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Cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) through the lens of Atalanta and Sophia as cases

Bachelor's project in European Studies and Foreign Languages

Supervisor: Viktoriya Fedorchak

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Abstract

Within the field of International Relations (IR), the debate has for the longest time concentrated on states versus institutions. This dissertation examines the cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) within the maritime domain. While revisiting the traditional debate to an extent, this paper utilizes a combined theoretical approach encompassing more recent insights from the field of Inter-organizational Relations (IOR) as well. The research follows a qualitative approach. This approach incorporates methods such as case study, comparative analysis and document analysis. Through comparing and analyzing two cases, these being the waters off the Somali coast and the Mediterranean, the paper finds that the renewed impetus in the wake of the 2016 Joint Declaration has facilitated modest improvements in the cooperation between the EU and NATO. Part of the research focus also looks ahead towards the future of maritime cooperation between the EU and NATO. While further maintaining the ongoing institutionalization of informal cooperation in the time to come, the two organizations should additionally not give up on exploring diplomatic means in order to ease tensions at the formal level, primarily caused by the political dispute between Cyprus and Turkey.

Sammendrag

Debatten innenfor det teoretiske feltet internasjonale relasjoner (IR) har på det lengste hatt fokuset stat mot institusjon. Denne oppgaven undersøker det maritime samarbeidet mellom den europeiske union (EU) og atlantepaktsorganisasjonen (NATO). Mens oppgaven ser på den tradisjonelle debatten til en viss grad, benytter den kombinerte teoretiske tilnærming seg også av nyere innsikter fra det teoretiske feltet mellomorganisasjonelle relasjoner (IOR). Forskningen følger en kvalitativ tilnærming. Denne tilnærmingen består av metoder som case-studie, komparativ analyse og dokumentanalyse. Ved å sammenligne og analysere to analyseenheter – havområdene utenfor Somalias kyst og Middelhavet – konkluderer oppgaven med at oppsvinget etter felleserklæringen fra EU og NATO i 2016 har ført til beskjedne forbedringer i det maritime samarbeidet mellom EU og NATO. Oppgaveformuleringen retter seg også mot fremtiden for det maritime samarbeidet mellom EU og NATO. Mens de to organisasjonene bør holde på den pågående institusjonaliseringen av det uformelle samarbeidet i tiden fremover, bør de heller ikke gi opp på å finne diplomatiske tiltak for å senke spenningen på det formelle nivået. Denne spenningen forårsakes hovedsakelig av den politiske konflikten mellom Kypros og Tyrkia.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations.....	viii
1 Intro	9
2 Methodology	10
3 Theory.....	11
4 Literature review	13
5 Cases	14
5.1 Comparison between Atalanta and Sophia	14
5.1.1 Format of cooperation.....	14
5.1.2 Challenges	17
5.1.3 Degree of success	19
5.1.4 Potential changes.....	20
5.2 Theoretical analysis	22
6 Discussion.....	24
7 Conclusion	27
Bibliography	28

List of Abbreviations

AO	Area of Operations
EU	European Union
EUNAVFOR	European Union Naval Force
IOLC	Inter-Organizational Life Cycle
IOR	Inter-Organizational Relations
IR	International Relations
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OHQs	Operation Headquarters
OOS	Operation Ocean Shield
OSG	Operation Sea Guardian
P-A	Principal-Agent
RDT	Resource Dependence Theory
SHADE	Shared Awareness and De-confliction
UN	United Nations
US	United States
WFP	World Food Programme

1 Intro

Organizations such as the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have caught the attention of scholars. Since the end of the Cold War, both of them have displayed considerable transformation. Today, both organizations exist in a form that transcends their original purpose. Security in Europe has long been dependent on the United States (US). With some obstacles on the way, the EU has recently shown increasing commitment within the security sector. This development has spurred on questions regarding the relationship between the EU and NATO. Can they achieve a mutually beneficial coexistence, or are they bound to get in the way of one another? The EU and NATO claim that they are aiming for a «strategic partnership» (EU, 2016, p. 1). Meanwhile, scholars such as Diedrichs (2005) and Ojanen (2006) point to potential challenges, which could impede on relations between the EU and NATO. In an international community faced by overwhelming issues such as the migration crisis, it is relevant to observe how inter-organizational cooperation is deployed in response.

In 2016 and 2018, the EU and NATO published joint declarations, which encouraged improving the cooperation between them. This paper examines whether the renewed impetus in EU-NATO cooperation led to observable improvements between operation Atalanta and operation Sophia. Pursuing this endeavor, the dissertation will address the research question «Has cooperation between the EU and NATO in the maritime domain improved from operation Atalanta to operation Sophia and, based on these developments, what could be done in the future?»

The methodological approach of the paper is explained in section 2 below. Section 3 introduces the combined theoretical framework. A few of the texts that particularly influenced this dissertation will be presented in section 4. The paper then moves on to its largest section, section 5. In this part, the cases are examined. Subsections 5.1.1 through 5.1.4 critically compare the two selected cases according to four aspects. These are, in the respective order, the format of cooperation, challenges faced, the degree of success and changes that could have been made. Subsection 5.2 then analyzes the developments that have been traced, utilizing the combined theoretical framework introduced in section 3. At the end, it states that small improvements have indeed occurred within EU-NATO maritime cooperation, although the challenges keep looming large. Section 6 discusses the future of EU-NATO maritime cooperation more broadly, based on the cases that have been compared and analyzed. Section 7 sums the paper up with a conclusion.

2 Methodology

This paper follows a qualitative approach to research. The work is driven by an interest in developments taking place in EU-NATO cooperation. When focusing on cooperation, it makes sense to examine specific instances of cooperation, thus, it is meaningful to incorporate cases.

The two operations that were chosen as cases, operation Atalanta and operation Sophia, belong within the area of maritime cooperation. In both cases, the EU and NATO were present in the same area during overlapping time frames but they each had their own operation with its own name. Operation Atalanta is the name of the EU's operation taking place outside the Somali coast, whereas the corresponding NATO operation was called operation Ocean Shield (OOS). To support European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Med Sophia in the Mediterranean, NATO redesigned an ongoing operation, which then became known as operation Sea Guardian (OSG). This paper will look at developments in the cooperation from the maritime operations in the waters off the Somali coast to the maritime operations in the Mediterranean. By comparing these cases and looking out for EU-NATO cooperation, the dissertation aims to trace and analyze changes since the first joint declaration in 2016.

In order to observe cooperation, naturally, both the relevant actors need to be involved. The time frame from 2008 to 2020 is deemed a good fit, because it represents a time before the renewed impetus of 2016, as well as some years in its wake, to trace the impact of the 2016 developments up until the present stage. Operation Atalanta was launched in 2008, whereas the EU operation in the Mediterranean was launched in 2015, although it received its current name somewhat later. Both operations were still active at the beginning of 2020. These considerations are what made the cooperation off the waters of the Somali coast and the cooperation in the Mediterranean appropriate targets as cases.

The specific methods incorporated into this paper include case study, comparative analysis and document analysis. Relevant primary sources in this regard are mainly the 2016 Joint Declaration signed at Warsaw (EU, 2016), the 2018 Joint Declaration signed in Brussels (EU, 2018) and the four progress reports on developments since 2016 (EU, 2017; NATO, 2017, 2018, 2019). Some additional information about the operations is gathered from the homepages of the respective organizations. Secondary sources, mostly in the form of journal articles and book chapters, provide necessary insight into the cooperation. Some of them include interviews with EU and NATO officials and are hence particularly helpful.

For similar research in the future, perhaps it would be better to conduct independent interviews. By doing this, the dissertation could have been less dependent on secondary sources, which after all are driven by the interpretation of other scholars to some extent.

3 Theory

International relations (IR) theory offers several approaches to view the international system from. Scholars pertaining to the rationalistic side focus on a state of anarchy. There is no entity that can effectively act as a global security guarantor. The international community is thus a playing field for the powerful nation states. The actors calmly analyze which course of action they have to take in a given situation, in order to obtain the outcome that maximizes their own selfish interests. (Neo)realist scholars doubt institutions to a large extent and point towards the position of the states in the driver seat (Schimmelfennig, 2002, p. 418). They assume conflict to rule at the international stage. (Neoliberal) institutionalists hold many of the same values as the realists, however, they recognize the significance of cooperation as well as institutions (Schimmelfennig, 2002, p. 418). With this in mind, institutions are merely used as tools in the strategic games of the member states. Despite both sides sharing basic assumptions, realists have often heavily criticized institutionalism (Jönsson, 2017, p. 50). This long debate between realists and institutionalists has arguably restricted the development of new theoretical frameworks dealing with organizations within the field of IR. Only recently have such newer trends finally been allowed to enter the stage. Concepts from the field of inter-organizational relations (IOR), as well as the so-called «practice theory» (Cornut, 2015, p. 3), can serve as examples.

While all of the theoretical frameworks mentioned so far provide some solid insights for analyzing cooperation between states, as well as cooperation between organizations, within the field of IR, they also have their weaknesses. Scholars such as Schleich (2014) have started combining established approaches with more recent trends. In doing so, one can draw on all the helpful insights, allowing the various frameworks and concepts to complement each other's weaknesses. Recognizing the value of such an approach, this paper will follow a similar one. The dissertation will draw upon selected concepts taken from the debate between realists and institutionalists, and combine these with some newer insights taken from the field of IOR. After all, the research focus is directed at cooperation between two organizations, not cooperation within a single organization.

While acknowledging the developments within the field of practices (Cornut, 2015, p. 3), this paper will only use practices as a support tool deemed particularly fit for the cases at hand. This is due to a political blockade at the formal level of EU-NATO cooperation, a situation that the paper will return to on several occasions. Practices are thus used for reflecting the operational reality, and are not involved in the analysis in the same way as realism, institutionalism, or concepts from IOR.

Resource dependence theory (RDT) follows a rationalistic way of thinking in explaining what may motivate organizations to cooperate (Biermann & Koops, 2017, p. 16). By combining the institutionalist way of thinking with concepts from the principal-agent (P-A) model (Schleich, 2014, p. 183), one can understand situations in which the organization in one way or another takes the incentive to act. In reality, interests at the level of the member states will at times shut the interests of the organizations themselves out, but there are also some instances in which the organizations find ways around the interests at the level of the member states. The paper uses concepts from the P-A model to analyze how the latter scenario has occurred in EU-NATO maritime

cooperation. The field of IOR offers tools that show how inter-organizational relationships are expected to evolve. Following these insights, the concepts inter-organizational life cycle (IOLC) (Biermann & Koops, 2017, p. 9) and «maturity» (Biermann, 2008, p. 161) are deployed together to assert that improvements, albeit of a strictly limited nature, have occurred in EU-NATO maritime cooperation. These concepts are generally applied in order to look at the bigger picture of relations between organizations, but they can also be insightful when looking at cooperation within a domain.

4 Literature review

The dissertation is now positioning itself within some of the existing literature. Out of consideration for space, only a few of the articles deemed the most relevant are presented here.

Initially, Gebhard & Smith (2015) point out that EU-NATO cooperation faces political and institutional problems. Even when the EU and NATO are working on related tasks in the same geographical area, there is no formal cooperation structure. The political level is at a constant stalemate, whereas in the field, the informal interaction works fairly well. Gebhard & Smith hint towards a trend of increased institutionalization but are unsure whether this trend actually will lead to advances on the formal front. Inspired by this article, this paper investigates whether the Joint Declarations of 2016 and 2018 have contributed to reinforcing the aforementioned trend. Have there since then been any signs at all of the development of a more formal structure? Also, what obstacles remain, and what could be done based on past experiences?

Græger (2016a) looks at the role informal interaction between staff at various levels plays in EU-NATO cooperation. This paper, however, does not analyze the same cases as her work. Græger connects her practice approach to a constructivist way of thinking, as already implied in the title with communities of practice. While this dissertation incorporates practices in order to examine EU-NATO maritime cooperation, it does not address neither constructivism nor communities of practice. Practices are simply considered to be insightful in light of the limited formal framework mentioned in the paragraph above.

Schleich (2014) also directs her attention at the EU and NATO. Schleich compares the member state level and the institutional level, in order to find out to what extent the respective levels have influenced EU-NATO cooperation. Schleich stresses the value of approaching EU-NATO cooperation scientifically. In her combined theoretical approach, Schleich combines rational institutionalism with insights from the P-A model and arguments from IOR. Recognizing the benefits of Schleich's combined theoretical approach, this paper applies a similar combined theoretical approach when analyzing the selected cases of EU-NATO maritime cooperation.

5 Cases

Up to this point, the dissertation has explained its methodology, presented its combined theoretical framework and situated itself within some of the existing literature. In this part, the focus is directed towards the selected cases. In subsections 5.1.1 through 5.1.4, the cases will be compared. This is done following a chronological order. Thus, the cooperation in the Indian Ocean will appear before the cooperation in the Mediterranean in each of these subsections. Each time a subsection switches from the first case to the second case, this will be explicitly stated. Marking the end of the case study section, subsection 5.2 provides a combined theoretical analysis. A more explicit link to the research focus on improvements is established at the end of the analysis.

5.1 Comparison between Atalanta and Sophia

5.1.1 Format of cooperation

Straight from the beginning, one could find somewhat diverging opinions. Former NATO secretary-general, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, seemed to support the idea that NATO, with its early involvement before the main operations, made some early-stage preparations from which the EU's operation, EUNAVFOR Somalia, also known as operation Atalanta, could later benefit (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 212). At the same time, however, there was not supposed to be any formal link between the organizations at this stage (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 212). Complementary operations like these do necessarily require some form of interplay, but there was no formal link between the operations. While each organization followed the structure of its own independent operation, the binding factor was a shared wish for success. Thus, the sentiment of the former NATO Secretary General could potentially appear like a symbolic shell around a pragmatic core. With that being said, there was in fact a meeting between the commander of the early NATO operation, and the commander of operation Atalanta (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, pp. 211-212). This should reflect that both sides do at the very least recognize the significance of one another's operations.

In the beginning, observers were surprised that both the EU and NATO were going to take action off the Somali coast. For some time, it seemed more likely that the states would combine their efforts in NATO, which had signaled its move (Riddervold, 2014, pp. 546-547). While critics first viewed an EU operation as redundant, the nature of the EU made for some distinct qualities, which in fact proved to be useful (Riddervold, 2014, p. 550; Umlaufova, 2016, p. 9). The EU operation appeared as more civil than military, and thanks to the EU's legal frame, its operation gained legitimacy through the ability to go into agreements with the regional states (Riddervold, 2014, p. 557). In other words, in order to deal with what had been assessed as a threat to the international community, it was beneficial to have both operations. After all, even through their distinct operations, both organizations aimed for the same overarching goal. Nevertheless, there is still the question of how they managed to work towards that objective without getting in the way of one another.

In accordance with its mandate, the objectives of EUNAVFOR Somalia are to protect World Food Programme (WFP) vessels, deter, prevent and repress piracy and armed robbery at sea, monitor illegal fishing, and as a whole contribute to the strengthening of maritime

security and capacity (EU, n.d.a, p. 5). The objectives of OOS are to repress acts of piracy and armed robbery, as well as support capacity-building (NATO, 2014, pp. 1-2). As noted before, the NATO operation could be characterized as being of a more military nature than the EU operation. However, the shared overarching goals are clear. While the area of operations (AO) for operation Atalanta and OOS was not identical, there was still a very large overlap (EU, n.d.a, p. 6; NATO, 2014, p. 2). Once again, as a result, the operations effectively have to deal with one another in some way.

There is an option for formal cooperation between the EU and NATO, provided by the Berlin Plus arrangements, however, EU officials deemed this approach to be too slow and inefficient (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 218). The situation was pressing, and one did not wish to risk wasting time and effort. As such, operation Atalanta and OOS had to rely on informal cooperation between them. The main aspects of this kind of cooperation on the ground are information sharing and situational awareness. Staff on various levels from both organizations meet informally with these issues in mind. Apart from the individual level, a tool to aid success does exist in the form of Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE), however, SHADE also follows a very careful approach (CMF, 2014). Nation states are generally skeptical to politics and authority within fields that are traditionally closely connected to their sovereignty. The same logic accounts for why SHADE is characterized by an informal atmosphere. It is more or less a forum for discussion, and is meant to make all the operations run as smoothly as possible, but it has very low, if any, obligations (CMF, 2014). While mentioning all these methods of informal cooperation, one should not forget about cross-briefings between the EU and NATO either (Græger, 2016a, p. 485). Additional cooperation was made possible by one nation in particular (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 218). Britain held an important position in both operations, and could hence be seen as a special link between the two. Furthermore, both operation headquarters (OHQs) were located in Britain. The shared location of the OHQs facilitated informal cross-staff meetings (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 227), for which the EU-NATO relationship eventually became rather famous.

Had the organizations somehow been able to launch the operations following the Berlin Plus-arrangements, the operations could have shared both assets and command structure formally (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 219). In such a scenario, cooperation could have taken place through planning ahead together, instead of solely interacting on the ground. Without such a formal connection, the cooperation is likely to be dependent on ad hoc measures. While the formal institutionalized tools do exist, as before mentioned, in effect, they were unavailable when they could have been of use (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 218). In the end, this is due to the fact that the member states shape the formal level with their own selfish agendas. Regardless, former secretary-general De Hoop Scheffer seemed rather enthusiastic about aiming for close consultation with the EU when NATO would launch OOS (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 220). Since the two organizations have such a considerable amount of overlapping members, the operations were in reality still sharing assets, but in an informal manner (S. Smith, 2014, p. 105). A consequence of the absence of formal cooperation was that the exchange of sensitive information was not possible (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 234). With that being said, at least the presence of other international actors in the operational theater provided the EU and NATO with an additional stage for cooperation, one not bound by formal EU-NATO relations (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 112).

The subsection now moves on to the second case. Cooperation between the EU and NATO was not simply standing still after the launch of operation Atalanta. Two joint declarations were issued by the two organizations, one in 2016 and one in 2018. Creating a renewed

impetus, the two organizations showed commitment on finding ways to improve the cooperation between operation Sophia and OSG (EU, 2016, p. 1). In doing so, the two organizations build on practical experience for instance acquired in the waters off the Somali coast (EU, 2017, p. 3). As a whole, the EU and NATO now express a clearer and increased focus on cooperation than before. In this regard, one could find that there is now an ongoing institutionalization of the practical cooperation between the EU and NATO, as we shall observe and then come back to in the theoretical analysis. Simultaneously, however, the two organizations still face restrictions at the political level, also in the Mediterranean. Accordingly, while the EU and NATO now openly embrace the cooperation between them, their wording still has to be careful to a degree. EU (2017) refers to EU-NATO cooperation as «the established norm, a daily practice» (p. 2). In a similar vein, EU (2018) states that their «(...) longstanding cooperation has developed substantially, and is now unprecedented in its quality, scope and vigour» (p. 1). These examples could appear as rather symbolic, something which in turn reflects quite clearly how the political level bars the two organizations from being too formal.

The mandate of operation Sophia is constructed around four phases. In the first phase, forces are deployed in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the smuggling working model (EU, n.d.b). Phase two is directed at the vessels used for smuggling on the high seas. More specifically, this phase envisions the boarding, search, seizure and diversion of such vessels (EU, n.d.b). The second stage of this phase moves into Libyan waters. However, as this paper will get back to, the operation has been unable to move past the first stage of phase two. The third phase allows for more measures against suspected vessels and assets within Libyan territory (EU, n.d.b). The fourth phase basically ends the operation (EU, n.d.b). Due to the complications with the original mandate, two supporting tasks were added. The first task is to train the Libyan coastguards and navy (EU, n.d.b). The second one is to take part in the implementation of the United Nations (UN) arms embargo on the waters off the coast of Libya (EU, n.d.b). OSG's mandate is to cooperate with relevant stakeholders regarding situational awareness, to fight against terrorism and to facilitate capacity building (NATO, n.d.). Operation Sophia and OSG were both involved in the Central Mediterranean (NATO, 2020). As we can see, the objectives of the two operations are not identical. In the end, the two operations are described as «very different missions geographically, legally and operationally» (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 2). Still, operation Sophia and OSG are officially cooperating, unlike the operations in the Indian Ocean (NATO, 2017, p. 3; NATO, 2020). This does mark a considerable change, in the sense that greater commitment is a step on the road towards improvements.

According to the EU and NATO, «cooperation and coordination at tactical and operational levels» have been improved between their operations in the Mediterranean (NATO, 2018, p. 3). More specifically, the two organizations state that information sharing and logistical support, such as refueling, have contributed to this (NATO, 2018, p. 3). An example of information sharing could be the active exchange of information between Allied Maritime Command (MARCOM) and operation Sophia's OHQs (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 2). Yet, not even this instance of cooperation is based on a formal agreement. In order for the EU and NATO to further benefit from informal cooperation, Marcuzzi (2018) proposes to increase the exchange of information involving other actors as well (p. 4).

Notably, the cooperation in the Mediterranean provides the first opportunity to implement the EU-NATO Joint Declaration of 2016 (Dibenedetto, 2016, p. 14). As such, the Mediterranean works as a theatre for putting the progress between the two organizations to test (Dibenedetto, 2016, p. 14). With this in mind, it could be insightful to look at another

instance of cooperation, besides those already mentioned in the above paragraph. SHADE has continued to evolve since the operations off the Somali coast. It now has a focus on the Mediterranean specifically and is considered to be the «main forum for sharing information and coordination of efforts» (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 2). The practical cooperation between the EU and NATO, which in the beginning occurred largely *ad hoc*, has been developed further and become incorporated into a more active and stable interaction (NATO, 2018, p. 9; NATO, 2019, p. 13). This trend could be depicted as an institutionalization of the informal relationship between the EU and NATO. Meanwhile, the fact that for instance SHADE, with its highly informal environment, plays such a central role in the cooperation only serves to affirm the presence of constraints on the formal level. Since informal cooperation is generally deemed to be less effective than formal cooperation (Szewczyk, 2019, p. 28), the improvements occurring within informal cooperation could face the danger of being overlooked as mainly symbolic.

5.1.2 Challenges

As mentioned earlier, the EU did consider to make use of formal cooperation through the Berlin Plus-arrangements. However, there were several restrictions that led the EU to take a different approach. One was practicality. There was simply not enough time to move on with this kind of bureaucracy (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 218). Additionally, a political conflict made EU-NATO relations as a whole rather complicated. The Cyprus-Turkey conflict stood in the way of virtually all formal relations between the two organizations (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 110). Cyprus is a member of the EU, but does not have a security agreement with NATO (Græger, 2017, p. 340). This is problematic because it allows Turkey to use the political conflict between the two countries to hamper formal inter-organizational cooperation (Græger, 2017, p. 340). However, this is certainly not the first time that a political conflict between two nations has hindered integration in an EU-context. Perhaps the Empty Chair Crisis could serve as a rough parallel.

The piracy activities in the waters off the Somali coast were a problem large enough to require the attention of more or less the entire international maritime community. The EU and NATO were both contributing to these efforts. Both organizations were operating in the same theatre with the same overarching goal in mind. In the maritime domain, exchange of information is essential (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 4). It would then be a natural conclusion that cooperation is beneficial in order for the two organizations to reach their objectives (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 115). Hence, the real challenge was to find a way to make this happen despite of a stalemate in formal EU-NATO relations. In other words, the organizations had to find a way around the formal blockade. The formal level was in fact locked down to such an extent, that any progress seemed out of the question (Smith, 2014, p. 104). Naturally, if the higher levels are not functioning, the lower levels will have to bear the strain in order to make up for it. The lower level staff on both sides had to find ways to interact across the organizational borders. The spatial proximity of the two OHQs provided such an opportunity, which was realized through an informal meeting structure (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 119; Smith, 2014, p. 107). In addition to these efforts by the bureaucrats, commanders had to arrange visits at sea in order to make the operations run as smoothly as possible (Græger, 2017, p. 348).

Allegedly, a general consensus has developed, which more or less allows for disguising necessary measures as informal in order to achieve success in the operations, even if these measures resemble the formal procedures to a large degree (Græger, 2017, p. 348). While the Cyprus-Turkey conflict arguably plays a major role in explaining why the cooperation has to rely so much on informal channels, it is not necessarily the sole explanation

(Græger, 2017, p. 352). Security and defense policy is, after all, an area of «high» politics that has traditionally been closely linked to state sovereignty. Either way, it is a craving situation for the lower level staff. Formal restrictions require careful and clever balancing (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 111). Strictly respecting the red lines is in a way merely an illusion, since the lower level staff in reality is responsible for finding the necessary informal short cuts. In the end, they just need the right disguise (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 111). As indicated at the beginning of the paragraph, this entire procedure is not unknown to those at the higher levels, but as long as it is being portrayed appropriately, all parties allow it to happen. Some officials view it as problematic that certain offices all of a sudden are left with a disproportionate amount of influence, even when considering that this is happening out of an operational necessity (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 116-117).

As previously mentioned, there is no active agreement between Cyprus and NATO. Furthermore, the maritime operations taking place in the waters off the Somali coast are barred from the framework for formal cooperation. Thus, passing sensitive information and exchanging relevant intelligence make up the greatest challenge for cooperation between the two maritime operations (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 114). As has also been brought up before, these two activities are related to the most crucial elements for success in operations within the maritime domain. This in turn only further stresses the significance of this particular challenge. As a consequence, shared interests could indeed suffer (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 115). There are several examples of how cooperation between the EU and NATO is exceedingly intricate because of the formal framework not being functional. In the case of information and intelligence, it is for instance possible for the two organizations to exchange a photograph, however, exchanging conclusions drawn from said photograph is a different story (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 115).

The subsection now proceeds to the second case. Operation Sophia had a somewhat abrupt launch. The combined theoretical analysis shows how the EU member states were involved in this. As a consequence, the operation was launched without the certainty of being able to proceed through the mission stages as planned (Johansen, 2017, p. 517). In fact, operation Sophia became largely passive when things did not progress as hoped. Ideally, the operation needs a UN mandate and an approval by the host state in order to enter the territory of a state (EU, n.d.b). In the absence of any such approval or mandate, operation Sophia is unable to move past the first stage of phase two (EU, n.d.b). A mission is designed in order to be effective as a whole. Hence, improvisation was needed in order to compensate for the loss. Supporting tasks, such as for instance preparing the Libyan coastguards and navy, who have access to the Libyan waters, have been added (EU, n.d.b). However, naturally, this is not an equivalent to the original mandate of operation Sophia. Indeed, even while taking these challenges into consideration, the responses from the EU and NATO appear to have been too lackluster so far (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 4).

In the Mediterranean, the EU and NATO are faced with a familiar struggle (Tardy, 2017, p. 4). Like the first case, operation Sophia and OSG are addressing the symptoms while the core remains hidden (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 3). Like Somalia, Libya is also facing chaotic circumstances (Baldwin-Edwards & Lutterbeck, 2019, pp. 2246-2247). The country had realistically been under the authoritarian leadership of a military leader. When this leadership was put to an end, competition for the political power arose. The involvement of several militias and armed groups further contributes to the chaos (Baldwin-Edwards & Lutterbeck, 2019, p. 2246). Needless to say, these are circumstances under which unlawful behavior can flourish. Additionally, Libya is currently part of the most popular migration route. The Libyan border control also faces serious issues, mainly because responsibilities

are divided amongst several agencies (Baldwin-Edwards & Lutterbeck, 2019, p. 2247). Due to these circumstances, the EU and NATO are more or less prevented from obtaining approval by Libya to enter its territory (Tardy, 2017, p. 2). Thus, this time around, the EU and NATO are restricted from supporting their activities on the high seas as originally desired. Furthermore, sorting out legal agreements is more challenging in the Mediterranean than it was for the operations in the Indian Ocean (Johansen, 2017, p. 518).

Meanwhile, the situation regarding formal cooperation between the EU and NATO is virtually unaltered. The absence of changes makes it pointless simply to repeat all the details regarding the political situation here, however, the combined theoretical analysis will return to this situation.

5.1.3 Degree of success

The stakeholders themselves were evidently content with the coordination of their efforts in the Indian Ocean (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 235). Accordingly, the EU and NATO were both important to the fight against piracy off the Somali coast, and appear to have been carrying out their respective parts rather well. Meanwhile, critical voices were nevertheless present. While the military staffs on the ground were performing well, it became evident that the operations only addressed the symptom but not the core of the problem (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, pp. 235-236). The underlying problem was rooted deep within the Somali state structure (Kaunert & Zwolski, 2014, p. 594). The lack of a functioning government resulted in political chaos. This in turn, allowed a plethora of organized crime and violence to unfold. Thus, the piracy outbreak was just one of several symptoms. Furthermore, there are still those critics who doubt the statements of the EU and NATO officials, and claim that the combined presence of both actors was in fact meaningless (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 236). Given that both organizations get their resources from their members, who overlap to a great degree, these critics argue that the resources could have been used more effectively if the states had united behind only one organization (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 236).

According to Marcuzzi (2018, p. 4), naval operations need to be complemented by other efforts in order to be truly effective. Operation Atalanta should in theory have fulfilled these conditions for success. Through its legal framework, the EU was able to enter into agreements with regional states to ensure that the pirates would get prosecuted properly (Larsen, 2019, p. 16). Additionally, the EU was able to support EUNAVFOR Somalia with various onshore activities. Apart from the EU and NATO officials, scholars such as Gebhard & Smith (2015) have also given the two operations praise for coordinating surprisingly well taking everything into account (p. 107). These scholars seem to be particularly impressed by how effectively informal approaches are used as the solution when the EU and NATO are operating in the same theatre but outside of a formal framework (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 120).

The objective to protect WFP vessels when providing food and aid to the Somali people seems to have been perfectly accomplished on paper (EU, n.d.a, p. 18). The EU operation also managed to protect other vulnerable shipping, and contributed to a significant reduction in the piracy incidents (EU, n.d.a, p. 18). Thus, the maritime security in the waters off the Somali coast has benefitted from the EU's involvement. OOS was terminated after a long period without any pirate attacks (NATO, 2016). It is thus clear that the operations were at least successful in putting an end to the piracy outbreak that occurred there and then.

The monitoring of illegal fishing does not seem to be prioritized, neither in official documents nor in academic literature. NATO allegedly showed greater commitment in capacity building now than in the past (Riddervold, 2014, p. 553). The EU also had onshore operations running. Overall, the EU surprisingly took the lead over NATO in the operational theatre (Riddervold, 2014, p. 547). However, as already pointed out, critics have claimed that the fundamental problems in Somalia remain unsolved (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, pp. 235-236). Perhaps the supporting onshore measures were simply not large enough in scope to address the challenges directly. It should be reasonable to assume that an extensive mandate as well as extensive means are needed in order to achieve such a feat (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 3). Even if the core is still intact, at least the operations did handle the symptom successfully for the time being.

The subsection now moves on to the second case. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have criticized the way in which the situation in the Mediterranean is being handled by the EU and NATO (Dibenedetto, 2016, p. 12). There is to some degree a divergence of interests regarding what various actors prioritize in the operational theatre (Nováky, 2018, p. 205). NGOs are generally more in favor of search and rescue operations. Meanwhile, border control and counter-smuggling activities were seemingly prioritized (Larsen, 2019, p. 21). There is also doubt as to whether military operations are at all appropriate to deal with the problems at hand (Pricopi, 2016, p. 126). Traditionally, NATO has been more of a «hard» power, whereas the EU has been more of a «soft» power. The EU has normally been praised for its civilian and legal aspects, not its military power. After all, the EU has a broader scope than NATO. First and foremost, the EU is a political actor. NATO is positioned more narrowly within the field of security. With operation Sophia, however, the EU displayed to a degree a transition to «hard» security as well (Larsen, 2019, p. 21).

Operation Sophia and OSG have been quite successful at a tactical level with carrying out their activities on the high seas (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 1). Dibenedetto (2016) points out that a significant weakness of operation Sophia is its ability to gather intelligence (p. 12). OSG's focus on surveillance and information sharing thus makes its cooperation all the more valuable (Dibenedetto, 2016, p. 12). Hence, the successful informal cooperation marks another parallel to the Indian Ocean. Up to now, operation Sophia has successfully delivered on the first phase, as well as the first stage of the second phase described in its mandate (EU, n.d.b). Nevertheless, the restricted mandate of operation Sophia has led critics to claim that the operation as a whole did not have realistic chances of success to begin with (Johansen, 2017, p. 518). Accordingly, its overarching success is overly dependent on the later phases. In other words, restricted access to Libyan territory essentially leads to some of the efforts at the high seas acquiring unwanted side effects. Saving lives at sea without properly being able to address the core of the problem in Libya may in fact motivate more people to risk their lives (Pricopi, 2016, p. 125). In a similar vein, the objective to destroy illegal vessels has not stopped the smugglers from sending migrants. Instead, the smugglers are now investing less by providing less capable vessels, in turn exposing the migrants to even larger risks. There are critics who tend to overlook operation Sophia's contributions due to these kinds of shortcomings (Pricopi, 2016, p. 122). As long as the access to Libya remains restricted, success in the early phases is not going to amount to much for the bigger picture in the Mediterranean (Johansen, 2017, p. 520).

5.1.4 Potential changes

It becomes quite clear that the EU and NATO are considerably restricted by the formal blockade. The two organizations find themselves in a situation where they need to carry

out their missions side by side, without depending on any formal legal arrangements between them. Meanwhile, the staffs have already shown impressive creativity in dealing with these restrictions. They managed to replicate large parts of the formal arrangements through informal alternatives, and have furthermore been surprisingly successful with their methods (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, pp. 107, 121). Trying to evolve the informal cooperation further thus seems like a logical choice. Apart from that, the EU and NATO could possibly try to include other international stakeholders in their cooperation to a larger extent. By taking advantage of the international theatre this way, the two organizations can escape the complications that follow the formal aspects of their relationship (Umlaufova, 2016, p. 9).

As pointed out earlier, the expectations leaned towards a concentrated effort in the form of one operation instead of two operations. NATO is considered to be more effective and experienced within military operations. However, France and Germany both pushed for an EU operation (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 207; Riddervold, 2014, pp. 549-550). Arguably, since NATO showed itself positive towards an EU operation and since the US was already involved in cooperation in the theatre, Britain was eventually led to compromise its original interests (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 221; Riddervold, 2014, p. 546). Meanwhile, NATO as an organization did not want to let go of the opportunity to display its maritime experience (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, pp. 226). Perhaps it would have been a more effective approach to let NATO handle the activities at the high seas, while the EU could have shown greater commitments onshore. This way, both organizations could have played on their strengths.

If the formal framework would have been accessible, the EU and NATO could basically have acted as one. However, the Cyprus-Turkey conflict in particular made this virtually impossible. The political tensions at the heart of this deadlock remained in place during the entire joint presence of the EU and NATO in the operational theatre.

The subsection now proceeds to the second case. Due to reasons that will be elaborated on in the joint theoretical analysis, operation Sophia and OSG were launched as a rather late response to the «migration problem» in the Mediterranean (Nováky, 2018, p. 198). When operation Sophia was launched, approximately two years after the first call for European cooperation in the Mediterranean, it happened in a somewhat sudden manner (Nováky, 2018, p. 205). If the initiative was taken earlier, the mandate could possibly have been planned more thoroughly (Pricopi, 2016, pp. 125-126). In turn, perhaps the complications deriving from the restricted access to Libyan territory could have been avoided to an extent.

In theory, it is possible for the operations to act in Libyan waters based on a UN mandate alone, without the agreement of the host state (Tardy, 2017, p. 2). Considering how dependent the overarching success of operation Sophia and OSG in the Mediterranean is on gaining direct access to Libya, perhaps the EU and NATO should attempt to obtain a UN mandate. Meanwhile, there are a few drawbacks that could make this option unattractive. There is no guarantee that the EU member states and NATO allies would succeed in their attempt (Johansen, 2017, p. 517). Furthermore, entering a state's territory without its consent is bound to be contested, even in the light of a UN resolution (Tardy, 2017, p. 2). It is possible that the EU member states and NATO allies do not want to risk this approach, particularly since legitimacy was highly valued in the operations off the waters of the Somali coast.

The cooperation between operation Sophia and OSG is also restricted by the lack of accessible formal arrangements, primarily due to the political conflict between Cyprus

and Turkey. Thus, until the political climate changes, the suggestions presented in the first case are still relevant in this regard.

5.2 Theoretical analysis

In the waters off the Somali coast, the international community seemed to agree that it was of interest to improve the maritime security in the region by addressing piracy. National economic interests were involved because the Horn of Africa is connected to a crucial trade route. The scale of the issue made cooperation appear beneficial to the nation states, something which resonates well with an institutionalist way of thinking (Schimmelfennig, 2002, p. 418). Realism, in contrast, failed to predict a development in which an organization such as NATO would transform and prove its lasting relevance to its member states (Hellmann & Wolf, 1993, p. 4). In the beginning, the European states could not quite agree how to cooperate though. Britain particularly favored a lone NATO operation (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 205), whereas particularly France but also Germany showed interest in an additional EU operation (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 207; Riddervold, 2014, pp. 549-550). Mainly because the US had already begun to act and welcomed an EU initiative (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 204), Britain was eventually convinced to take part in a separate EU operation as well. This displays how the member states have a crucial role when it comes to deciding the form of cooperation, and can for instance be seen through the lens of rationalistic strands within institutionalism (Schleich, 2014, p. 185). Meanwhile, the two organizations can be said to have influenced the member states with their own agendas as well (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, p. 226). For covering this aspect, something other than realism or institutionalism is needed. Here, the P-A model, which we will come back to later in this subsection, can aid our understanding.

RDT can show that even the independent operations launched by the EU and NATO could profit from each other's presence in the operational theatre (Biermann & Koops, 2017, pp. 17-18). Both organizations had resources that could contribute to the overarching success. For instance, NATO had its maritime experience, whereas the EU had the legal framework and the civilian dimension to support its operation at the high seas.

The IOLC predicts that an inter-organizational relationship is often largely *ad hoc* early on, even more so if the formal political link is hampered by conflict (Biermann & Koops, 2017, p. 9). Especially the military and international staffs interacted informally, in an *ad hoc* fashion, in order to carry out the operations in the waters off the Somali coast in the best way possible. Since the formal political level in EU-NATO relations is suffering from a blockade, it is all the more helpful to observe the practices of the lower level staffs (Græger, 2016, p. 479). This trend also complies with the P-A model, as this model predicts that discord amongst the principals, in this case particularly Cyprus and Turkey, results in more leeway for the organizations themselves (Schleich, 2014, pp. 186-187). The lower level staffs did not allow themselves to be paralyzed by the lack of formal cooperation. They did what they had to do regardless, just in the disguise of informality. Within the terminology of the P-A model, this phenomenon could be characterized as a type of «agency slack» (Schleich, 2014, p. 186).

With regards to the problem that the migration over the Mediterranean posed, Italy had wanted to cooperate in an EU maritime operation already in 2013 (Nováky, 2018, p. 198). However, at this stage, the other EU member states saw no benefit in such a cooperation (Nováky, 2018, p. 198). Seen through the lens of realism, the «relative-gains» were deemed to be in favor of Italy (Keohane & Martin, 1995, pp. 45-46). Thus, it would have been irrational for the other member states to engage in the proposed cooperation. The

member states analyzed the situation in terms of their own national interests and those of their potential partners in order to make a decision. Meanwhile, the EU was unable to influence them through its input. Thus, in this case, the organization failed to play the role that liberal institutionalists perhaps would have hoped to see (Keohane & Martin, 1995, pp. 45-46). This serves as an example of a situation where the interests of the member states leave the EU as an organization without any room for action. The operations in the Mediterranean were only launched once the absence of cooperation started posing a bigger risk to the member states than the costs of cooperation. Even then, the EU operation was first and foremost launched because of external circumstances, not because the organization had necessarily managed to convince the member states through a mediating role (Nováky, 2018, p. 203). Once both operations were under way, however, EU-NATO cooperation was more pronounced this time around.

Meanwhile, the formal political situation was virtually unaltered. There was still discord on the level of the principals (Schleich, 2014, pp. 186-187), with its root in the Cyprus-Turkey conflict. From the point of RDT, there was still the same logic for the EU and NATO to combine their resources as best as they could (Biermann & Koops, 2017, pp. 17-18). However, this time it proved more difficult to enter into legal agreements and to follow up the efforts on the high seas with onshore activities. Once again, it was the agendas of nation states that led to complications. No third state was willing to enter into legal agreements this time around (Johansen, 2017, p. 518). Furthermore, if the organizations should have tried to obtain a UN mandate in order to operate within Libyan territory, it was deemed likely that states such as Russia or China would veto such an attempt based on their national agendas (Johansen, 2017, p. 517; Tardy, 2017, p. 2).

Even with the restrictions that have been pointed out, the EU-NATO cooperation has been following the IOLC to some extent. A general tendency represented in the IOLC is that such relationships often evolve in the direction of gradual institutionalization (Biermann & Koops, 2017, p. 9). In 2016, the EU and NATO issued a joint declaration as a renewed impetus for their cooperation, mentioning the maritime domain amongst others (EU, 2016, p. 1). Since then, they have continued following up with progress reports focusing on things such as increasing the interaction between their staffs. In some cases, informal working groups are established as well (NATO, 2018, p. 3). All of these tendencies can serve as examples of instruments of institutionalization (Biermann & Koops, 2017, p. 9). All in all, one can then find that the EU and NATO have been institutionalizing those informal practices that in the outset occurred largely *ad hoc*. In this process, the informal practices have become increasingly «regular» and «intense», while additionally representing «long-term orientations» (Biermann, 2008, p. 161). As such, EU-NATO cooperation in the maritime domain has also «matured» to some extent. These developments occurred as an alternative to the political stalemate at the principal level, once again showing that such circumstances provide more leeway for the agents (Schleich, 2014, pp. 186-187). While there are still uncertainties connected to the impact of the informal institutionalization (Koops, 2017, p. 331), EU-NATO cooperation has arguably improved and is headed in the right direction, only at a limited speed due to formal drawbacks.

6 Discussion

Based on the findings from the previous sections, this part provides some suggestions for what could be done regarding EU-NATO maritime cooperation as a whole in the future.

The maritime domain was not originally included in the Berlin Plus arrangements. Therefore, the problem for EU-NATO cooperation in this particular domain is not only that the existing agreements are currently inaccessible. Furthermore, the existing formal arrangements are not matching the current state of affairs (Lindstrom & Tardy, 2019, p. 12). International affairs have evolved since then. So has the commitment of both the EU and NATO to cooperate on facing the various challenges (Lindstrom & Tardy, p. 13). Ideally, perhaps the organizations should either update the existing arrangements, or enter into a new agreement. In such a scenario, maritime cooperation could potentially be included in functioning formal arrangements as well.

The current political climate naturally will not make such steps easy. The legal framework between the EU and NATO is virtually locked away by the Cyprus-Turkey conflict (Lindstrom & Tardy, 2019, pp. 12-14). In essence, Cyprus is able to keep Turkey from moving closer to the EU, whereas Turkey is able to keep Cyprus at a distance from NATO. Neither side wanting to allow their counterpart any progress, essentially leads to a blockade at the formal political level in EU-NATO relations. Thus, the two organizations can neither activate nor change any legal arrangements between them (Lindstrom & Tardy, 2019, p. 12). This political blockade is generally pointed out as the biggest restriction on EU-NATO cooperation (Acikmese & Triantaphyllou, 2012, pp. 564-565; Duke, 2008, p. 42; Stabile, Lasconjarias, & Sartori, 2018, p. 14). Even then, EU-NATO cooperation has only been slowed down, not stopped entirely. Within the maritime domain, several stakeholders are usually present in roughly the same operational theatre. Under these conditions, practical cooperation between the EU and NATO tends to work impressively well (Türke, 2019, p. 246). The operations in the Indian Ocean were officially independent of each other. Yet, thanks to the safe haven of informality, the military and international staffs all contributed to the same overarching goal in the region to some extent (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 1). In the waters off the Somali coast, the practices were largely *ad hoc*. With the trend initiated by the 2016 Joint Declaration, however, the EU and NATO have been committed to facilitating these practices in a more systematic way (NATO, 2018, p. 1).

The most realistic chance of improvement perhaps, is to carry on with the trend that was captured for real in 2016. The 2016 Joint Declaration provided a new impetus for EU-NATO cooperation (Lindstrom & Tardy, 2019, pp. 11, 13), also within the maritime domain. Since the launch of operation Atalanta, EU-NATO practical cooperation has started showing various signs of an ongoing institutionalization (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 107). Staff from one organization more frequently sits in on informal meetings in the other organization, they sometimes create informal working groups and joint seminars regarding lessons learned, such as that from the Indian Ocean, have been organized (NATO, 2017, p. 3; NATO, 2018, pp. 3, 9). This increasingly active and stable interaction provides for better mutual awareness. The EU and NATO should probably try to maintain this development and continue to show creative solutions in their informal cooperation. Even with the inherent shortcomings of informal cooperation (Lindstrom & Tardy, 2019, pp. 28-29), EU-NATO relations are likely to keep moving on slowly but steadily. Furthermore,

more research still needs to be conducted on what kind of conditions can draw the most out of informal cooperation (Koops, 2017, p. 331). Thus, there might still be some hidden potential.

There have previously been statements by officials such as «We certainly are not integrating» (Gebhard & Smith, 2015, p. 107) and «(...) We will never achieve unity of command» (Smith, 2014, p. 104). Meanwhile, the general assumption is that formal cooperation can make EU-NATO relations evolve even further (Szewczyk, 2019, p. 28). Hence, it does not seem beneficial for the two organizations to give up on the formal level entirely, even in the light of the political blockade. Apart from the conflict over recognition of Cypriot territory, Turkey also has a negative attitude towards EU-NATO cooperation in general. The root cause is that Turkey perceived itself to have been treated inappropriately by the two organizations in the past (Duke, 2008, p. 38). As European security kept evolving, Turkey was suddenly no longer involved in the same way as earlier. Thus, there was a sense of betrayal on the Turkish side (Duke, 2008, p. 38). While this has led to intricate relations between the EU, NATO and Turkey, there has been some hope that perhaps deploying diplomatic means could accomplish something (Duke, 2008, p. 42; S. J. Smith, 2019, p. 76). An observation of the operational theatre in the Aegean Sea suggests an alternative development. Turkey and Greece have together been involved in a NATO maritime operation in the Aegean. In connection with the Cyprus-Turkey conflict, relations between Greece and Turkey have also been rather strained. The observation shows, however, that they were able to facilitate cooperation to some extent (Græger, 2016b, p. 2). Hence, Græger (2016b) is led to suggest that perhaps operational practices are not just an emergency measure to cope with challenging circumstances, but could additionally be part of the overarching solution (pp. 1, 3). In other words, perhaps the political strains could be eased in the future through more practical cooperation amongst the involved parties.

Scholars such as Acikmese & Triantaphyllou (2012) and Duke (2008) point out the lack of a guarantee that there are no other complications simply waiting in line after the Cyprus-Turkey conflict. It is true, for instance, that the US is flirting with the idea of distancing itself from NATO (Howorth, 2017, pp. 2-3). The US has been a central motivational factor for NATO operations. The US is crucial both as a leader and contributor. NATO financing depends on the US defense budget to a large degree. Thus, such a move could influence EU-NATO cooperation. Also, it remains to be seen what exactly the aftermath of Brexit will bring with it. However, scholars such as Keohane have pointed out that cooperation and conflict are inherently connected (Biermann & Koops, 2017, p. 20). While France generally likes to see herself and Europe exercise influence globally, «rapprochement» between France and NATO was still accomplished quite successfully in the end (Rieker, 2013, pp. 376-377). Thus, while there are certainly uncertainties at the level of nation states regarding the nature of future EU-NATO cooperation, simply assuming that other obstacles are going to take the place of the Cyprus-Turkey conflict would perhaps be too much of a defeatist mentality. While openly acknowledging the Cyprus-Turkey conflict as the main cause of the current state of affairs might lead to even further deterioration of political relations with Turkey (Duke, 2008, p. 42), solving it could open the door to gradual advances at the formal level in the future.

Last but not least, suggestions for the future should not examine maritime operations in a vacuum. EU-NATO activities on the high seas have generally been successful (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 1). Rather than the tactical execution, it is perhaps what happens at the earlier stages that does not live up to the standards. This could for instance be the planning or

the available resources. In the Indian Ocean, as well as in the Mediterranean, the operations failed to guarantee long-term effects (Fahron-Hussey, 2019, pp. 235-236; Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 3). This might make the maritime operations appear as less successful, but is essentially about discovering better ways to support the maritime operations with other types of activities (Marcuzzi, 2018, p. 4). While onshore operations did support the activities at the high seas in the Indian Ocean, these efforts have arguably not been successful enough. Addressing instability at the basic state structure is a daunting task, but such an approach might be needed in order to tackle the fundamental weakness shown in operations up to date.

7 Conclusion

The following research question was presented in the introduction to this paper: «Has cooperation between the EU and NATO in the maritime domain improved from operation Atalanta to operation Sophia and, based on these developments, what could be done in the future?» Through the comparison of two cases, the dissertation examined developments in EU-NATO cooperation within the maritime domain. The cases were the operational theatre in the waters off the Somali coast and the operational theatre in the Mediterranean. In 2016, a joint declaration was issued by the two organizations. It was meant to spur on cooperation in a number of areas. The maritime domain was one of them. Since then, four progress reports and another joint declaration have been issued. Operation Atalanta was launched in 2008, whereas operation Sophia was launched in 2015. Both operations were still running at the start of 2020. Thus, the selection of cases provided an opportunity to compare cooperation before the renewed impetus and cooperation in its wake. Based on the developments examined in the other case subsections, the analysis concluded that there have been modest improvements. The interaction that occurred between EU and NATO staffs in the beginning was not officially part of the agenda of the two organizations. Rather, it was an *ad hoc* reaction by lower EU and NATO staffs. Their respective organizations were present in the same operational theatre and had the same overarching goals. Meanwhile, they were not allowed to cooperate formally. Hence, it was part of their work to avoid getting in the way of one another somehow. In 2016, the two organizations officially recognized this informal approach. Since then, the EU-NATO practical cooperation has been on an upward trend. There are now more different types of informal cooperation, it is happening more frequently and it now increasingly takes place in a planned manner, instead of a spontaneous one. Through an ongoing institutionalization, the informal EU-NATO cooperation has followed the IOLC further and «matured» to an extent. However, since the formal political blockade, primarily caused by the Cyprus-Turkey conflict, still significantly impedes on EU-NATO maritime cooperation, it is far from where it ideally could have been. Thus, the improvements achieved so far risk getting marginalized by the obstacles in their way. The dissertation also addressed the part of the research focus that is directed towards the future of EU-NATO maritime cooperation. Firstly, the EU and NATO should not let up on the trend that they have maintained up to this point. Secondly, the two organizations should not entirely give up on diplomatic means either in order to improve the political relations. Lastly, the EU and NATO should perhaps show more commitment in finding better ways to support their activities on the high seas.

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