the interest of their own member state; they generally represent the intergovernmental dimension vis-à-vis the supranational institutions of the EU, meaning the Commission and the EEAS. In other words, the Member States (and the ambassadors) see the PSC as a “bulwark” against these other EU institutions (Interview 10, 2016).³²

Some senior NATO ambassadors are in a significantly better position than those in the PSC, and have the authority to go back to their national governments and directly ask for “changes” in the instructions from their ministry (Interview 5, 2012). They can even go beyond their mandate because they have the authority to negotiate, and therefore, some freedom to manoeuvre. For other nations, like Turkey for example, the actual leverage they

have in negotiations more often depends on the level of experience and relative authority of the chair (Interview 5, 2012).

The sub-category of expertise, especially in the sense of experience is therefore closely linked to the sub-category of *freedom of manoeuvre*. In the case above, more senior and experienced ambassadors possess the necessary expertise to manoeuvre in negotiations both within the organization but also between the organization and their capital. However, expertise alone is not sufficient to determine the extent of such freedom. The freedom to manoeuvre is also determined by the member states' administrative and diplomatic culture in the capital. For example, for the NAC French delegation, highly political issues need to be coordinated between their inter-agencies; the general staff, the Ministry of Defence, and the Élysée.³³ Consequently, France's more hierarchical and presidential system can often restrict the ambassador in either the NAC or at committee level (Interview 5, 2012). The UK ambassador on the other hand has more freedom to manoeuvre, to act and negotiate, due to the UK's integrated approach, which brings both foreign and defence ministries into their delegation (ibid). The smaller nations follow their instructions more tightly and are often not able to make substantial decisions (Interview 5, 2012).

Finally, the freedom of manoeuvre is tightly connected to the sub-category of *personality*, which correlates positively with the sub-categories of *expertise* and *freedom of manoeuvre*, but can sometimes inversely correlate with "professionalism". Ambassadors' freedom of manoeuvre requires both expertise and likeability, as one interviewee explains: "Personality has a great impact. You can obviously see whose positions are promoted more successfully because those ambassadors are more likeable" (Interview 11, 2016).

However, a strong combination of such properties in an ambassador may have adverse effects on the professional aspect of the decision-making process. Within the PSC, for example, during the formal meetings, ambassadors are allocated three minutes for their

interventions. “The three-minute rule is for both equality and efficiency, but some personalities break the rule and talk for more minutes” (Interview 11, 2016). One particularly candid interlocutor pointed out that some ambassadors have “big egos and they cause more problems than they are being asked to by their capital”, but later added that this “is rare and everyone is on good terms” (Interview 2, 2012).

PSC-NAC meetings

The data suggested that joint NAC-PSC meetings were “amicable” (Interview 9, 2016). As there are 22 common member states, this is not necessarily surprising. However, *professionalism* extends to the non-common member states as well. Interestingly, collegiality between Turkish and Cypriot colleagues was discernible through discussions with the relevant officials (Interview 1, 2012). *Expertise* plays a part through the various diplomatic ways in which ambassadors state their positions, i.e. without engaging in direct confrontation. A nuanced and perceptive awareness of such sensitivities by ambassadors is essential in these informal NAC-PSC meetings.

That said, besides maintaining collegiality in the meeting, *personality* does not seem to play as big a role as is the case with meetings of the PSC and the NAC respectively, since interventions are “voluntary” (Interview 10, 2016) and “scripted” (Interview 9, 2016). In the specific case of informal PSC-NAC meetings, any *freedom of manoeuvre* only manifests itself in the possibility for ambassadors to discuss issues that are not on the previously agreed agenda. “If they want to make a point they do” (Interview 10, 2016). Moreover, because these meetings are rare events and the two committees do not have much of “an institutional relationship”, there is not a lot of opportunity (or desire) for ambassadors to develop further *expertise* in this context (Interview 7, 2016).

In sum, the data suggests that the main purpose of these joint meetings is to “establish a pattern of normality”. The meetings aim to convey an increase in EU-NATO

cooperation more broadly, while not introducing controversy into the milieu that might further stir political divides (Interview 9, 2016). In this context, attaining a consensus as such is less relevant, which particularly marginalises the role of agency through the ambassadors. Any remaining agency available to ambassadors is solely defined by the sub-categories *professionalism* and *expertise*. Any agency stemming from ambassadors' *freedom of manoeuvre* and *personality* is restricted by the highly scripted nature of the meetings. One possible exception can be found in the form of interjections that deviate from the agreed agenda at informal meetings. Considering that agreeing an agenda is seen as controversial, avoiding such controversy requires the aforementioned *expertise* and to some extent *personality* as well.

Conclusions

When generation of theory is the aim, however, one is constantly alert to emergent perspectives, what will change and help develop the theory. These perspectives can easily occur on the final day of study or when the manuscript is reviewed in page proof: so the published word is not the final one, but only a pause in the never-ending process of generating theory (Glaser and Strauss: 1967, p. 40).

We set out to shed light onto the decision-making in the NAC and the PSC, and the inter-organisational practices that emerge from the views of ambassadors involved in joint NAC-PSC meetings. To our knowledge, data collection on these meetings has never been undertaken, at least not with regard to the minutia of process and dynamic of both formal and informal NAC-PSC meetings. We realise that given the inherently small size of the sample, and the general limitations of any investigation in the area of security and defence, any tentative hypothesising is potentially premature. That said, we feel that our initial findings go some way towards both the wider objective of this special issue to further develop the EU-NATO research agenda, and more specifically, towards filling a gap in the

literature that contributes to a deeper understanding of the subtleties and deficiencies in joint decision-making between the NAC and the PSC. Induction helps generate probable “truths”, which proves to be a fruitful exercise in an issue area that is notoriously understudied. We argue that the openness and potential of inductive reasoning clearly outweighs any deficiencies in the approach.

Overall, we infer a higher degree of structural influence and some impact of agency on decision-making within the PSC and the NAC, as well as at their less frequent joint meetings. Structures are found in the *established procedures* that emerged from the data as well as in the engrained practices of *driving consensus* that our interlocutors outlined; any arguments relating to *the role of the ambassador*, in turn, point to the influence of agency, which we argue is largely inconsistent, depending on the political and institutional circumstances.

The categories that emerged from the data encompass more particular sub-categories. “Established procedures” include: *frequency of meetings*, *preparation of the agenda* and *consensus rule*. The consensus rule is identified as the most rigid structure, as none of our interlocutors expect it to change. As such, the consensus rule conditions a high frequency of meetings and intricate preparation procedures of the agenda and discussion points. While this may be the case at the respective NAC and PSC settings, at the joint PSC-NAC meetings, no real consensus is needed and the objective of these meetings is “just to have them”. Consequently, the frequency of these meetings is limited. However, individually established agenda preparation procedures still feature in the common meetings.

The category “driving consensus” encompasses *organisational design*, *informality* and *socialising*. Both the PSC and the NAC are, by design, expected to reach consensus in preparation of the ministerial meetings. The organisational design encourages informality and informality in turn encourages socialising. In the joint setting, by design, the agreed

framework is not to formally take any decisions which can be operationalised. For this reason, the only real driver of consensus is establishing the agenda itself. Considering the agenda is predominantly set by the individual secretariats, any socialising or informality intended to drive consensus is marginal for joint meetings.

The two structural categories (“established procedures” and “driving consensus”) are tightly connected to the predominantly agency focused category of “the role of ambassadors”. This category covers *professionalism*, *expertise*, *freedom of manoeuvre* and the *personality* of ambassadors. Apart from the structural nature of professionalism (which sets professional boundaries for ambassadors’ actions), these sub-categories are focusing on the agency of ambassadors. The correlations that emerge from the comparison between the PSC and the NAC suggest that the freedom of manoeuvre is enhanced with a higher level of expertise and agreeable personality. Personality is however still limited within the confines of professionalism. In the joint setting, these correlations are slightly altered. Professionalism still plays a role but any agency stemming from ambassadors’ *freedom of manoeuvre* and *personality* is restricted by the highly scripted nature of the meetings.

These correlations offer insights into the workings of the PSC, the NAC and their joint meetings, but do not advance a finalised theory of decision-making in international security organisations. For that, further refinement of analysis, data collection and theory building would be required. However, the existing findings and categories that have emerged from this study are encouraging and demonstrate the usefulness of an inductive GT approach. Studying decision-making in the PSC and the NAC using a GT approach is particularly useful for understanding the established procedures, consensus building and the role of the ambassadors at the joint meetings for which existing theories are yet to be developed. In turn, this approach can be used to understand both the facilitating and constricting processes of the decision-making environment in future EU-NATO

cooperation - and particularly so if the current political blockages were to be alleviated. This article does not profess to be revolutionary or ground-breaking. However, it does break ground by suggesting that a direct, inductive approach to a problem may yield similar results as a potentially overly sophisticated and studious deductive approach to studying complex decision-making processes within the context of international security organisations.

Finally, to put our analysis into perspective in terms of any broader understanding of the three bodies under investigation, the analogy of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, although light-hearted, is somewhat useful for demonstrating how the ambassadors view their own institutions. The NAC (the father) has mapped out its territory quite well given its relative temporal maturity and commitment to established conventions. Our interlocutors spoke of a body whereby they believe “the scope of the conversation is more limited (compared to the PSC) but the quality and thoroughness is much higher” (Interview 5, 2012). In contrast, ambassadors to the PSC (the son) believe their work to be novel and developing while also “more fun” due to the wider foreign policy instruments at their disposal (Interview 2, 2012). Finally, joint PSC-NAC meetings (the ghost) do manifest themselves occasionally but are understood to have no real tangible deliverables in terms of deepening formal EU-NATO cooperation. Considering that NATO and the EU are two of the most influential organisations for the provision of collective security, the three bodies under investigation should all shape the milieu of international security. The PSC and the NAC make actionable decisions for their own respective organisations whereas the joint meetings facilitate EU-NATO political and institutional cooperation through informal processes but without actionable joint decision-making. This article demonstrates how an inductive Grounded Theory approach can systematically generate insights into the key processes connected with these tasks.

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Notes

- ¹ 22 of 28 member states of the EU are also NATO members, and most of the EU member states that do not have full membership of NATO (Austria, Finland, Ireland and Sweden) are part of NATO's Partnership for Peace. Cyprus is the only EU member state that is not part of or associated with NATO in any way.
- ² As outlined in section 3. of the EU-NATO: The Framework for Permanent Relations and Berlin Plus, 'Such EU-NATO consultations involve the EU's Political and Security Committee and NATO's North Atlantic Council, the EU and NATO Military Committees as well as the Secretary General/High Representative and NATO Secretary General'. For full details, please see European Council. 2003. [Background on EU-NATO permanent arrangements \(Berlin +\)](#)
- ³ Jørgensen (2004) reached a similar conclusion over a decade ago: "How different is intergovernmental cooperation in the CFSP from intergovernmental cooperation within NATO? Such a comparison, to my knowledge, has not been attempted by anyone. [...] The absence of such comparative studies is unfortunate because we cannot reach general conclusions about intergovernmental cooperation or something about the specifics of each of the institutions mentioned" (p. 21).
- ⁴ In the case of the NAC, this is an unspoken rule or "gentlemen's agreement"; Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty does refer to "unanimous agreement" but only in connection to NATO enlargement. Voting procedures in the PSC fall under Article 23 of the Treaty of the European Union (TEU) which states that decisions "shall be taken by the Council acting unanimously" (Signatories to the Treaty of the European Union 1992 Title V, Article 23.1). However, for some procedural matters as well as adopting joint actions and common positions, qualified majority voting is applicable with the exception of "decisions having military or defence implications" (ibid., Article 23.2).
- ⁵ The labels for these conceptual categories were taken ad litteram from the interviews.

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- ⁶ Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States.
- ⁷ In 2000 an interim Political and Security Committee was set up by Council Decision 2000/143/CFSP.
- ⁸ Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom
- ⁹ Prior to the creation of the European External Action Service, the PSC agenda was “agreed by the rotating Presidency and the Council Secretariat” (Howorth 2007, p. 71). However, post-Lisbon the PSC has had a Permanent Chairman. From 2010 to mid 2013, the former Swedish Representative to the PSC, Olof Skoog, held the job. Since 2013, the role has been undertaken by Walter Stevens.
- ¹⁰ While the majority of published research on the EU and NATO is either atheoretical or using a deductive approach, there have been attempts at “building bridges” through the use of abduction. Mérand (2012) used a combination of empirical observation, inductive theorising and hypothesis building, and a deductive comparison of Rational Choice and Historical Institutionalism to explain the emergence of the CSDP, effectively focusing more on the actual social practices found in the case than on theoretical premises about them.
- ¹¹ In the study of international security organisations, forms of data collection that involve direct participation or observation are not normally an option given the heightened levels of confidentiality.
- ¹² In this study, this translated into conducting several rounds of elite interviews. The interviewees can be the same or changed, and the approach allows for experimentation and

variance in the targeted groups that are studied, which are “chosen in accordance with [the] emergent analytic framework.” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 53).

- ¹³ Where GT inconveniently remains vague is the actual process of data analysis and writing of theory, which represents GT’s main limitation, as some critics duly point out (Allan 2003; Kelle 2005). Inductive inference still relies on intuition or what Glaser and Strauss refer to as “theoretical sensitivity” (ibid., p. 46).
- ¹⁴ Given the reliance of inductive reasoning on probability, we are aware that conclusions should draw on a dataset as large as possible. However, due to the fixed size of membership within the organisations under investigation, the sample size was limited to 28 and 28 ambassadors. The data collection consisted of a total of four rounds of interviewing with NAC and PSC ambassadors as well as deputies within the permanent representations. The first three rounds were conducted within a relatively short time frame and were therefore treated as one round in the analysis. All direct quotations in the following empirical sections were attained from transcripts; they are numbered throughout to allow replication. Beyond this information, no details of our interlocutors can be disclosed due to confidentiality.
- ¹⁵ In the case of the NAC, the ambassadorial formation is the one meeting most frequently, which alongside with the direct comparability this ensures, was the main reason for targeting it in our data collection.
- ¹⁶ In line with GT, the labels for each category were set in vivo, meaning that they were drawn from recurring phrases and expressions used by the interlocutors.
- ¹⁷ “[The meetings] very much depend on the issue and the established procedures” (Interview 5, 2012).
- ¹⁸ The same respondent suggested that the reduction in NAC meetings was due to pressure by then Sec/Gen Rasmussen, who thought there were too many” (Interview 2, 2012). This did not emerge from other interviews but there was a more subtle suggestion that the PSC and the NAC were going into opposite directions. This may also be connected to the difference in size and scope of the PSC agenda (see below) compared to that of the NAC.

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- ¹⁹ At the NAC, informal consultation among national representatives is internally understood as the “lifeline of the Alliance” (Interview 13, 2016).
- ²⁰ A 2016 NATO ‘Fact Sheet’ states ‘since 2003 the “Berlin Plus” arrangements provide the basis for NATO-EU cooperation in crisis management in the context of EU-led operations that make use of NATO’s collective assets and capabilities, including command arrangements and assistance in operational planning. In effect, the “Berlin Plus” arrangements allow the Alliance to support EU-led operations in which NATO as a whole is not engaged. According to Yost (2007, p. 12) “Operation Althea is the only on-going EU-led operation under ‘Berlin Plus,’ and it alone can be considered in a formal NATO-EU format. Aside from capability development issues, Althea is the only agreed agenda subject that can be discussed without the presence of Cyprus.”
- ²¹ At the 2016 NATO Warsaw Summit, the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and the NATO Secretary General signed a Joint Declaration ‘to give new impetus and new substance to the NATO-EU strategic partnership in light of common challenges’.
- ²² “Consensus based and consensus driven that essentially influences to a large extent how things are negotiated; if you can be out voted than you start negotiating in a different way” (Interview 3, 2012)
- ²³ “The PSC was designed to reach consensus” (Interview 9, 2016).
- ²⁴ “We keep it informal here” (Interview 9, 2016); “Informally, there are receptions, dinners, working lunches [...] so you meet your colleagues every day” (Interview 2, 2012).
- ²⁵ “New allies and new ambassadors [...] integrate into the various social and political occasions and meetings” (Interview 5, 2012).
- ²⁶ From the data, we can infer the following: PSC Ambassadors seem to work under the assumption that their remit is more “fun” due to a wider ranging scope and the amount of foreign policy instruments at their disposal. Some PSC Ambassadors see the EU as the “wave of the future”, whereas NATO is an Alliance that has “mapped out its territory quite well” but

is not really an “organisation in development” (Interview 2, 2012). However, NAC Ambassadors assume that although the scope of the conversation in the NAC is more limited than in the PSC, the quality and the depth is much higher. The interviews suggest that NAC ambassadors believe they believe the PSC is only “scratching the surface” whereas they are “going in depth” (Interview 5, 2012).

²⁷ “Scheduling of meetings and the rhythm of work is very well established.” (Interview 7, 2016)

²⁸ “I have never experienced when an Ambassador was shouting or losing his or her temper. They are professionals” (Interview 5, 2012).

²⁹ “Not all states have the expertise or a strong interest in all issues” (Interview 11, 2016).

³⁰ “This gives him a huge weight vis-à-vis his own administration and huge freedom of manoeuvre” (Interview 5, 2012).

³¹ “I think it is much more the personality of the individual” (Interview 7, 2016)

³² For a discussion on supranational features of the PSC, see Howorth (2012)

³³ The official residence of the President of France.