THE BRUSSELS WALL AND
A EUROPEAN SECURITY
ARCHITECTURE:

NATO-EU COOPERATION
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS

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Acknowledgements

While this Masters dissertation technically marks the end of a year of studying Security Studies in London, its foundations are largely entrenched in a similar undertaking as part of my undergraduate degree at University College Utrecht in the Netherlands. Researching NATO-EU cooperation seemingly was a logical transition from what I had been working on last year: Dutch foreign- and defense policy. Correspondingly, the unfolding of the crisis in Ukraine sparked my interest in the endeavors of Europe’s foremost security institutions to mitigate this emerging threat. Notwithstanding the wealth of academic literature on NATO-EU cooperation, the Russian military incursions in Ukraine provided me with an impetus to investigate the dynamics of inter-institutional cooperation in greater detail. The intellectual challenge posed by the nature of the subject matter required me to seek the mentorship of professionals in the field of Security Studies. To that extent, I want to express my utmost gratitude to the following people. First of all, to my UCL supervisor Dr Samuel Raszewski, who critically assessed my work throughout the entire period of supervision. Secondly, I want to thank the following persons for their constructive criticism: LSE Professor Christopher Coker, Dr Simon J. Smith of the University of Bath, Colonel Peter Loukes of the Royal Netherlands Air Force, LSE Fellow Dr Nicola Chelotti, Professor Richard G. Whitman of the University of Kent, and Mr Martin Michelot of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Finally, I want to thank all interviewees who participated in my research, and whose names and affiliations are (occasionally) to be found in the appendices of this dissertation. Without your guidance and expertise, this dissertation would have been impossible to complete.
Abstract

This Masters dissertation seeks to investigate how the preliminary stages of the Ukrainian crisis have impacted the cooperation between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Previous academic research has not only analyzed the separate institutional developments of both organizations, but also maintained that a critical juncture would be necessary for the strained inter-institutional relationship to improve. In the aftermath of the Euromaidan revolution, followed by the Russian annexation of Crimea and subsequent military intervention in Eastern Ukraine, the European security architecture was provided with a much-needed opportunity for change. Building upon theories that focus on historical institutionalism and critical junctures, this thesis aims to elicit the precise mechanisms by which the Ukrainian crisis has impacted NATO-EU cooperation both through its political and military dimensions. On the one hand, the empirical evidence gathered in this dissertation indicates that the Ukrainian crisis has urged both institutions to enhance their cooperation. In particular, NATO and the EU have vowed their ambition to jointly mitigate the threats associated with hybrid warfare. At the same time, the Ukrainian crisis has aggravated the political divide in Europe as member states harbor different policy stances depending on their geographical proximity to the conflict. Simultaneously, differences of opinion between key figures in U.S. foreign policy and their European counterparts further heightened existing tensions inherent to the NATO-EU relationship. The Ukrainian crisis appears to have had mixed effects on NATO-EU cooperation thus far, but further research is required to gather more conclusive evidence.
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1. Introduction

1.1. Preface

Many contemporary developments in the European security architecture, such as the rise of the European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) and the Strategic Concept of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), stem from the end of the Cold War in the late twentieth century. Yet, as the security threats of the twenty-first century have become increasingly diverse – ranging from international terrorism to migrant crises and hybrid warfare – Europe’s most iconic security providers are now finding themselves in an institutional environment that requires better forms of cooperation with fewer resources. For that reason, the strained relationship between NATO and the European Union (EU) has gained renewed interest by academics researching institutional development and inter-organizational relations (Knutsen: 2012; Gebhard and Smith: 2015). Despite the geographical proximity of both organization’s headquarters in the capital of Belgium, the rather unyielding partnership has caused some scholars to call for the dismantling of another infamous wall in Europe: the ‘Brussels Wall’ (Drozdiak: 2010).

Although the division of labour between both organizations was initially strictly separated along a hard power-soft power divide, the EU has expressed its ambition to form Battle Groups (EUBG) that are capable of conducting crisis management operations abroad (Larsen: 2002; Posen: 2004; Menon: 2009). Yet, the capability-dilemma has been plaguing the EU ever since the inception

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1 ESDP is the precursor to the EU’s Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP); the latter acronym will henceforth be referred to.
of its foreign policy ambitions. An often-cited illustration here is Christopher Hill’s analysis of the ‘capabilities-expectations gap’. Put simply, Hill argues that there is a large discrepancy between the military ambitions set out by the EU and what can be achieved in practice (Hill 1993: 315). At the same time, the proliferation of asymmetric forms of violence (such as terrorism and hybrid warfare) has provided NATO with a wide array of opportunities to redefine its traditional core purpose of ensuring collective defense. Despite two decades of efforts to enhance the European security architecture, the relationship between NATO and the EU continues to be subject to sources of contestation, particularly in the highest political realms.²

Concerning NATO-EU cooperation, scholarly work thus far has identified both areas of contestation (Van Ham: 2013) on the ‘clash of strategic cultures’ and cooperation (Riggio: 2003) on ‘complementarity in crisis management’). The general consensus among academics holds that while informal cooperation at the staff-level is experiencing an upward trend, formal political arrangements remain insufficient despite official statements painting a rosier picture (Græger and Haugevik: 2011). Not infrequently, scholars have therefore referred to the NATO-EU relationship as being paralyzed due to “institutional fatigue” (Smith 2011: 243). Some have even gone as far as to say that both organizations face “irrelevance due to continued competition and conflicting interests” (Duke 2008: 27).

² In this context, contestation encompasses what Howorth and Keeler (2003) have referred to as the ‘quest for European autonomy’, or the ability of the EU to credibly act as a security guarantor without unabiding American involvement.
Perhaps, then, an external shock or crisis situation might be able to generate the much-desired change that would foster a more harmonious relationship between NATO and the EU? Greif and Laitin (2004: 639) have pointed out that “institutions can change due to endogenous processes, external shocks, and combinations of both.” Over the past two decades, both NATO and the EU have been witnessing endogenous transformations as a consequence of institutional enlargement in Eastern Europe. Increasingly penetrating into the post-Soviet space, both organizations have been able to succumb former USSR-republics to Western-inspired principles such as democracy, rule of law and freedom of speech. Against the backdrop of the extensive history of NATO-EU cooperation and contestation, this dissertation is confined to the most recent developments and institutional processes that have metamorphosed both organizations. To further that purpose, the following research question is being addressed:

“Has the Ukrainian crisis - between 2013 and 2015 - pressurized NATO and the EU into higher levels of political and military cooperation, or did it instead drive a wedge between both organizations?”

1.2. Scope and Relevance

It is precisely through the investigation of the NATO-EU cooperation in the context of the Ukrainian crisis that this dissertation seeks to make a novel and yet predominantly empirical contribution to the literature. Dr Simon J. Smith has extensively researched the relationship between both organizations and his conclusions echo many of the aforementioned intricacies. In the final remarks of his PhD-thesis, Smith (2013: 265) alludes to the following: “If the
EU and NATO are to ever truly achieve a ‘Strategic Partnership’, it will stem from an existential security critical juncture and not from internal evolutionary processes." Hence, this dissertation takes Smith’s proposition as a starting point to empirically validate the claim that exogenous events are indeed necessary to forge a transformation of the static NATO-EU relationship. It should be stressed however that no definite conclusions can be drawn regarding the ‘post-crisis effects’ of the Ukrainian crisis on the NATO-EU cooperation due to its on-going status.

As can be inferred from the preceding paragraphs, a wide array of security challenges marks the current environment in which NATO and the EU are embedded. Yet, one cannot adequately grasp the complexity of NATO-EU cooperation during crisis situations without an understanding of the dynamics during times of relative stability. Without too many immediate threats looming, individual member states in both NATO and the EU are more prone to employ strategies aimed at securing national interests rather than fostering cooperation on the supranational level. The Cyprus-case is one such example that shows how particular member states (i.e. Turkey) are able to ‘take hostage’ efforts at formal cooperation in NATO and the EU by calling upon their veto powers (Hofmann: 2009).

Additionally, member state strategies frequently result in ‘turf battles’ both within and across institutions that primarily arise due to competition over power and influence in the decision-making process (Alter and Meunier: 2009).

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3 These are effects pertaining to the ‘post-crisis period’, which is characterized by an observable decline in the level of intensity of one or more of three perceptual conditions: threat, time salience and war probability (Brecher 1979: 21).
The most prominent illustration of such turf battles includes the effort by some EU member states to see the CSDP reign supreme over NATO as Europe’s foremost provider of collective security and crisis management (Hofmann: 2009). Clearly, this was seen as a way to curtail U.S. influence over European foreign policy through NATO (Varwick and Koops: 2009).

In answering the research question, the relevance of this dissertation should be viewed in the light of its ability to help comprehend how crisis situations affect inter-institutional cooperation. For instance, it has been stipulated that the economic crisis in Europe forged better cooperation among member states in securing prosperity and stability (Moravcsik: 2009). The same scholar subsequently maintains that, although for pragmatic reasons, “Europe is stronger than ever”. If ‘pragmatism’ is the key word that defines cooperation between member states in the economic realm, then the puzzle that this dissertation seeks to address is what notion best describes supranational policymaking in the European defense and security arena.

1.3. Structure

Prior to elaborating on the exact causal mechanisms by which the Ukrainian crisis has affected NATO-EU cooperation, an outline now follows that elaborates on the theoretical framework and methodological set-up of this dissertation. Theoretically, historical institutionalism is being used as the analytical lens, before drawing upon the narrower conceptualization of critical juncture theory. The methodological approach central to this dissertation invokes the virtues of process tracing, a qualitative research technique frequently heralded by Collier (2011: 823).
After the introduction (Chapter 1), the theoretical framework (Chapter 2) and the methodological approach (Chapter 3) to this dissertation, Chapter 4 elaborates on the empirical findings directly associated with the research question and hypotheses. It consists of three distinct parts (designated in the dissertation as ‘Phase I, II and III’), and separates the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on NATO-EU cooperation by adhering to a chronological divide: 1) Euromaidan Revolution; 2) Russian intervention in Crimea; 3) War in Eastern-Ukraine. Therefore, the entire time scale under consideration spans from the 21st of November 2013, when the mass protests erupted in the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv, up until the 30th of May 2015, when the Russian Federation imposed a travel ban on 89 European political and military leaders in response to a similar list compiled as part of the EU sanctions (The Guardian: 2015).

Chapter 5 of this dissertation concludes by disseminating the empirical findings, by summarizing the theoretical- and policy implications, and by making suggestions for future research as well as specifying the limitations of this thesis. It should be stressed that the primordial objective has not been to provide an exhaustive account of the Ukrainian crisis and its impact on NATO-EU cooperation. Rather, it acknowledges the importance of critical junctures in the theorization of inter-institutional cooperation and aspires to elicit the precise mechanisms by which NATO-EU cooperation will continue to evolve. Future research should therefore, with the benefit of hindsight, be better positioned to substantiate the main conclusions drawn in this study.
2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Historical Institutionalism

Previous analyses performed on NATO-EU cooperation have frequently invoked historical institutionalist theory to account for organizational developments across time and space, and therefore serve as an excellent tool for contextualizing the research question. As part of a group of theories in International Relations (IR), historical institutionalism distinguishes itself by providing a theoretical lens to the development of political institutions, structures and policies over time, and occasionally across countries (Pierson and Skocpol: 2002).

Clearly, the intellectual puzzle that is NATO-EU cooperation in the wake of the Ukraine crisis requires a theoretical approach that is both comprehensive and all-encompassing. In accordance with Pierson and Skocpol’s (2002: 3) argument, this dissertation therefore initially employs historical institutionalism because it enables the analysis of “substantive questions that are inherently of broad publics as well as to fellow scholars.” Against the backdrop of this dissertation’s research, historical institutionalism has frequently been applied to enlargement processes within NATO and the EU (Pierson: 1996; Aspinwall and Schneider: 2000; Jacoby: 2004).

Within that context, historical institutionalism is particularly promising when applied to the NATO-EU relationship on a macro-level scale that stresses structural constraints and modes of behaviour. This is what Singer (1961: 80) has referred to as the ‘systemic level of analysis’, which “permits us to
examine international relations in the whole”. It is clear that most of the
previous research on NATO-EU cooperation has adopted a rather systemic
perspective, which focuses on such concepts as ‘strategic culture’ (Cornish
and Edwards: 2005). The impact of the previously discussed Turkish-Cyprus
impasse on NATO-EU cooperation remains significant, as is the case with the
current lack of political leadership in particular the EU to forge an effective
common security and defence policy (Kamp 2015: 184). These are symptoms
of the earlier discussed capabilities-expectations gap that has been plaguing
the EU for years.

Despite building upon existing literature, this dissertation requires additional
theoretical input due to its sub-systemic focus on how a quintessential crisis
situation has impacted NATO-EU cooperation. That is not to say that systemic,
structural factors are not important when investigating the intricacies of inter-
institutional relations. Rather, while acknowledging the forces driving these
dynamics, the sub-systemic level of analysis adopted here should allow for a
picture that exhibits “richer depth, greater detail and more intensive portrayal”
(Singer 1961: 89). Ideally, mere correlation ought to be transformed into
causation when moving from the systemic level of analysis to its sub-systemic
twin. The next sections will be zooming in on these sub-systemic factors, and
in particular how critical junctures or crisis situations affect multiple levels of
analysis.

2.2. Critical Juncture Theory

Frequently associated with the theory of historical institutionalism, critical
junctures typically constitute a “historical decision point at which there are
clear alternative paths to the future (Calder and Ye 2004: 198).” Yet, critical junctures not only lend themselves for their incorporation into a theoretical framework, but also for the methodology of research designs. As has been pointed out by Mahoney (2015: 204), sequential analysis, with its strong links to process-tracing, “often identifies critical junctures when certain choices or events occurred that set countries down long-run trajectories of change.”

According to Mahoney (2001:113) and other scholars, including Calder and Ye, every critical juncture has three main components:

1. “**Critical junctures are located at or about the same time as a crisis event that challenges the status quo and its institutional arrangements.**
2. **The crisis itself ushers in a social backlash and creates stimuli for change.**
3. **Time pressure creates a sense of urgency for decision makers and affects the decision making process.**”

Although empirical evidence is required to test whether the Ukrainian crisis indeed presents itself as an appropriate example of a critical juncture, the fact that these three components can indeed be observed indicates that on a preliminary basis this proposition holds. Chapter 4 will elaborate on this in greater detail. Alternatively, some scholars have distinguished between two types of causal conditions operating in the presence of a critical juncture: ‘permissive conditions’ and ‘productive conditions’. According to Soifer (2012: 1573), “permissive conditions represent the easing of constraints of structure and make change possible, while productive conditions – in the presence of permissive conditions – produce the outcome or range of outcomes that are
then reproduced after the permissive conditions disappear and the juncture comes to a close." Yet other scholars have looked into the notion of ‘critical antecedent’, which typically precedes a critical juncture (Slater and Simmons: 2008), and ‘mechanisms of reproduction’, which are the factors that are sufficient to keep an outcome in place after the factors that produce it have disappeared (e.g. Collier and Collier: 1991). According to Soifer (2012: 1577), these are all “components of a complete critical juncture framework”. In this particular research context, such a critical juncture framework constitutes the following:

- **Critical antecedent:**
  NATO and EU expansion in Eastern Europe since early 2000s.

- **Permissive conditions:**
  Euromaidan Revolution, Russian interventions in Crimea and Eastern-Ukraine.

- **Productive conditions:**
  Renewed sense of purpose among Western policymakers, as well as the realization that European security is of vital importance and can easily be threatened.

- **Outcome:**
  Higher or lower degree of political and military cooperation between NATO and EU.

- **End of critical juncture:**
  Unknown at this point in time, hypothesized to be when the hostilities regarding the conflict in Ukraine end.

- **Mechanisms of reproduction:**
Newly established institutions and mechanisms of cooperation between NATO and EU, as a consequence of the critical juncture.

- **Consequences:**

  Hypothetically, a more effective and durable relationship between NATO and the EU. Alternatively, the crisis would induce negative consequences, which would for instance materialize into permanent member state cleavages.

Combined with the research methodology of process tracing, the theoretical insights derived from historical institutionalism and the critical juncture framework provide the foundations of this dissertation. It ought to be stressed that the empirical evidence gathered is concerned predominantly with the aforementioned permissive- and productive conditions, whereas the critical antecedent of NATO and EU expansion has been researched frequently in past academic literature. Finally, one can merely speculate of the precise consequences or outcomes issued under this particular critical juncture framework. As such, the emphasis is placed upon dissecting the most recent developments in NATO-EU cooperation, while keeping the forecasting ambition to an absolute minimum.
3. Methodology

3.1. Ontological Assumptions

A fundamental component of any research design entails the alignment of methodologies used to gather empirical evidence with an accompanying set of ontological and epistemological assumptions. According to Hall (2003: 374), ontology consists of “premises about the deep causal structures of the world from which an analysis begins and without which theories about the social world would not make sense.” Considering the stress on causality in relation to the research question, as well as the adoption of the process tracing method, the ontological assumptions to be elaborated upon are primarily concerned with the nature of causality. In line with Beach and Pedersen’s ontological understanding of process tracing, this dissertation therefore utilizes a ‘mechanistic’ conceptualization, which treats causal mechanisms as “a series of parts composed of entities engaging in activities” (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 6).

One of the most fundamental ontological debates concerning causal mechanisms centres around the question of whether causal mechanisms are observable or not (Denk and Lidén 2015: 3). Over the course of time, three different stances on this issue have been developed. Scholars such as Hedström and Ylikoski have argued that causal mechanisms are indeed observable: “most of the mechanisms constituting an automobile’s engine, for example, are quite visible when one opens up the hood” (Hedström and Ylikoski 2010: 51). Two of the foremost authors on process tracing, Bennett
and Checkel, reason slightly differently and assert that causality itself cannot be observed because researchers merely derive inferences from it.

This dissertation takes a hybrid approach grounded in the propositions of Beach and Pedersen, who advocate that attempts should be made to observe causal mechanisms where possible. In their view, only theoretical and empirical limitations provide plausible explanations for the imperceptibility of certain causal mechanisms. The following table depicts the current divisions surrounding the ontological nature of causal mechanisms:

**Table 1: Observability of Causal Mechanisms (Denk and Lidén 2015: 5)**

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The theoretical levels-of-analysis debate covered in the previous chapter can be extended to the ontological question of how to conceptualize causal mechanisms, whereby scholarly disagreement largely focuses on the appropriate balance between adopting a micro-perspective (Rohlfing: 2012) or a macro-perspective (Bennet and Checkel: 2015). This debate intersects with Singer’s aforementioned levels-of-analysis conceptualization.

As can be observed in the next paragraphs, the danger associated with too large of a distance between the independent and dependent variable should not be underestimated. It has been pointed out that this could realistically lead
to “an analytically pointless empirical endeavour due to an abundance of hypothesized causal mechanisms” (Gerring 2010: 1506). Thus, while the primary aim is to uncover causal mechanisms at the micro-level (by solely focusing on the impact of the Ukrainian crisis on the NATO-EU cooperation), the structural dynamics (e.g. Turkey-Cyprus impasse) at play should not be omitted from the debate.

3.2. Epistemological Assumptions

As has been indicated by Checkel (2005: 6), process tracing is "a method solidly anchored in positivism, due to its focus on variables and causal dynamics.” Generally, process tracing has frequently been regarded as “an alternative to the comparative and statistical methods” (Little: 1991; Bennett and George: 1997; Bennett and George: 2005). Yet, at the same time, researchers employing process tracing frequently draw upon qualitative and therefore largely interpretivist data. This seeming contradiction requires the researcher to be explicit not only about the ontological assumptions adhered to, but also the respective epistemological standpoints. According to Beach and Pedersen (2013: 5), then, epistemology refers to “arguments regarding how we should best study causal relationships in the social world.” In this regard, process tracing can only be used as a valuable research tool when the causal mechanism it seeks to unveil constitutes ‘admissible evidence’ for the hypotheses formulated in the research design (Ruzzene 2013: 361). In short, these are fundamental epistemological assumptions of this thesis: 1) knowledge acquisition is primarily derived from empiricism, which implies that knowledge itself is defined \textit{a posteriori}; 2) the role of human perception
requires the application of inductive reasoning; 3) the purpose of positivism (i.e. objectivism) is being pursued only to the extent that it does not hamper the use of qualitative, interpretivist data derived from interviews.

3.3. Data Collection and Recording

3.3.1. Policy Documents

Official NATO and EU policy documents, as well as policy briefs produced by think tanks such as the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMFUS), serve as one of the principal sources of information input. Some of these documents have been gathered via the websites of these institutions, whereas others were handed over in person while conducting the interviews. Statements made in policy briefs from think tanks were corroborated with those found in official NATO and EU documents, in order to verify to what extend either of these documents would provide an objective account of events. Yet, for the pursuance of increased reliability, additional sources of primary data were required to exploit, such as semi-structured interviews. Finally, a full account of the secondary data used for this dissertation can be found in the bibliography.

3.3.2. Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to the gathering and analysis of official NATO and EU documents, this dissertation relies on qualitative data derived from conducted semi-structured elite interviews. The adoption of this additional data collection tool allows for the strengthening of the research design through ‘triangulation’.
This research technique enhances the robustness of the empirical findings, which is being accomplished by “corroborating what has been established from other sources” (Tansey 2007: 766).

For that reason, none of the data collected here ought to be viewed in isolation. Although inevitably interview data are faced with validity and reliability issues, in addition to other sources of information they are often indispensable when uncovering complex causal mechanisms. In order to reduce the difficulties associated with the validity and reliability of interview data, different categories of interviewees have been asked to participate in the research. Initially, participants from four distinct professional groups were identified as potential interviewees: 1) academic scholars; 2) think tank experts; 3) civilian policymakers and politicians; 4) military officials. Unfortunately, this dissertation proved unable to rely on data gathered from military officials due to logistical problems.

The interviewees that did participate constitute a wide spectrum of nationalities, ranging from American to British, Dutch, German, Slovenian and Swedish citizenships. A total of seven interviews have been carried out, the majority of which have been conducted in person in Brussels and London. The remainder of the interviews took place either on Skype or via telephone. In principle, the quotations in this dissertation have been incorporated on an anonymous basis, unless explicit permission was granted by the interviewee to operate otherwise. An interview framework and informed consent sheet were composed to guide the course of the interview and to allow for prior
notification to all the interviewees (copies of these can be found in the appendices).

3.4. Data Analysis

3.4.1. Process Tracing

As has been indicated before, most of the literature on NATO-EU cooperation adopts a historical institutionalist perspective and as such focuses on the organizational processes that shape the institutions over time. This dissertation however takes a slightly different approach by focusing specifically on the effect of a critical juncture on a specific outcome variable. In this regard, process tracing lends itself particularly well for investigating the precise causal mechanisms by which independent variables influence outcomes. Bennett and George (2005: 206-207) maintain that “process tracing involves attempts to identify the intervening causal process – the causal chain and causal mechanism – between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable.” Although process tracing is becoming an increasingly popular tool of qualitative inquiry, there remains ‘a lot of murkiness’ as to what process tracing entails on a conceptual level and how it ought to be applied in practice (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 3).

Hence, three different variants of process tracing have been developed that each hold unique ontological and epistemological propositions, as well as practical applications. This dissertation attempts to apply the theory-testing variant of process tracing (the other two being theory-building PT and explaining outcome PT, as can be inferred from Figure 1 in the Appendices).
In this way, while theoretically informed hypotheses are being tested against gathered empirical evidence, the aim of theory-testing PT is to make theoretical generalizations ‘beyond the confines of a single case’ (Beach and Pedersen 2013: 16). In the context of this research, an in-depth analysis of the Ukrainian crisis is therefore intended to serve as an illustration of how crises situations can impact inter-institutional relations.

3.4.2. Variable Operationalization

While the independent variable X is known (i.e. Ukrainian crisis), the exact value of the dependent variable Y (i.e. NATO-EU cooperation) is currently unknown and is subject to mere speculation. This situation forces the adoption of an ‘X-centred’ case study research design, which helps investigating the “effects of a particular cause with no preconceptions about what these effects might be” (Seawright 2007: 7). Although the precise effects of the independent variable on the dependent variable are currently indeed unknown, that does not rid the researcher of the obligation to specify how one operationalizes the respective variables under investigation.

In this dissertation, NATO-EU cooperation is being operationalized in a three-dimensional manner that to some degree resembles Drent’s approach (2014: 118) of focusing on different fields of cooperation. To that extent, the three-stage chronological account of the Ukraine crisis (designated as ‘Phase I, II and III’) serves as a framework in which three specific dimensions of NATO-EU cooperation will receive meticulous attention: 1) formal or political strategic cooperation; 2) informal or staff-to-staff cooperation; 3) operational or defense cooperation on the ground.
3.4.3. Hypotheses and Causal Mechanisms

With the operationalization of the different variables in place, the following three hypotheses are intended to reliably cover the most important causal mechanisms. These mechanisms of causality vary from having a substantial positive effect on NATO-EU cooperation, to a substantial negative effect, to no effect whatsoever:

\[ H_1: \text{The Ukrainian crisis has improved NATO-EU cooperation thus far.} \]

Causal mechanism:

As has been indicated under the first and second component of the critical junctures framework, crisis situations akin to the conflict in Ukraine create stimuli for change. In this context, the status quo in NATO-EU cooperation is being challenged through its current institutional arrangements. Structural constraints can now be effectively managed as the critical juncture allows for alternative policy options. Newly established inter-institutional arrangements lay the foundations for better NATO-EU cooperation.

\[ H_2: \text{The Ukrainian crisis has worsened NATO-EU cooperation thus far.} \]

Causal mechanism:

As has been indicated under the third component of the critical junctures framework, crisis situations akin to the Ukrainian case create a sense of urgency for decision makers through time pressure and as such might negatively affect the decision-making process. In this scenario, the centralization of decision-making authority in both NATO and the EU could
reduce information sharing between the two organizations, particularly on intelligence matters. In general, the crisis could exacerbate existing sources of contestation and deepen member state cleavages in both NATO and the EU.

**H₀: The Ukrainian crisis has left NATO-EU cooperation unaffected thus far.**

**Causal mechanism:**

*The immediate consequences of the Ukrainian crisis may require NATO and the EU to upscale joint efforts at crisis management, but do not significantly alter existing methods of political and military cooperation. To that extent, the current institutional arrangements function as envisioned when NATO-EU cooperation was first established in the early 2000s. Neither are structural constraints exacerbated by the effects of the crisis. Both organizations can effectively manage the consequences of the Ukrainian crisis without having to engage in a complete institutional overhaul.*

Regardless of what Y constitutes concretely, the causal mechanism at work that ought to be captured through process tracing resembles the following formula, with ‘n’ indicating an entity and ‘→’ indicating an action. Note how a sequence of events (i.e. a causal mechanism) transitions cause and effect from the X-variable to the Y-variable:

\[ X \rightarrow [(n1\rightarrow)\ast(n2\rightarrow)]Y \]

While the theoretical framework has sought to address conceptual challenges associated with critical junctures, there remain a number of methodological
obstacles. First of all, as Capoccia and Kelemen (2007: 354) have pointed out, the analysis of critical junctures should be regarded as the “analysis of decision-making under conditions of uncertainty.” To that extent, the researcher’s task is to identify the most influential policy decisions that were made in parallel to the available alternatives (i.e. ‘contingency’). Contingency, then, is a key element of critical junctures, “as the structural constraints imposed on actors during the path dependent phase are substantially relaxed” (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 368). Essentially, the aim is to focus on the decisions of influential, strategic actors such as political leaders, policymakers and military commanders to analyse how they “steer outcomes towards a new equilibrium” (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 354). The next chapter seeks to fulfil precisely that objective by closely examining the empirical evidence that has been gathered from the various sources.

Yet, as Falleti and Lynch (2009: 1145) have pointed out, making valid inferences about causal mechanisms through process tracing requires a careful contextualization of those same causal mechanisms: “causation resides in the interaction between the mechanism and the context within which it operates.” Indeed, such warning signs largely coincide with ‘permissive conditions’ in the critical juncture framework that was presented in Chapter 2. Falleti and Lynch (2009: 1153), as well as Pierson, emphasize the temporal aspect of contextualization and the former two scholars referred to this as ‘periodization’. Pierson (2000: 73), on the other hand, elaborates on the importance of ‘timing’ and ‘sequencing’. For these reasons, this dissertation will occasionally rely on contextual arguments that have shaped
the current security environment in which the targeted causal mechanisms are operating.

### 3.4.4. Testing

In order to test the aforementioned hypotheses and accompanying causal mechanisms, hoop tests and smoking-gun tests will be performed in Chapter 4 as part of the empirical analysis. In many scholarly accounts of process tracing, analogies have been made to detective work, as certain pieces of evidence may discredit particular hypotheses and confirm others. The academic literature has identified four process-tracing tests that allow for robust causal inference, and these are depicted in ‘Table 2’ in the appendices.

The justification as to why only hoop tests and smoking-gun tests will be performed is twofold: 1) straw-in-the-wind tests are not sufficiently capable of eliminating or confirming particular hypotheses over others; 2) doubly decisive tests require a substantial amount of evidence (that is difficult to obtain) as the implications of a particular outcome are more far-reaching than those of the alternative tests. The complementarity associated with combining hoop tests and smoking-gun tests should allow for the kind of hypothesis testing that will enable future research to draw more substantive conclusions. For the purpose of this dissertation, therefore, hoop tests and smoking-gun tests are being conducted to “evaluate hypotheses proposing that (1) certain specific unobserved events or processes occurred and (2) there is a causal connection between two or more processes or events” (Mahoney 2012: 3).
Initially, hoop tests will allow the researcher to validate whether the formulated hypotheses are able to ‘jump through the hoop’ and maintain their presumed validity. Mahoney has constructed a comprehensive overview of how specific within-case observations impact the various hypotheses. As one can infer from ‘Figure 2’ in the appendices, “X is crucial for a true hypothesis, though its presence does not guarantee this truth” (Mahoney 2015: 207). Succeeding the hoop tests that are being conducted in the empirical analysis, smoking-gun tests will further substantiate the hypotheses formulated in the methodological framework. In a similar manner (presented in Figure 3 in the appendices), Mahoney (2015: 211) shows how “the presence of X yields a true hypothesis, though its absence does not mean the hypothesis is false”.

3.4.5. Evidence

Hereafter, the question that ought to be addressed is what kind of evidence supports or eliminates a particular set of hypotheses. The academic literature has identified four types of evidence relevant to process tracing accounts (Beach and Pedersen: 2013; Tansey: 2007): 1) account evidence; 2) trace evidence; 3) sequence evidence; 4) pattern evidence. These types of evidence are explained in greater detail by the Centre for Development Impact, and an excerpt of its policy paper can be found in ‘Table 3’ of the appendices.

As has been righteously pointed out by Bennett (2010: 209), it is “not the amount of evidence that matters, but instead its contribution to adjudicating among alternative hypotheses.” It is to be expected that in the current research design, all types of evidence should be ‘within arm’s reach’, except
for pattern evidence as no statistical analysis will be performed. The next chapter provides a synthesis of the aforementioned theoretical concepts with the accompanying empirical evidence that is necessary for testing the different hypotheses.
4. NATO-EU Cooperation and the Ukrainian Crisis

In order to bring to the forefront the intricacies of the relationship between NATO and the EU in the context of the Ukrainian crisis, one first needs to grasp the motivations that were driving the actions of both institutions in this period. Juncos and Whitman (2015: 6) have remarked that the EU’s activities concerning Ukraine were undertaken among three strands: “1) recognition of Ukraine’s new government and providing political support for its consolidation; 2) pursuing a ‘rebooted’ Association Agreement through the pressing ahead with the signing and preliminary implementation process with Ukraine; 3) diplomatic and sanctions responses to Russia for its invasion of Crimea and military role in Eastern Ukraine.”

Kamp has indicated that since the start of the Ukrainian crisis, NATO on the other hand has reshuffled the relative importance of its three core functions as defined in the 2010 Strategic Concept. Between self-defence, crisis management and partnership, the first one becomes (again) the “ultimate business of the North Atlantic Alliance (Kamp 2015: 188).” According to EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, a unified NATO-EU response to the crisis in Ukraine should consist of a “firm and strong reaction together with an open channel of dialogue (EEAS, November 11th 2015).” Dempsey (2014) has argued that “the Ukraine crisis should surely be a catalyst for the EU and NATO to reinforce the ties between them by finding ways to complement each other’s strength.” The next paragraphs will shed light on the processes that have guided NATO-EU cooperation through the different stages of the crisis.
4.1. Phase I: Euromaidan Revolution

The pinnacle of political tensions in Ukraine was reached in late 2013, when President Yanukovych refused to sign the Association Agreement with the European Union (Kudelia 2014: 28). Although since the Orange Revolution of 2004 many scholars had anticipated protest fatigue in Ukraine, the Euromaidan Revolution opened Pandora’s box and culminated in instances of mass mobilization and waves of protest (Onuch 2014: 32). Following the violent repression of demonstrators by government police forces, both NATO and the EU repeatedly expressed their concerns about human rights violations in Ukraine and defended liberal values of democracy and rule of law (European Council, November 28th-29th 2013).

A few weeks after the first protests had erupted, NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen reassured that “there is no doubt that the future of Ukraine lies within close cooperation with our Euro-Atlantic organizations (NATO, December 19th 2013).” In that same address to the European Council, Rasmussen also urged EU nations to develop “real military capabilities such as observation drones, air-to-air refuelling and heavy transport.” These statements indicate that regarding the first dimension of NATO-EU cooperation, formal leadership visions concerning the future of European security were increasingly converging as a consequence of direct threats to territorial integrity.

At the same time, both organizations have continuously expressed the need to avoid a duplication of efforts. When the European Union Military Staff (EUMS) and the NATO International Military Staff (IMS) convened in January
2014, both Directors General indicated that “staff-to-staff interaction is positive” and that “synergizing capability development and standardisation is key to both organisations (NATO, January 28th 2014).” NATO spokesperson Oana Lungescu put forward cooperation between NATO’s Allied Command Transformation (ACT) and the European Defense Agency (EDA) as an example ‘smart defence’ or ‘pooling and sharing’ (Atlantic-Community, December 4th 2013). Even though official channels of communication praise the ability of both organizations to cooperate, some scholars have referred to ‘selective multilateralism’ rather than ‘effective multilateralism’ (Drent 2014: 118). According to Drent, the NATO-EU relationship has witnessed four phases of development, ranging from ‘competition’, to ‘formalization’, to ‘impasse’ and to current-day ‘normalization through informalization’.

The Euromaidan Revolution occurred during the ‘normalization through informalization’ phase and constitutes the first potential crisis event that could create the ‘stimuli for change’ as mentioned in the critical juncture framework. In order to conduct a hoop test for this particular phase of the crisis, two questions will have to be addressed. In particular, the researcher ought to find out “whether the case possesses all conditions that are known to be necessary for the cause or outcome” (Mahoney 2012: 6).

In this context, one would therefore have to ask whether the impact of the Euromaidan Revolution was significant enough to instigate particular changes in NATO-EU cooperation. Under the umbrella of H1, the Euromaidan Revolution would hypothetically be required to create stimuli for change such that NATO-EU cooperation will have improved in a post-Euromaidan
environment. Second, in order for $H_1$ to pass the hoop test, Mahoney recommends to “also ask about auxiliary traces that a particular cause or outcome would have left behind if it actually occurred” (Mahoney 2012: 6).

This would imply that the actual occurrence of the causal mechanism developed under $H_1$ should have left particular traces that would make $H_1$ to pass the hoop test. By contrast, the absence of such auxiliary traces would indicate the failure of $H_1$ to pass the hoop test.

The empirical evidence presented in the previous couple of paragraphs does not yet indicate the presence of auxiliary traces related to the significant ‘stimuli for change’ that would be required to pass the first hoop test. Indeed, shortly after the Euromaidan protests, both NATO and EU officials were adamant to continue using political buzzwords triumphing rule of law and democracy. Yet, Jan Pieklo (2014) points out that the Euromaidan was the first event that ushered European and U.S. politicians alike to express to “emotional words of support to the protestors in Kyiv”. While the Western political elites had begun celebrating the victory of pro-European demonstrators in Ukraine, the Kremlin was preparing the reassertion of Russia’s influence in the international political arena. Just a month before Russia’s invasion of Crimea, Pieklo warned that “in cooperation with NATO, the EU should prepare a plan in case of a black scenario of possible conflicts and deepening chaos spreading through the region.”

Around that time, the European Commission’s meeting in December 2013 provided a more tangible piece of evidence concerning the willingness of both institutions to cooperate. In particular, EU member states vowed to ensure
complementarity with NATO in the fields of cyber and air-to-air refuelling (European Council, December 20th 2013). Yet, the absence of any major auxiliary traces indicating significant improvement to NATO-EU cooperation could be due to a lack of immediate ‘basic value threats’ (Brecher 2013: 56). At the time, the security situation simply was not grave enough for the crisis to have a significant impact on NATO-EU cooperation. Thus, if one is to conclude that $H_1$ fails to pass the hoop test, the question becomes whether Phase II will significantly alter the results. In other words: did the value threats associated with the Russian annexation of Crimea prove sufficient for NATO-EU cooperation to ameliorate?

4.2. Phase II: Russian Intervention in Crimea

Under the critical juncture framework, the Ukrainian crisis clearly scaled up from an ‘onset stage’ to an ‘escalatory stage’ in late February 2014 when representatives of the Russian Federation first set foot on Crimean soil. In this context, Brecher’s conceptualization of crisis escalation centres around three distinct processes that are not only markedly different from a crisis onset situation (akin the Euromaidan Revolution); they also indicate why $H_1$ is now far more likely to pass the hoop- and smoking-gun tests. First of all, there is a “change from an embryonic to a full-scale crisis, in terms of stress, from low to peak stress” (Brecher 2013: 113). Secondly, there is a “change from non-violent to violent crisis”. Finally, there is a “change from no/low violence to severe violence.”

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4 Value treats measure the perceived threat to the existence of system members.
As has been pointed out by Allison (2014: 1255), the Russian incursions and eventual annexation of Crimea, “using coercion and force to take control of and destabilize the territories of a neighbour state, is a frontal challenge to the post-Cold War European regional order.” The further escalation prompted to Western political elites to strongly condemn the Russian ‘acts of aggression’, while time pressure was becoming an increasingly salient issue (EuroNews, March 3rd 2014). Yet, the annexation of Crimea never metamorphosed into the kind of military conflict that would characterise much of what this dissertation refers to as Phase III. Instead, Putin used legal rhetoric to reinterpret existing institutional arrangements and challenge the status quo – the first component of the critical juncture framework.

The central question is whether the Russian intervention in Crimea presents a representative case of how critical junctures can affect inter-institutional cooperation compared to the Euromaidan Revolution. Certainly, the conditions necessary for the hypothesized cause or outcome (improved NATO-EU cooperation under H₁) are more apparent in Phase II. That is, time pressure has dramatically increased, the annexation of Crimea has directly challenged international rule of law, and stimuli for change have emerged as a consequence. Thus, if all conditions necessary for the (forced) improvement of NATO-EU cooperation are present, then what does the empirical evidence – in the form of auxiliary traces – reveal about the occurrence of the causal mechanism hypothesized under H₁?

MacFarlane and Menon (2014: 100) have found that “geographical proximity of EU member states to Russia” has been a significant predictor of the
emergence of divisions regarding European reactions to the annexation of Crimea. With signs of Eastern European countries (e.g. Poland and the Baltic states) demanding a tougher European stance, and Mediterranean countries (e.g. Spain and Italy) favouring a neutral position, H₂ rather than H₁ is gaining credibility. Following this proposition, NATO-EU cooperation would continue to worsen as the Ukrainian crisis keeps on aggravating political divisions in Europe. In this regard, multiple interviewees warned for the increase of ‘member-state cleavages’ as part of Europe’s security dilemma. Of course, as was indicated by Oscar Jonsson in one of the interviews, the uncompromising retention of sovereignty by individual member states is at the heart of the current impediments to improved NATO-EU cooperation.

The discrepancy associated with diverging member state positions has caused a group of researchers at the University of Copenhagen to recommend the establishment of a NATO-EU taskforce. This new institutional arrangement should help “coordinating the policies of the two organisations with regard to Russia in order to strengthen cooperation between the two organisations (Rasmussen et al. 2014).” Meanwhile, in the wake of the annexation of Crimea, the North Atlantic Council (NAC) and the EU’s Political and Security Committee (PSC) held joint informal talks at the ambassadorial level on the 5th of March 2014. While this indicates that NATO-EU relations were still in the midst of Drent’s ‘normalization through informalization’ phase, the dialogue between NATO and EU representatives “showed the convergence of views in both organizations in upholding Ukrainian sovereignty and territorial integrity (NATO, March 5th 2014).” Thus, up until the annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation, NATO-EU cooperation
appeared to have improved, particularly with regard to the formal and informal dimensions of cooperation.

4.3. Phase III: War in Eastern Ukraine

Only a few months after the annexation of Crimea, a large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine’s Donbass region further threatened European security (Koenig: 2015). Characterized by the military tactic of hybrid warfare, Russian-backed rebel forces effectively took control of government buildings in Eastern Ukraine. Over the course of several months, the crisis in Ukraine had become “less of an externally sponsored insurgency in Eastern Ukraine” and “more of a limited war between Ukraine and Russia” (Freedman: 2014). Certainly, the conflict reached an unprecedented level of international involvement when 298 passengers died after the downing of a civilian airliner (Malaysia Airlines Flight 17) by rebel forces (Gibney: 2015). Subsequent Russian troop deployments along the borders with the Baltic countries, as well as the incursions in Ukraine, have caused several Western officials to classify Russia as “a threat to other former Soviet Bloc countries such as Latvia, Lithuania or Estonia” (Fallon: 2015).

Consequentially, the return of realpolitik had been a convenient alibi for NATO to justify its post-Cold War existence as a security actor aimed at collective defense under Article V of the Washington Treaty. At the NATO Summit in Wales, NATO’s ‘three-dimensional purpose’ of collective defense, crisis management and cooperative security was further reiterated (Deni: 2015). The EU on the other hand initially abided by a diplomatic strategy to the crisis. Ultimately, however, it proved to be largely ineffective, as Russia’s aggressive
behaviour in Eastern Ukraine did not significantly decrease. To that extent, increasingly hefty EU-sanctions on Russian individuals, companies and government institutions were instituted to seek forced compliance – particularly after MH17 was shot down (Haukkala: 2015).

In terms of formal NATO-EU cooperation, the further escalation of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine provided both organizations with what has been referred to as a ‘basic value threat’. Human security in for instance the Baltic States had become an increasingly pressing issue as the threat of Russian military incursions started to materialize along the border with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In the highest political echelons of NATO and the EU, calls were made to have both organizations join forces and develop a comprehensive approach to curtail (Russian) hybrid warfare. Combining the military capabilities of NATO with the non-military means of the EU, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg indicated that both organizations had agreed to “intensify NATO-EU cooperation in countering hybrid warfare (Reuters, May 14th 2015).”

Such initiatives, at least at the formal level of cooperation, are not infrequently being attributed in the change of leadership that both organizations witnessed in the autumn of 2014. Multiple interviewees indicated that NATO-EU cooperation had significantly improved with the leadership transitions in October (Jens Stoltenberg assuming the office of NATO Secretary-General to succeed Anders Fogh Rasmussen) and November of 2014 (Federica Mogherini assuming the office of High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to succeed Catherine Ashton). In the words of one
interviewee, “leadership personalities appear to contribute to the rapprochement of NATO and the EU” (interview Bruno Lété). Similarly, another interviewee spoke of “a leadership dynamic that is conducive to cooperation” (interview Bastian Giegerich).

Yet, while since the Russian incursions in the Donbass region NATO and the EU were forced to intensify their cooperation on issues such as hybrid warfare, the crisis has gradually been accentuating existing cleavages both within and between the two organizations. While the Turkey-Cyprus question continues to inhibit NATO and the EU from truly reaching a strategic partnership, the conflict in Ukraine has intensified divisions among member states regarding the creation of an appropriate solution to the crisis. On the one hand, cleavages have materialized regarding the imposition of EU sanctions vis-à-vis the Russian Federation. As was indicated also by MacFarlane and Menon, EU (and NATO) member states have “different opinions on sanctions on Russia because they have different strategic imperatives and priorities (Stratfor, March 17th 2015).”

Next to the imposition of economic sanctions, the gap between NATO and the EU also started to widen concerning the dilemma of supplying arms to the Ukrainian military. This had become an increasingly salient issue as the failure of the Minsk II agreement implied that Russia had proved unwilling to de-escalate the crisis in Ukraine. In March 2015, German newspaper Der Spiegel suggested that “the Americans are trying to thwart European efforts at mediation led by Chancellor Angela Merkel.” In particular, NATO Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) Philip Breedlove had been accused by
German diplomats of consistently having overestimated the number of Russian troops along the border with Ukraine. To that extent, he was supposedly not only undermining the efforts of European officials to pursue a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Ukraine; Breedlove reportedly was also “playing directly into the hands of hardliners in the U.S. Congress and in NATO.”

While formal cooperation between NATO and the EU suffered a couple of blows that intensified member state cleavages, informal or staff-to-staff cooperation largely followed the trajectory that was already present in Phase I and II. Throughout 2014, three informal meetings between EUMS and NATO IMS representatives were held as part of the NATO-EU Strategic Dialogue. Yet, as has been the case with most informal meetings between both organizations in recent years, press statements released afterwards did not go beyond the reiteration of both organizations that they harbor “a strong desire for enhanced NATO-EU cooperation (NATO, December 5th 2014).”

Oliver Dajić, policy officer at the European External Action Service (EEAS), indicated in one of the interviews that “both organizations have been through more informal talks in the past sixteen months than in the preceding five years.” While this upsurge can partially be attributed to the escalating crisis in Ukraine, the question that comes to mind is whether a higher number of NATO-EU meetings necessarily leads to the ‘enhanced cooperation’ that official NATO and EU documents are eager to emphasize. Keil and Lété (2015: 6) point out that there is “a pressing need for staff-level mechanisms, daily information-sharing and policy/activity coordination”, and that both
organizations ought to “operationalize the NATO-EU relationship”. Thus, if since the eruption of conflict in the Donbass region formal and informal dialogues have only marginally contributed to a truly enhanced partnership between NATO and the EU, then at the operational level the absence of such coordinated efforts is expected to surface as well.

On the ground, the different strategic imperatives of both NATO and the EU take shape in the form of missions and representations that often function separately rather than jointly. Two such practical examples are the EU Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine (EUAM)⁵ and the NATO Trust Funds as agreed upon during the 2014 Wales Summit. The former mission, which focuses on improving Ukraine’s police apparatus and rule of law, was given a mandate by the EU of two years. Yet, when one considers the failures associated with the mission’s twin brother in Afghanistan (EUPOL), an integrated approach with NATO suddenly seems fairly reasonable. After all, how is a civilian mission supposed to complete complex reform processes while having to withstand the security challenges characteristic to war-torn nations such as Afghanistan? In that regard, NATO’s military capabilities could provide the much-needed robustness that EU civilian missions have often lacked thus far.

NATO’s Trust Funds present another potential asset for NATO-EU cooperation in Ukraine, and yet there is no indication of significant convergence in this field. These Trust Funds are designed to increase support to Ukraine and specifically target four areas: command, control and

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⁵ European Council, July 22nd 2014.
communications; logistics and standardization; cyber defence; and military career transition (NATO, December 1st 2014). In one of the interviews, Bruno Lété (GMFUS) emphasized the tremendous potential for both organizations to work together in the field of strategic communications. NATO’s C4 (Command, Control, Communication and Computers) Trust Fund could benefit greatly from the EU’s expertise in strategic communications, particularly since the East Stratcom Team was launched in April of 2015 in six former Soviet countries, including Ukraine and Russia. It thus appears that while both formal and informal talks in Brussels are increasingly showing signs of NATO-EU convergence, evidence from the operational level shows that the diffusion of renewed institutional arrangements is a lengthy process that certainly does not materialize overnight.
5. Conclusion

After the annexation of Crimea in 2014 by the Russian Federation, European Council President Herman van Rompuy stated that “the world would never be the same again” (Buras et al. 2014). Others, such as U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, avowed that in Crimea the world had been witnessing “nineteenth century behavior in the twenty-first century” (Crittenden: 2014). Conversely, the crisis in Ukraine highlighted inability of Western policymakers to effectively counter Russian demonstrations of great power politics. NATO and the EU, as Europe’s foremost security institutions, were now faced with a value threat of significant proportions after nearly three decades of unthreatened post-Cold War institutional development.

It therefore should come as no surprise that, over the past twenty years, much of the academic literature on NATO-EU cooperation has been concerned with the institutionalization of an encompassing European security architecture. More than a decade after the Berlin Plus arrangements, this Masters dissertation has sought to scrutinize how a crisis situation, the scope of which has been unique in recent European history, impacts the cooperation between these two international organizations. It used as a starting point the conclusions drawn by Dr Smith in his 2013 PhD-thesis, in which he stipulated that NATO and the EU are only to ever truly achieve a ‘Strategic Partnership’ when they are faced with “an existential security critical juncture, rather than internal evolutionary processes (Smith 2013: 265).”
Within this context, the following research question has been addressed in this study:

“Has the Ukrainian crisis - between 2013 and 2015 - pressurized NATO and the EU into higher levels of political and military cooperation, or did it instead drive a wedge between both organizations?”

Concerning the theoretical and methodological foundations of this dissertation, the structure has been as follows. The theoretical framework first elaborated on the larger historical institutionalist debates of NATO-EU cooperation, before zooming in on the specific relevance of critical juncture theory. Methodologically, process tracing has been employed to uncover the precise causal mechanisms by which the Ukrainian crisis has impacted NATO-EU cooperation. Subsequently, three hypotheses have been tested.

With the Ukrainian crisis identified as the independent variable, NATO-EU cooperation was determined as the dependent variable and operationalized according to three different strands of cooperation: 1) formal or political strategic cooperation; 2) informal or staff-to-staff cooperation; 3) operational or defense cooperation on the ground. With regard to the hypotheses as set out in the introduction, the empirical evidence gathered by means of official documents and semi-structured interviews allows for the following preliminary conclusions:

\( H_1: \text{The Ukrainian crisis has improved NATO-EU cooperation thus far.} \)

- Posing a direct threat to European security unlike any other crisis in the past two decades – particularly to the Baltic States – NATO and the EU
were forcibly drawn towards each other by the conflict in Ukraine. The initiative to jointly counter hybrid warfare is one such example of improved cooperation, as well as the tight working relationship that Mogherini and Stoltenberg have developed as the political leaders of both organizations. The desire for closer NATO-EU cooperation has certainly been amplified as a consequence of the crisis, but words have only marginally materialized into concrete action thus far.

**H$_2$: The Ukrainian crisis has worsened NATO-EU cooperation thus far.**

- According to the critical juncture framework, international organizations tend to centralize authority and decision-making in times of heightened time pressure and stress. This has certainly been the case for NATO and the EU, as both organizations are operating separately on the ground without pursuing a collective approach. Prime examples are the NATO Trust Funds and the EUAM in Ukraine. At the same time, member state cleavages in both NATO and the EU have been aggravated due to diverging strategic imperatives concerning Ukraine. The influence exerted by hawkish U.S. politicians on key figures in NATO has further exacerbated the abyss between the Atlantic Alliance and the EU, whose conceived solution to the crisis is predominantly a diplomatic one.

**H$_0$: The Ukrainian crisis has left NATO-EU cooperation unaffected thus far.**
A number of factors allow for this hypothesis to successfully pass the hoop tests. First of all, the markedly different working cultures of both organizations continue to hamper the road to closer cooperation. Prof. Michael Clarke for instance indicated that “the EU was considered fearful of being swamped by NATO.” Meanwhile, NATO continued to be hesitant about intermingling with the large bureaucracy of the EU. Similarly, the crisis so far has not been a triggering factor in resolving the Turkey-Cyprus question. The Ukrainian crisis should have urged NATO and the EU to carefully review their cooperation and existing strategies, but concrete action has been minimal thus far.

On the theoretical front, some pieces of empirical evidence appear to be contrary to what the academic literature suggests. The critical juncture framework asserts that the number of communication channels is being reduced at the onset of a crisis. Rationally, this could be explained by the desire for more efficient decision-making without having to muddle through burdensome bureaucratic processes. Yet, as the crisis in Ukraine developed, NATO and the EU engaged more frequently in joint informal- and formal meetings. Thus, while the number of meetings and channels of communication has certainly not decreased, the usefulness of such initiatives remains subject to debate if little metamorphoses into a joint approach.

As one interviewee righteously pointed out during the interviews, the current array of crises in Europe has amassed to such a degree that both NATO and the EU can no longer be merely reactionary in their policymaking. In perhaps apocalyptic terms, both organizations are now faced with the ultimate
opportunity to rid themselves of the institutional dilemmas that have hampered affective cooperation for about two decades. Clearly, the change of leadership in 2014 has been beneficial to the mutual understanding between NATO and the EU. Indeed, the working cultures of both organizations are markedly different, but their objectives and challenges appear to have converged more than ever before. In turn, this should allow for the creation of the mechanisms of reproduction that were introduced in Chapter 2.

The aforementioned implies that a higher degree of complementarity ought to be realized not only in the highest political realms, but also on the operational level. It is here that the greatest potential for enhanced NATO-EU cooperation is to be found. Only if small-scale initiatives - such as EU involvement in NATO Trust Funds - take place, then particular bottom-up processes could instigate change in other layers of cooperation. In 2015, the ‘year of strategy reviews’, the leadership of both organizations should prioritize the development of separate NATO and EU-strategies. Only afterwards, they can seek to agree upon an encompassing European security strategy. It is considered the only way to avoid the types of duplication seen in the past.

By the same token, this dissertation has suffered from a number of limitations. First of all, the on-going status of the conflict in Ukraine causes the conclusions of this research to be grounded in probability rather than certainty. The cut-off point of May 30th 2015 was considered helpful in mitigating that problem, but more conclusive evidence about the exact impact of the Ukrainian crisis on NATO-EU cooperation should not be expected any time soon. Again, this is also due to the fact that many current policies are being
reviewed, which makes that the institutional implications will only start to surface after some time. Additionally, a higher number of interviewees would have benefitted the validity and reliability of the empirical findings. Unfortunately, many potential interviewees were busy finishing up their work before the summer holidays or were already abroad for vacation. This deficiency in the research was somewhat accounted for by incorporating official NATO and EU documents into the data analysis.

Finally, future research may want to investigate how critical junctures impact the ability of organizations such as NATO and the EU to respond collectively and coherently to crisis situations. Alternatively, the frequently overlooked importance of leadership seems worthwhile to reinvigorate through academic research. In particular, given the trickle-down effects associated with the appropriate type of leadership. Policymakers on the other hand, as the NATO Special Advisor indicated during an interview, should be more aware of the added value that interns and junior analysts can bring to NATO and the EU. On multiple occasions, these people have signalled to their superiors opportunities for improved cooperation that the organizations themselves had previously been oblivious about. If experienced leadership and youthful enthusiasm are to meet more frequently, NATO and the EU might be able to finally tear down that Brussels Wall piece by piece.
6. Bibliography

Academic literature:


Electronic sources:


7. Appendices

7.1 Figures:

**Figure 1**: Three different variants of process tracing and their analytical purposes (Beach and Pedersen 2012: 7).

![Diagram of process tracing purposes](image)

**Purpose 1**: Is causal mechanism present and does it function as theorized?

- Theory-testing process tracing
- Theory-centric

**Purpose 2**: What is causal mechanism between X and Y?

- Theory-building process tracing

**Purpose 3**: What mechanistic explanation accounts for outcome?

- Explaining outcome process tracing
- Case-centric

**Figure 2**: Illustration of a hoop test (Mahoney 2015: 207).

![Diagram of hoop test](image)

To the extent that X is atypical, it becomes a smaller superset of H.

**Note**: X = specific within-case observations; H = true hypothesis.
7.2 Tables:

**Table 2:** Four different process tracing tests for affirming causal inference (Collier, D., 2011: 825).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process Tracing Tests for Causal Inference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUFFICIENT FOR AFFIRMING CAUSAL INFERENC</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>No</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NECESSARY FOR AFFIRMING CAUSAL INFERENC</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Straw-in-the-Wind</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. <strong>Passing:</strong> Affirms relevance of hypothesis, but does not confirm it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. <strong>Failing:</strong> Hypothesis is not eliminated, but is slightly weakened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. <strong>Implications for rival hypotheses:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Passing</em> slightly weakens them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Failing</em> slightly strengthens them.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>2. Hoop</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. <strong>Passing:</strong> Affirms relevance of hypothesis, but does not confirm it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. <strong>Failing:</strong> Eliminates hypothesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. <strong>Implications for rival hypotheses:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Passing</em> somewhat weakens them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Failing</em> somewhat strengthens them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3:** Four different types of process tracing evidence (Punton: 2015).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Account evidence</strong></th>
<th>– the content of empirical material (interviews, focus groups, observational evidence, meeting minutes, oral accounts).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trace evidence</strong></td>
<td>– evidence whose mere existence provides proof that a part of a hypothesised mechanism exists (for example, official meeting minutes demonstrate that a meeting did in fact take place).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pattern evidence</strong></td>
<td>– statistical patterns. Classic statistical probabilities can be relevant when evaluating this evidence (for example, employment statistics in a mechanism relating to racial discrimination).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sequence evidence</strong></td>
<td>– the chronology of temporal and spatial events (for example, we may expect to see events happening in a particular order if a specific part of a mechanism exists).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7.3 Interview Consent Form:

Dear Sir or Madam:

Hereby I would like to invite you for an interview as part of the completion of my Masters dissertation at University College London. As an MSc Security Studies student I am currently working on an academic research thesis that seeks to investigate the relationship between NATO and the EU in the context of the Ukrainian crisis (2013-2015). The research question that I aim to answer is whether the Ukrainian crisis has allowed for the intensification of NATO-EU cooperation, or whether it instead has been driving a wedge between both organizations. As part of my research, I will be conducting interviews with various academic and military experts, as well as policymakers. In particular, the interviews intend to pay attention to four different domains: 1) crisis management operations; 2) channels of NATO-EU communication; 3) cooperation on military capabilities; 4) structural constraints inherent to NATO-EU relations. With your permission, I would greatly appreciate to be able to record the interview for analytical purposes.

In principle, the interview will not last much longer than half an hour, and can be conducted either at home, at work or elsewhere, depending on the preferences of the interviewee. The interview will be of a semi-structured format, in which there are enough possibilities to make remarks that are of value to the interviewee and the research. Also, if there are any questions you would prefer not to answer, please indicate this to me and we can resume the interview by discussing another issue. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, unless your explicit consent would allow full quotations in the dissertation. At all times, the interviewee is allowed to withdraw from the interview without having to give an explanation. Pieces of information gathered from the interviews will be incorporated in the dissertation after a thorough analysis. In case you have any queries, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me via email or telephone.

Thank you in advance for considering this invitation, and I am looking forward to your response!

Kind regards,

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Dr Samuel Raszewski
University College London
Dissertation Supervisor
s.raszweski@ucl.ac.uk
7.4 List of Interviewees:

1. Mrs Annelène Damen, Politico-Military Group (PMG) delegate at the Permanent Representation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the EU.

2. Mr Oliver Dajić, Policy Officer at the European External Action Service (EEAS).

3. Mr Bruno Lété, Senior Analyst at German Marshall Fund of the United States.

4. Mr Oscar Jonsson, PhD-candidate at War Studies Department, King’s College London.

5. Prof. Michael Clarke, Director-General at Royal United Services Institute (RUSI).

6. Dr Bastian Giegerich, Director at International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS).


LOGISTICAL SUPPORT:

- Prof. Christopher Coker, London School of Economics
- Dr Simon J. Smith, University of Bath
- Dr Nicola Chelotti, London School of Economics
- Col. Peter Loukes, Royal Netherlands Air Force
- Prof. Richard G. Whitman, University of Kent
- Mr Martin Michelot, German Marshall Fund of the United States
7.5 Interview Framework:

NATO-EU COOPERATION
IN THE CONTEXT OF THE UKRAINIAN CRISIS

“What has the Ukrainian crisis - between 2013 and 2015 - pressurized NATO and the EU into higher levels of formal political and military cooperation, or did it instead drive a wedge between both organizations?”

Structure of the interview:

I. Introduction
II. Objectives
III. Structure
IV. Estimated duration
V. Appreciation of participation
VI. Data importance
VII. What happens with the data

Topic list:

• NATO-EU relationship
• Impact of Ukrainian crisis
• Crisis management operations
• Informal and formal cooperation
• Cooperation on military capabilities
• EU High Representative and NATO Secretary General

Introductory questions:

• In what capacity have you been involved in the NATO-EU relationship over the period 2013-2015? What is your relevant expertise?

• (In your official role, did you have any kind of influence over the decision making process with regard to NATO-EU relations?)
Note: answers to each question should ideally be provided on the basis of a chronological account, pinpointing at each of the three different phases (I: Euromaidan Revolution, II: Russian Intervention in Crimea, III: War in Eastern-Ukraine).

Factor 1: Joint NATO-EU crisis management operations

In the literature, a crisis has typically been described as consisting of three components: 1) threatens high-priority values of the organization; 2) presents a restricted amount of time in which a response can be made, and (3) is unexpected or unanticipated by the organization.

• Could you please elaborate on how each of these characteristics surfaced in your respective organization and work environment between 2013 and 2015?

Drent: “In urgent and complex situations, requiring rapid response, the institutional constraints of an international organization are increasingly circumvented, but still international organizations are selectively involved for their advantages.”

• Would you agree that the Ukrainian crisis has caused the return from ‘selective’ to ‘effective’ multilateralism (i.e. the return of the centrality of multilateral organizations in pursuing its foreign and security policies)?

Factor 2: Channels of communication between NATO and EU

Hermann: “With the introduction of a crisis, the total number of communication channels used for the collection and distribution of information will be reduced.”

• How would you assess the formal and informal lines of cooperation between NATO and the EU between 2013 and 2015?
  Do you observe any significant changes over time?

Drent: “Due to the informal consultation mechanisms, EU and NATO cooperation remains underdeveloped on strategic issues, as there is no dialogue about shared strategic interests.”

• Assuming that the Ukraine crisis is a strategic issue which requires cooperation and dialogue, what is your judgment concerning information/intelligence sharing between NATO and the EU in the period 2013-2015?

Factor 3: Cooperation on military capabilities

Drent: “The pragmatic turn which capability generation is taking holds a potential risk of developing capabilities in isolation and thereby not
contributing to the collective security and defence needs of the European countries.”

- Considering the immediate threat that the Ukrainian crisis is posing to the European security architecture, has a reversal of this ‘pragmatic turn’ been triggered recently to ensure collective security?

- Has the Ukrainian crisis allowed NATO and the EU to show that they are capable of channelling these cluster initiatives to the benefit of European security in general?

- What is your assessment of NATO-EU cooperation with regard to an arms embargo against Russia (e.g. French Mistral ships), as well as arming the Ukrainian military?

**Factor 4: Exacerbation of structural constraints NATO-EU**

As Hermann indicated, “a crisis will tend to intensify any conflicts prior to the crisis.”

- Do you think this has been the case for NATO and the EU? Is the Ukraine crisis exacerbating structural problems inherent to the NATO-EU relationship (such as the Turkey-Cyprus case and defense spending norms)?

It has also been noted frequently that leadership problems have a profound impact on the relationship between the EU and NATO.

- If in this context we take for granted that crisis situations create a tendency toward concentration of authority within each of the organizations, would you agree that the Ukraine crisis has confined space for cooperation to the top political levels of EU High Representative and NATO Secretary General?

**Additional topics of discussion:**

- Are there any relevant topics of discussion that according to you have been little exposed in this interview and that would have to be provided with additional explanations?

**Conclusion of the interview:**

Thank you very much for your contribution and for participating in my research!