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# Transgovernmental Networks in the European Security and Defence Policy

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## Transgovernmental Networks in European Security and Defence Policy

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**Abstract:** An increasing number of authors describe the European Union as an advanced form of transgovernmentalism. Whether called Europeanization, supranational intergovernmentalism, multilevel governance, administrative fusion or Brusselisation, the transgovernmentalist thesis states that European politics is shaped by the growing interaction of national government officials at every level of the decision-making process. This paper tests the transgovernmentalist thesis by looking at patterns of formal and informal cooperation in the framework of the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The data is based on a questionnaire circulated among 73 defence officials in France, Germany, the United Kingdom and Brussels-based institutions. The results are analyzed through social network

analysis. We find that the governance of ESDP is characterized by a weak form of transgovernmentalism, in which cross-border links do exist but formal state actors occupy strategic positions. In particular, two groups display transgovernmental features: a *core policy group* of crisis management and capability development officials in and around the Council, and a *Franco-German group* of capital-based defence actors.

**Keywords:** Europeanization, governance, intergovernmentalism, networks, European Security and Defence Policy, political science

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## 1. Introduction

Over the past 10 years, the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) has become one of the most dynamic sectors of administrative interaction in the European Union (EU).<sup>1</sup> This has entailed the creation of several political-military bodies in Brussels as well as functional desks specifically devoted to European security cooperation in member state foreign and defence ministries (Vanhoonacker, Dijkstra and Maurer 2010). As a result, an expanding group of diplomats, policy advisers, military officers, civil servants, engineers and think tank personnel are now involved in the decision-making process and the implementation of ESDP in its various dimensions (military operations, civilian crisis management, capability development).

Pointing to various instances of Europeanisation, some analysts conclude that security and defence policy has moved beyond intergovernmental decision-making towards a transgovernmental form of governance. Whether called supranational intergovernmentalism, multilevel governance, administrative fusion or Brusselisation, the transgovernmentalist argument states that European politics is shaped by the growing interaction of national government officials at every level of the decision-making process (Wallace and Wallace 2000; Webber et al. 2004; Regelsberger and Wessels 2005; Duke and Vanhoonacker 2006; Norheim-Martinsen 2010a).

In this paper, we test the transgovernmental thesis through social network analysis, a methodology that detects patterns of formal and informal social relations across a policy field. The picture that emerges from our analysis confirms a weak form of transgovernmentalism in which cross-border ties between different policy actors have indeed developed along functional lines, but only among a handful of government actors who occupy strategic positions. Using original data gathered among 73 French, British, German, EU and NATO officials, we address two research questions. *First*, which actors occupy key strategic positions in the web of administrative cooperation? We find that specific government actors, namely security ambassadors, are located at the strategic core of the ESDP network. These actors, which we call “gatekeepers,” are Brussels-based, not capital-based, and we observe that there is a high density of social relations among domestic government actors in parallel to the formal meeting point of Council meetings. *Second*, is it possible to observe cohesive groups of actors who share particularly strong connections between themselves across borders? This is a key question if we want to weigh the possibility that transgovernmental coalitions will emerge over time along transnational or functional lines to push (or block) specific ESDP initiatives. In our analysis, two groups display transgovernmental features: a functional *core policy group* of crisis management and capability development officials in and around the Council, and a political *Franco-German group* of capital-based defence actors. This suggests that while there is room for cross-border collective action in ESDP, it will be limited to these narrow clusters of government officials for the foreseeable future.

Within the context of this special issue, our article makes two contributions. First, it offers a systematic way of analyzing and conceptualizing administrative interaction in ESDP policy-making. As Nuttall (2005) has argued, ESDP faces the twofold problem of coherence along the various dimensions of ESDP (capabilities, arms production, civil crisis management, military operations) and consistency between various institutions and actors. Consequently, a cross-sector analysis of the dynamics of ESDP has been lacking so far (Schroeder 2006). Most of the contributions in this issue address this gap with rich case studies of individual administrative bodies or specific crisis management operations. To supplement these case studies, social network analysis provides a methodology in which bureaucratic, political and non-governmental actors can be situated in a relational and comprehensive context of decision-making. In other words, by identifying patterns of cooperation within the ESDP domain, we can map out the social structure in which ESDP bodies and operations are embedded. Several findings in this special issue are confirmed by social network analysis; for

example, the relative weakness of the European Parliament (Stie 2010; Peter, Wagner and Deitelhoff 2010), the marginalization of civilian actors such as the Commission and NGOs (Norheim-Martinsen 2010b), and the “coordinator” role of the Council Secretariat (Juncos and Pomorska 2010).

We also seek to contribute to the literature on the changing nature of governance in international security – whether between or within international security institutions. In this special issue, Petrov (2010) and Justaert and Keukeleire (2010) use the governance metaphor to describe the complex ESDP decision-making machinery, in which state and non-state, EU and national actors coexist alongside one another. A key challenge in this perspective is to identify potential policy entrepreneurs that fit the governance image of “beyond intergovernmentalism” (Norheim-Martinsen 2010a). In the literature on ESDP, authors have paid attention to the growing role of informal directorates such as the EU-3 (France, United Kingdom and Germany) or the “Quint” (Gegout 2002; Giegerich 2006). By revealing the existence of a core policy cluster and a Franco-German cluster, social network analysis identifies two other likely policy entrepreneurs in ESDP governance.

It is worth emphasizing that our approach is a structural one. We are interested in the ESDP network as a social structure and not as a collective actor or as a mode of policy-making. The contribution of a structural approach is that it allows us to detect informal social relations in addition to formal ones in the ESDP field. It is thus well suited to verify the growth of a social layer beneath formal state interactions, which is the key claim made by transgovernmentalists. In EU studies, structural social network perspectives have been applied to analyze influence in the common agricultural policy (Ray and Henning 1999) and the transfer of social policy to Eastern Europe (Sissenich 2008). In security policy, by contrast, the use of networks has been more metaphorical. Krahmman (2005) and Eilstrup-Sangiovanni (2009), for example, use qualitative methods to describe and compare emerging forms of security cooperation as well as their effects on global governance.

## **2. What is a transgovernmental network?**

Jolyon Howorth (2000) coined the term “supranational intergovernmentalism” to capture the phenomenon whereby several institutions and groups take root in Brussels and tend to formulate and even drive ESDP policies. This is close to the idea of Brusselisation used by David Allen (1998) and Simon Nuttall (2000) to describe the institutionalization of the Common Foreign and Security Policy in the 1990s. European security observers indeed generally agree with Kirchner and Sperling (2007: 9) that:

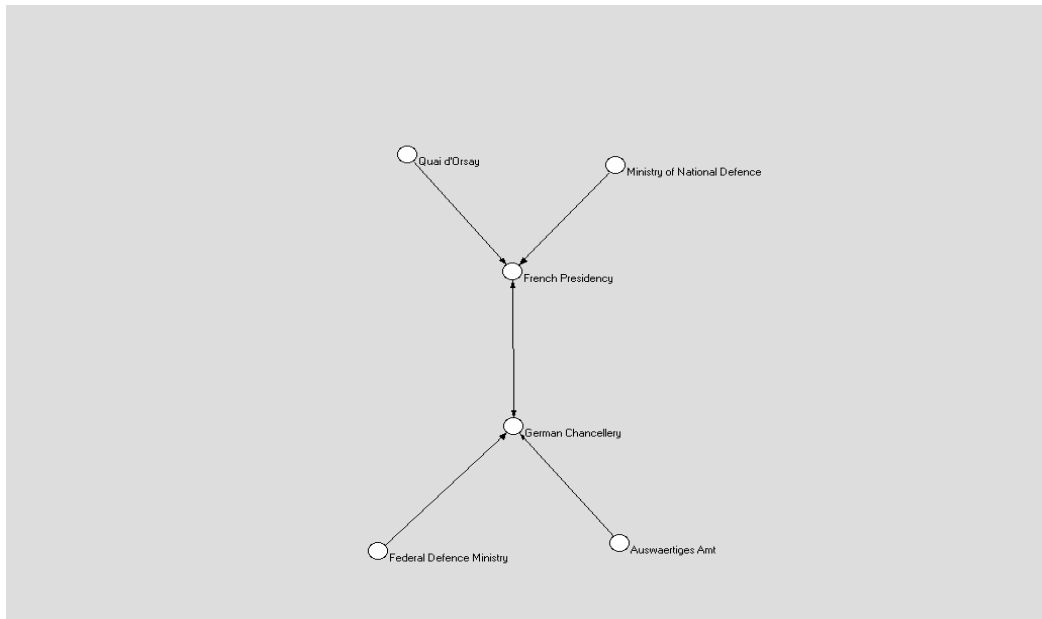
“National authorities in the EU can no longer unilaterally fulfil their primary responsibilities of maintaining territorial integrity and ensuring economic growth. Not only do security threats now trespass into areas once considered to be strictly domestic, but the transformation of the European state has made it increasingly

difficult to achieve its security goals owing to the vulnerabilities of the post-Westphalian state to external shocks. The mitigation of those vulnerabilities evades a national solution ...”

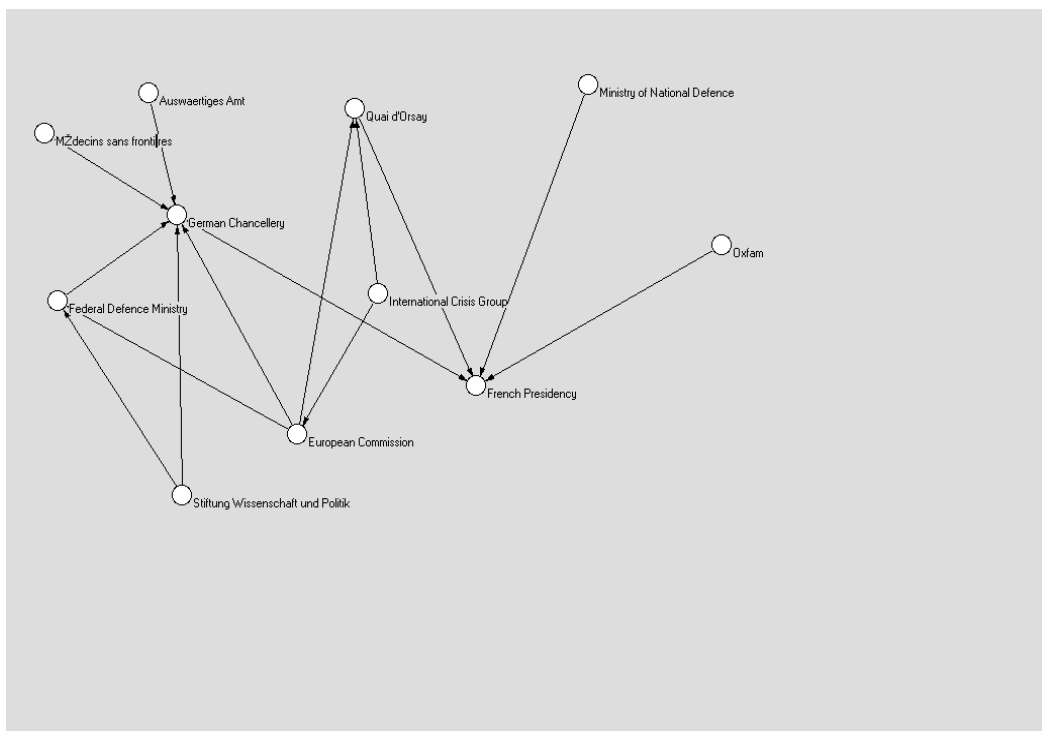
These various concepts speak to a form of international cooperation defined by Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (1974) as transgovernmentalism. According to Keohane and Nye (1974: 43), transgovernmental cooperation implies “direct interactions among sub-units of different governments that are not controlled or closely guided by the policies of cabinets or chief executives of those governments.” These networks of government officials interact beneath formal state hierarchies along functional lines (through transversal bureaucratic cooperation) to produce policy outcomes (Slaughter 2004). By contrast, intergovernmentalism describes traditional inter-state relations that take place exclusively via chiefs of government and the formal diplomatic machinery, while transnationalism refers to dense interaction across different levels of society – thus including non-state actors and supranational organizations such as the EU in a more complex form of governance.

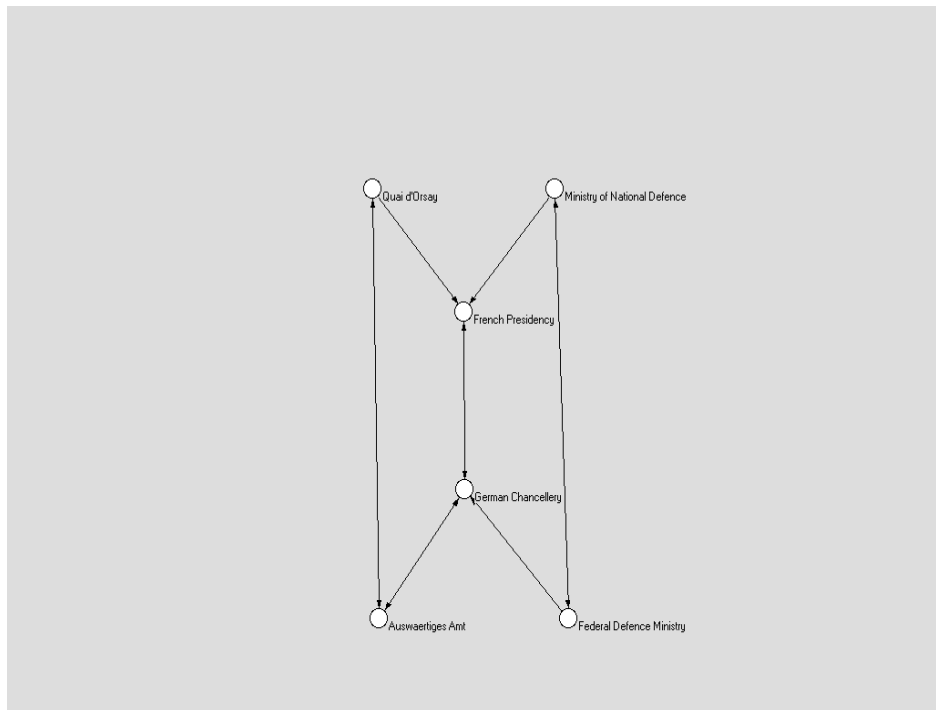
Each form of international cooperation defined by Keohane and Nye corresponds to a different network structure. These network structures differ along two dimensions: the locus of gatekeeping and the strength of national borders (Sissenich 2008). Gatekeeping refers to who controls access to important sections of the network. Border effects refer to the boundaries that delineate cohesive groups within the network. As depicted in Graph 1, a stylized intergovernmental network structure is one in which chief executives (or their representatives) constitute the sole gatekeepers. Supranational institutions are marginal and there are no meaningful cross-border connections beneath the level of formal state representatives. Thus, there are strong gatekeeping and strong border effects. Graph 2, by contrast, depicts a hypothetical transnational network, in which state and non-state actors, as well as EU institutions, are related in numerous ways above and beneath formal diplomatic links. Gatekeeping and border effects are, therefore, non-existent. In between these two extremes, Graph 3 describes a transgovernmental network, in which a dense web of relations above and beneath formal hierarchies coalesce around the EU level, but national state actors remain at the core of the network. Here, border effects are weak but gatekeeping by government actors remains strong. In this paper, we operationalize transgovernmentalism as a strong fit between the empirical ESDP network and this stylized transgovernmental network structure.

**Graph 1. Intergovernmentalism**



**Graph 2. Transnationalism**



**Graph 3. Transgovernmentalism**

### 3. Method and data

Our research strategy is to measure gatekeeping and border effects in the empirical ESDP network. Strong gatekeeping by government actors associated with weak border effects would be evidence of a transgovernmental structure in the ESDP network. Conversely, strong border and gatekeeping effects would be evidence of an intergovernmental structure while weak border and gatekeeping effects would substantiate transnationalist arguments. To graph the ESDP network, we use the Pajek software package for social network analysis. The data used to graph this network was collected through a standardized questionnaire circulated to “key” ESDP actors in France, Germany, the UK, and in Brussels. We conceive of an actor not as a person but as an organizational unit with unity of function. This includes the many divisions in a government department that deal with European security (for example the EU, CFSP and NATO desks as well as the political directorate and political staff in a foreign ministry) but also interest groups, political actors and think tanks that focus on ESDP. There are sound reasons to begin with these three countries (in addition to the two European security organizations). First, these countries provide a good starting point for analysis because they are the most consequential military powers in the system of European security governance (Webber et al. 2004). Second, each has a distinct strategic outlook with which other EU member states tend to align (Mérand 2008; Jones 2007; Howorth 2007).

Delineating the scale of a network is a challenge because it depends on analytical criteria and not on random sampling. Three standard criteria were used to identify the population of key ESDP actors (cf. Kriesi and Jegen 2001): (1) we scanned the organizational chart of every government department, political party or interest group interested in security policy with a view to identifying decision-making units and observers in France, Germany, the UK, and in EU institutions (*positional criterion*); (2) we did an in-depth study of ESDP-related conferences, seminars, summits, etc. in order to extract actors who took a stand on ESDP issues on behalf of their organization (*participative criterion*); (3) we submitted the resulting list containing several hundred units to a small group of ESDP experts, who added key units they thought were missing, but also subtracted those they thought were too marginal to ESDP debates (*reputational criterion*). A sample of 100 ESDP actors was created on the basis of that last iteration.

The questionnaire was circulated between October 2007 and May 2009. To graph the network, respondents were asked whom they had cooperated with in the past two years on ESDP files. We define cooperation as the intensive exchange of important information and joint work towards the development of common positions. Consequently, the network is based on social relations of cooperation. Most questionnaires were administered in face-to-face interviews but, in a limited number of cases, they were left for the interviewee to fill out. The latter option was only used to minimize missing data, as we preferred to err in the direction of increasing the response rate, which is 73% (73 actors). Only 43 of the questionnaires could be used to perform network analysis, but symmetrization produced a network of 117 actors.<sup>2</sup> Taken together, French, British and German actors represent 89% of our population. Thirty percent are career diplomats, 24% military officers, 16% EU or national members of parliament, 18% academics, interest group or NGO people, and 12% civilian officials (e.g. civilian official working in a defence ministry or EU *fonctionnaire*). Some diplomats and military officers are seconded to EU institutions, usually the Council Secretariat, or to the executive branch. Thirty-one percent of our sample work in Brussels and the remainder in national capitals. All the interviewees held positions of responsibility in organizational units. While names cannot be divulged for reasons of confidentiality, we are confident that this sample provides an accurate picture of the ESDP domain so far as France, Germany, and the UK are concerned.

Two methodological limitations should be stressed. First, because data collection was limited to three EU member states (in addition to Brussels-based institutions), it is likely that we were not able to capture patterns that are more prevalent in countries with different security traditions, notably non-aligned countries. The weakness of civilian and non-state actors in our analysis may be a result of the fact that we selected the EU's three military powers, while countries like Sweden and Finland have been more involved in civilian files. Another potential bias is related to the timeframe of the study. Fieldwork was conducted during four successive EU presidencies: Portugal, Slovenia, France, and the Czech Republic. Also, the main activity during this period was EUFOR Chad, an operation with a strong military

component led by the French. As a result, the role of French and military actors in our analysis may have been altered somewhat since they may have been more solicited than is usually the case. Note, however, that we did not conduct a disproportionate number of interviews under any of these four presidencies.

#### 4. The Main ESDP Brokers: Beyond National Gatekeeping?

In this section, we identify the main brokers in the ESDP field. Based on network theory, we assume that certain actors occupy strategic positions in the network that depend on their ability to control the flow of cooperation (Scott 2000). Brokerage is a measure of the importance of one's ties in bridging different components of the network, that is, in keeping the social structure together. Brokerage suggests that some actors become key points of contact because they control access to specific subgroups. The disappearance of these brokers would break the network into its constituent parts.<sup>3</sup> Pajek produces a structural index of brokerage, called *gatekeeping*, which captures the ability to control the flow of cooperation towards one's subgroup (de Nooy et al. 2005: 151).<sup>4</sup>

Measuring gatekeeping requires that we assign each organizational unit to a predetermined partition. We defined six groups in the network: France, UK, Germany, EU, NATO, and interest groups/think tanks. In our view, these three governmental, two intergovernmental and one non-state group correspond to the main formal categories of actors in CSDP. Whereas an intergovernmental network structure should be composed of only one gatekeeper per group (with a high gatekeeping score) – for example the executive branch of a country – a transgovernmental or a transnational structure should be composed of several gatekeepers, reflecting the relative fluidity of cooperation patterns. For the transgovernmentalist thesis to hold, it is particularly important that government actors should be gatekeepers to their country but that no single government actor controls all access; there must be several governmental gates to the domestic level, so to speak.

Table 1 displays a list of the top 16 gatekeepers in the ESDP network based on two different matrices. For each actor, we give two scores: Column A is the score based on the original matrix in which collaborative ties are directed (e.g. *y* reported collaboration with *z* but *z* did not). Column B is the score based on the “symmetrized” matrix. To symmetrize, we produce an undirected network in which any identified cooperation, regardless of whether it was reported by only one or the two actors involved, is considered to be a tie. In other words, in the symmetrized matrix we assume that self-reported cooperative ties are necessarily reciprocal, while in the original matrix, we did not. Accepting potentially unilateral ties explains why gatekeeping scores are higher in a symmetrized network.<sup>5</sup> The substantial overlap of Column A and Column B (for the top 16 positions), however, is evidence of the reliability of the symmetrical matrix vis-à-vis the non-symmetrical matrix.<sup>6</sup>

Taken as a whole, the results presented in Table 1 are instructive. The number of gatekeepers in the ESDP network is small and, regardless of which matrix we use, the three PSC ambassadors come up in the six top gatekeeping positions. This means that: (1) formal diplomatic representatives are the main point of contact between their domestic colleagues and other ESDP actors; (2) they generally occupy key strategic positions in the ESDP network. But, in contrast to the pre-ESDP era when capital-based political directors controlled the agenda (Smith 2004), these actors are permanently based in Brussels where they interact on a weekly basis. They also have to share their gatekeeping role with a limited number of government actors who also act as brokers. Other national gatekeepers include: in Germany, the capital-based political directorate, the foreign ministry's policy staff and the defence staff's EU division; in France, the defence ministry's strategic affairs delegation, the defence staff's EU affairs division and the foreign minister's political director; and, in the UK (but to a much lesser extent), the defence staff. Seasoned observers of the ESDP scene will have instinctively recognized these actors as very plausible brokers in the ESDP domain, but social network analysis produces results that are grounded in systematic patterns of cooperation.

Overall, this suggests that gatekeeping by Brussels-based state actors is strong across the ESDP domain. Gatekeeping among EU institutions is more diffuse. Indeed, several political-military bodies seem to play a minor brokering role: the EU Military Committee, the EU Military Staff, the European Defence Agency, and the Council Secretariat's DG for political-military affairs, to which one should add the European Parliament's security and defence subcommittee. This can be attributed to the fact that, by virtue of their coordination mandate, each of these organizational units has to cultivate relations with a fairly wide range of actors from different EU member states. Among interest groups, the Aerospace and Defence Industry Association of Europe (ASD) stands out: this is not surprising given that it represents 30 industry associations in Brussels. More interesting is the gatekeeping role played by the Centre for European Reform, which despite the fact that it is based in London, has been arguably the most active think tank with regards to ESDP since 2000, with several remarked publications and events.

The analysis of gatekeeping yields a picture that is both nuanced and faithful to ESDP's terms of reference, one in which formal state representatives occupy strategic positions. Despite this privileged status, however, PSC ambassadors do not fully control the dense flow of cooperation that criss-crosses the network and easily transcends borders. Other government actors, especially officials in defence and foreign ministries, also control access to domestic subnetworks. Interestingly, political leaders, such as 10 Downing Street, the foreign minister's cabinet or the High Representative's staff, are more remote from the main channels of cooperation. As Duke and Vanhoonacker (2006) argue, administrative actors are more heavily involved in everyday policy-making than political actors.

**Table 1. Gatekeeping Scores in the ESDP Network**

(partitions: Germany, France, UK, EU, NATO, interest groups/think tanks)

|  | <b>Non-symmetrical collaboration network</b> | <b>Symmetrical collaboration network</b> |
|--|--|--|
| UKPR (PSC ambassador)                                      | 36   | 184                                      |
| German PR (PSC ambassador)                                 | 35   | 117                                      |
| European Parliament SEDE                                   | 30   | 86                                       |
| German defence staff EU affairs                            | 28   | 134                                      |
| French PR (PSC ambassador)                                 | 24   | 334                                      |
| ASD  | 21   | 41                                       |
| EU Military Committee                                      | 20   | 38                                       |
| German Foreign Ministry's policy staff                     | 19   | 47                                       |
| French Defence Ministry's Delegation for Strategic Affairs | 19   | 127                                      |
| EU Military Staff  | 19   | 36                                       |
| Centre for European Reform                                 | 16   | 85                                       |
| European Defence Agency                                    | 15   | 70                                       |
| German Foreign Ministry's Political Directorate            | 12   | 767                                      |
| French Foreign Ministry's Political Directorate            | 3  | 96                                       |
| UK Defence Staff   | 1  | 59                                       |
| Council DG-E   | 0  | 65                                       |
| French Defence Staff's EU Affairs                          | 0  | 72                                       |

We also find that different administrations are structured differently, gatekeeping being more diffuse among EU bodies than in the capitals. Gatekeeping is in fact strongest among interest groups and think tanks, which suggests that very few interest groups and think tanks have privileged access to the rest of the ESDP network. In general, PSC ambassadors and the ASD derive a prominent gatekeeping role from their mandate as government or industry *representatives* while EU institutions, which are supposed to act as *coordinators*, exhibit

weaker gatekeeping strength. As Juncos and Pomorska (2010) show in their article, the latter role is well understood by Council officials, who use words like “secretariat” or “facilitator” to describe their tasks.

## 5. Crossing Borders: A Basis for Transgovernmental Coalitions?

After gatekeeping, we now turn to a closer analysis of border effects, which is the second dimension of an international cooperation structure. One way of measuring border effects is to map out the constellation of actors. We want to see which actors have similar patterns of collaborative ties. This is called “structural equivalence” in social network analysis. Actors who belong to structurally equivalent positions and, in addition, who are related to each other, can be assumed to form cohesive subgroups. These actors are more likely to form coalitions that will push for specific policy initiatives. At the political level, an example would be the 2003 proposal to set up a European Headquarters made by France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg (dubbed the “Chocolates”). At the bureaucratic level, it could include attempts on the part of defence procurement officials to push for new armaments programs in the context of the European Defence Agency. While intergovernmentalism assumes that such clusters will be structured along national lines, transgovernmentalism predicts that they will be structured along functional lines and thus across borders. Transnationalism would add that a significant number of non-state actors should be involved in these clusters.

Thus, we define a potential coalition as a cohesive subgroup in which all actors meet two conditions: (1) they have identical ties to other actors (structural equivalence), and (2) they are related to each other (relation). In network theory, structural equivalence can be analyzed through a procedure called blockmodeling. Like the analysis of gatekeeping, blockmodeling requires that we impose a number of clusters on the network. We tested several options and, at the end, assigned seven clusters to the blockmodel.<sup>7</sup> This corresponds to our theoretical expectation that the ESDP field is structured around seven formal groups: France, the UK, Germany, EU, NATO, interest groups, and think tanks (here we distinguish the two kinds of non-state actors).

To detect structural equivalence, blockmodeling produces an *image matrix*, which distinguishes blocks in which actors have identical ties (called complete blocks [com]) from blocks in which there are no such patterns (- or null). In a large network such as ours, it is very rare that perfect blocks of structural equivalence can be formed (that is, clusters in which groups of actors have perfectly identical social relations). That is why blockmodeling rearranges the matrix of collaborative ties until blocks of structural equivalence are found wherein error is *minimized*. The final *error matrix* shows the error score for each block, that is, the number of ties that do not fit a perfect structural equivalence pattern at the end of the iterative blockmodeling procedure.

Table 2 shows the ESDP network's image and final error matrices. Since we add the condition that actors need to be related to each other, only the complete groups that show up along the main diagonal of the image matrix will be retained (Wasserman and Faust 1994: 419). The image matrix then shows three cohesive subgroups, illustrated by the presence of a complete [com] block on the diagonal. These cohesive sub-groups are central in the ESDP network: 14 of their members are also among the top 16 gatekeepers. The members of these groups are listed on Table 3. Block A (cross section of 3-3 on the image matrix) includes French defence officials and EU Council Secretariat staff. Block B (cross section of 4-4 on the image matrix) includes EU political-military bodies, also located in the Council Secretariat, the French foreign ministry's political director, and the British defence staff and Permanent Representation. These two blocks, we would argue, form the core group of the ESDP bureaucratic machinery, both in Brussels and in the capitals. Block C (cross section of 6-6 on the image matrix) depicts a group of capital-based, mostly defence ministry-related Franco-German actors. The other complete blocks (for example 3-2 or 5-2) contain actors who are structurally equivalent but not necessarily related to each other and so are not considered to be cohesive.

**Table 2. Image and Error Matrix - 7 assigned clusters**

Final Image Matrix:

|   | 1 | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   |
|---|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | - | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   | -   |
| 2 | - | -   | com | -   | com | -   | -   |
| 3 | - | com | com | com | com | com | -   |
| 4 | - | -   | com | com | com | -   | -   |
| 5 | - | com | com | com | -   | com | com |
| 6 | - | -   | com | -   | com | com | -   |
| 7 | - | -   | -   | -   | com | -   | -   |

Final Error Matrix:

|   | 1   | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5 | 6  | 7  |
|---|-----|----|----|----|---|----|----|
| 1 | 100 | 16 | 36 | 33 | 0 | 7  | 51 |
| 2 | 16  | 2  | 8  | 7  | 1 | 4  | 10 |
| 3 | 36  | 8  | 0  | 6  | 0 | 11 | 39 |
| 4 | 33  | 7  | 6  | 8  | 0 | 16 | 36 |
| 5 | 0   | 1  | 0  | 0  | 0 | 1  | 0  |
| 6 | 7   | 4  | 11 | 16 | 1 | 8  | 36 |
| 7 | 51  | 10 | 39 | 36 | 0 | 36 | 50 |

Final error = 804.000

**Table 3. Cohesive Sub-Groups**

| CORE ESDP ACTORS   |  | FRANCO-GERMAN GROUP                  |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| Block A (3-3)  | Block B (4-4)                              | Block C (6-6)                        |
| French Defence Ministry EU Affairs                         | French Foreign Ministry Political Director | French Defence Staff EU Affairs      |
| French Defence Ministry's Delegation for Strategic Affairs | French Defence Staff                       | French defence minister's cabinet    |
| FPR PSC Ambassador   | UKPR PSC Ambassador                        | German Defence Ministry Policy Staff |
| DGE Council Secretariat                                    | UKPR Military Representative               | German Defence Staff EU Affairs      |
| EUMS   | PSC  | German Defence Ministry Policy Staff |
|  | EU High Representative                     | German Chancellery                   |
|  | European Defence Agency                    |                                      |
|  | EUMC                                       |                                      |

Our results are quite robust. Roughly the same constellation of actors is found when running a blockmodeling procedure with four, five, six or eight assigned clusters. Although the structural equivalence position of some actors changes, we find each time one or two transgovernmental groups of *core ESDP actors* that include Council Secretariat bodies, the Brussels-based permanent representations, and sometimes key ESDP decision-makers from the capitals, along with a small *Franco-German group* centred around the German Chancellery, the German defence ministry and the French defence ministry. Four procedures out of five also generated a small group of *German-only decision-makers*. None of the parliamentary, interest group, think tank or functional (non-ESDP) government divisions belong to a cohesive subgroup in any of the blockmodels (that is, they may be in a structurally equivalent position but not related to each other).

This suggests that there exist two potential transgovernmental coalitions in the ESDP domain. First, the core policy group of crisis management and capability development officials, which brings together the Council Secretariat, the permanent representations, and a number of capital-based security officials. Second, we consistently find a smaller but very robust Franco-German group of (mostly) defence officials who are based in their capitals. This is evidence of an intensive border crossing that is, however, limited to a very small number of government officials. Although other ESDP actors are not completely trapped by their national borders, there are few structurally equivalent positions across borders that would suggest any basis for cohesion and collective action. While a modicum of

transgovernmentalism is definitely taking place, we find little trace of transnationalism or security governance beyond government actors.

## 6. Conclusion

This article is part of a larger research project on the ESDP domain.<sup>8</sup> To date, scholars have no reliable and systematic information on ESDP decision-making processes. Ultimately, the objective of our project is to map out the policy domain by identifying the position of actors, their social relations, trajectory, social representations, and role in the decision-making process. The social network analysis of the ESDP domain presented here provides tentative answers to two research questions. Using cooperation as an indicator, we observe that the actors who are formally responsible for speaking on behalf of their state, namely the PSC ambassadors, occupy a strategic position in the web of cooperation. These actors act as the main gatekeepers for their respective domestic government arena. Several EU political-military bodies also play an important role, but as coordinators. Especially around EU institutions, the network is quite dense and contains a number of transversal links between bureaucratic actors from different countries, some of whom also provide access to important sections of the network – but they do not go beyond what is expected of formal bureaucratic interaction. By and large, political leaders, interest groups and think tanks are marginal in daily cooperation practices.

The transgovernmentalist thesis finds greater support when looking at the constellation of actors in structurally equivalent positions. In line with the transgovernmentalist thesis, our findings thus suggest a fairly high degree of interaction among actors from different countries, which may sometimes lead to genuine cooperation across borders, but predominantly along narrow bureaucratic lines. We discern two potential coalitions that cross national boundaries: *a core policy group* of crisis management and capability development officials in and around the Council, and a *Franco-German group* of capital-based defence actors. While the former is mainly functional in character, the latter looks more political and could be related to 50 years of close Franco-German cooperation. Thus, there are clear elements of transgovernmentalism in the ESDP domain, but the phenomenon seems limited to a narrow group of officials. The next step will be to analyze whether these two cohesive subgroups have played a key role in specific cases of decision-making, such as the decision to launch a crisis management operation or to develop a procurement program.

Has ESDP moved beyond formal inter-state relations? A close look at the ESDP network provides some nuances in the theoretical debate between, on the one hand, realists and intergovernmentalists who believe that ESDP is an instrument in the hands of big states that pursue their national interest and, on the other hand, constructivists and institutionalists who argue that the EU is playing a key role in forging compromises in the ever more complex governance of European security (Irondelle 2003). This article suggests that it may be

impossible to draw a clear line or adjudicate between these two well-entrenched positions. Indeed, what emerges from our structural approach to ESDP is a policy domain in which intergovernmentalism and transgovernmentalism coexist as forms of security governance.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>2</sup> Some respondents did not fill out the network matrix, or did not fill it out properly, which generates missing data. On symmetrization, see following section.

<sup>3</sup> Technically, a broker is a vertex (here an actor) whose removal creates a structural hole and thus increases the number of separate components in the network.

<sup>4</sup> A gatekeeper is situated on a path from an actor from another group towards an actor from his or her own group, provided that these actors are not themselves directly connected. Gatekeepers can be ranked according to the number of incomplete triads (that is, subnetworks containing three actors) in which the actor is a broker.

<sup>5</sup> Symmetrization is a common procedure in social network analysis to address the problem of missing data but it has the potential effect of skewing the data. For example, an actor who identified a large number of collaborative ties could end up being a broker even though others did not necessarily identify this actor as a collaborator. To correct this potential bias, we eliminated from the network actors who reported an unreasonably high number of cooperative ties relative to the number of times they were themselves identified as collaborators. But the best remedy is to cross check the original and symmetrized results.

<sup>6</sup> Note, however, that the ranking of gatekeepers is altered. Cross-checking the two columns suggests that the gatekeeping score of four actors (the German foreign ministry's political directorate, the strategic policy division of the French foreign ministry, the French defence staff, the UK defence staff, and the EU Council Secretariat's political-military DG) is probably underestimated in the original matrix, while that of four other actors (Aerospace and Defence Industry Association of Europe, EU Military Committee, EU Military Staff, and Auswärtiges Amt's policy planning staff) is probably overestimated. This is due to the fact that gatekeeping considers the flow of cooperation *to* one's group and not *from* one's group in the original matrix, while both flows are considered in the symmetrized matrix. To our knowledge, there are no methodological grounds to choose one ranking over the other.

<sup>7</sup> Here, we use the symmetrized network.

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