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Differing Perspectives on Military Partnership: Understanding the NATO-Ukraine Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP)

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Abstract

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has brought significant attention to the relationship between NATO and Ukraine as well as the prospect of Ukraine joining the alliance. Ukraine's continued defiance against Russian aggression and interoperability with NATO has translated into battlefield successes against Russia's ongoing invasion, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reaffirming that NATO membership remains a key priority. As the official partnership agreement between NATO and Ukraine, the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP) has grown in relevance for aiding Ukraine in its goal of becoming a NATO member. However, the existence of the NATO-Ukraine EOP presents a research puzzle given that Ukraine's goal with NATO is membership and there is possible military utility for NATO to instead extend membership to Ukraine. As the first academic study on the NATO-Ukraine EOP, this thesis aims to address this research puzzle using discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews for understanding the differing perspectives that NATO and Ukraine have on the EOP. In analyzing the NATO-Ukraine EOP, the thesis provides an explanation for why the NATO-Ukraine EOP exists and how it has been implemented since its creation in June 2020.

Keywords: NATO, Ukraine, Enhanced Opportunities Partnership, membership, interoperability, military alliances, Russian invasion of Ukraine.

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List of Abbreviations

ACT	Allied Command Transformation
CAP	Comprehensive Assistance Package
EOP	Enhanced Opportunities Partnership
HIMARS	High Mobility Artillery Rocket System
IR	International Relations
MAP	Membership Action Plan
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NLAW	Next-generation Light Anti-tank Weapon
PfP	Partnership for Peace
PII	Partnership Interoperability Initiative
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
USA	United States of America

Introduction

Background

In June 2020, NATO and Ukraine furthered their cooperation with the signing of the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP). With a focus on interoperability, the EOP was given to Ukraine in recognition of previous contributions to NATO and provides Ukraine with greater access to NATO training (NATO, 2020). Ukraine joined five other states- Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan and Sweden- in being designated the EOP which continues to exist as Ukraine's official status with NATO. Following the Finnish and Swedish government decisions to pursue NATO membership, the EOP program is now dominated by states seeking full membership rather than just interoperability. Although the EOP is separate from the NATO membership process, the Ukrainian government's driving goal with NATO remains becoming a full NATO member (Balmforth, 2022).

After the creation of the NATO-Ukraine EOP, the Russian government raised concerns and argued that the agreement did not contribute to peace in Europe. Russian government spokesperson Dmitry Peskov responded to the NATO-Ukraine EOP stating: "we are always very attentive to the approach of NATO's military infrastructure to our borders, and we are forced to take appropriate necessary measures to ensure our own security in this regard" (Teslova, 2020). Several months after the NATO-Ukraine EOP was signed, Russia initiated a military build-up on the Ukrainian border and ultimately launched a full-scale invasion in February 2022 (Ozawa, 2022, p. 9). Following Russia's formal annexation of four additional Ukrainian oblasts in September 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy requested accelerated NATO membership for Ukraine (Zelenskyy, 2022). This invasion has therefore brought further significance to the NATO-Ukraine relationship and Ukraine's official status as an enhanced opportunities partner.

Reason and Aim for the Thesis

Given how recently the NATO-Ukraine EOP was signed, there is a lack of academic studies which have researched this topic in detail. Academic studies have frequently focused on the NATO-Russia relationship or the relationships between Ukraine and

individual NATO states. However, there is a need to understand how NATO has approached its recent interactions with Ukraine, particularly in light of Russia's 2022 invasion. Since NATO has been unwilling to give Ukraine membership, it is important to understand what alternative interaction exists below this level of membership. With Ukraine's current official status being an enhanced opportunities partner, it presents a research puzzle as to why NATO has given Ukraine this status rather than giving nothing or providing NATO membership. To address this research puzzle, this thesis will aim to analyze the official discourses which help explain why the NATO-Ukraine EOP exists and how it has been implemented.

Research Questions and Structure

This period of focus for this thesis will be from the signing of the NATO-Ukraine EOP in June 2020 to President Zelenskyy's accelerated NATO membership request in September 2022. With this thesis seeking to understand the NATO-Ukraine EOP and how it is presented in official discourses, the primary research question is:

- ***How has the EOP been presented in Ukrainian and NATO discourses?***

In order to provide greater understanding from these discourses for why NATO has formed a partnership rather than giving nothing or offering membership to Ukraine and how the EOP has been practically implemented, this thesis will address two further supplementary research questions:

- ***Why has NATO given Ukraine the EOP status rather than giving nothing or offering NATO membership?***
- ***To what extent have NATO and Ukraine furthered their interoperability through the EOP?***

To answer the above research questions, this thesis will first start by clarifying in chapter 1 what is meant by the NATO-Ukraine EOP and how it differs from other NATO partnership programs or NATO membership. Ukraine's history with NATO will also be discussed in addition to recent developments such as Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

After providing context to the EOP in Chapter 1, the conceptual literature review in Chapter 2 will outline previous academic understandings of the NATO-Ukraine

relationship through three concepts- partnership, membership, and interoperability. A theory section will also be produced to show how constructivism is able to effectively explain the NATO-Ukraine EOP.

In the subsequent Chapter 3 on methodology, the thesis will discuss the research methods of discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews to illustrate why these are the most appropriate methods for this research. The findings from the research methods will be presented and analyzed in Chapter 4, culminating in a conclusion summarizing the overall research contribution of this thesis.

Value of Research

This thesis is the first academic study of the NATO-Ukraine EOP and is valuable towards ongoing studies of the NATO-Ukraine relationship. Since NATO membership remains a priority for the Ukrainian government, this thesis topic on the NATO-Ukraine EOP is particularly relevant to the field of Ukrainian security studies. By focusing on an individual EOP state of Ukraine, the thesis opens up the opportunity for future comparative studies with other EOP states. The thesis conducts discourse analysis on new official statements released by NATO and Ukrainian officials which have not been assessed in previous academic studies. Furthermore, the interviews with former high-ranking NATO and Ukrainian defense officials/academic experts bring new perspectives on the evolving nature of the NATO-Ukraine relationship.

Previous studies looking at NATO partnerships have been centered on the period before the EOP existed and have therefore been unable to address significant recent developments. For example, previous works on NATO partnerships have not included Ukraine's growing cooperation with NATO since 2014, Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine or the dramatic shift of Finland and Sweden towards NATO membership. These developments give an important context to the NATO-Ukraine relationship which will be explored in this thesis, with the EOP being a key outlet for Ukraine to expand co-operation with NATO.

Chapter 1 - Historical Overview

This chapter will define the NATO EOP and provide relevant historical context with regard to Ukraine. The purpose of this chapter is to explain why the EOP is significant for aspiring NATO members such as Ukraine and how the EOP is important to the NATO-Ukraine relationship.

1.1 NATO EOP Explained

In the first analysis, it is important contextually to outline why NATO created the EOP program in 2014 and the motivations for the initial five states who joined- Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan and Sweden. At NATO's Wales Summit held in September 2014, discussions surrounding Ukraine dominated proceedings given the Maidan Revolution, Russia's annexation of Crimea and the War in Donbas (Mills & Brooke-Holland, 2014, p. 3). NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission in Afghanistan was also finishing at the end of 2014, placing a greater emphasis on NATO's security role within Europe (Ozawa, 2019, p. 45).

The Wales Summit led to NATO revamping its policy on deterrence in the face of Russian aggression in Ukraine, with NATO nations pledging increased defense spending and a greater focus on cooperation with NATO partners (Ibid, p. 2). Interoperability between NATO members and partners would become a key method for NATO to ensure collective defense, crisis management and security cooperation globally following the Wales Summit (Ibid). Historically, NATO formed multiple different partnership initiatives after the Cold War which were focused on specific geographic regions for security cooperation [refer to Appendix A]. Examples of these included the Mediterranean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. Additionally, the Partnership for Peace (PfP) formed in 1994 was designed to ensure security dialogue and cooperation between NATO and European partner nations (Arts & Keil, 2021, p. 3).

At the 2014 Wales Summit, NATO formed the Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII) to ensure greater coherence and effectiveness with its partnership initiatives. The first part of the PII was the creation of an Interoperability Platform consisting of 23 states and focused on political dialogue regarding crisis management issues (NATO,

2022a). The majority of these 23 states had been part of NATO's ISAF operation in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014, although there was limited expectation of joint exercises with NATO within the Interoperability Platform states (Lorenz, 2020). On a more practical military level, the PII had a second part which was the EOP, and this was awarded initially to five states regarded as providing the greatest mission support and security assistance to NATO (Ibid). The EOP provides these five states- Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan and Sweden- with tailor-made interoperability opportunities consisting of the following:

- “Regular, political consultations on security matters, including possibly at ministerial level.
- Enhanced access to interoperability programs and exercises.
- Sharing information, including on lessons learned.
- Closer association of such partners in times of crisis and the preparation of operations” (NATO, 2022a).

The EOP therefore was a significant development from the Wales Summit as it targeted five states viewed as being the most committed partners to NATO and aimed at furthering their interoperability on both a political and military level with NATO. However, the agendas for each of the initial five EOP partners diverge with differing security interests from their partnerships.

Australia and Jordan's partnership agendas can be classed as non-European states who are not seeking NATO membership. Australia and NATO share common security interests in the Indo-Pacific region related to China's maritime capabilities and the threat of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan (Basagni & Lete, 2016). Whereas Jordan has overlapping security interests with NATO in the Middle East concerning counter-terrorism operations and preventing refugee crises. Despite Australia and Jordan not being eligible to pursue NATO membership due to geographical factors, they are both committed to spending at least 2% of their GDP on defense in line with NATO guidelines (Ibid).

Finland and Sweden's partnership agendas fit into a different category which is European states seeking NATO membership that have made considerable progress towards membership. Initially, neither state had a motivation for NATO membership

when the EOP was introduced in 2014. They both were however committed to supporting NATO operations by making troop contributions to NATO's missions in Afghanistan and the Balkans. Prior to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, Finland and Sweden's defense priorities were focused on Baltic Sea security and engaging with individual NATO states such as the USA on a bilateral basis (Ibid). Finland and Sweden had also commissioned reports assessing the possibility of them receiving NATO article 5 collective defense assurances without the need for membership (Ibid). After Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, both states made the bilateral decision to instead apply for NATO membership over security concerns that they may experience a similar Russian invasion and that membership was the only way to ensure protection from this threat (Mitchell, 2022).

Even though Georgia's partnership agenda is also a European state seeking NATO membership, Georgia can be argued as a separate category from Finland and Sweden due to a lack of progress made toward NATO membership (Basagni & Lete, 2016). Russia's ongoing militarization of Georgia's occupied Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions since 2008 has encouraged Georgia to pursue NATO membership in the hope of gaining NATO member protection. Despite Georgia's membership intentions, NATO has not provided it with a Membership Action Plan (MAP) due to perceived failures of Georgian defense reform and concerns over Georgia's territorial integrity (Ibid).

Of the three broad EOP partnership agendas, Ukraine most closely aligns with Georgia's as a result of similar security concerns related to Russia and similar difficulties in making progress towards NATO membership. At the same time, Ukraine does differ from the Georgian EOP example given that Ukraine is currently engaged in a full-scale war with Russia and is receiving unprecedented weapons support from NATO nations. As will be discussed later in this thesis, Ukraine's interoperability with multiple NATO nation weapons systems and battlefield successes against Russia may eventually improve its prospects of moving from the EOP towards NATO membership, aligning closer with the Finland and Sweden examples.

1.2 Relationship Between the EOP and NATO Membership

According to NATO, the EOP does not prejudice any decisions on NATO membership and is separate from a MAP (NATO, 2020). Although NATO separates the EOP from

NATO membership, by focusing resources on building interoperability with certain partners through the EOP, NATO is arguably providing these states with military standards relevant to NATO membership. With none of the six current EOP members having transitioned from the EOP to membership, it has yet to be proven that an EOP state can become a NATO member. However, since the majority of EOP states- Georgia, Finland, Sweden and Ukraine- are now seeking NATO membership, the EOP has potentially grown greater in significance for these four states' membership bids.

Under NATO's North Atlantic Treaty (Washington Treaty) signed in 1949, NATO employs an 'open-door policy' meaning that any European state has the ability to apply for membership (NATO, 2016a). Following consultations with NATO members, an aspiring member state may receive a MAP which provides a guideline for necessary reform guidelines, although this does not guarantee membership (Ibid). NATO membership relies on the approval of all 30 members in addition to sufficiently achieving the below criteria (Ibid):

1. A functioning democratic political system based on a market economy.
2. Fair treatment of minority populations.
3. A commitment to resolve conflicts peacefully.
4. An ability and willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations.
5. A commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutions.

As part of its interoperability and access to NATO exercises remit, the EOP is likely able to assist a state in achieving the fourth and fifth parts of the above criteria. In the case of Finland and Sweden, the EOP has assisted both states with achieving strong military interoperability with NATO which is important for their recent membership bids. In contrast to Bosnia which is the only state currently with a NATO MAP, both Finland and Sweden have been able to effectively avoid the requirement for a MAP due to their already high military standards and interoperability with NATO (Gotkowska, 2022, p. 3). These two states have also developed democratic institutions, legislation to protect minorities and the absence of ongoing conflicts (Ibid). If Finland and Sweden are able to gain final NATO approval for membership, it will potentially serve as a case study example for Ukraine to replicate in moving from the EOP to membership.

On the other hand, simply matching the five above criteria does not guarantee membership because all 30 members must agree on the inclusion of Finland and

Sweden. Despite initial optimism that both these states would have a simple accession process due to their democratic and military standards, Turkey have blocked their accession based on concerns that they have been harboring Kurdish terrorists (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2022). Hence, even if a state achieves significant success from the EOP by becoming interoperable with NATO forces, political divisions from NATO member states have the potential to disrupt NATO expansion. This dominance of a political rather than military logic for NATO's membership expansion decisions will be further expanded in the findings and analysis section of this thesis. As will also be explored later in this thesis, Ukraine faces political opposition from several NATO states which would likely hamper its ambitions in transitioning from the EOP to NATO membership.

1.3 Ukraine's Relationship With NATO

Since this thesis has explained the EOP more broadly, it will now specifically analyze Ukraine's inclusion into the EOP in 2020 and summarize Ukraine's relationship with NATO since independence in 1991. Ukraine's relationship with NATO will be broken down into three distinct periods of cooperation: pre-2014 period, 2014-2022 period and the current period following Russia's 2022 invasion.

Pre-2014

In Ukraine's pre-2014 relationship with NATO, a number of joint agreements and initiatives were signed which opened the way for a post-independence Ukraine to engage with NATO. Under the first President Leonid Kravchuk (1991 – 1994), Ukraine became a member of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council which was a forum between NATO and former Warsaw Pact states (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2021a). Furthermore, Ukraine became the first post-Soviet state to join the PfP in 1994 to further expand its dialogue with NATO (Ibid). In 1997, the NATO-Ukraine relationship was again furthered with the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership in which both parties agreed reform objectives for the economy and in building democracy (Ibid, p. 30).

Taras Kuzio has described this period of Ukraine's initial relationship with NATO as one where Ukrainian elites were largely in favor NATO membership (Kuzio, 1998, p.

4). Nevertheless, Kuzio notes that Ukraine's second President Leonid Kuchma (1994 – 2005) was supportive of NATO but initially opposed to NATO membership based on concerns that it would harm Ukraine's relationship with Russia (Ibid). More broadly in the period of the late 1990's, NATO began to significantly expand its membership in Central and Eastern Europe. This initially started in 1999 with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland who were viewed as having made the greatest progress with defense reform (Lazarevic, 2009, p. 40).

Although President Kuchma had been opposed to NATO membership, this policy changed in 2002 with Ukraine targeting membership based on prevailing public sentiment (Ibid, p. 49). Within the PfP, Ukraine began to deploy significant peacekeeping forces to NATO's operations in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Kosovo (NATO, 2022b). Although a further seven states were included as NATO members in March 2004 [refer to Appendix B], Ukraine was not included due to a lack of progress in achieving defense reforms under President Kuchma (Ibid, p. 30). Following Ukraine's Orange Revolution (November 2004 - January 2005), Ukraine's third President Viktor Yushchenko sought to push Ukraine towards closer Euro-Atlantic integration and deliver on getting a NATO MAP (Ibid, p. 47).

President Yushchenko experienced initial domestic difficulties in pushing for a NATO MAP as his then Prime Minister Viktor Yanukovich was opposed to the plan in 2007 (Pifer, 2019). However, President Yushchenko had the support of a new Prime Minister in 2008- Yulia Tymoshenko- and the support of the US to push for a NATO MAP (Ibid). US President George W. Bush used the April 2008 Bucharest Summit to deliver an appeal to provide Georgia and Ukraine with NATO MAPs (Forsberg & Herd, 2015, p. 47). France and Germany instead blocked this plan based on concerns of a Russian retaliation, with Russian President Vladimir Putin (still serving in his first stint as president) declaring these MAPs a 'direct threat' to Russia (Ibid, p. 49). Once Viktor Yanukovich was elected as President in 2010, Ukraine's progress towards NATO membership was effectively halted and the prospects for Ukraine gaining a NATO MAP were then minimal (Pifer, 2019).

Post 2014-2022 period

President Yanukovich's move to suspend Ukraine's EU Association Agreement discussions and align Ukraine closer with Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) sparked major protests in 2014 (Suba, 2020, p. 30). Both the US and NATO were in public support of the protests and the subsequent Revolution of Dignity which ultimately led to the downfall of President Yanukovich's government (Ibid). President Putin retaliated to Ukraine's shift back towards a pro-western stance by illegally annexing Crimea in March 2014 and instigating war in Eastern Ukraine (Ibid). NATO's response to these developments was firstly limited to political actions with NATO publicly reaffirming support for Ukraine's sovereignty and suspending cooperation with Russia (NATO, 2022b). By the time of NATO's Wales Summit in September 2014, the presence of war in Eastern Ukraine discouraged NATO from extending the EOP to Ukraine (Atlantic Council, 2020).

NATO's main response to Russia's 2014 aggression in Ukraine was made at the 2016 Warsaw Summit, where a Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP) for Ukraine was implemented. The CAP provided Ukraine with NATO trust funds to develop priority defense areas such as cyber defense and logistics for the Ukrainian military. Additionally, NATO members agreed at the Warsaw Summit to the creation of an Enhanced Forward Presence consisting of four battalions deployed to the NATO members of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland (Monaghan, 2022). These battalions were introduced as a deterrence to a potential Russian attack on the NATO states which border Russian territory (Ibid). NATO's decision not to deploy a similar operation to Ukraine was based on security concerns from several NATO states over the ongoing war in Eastern Ukraine and the possible impact on NATO forces (Dempsey, 2022a) It was therefore decided by individual NATO states including Canada, the UK and the USA to set up their own training missions in Ukraine to build Ukraine's defensive capabilities (Mills, 2022).

Alongside receiving NATO assistance, the new Ukrainian government under President Petro Poroshenko put forward a new National Security Strategy outlining a strategy for the Ukrainian military to meet NATO standards (NATO, 2016b). The National Security Strategy set 2020 as the date for which the Ukrainian military would be fully interoperable with NATO forces (Ibid). By 2020, Ukraine was able to substantially

improve its NATO interoperability with the assistance of the NATO CAP and was awarded the EOP status in June 2020 (NATO, 2020). NATO made this decision to grant Ukraine the EOP status based on Ukraine's ongoing support of NATO peacekeeping missions, its involvement with NATO exercises and the defense reform achievements made by Ukraine since 2014 (Ibid).

Despite the significant achievement in being granted the EOP, Ukraine's current President Volodymyr Zelenskyy issued an updated Security Strategy in September 2020 to confirm that Ukraine's intentions were to move beyond the EOP and towards NATO membership (President of Ukraine, 2020). Given that NATO has been unwilling to grant Ukraine anything further than the EOP, President Zelenskyy's goal of NATO membership set out in the 2020 National Security Strategy has yet to be achieved. At the same time, Russia's military build-ups on the Ukrainian border in the two years following the EOP would threaten Ukraine's security and dissuade NATO from engaging in membership discussions for Ukraine (Ozawa, 2022, p. 2). Even though US President Joe Biden outlined the detrimental impacts that escalation would have for Russia to President Putin, the US and NATO policy of deterrence would prove unsuccessful (Sisson, 2022). President Putin's decision to launch a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022 would ultimately bring significant security ramifications for Ukraine and the NATO-Ukraine relationship.

Russia's 2022 invasion onwards

President Putin's decision to launch the February 2022 invasion may have been guided on an expectation that NATO nations would not respond effectively (Ibid). Based on the limited sanctions response and lack of arms given to Ukraine in 2014, President Putin potentially expected a similar NATO nation response from this invasion. However, Ukraine's effectiveness in containing Russia's advance in the early stages of the invasion and the ongoing threat posed by Russia to European security encouraged NATO nations to begin heavily arming the Ukrainian military (Ibid). Even individual NATO nations previously opposed to arming Ukraine such as France, Germany and Hungary shifted their positions toward providing military equipment (Kiel Institute For The World Economy, 2022). Ukraine's battlefield successes against Russia have been enhanced by the provision of this NATO nation military support which includes artillery, air defense systems and armored vehicles (Ibid). Although

NATO nations have not deployed forces to Ukraine due to fears of a confrontation with Russia, western military support has allowed Ukraine to dramatically change the course of the war and begin a major counter-offensive starting in September 2022 (Duggal, 2022).

In addition to the emphatic response by individual NATO nations, NATO as an organization has strengthened its relationship with Ukraine since the 2022 Russian invasion. At the Madrid Summit in June 2022, NATO implemented changes to their Ukraine CAP to move from purely providing trust fund support towards practical military resources (Dempsey, 2022b). According to the official statement on the improved CAP, NATO will provide “short-term assistance, ranging from fuel, protective equipment to portable anti-drone systems and secure communications” (NATO, 2022c) Despite Ukrainian troops withdrawing from a number of NATO peacekeeping missions and having to cancel its participation in several NATO exercises due to the Russian invasion, NATO’s updated CAP will include longer-term support for Ukraine to meet NATO interoperability standards (Ibid). This could ensure that Ukraine continues to benefit from its EOP with NATO in light of the ongoing Russian-led war in Ukraine.

On the Ukraine side, President Zelenskyy has furthered calls for NATO to grant Ukraine membership following escalations by President Putin in September 2022. Russia formally annexed four Ukrainian oblasts- Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia- on 30 September 2022 after conducting illegitimate referendums (Shvestsova, 2022). President Zelenskyy’s immediate response to this was to publish a formal Ukrainian request for NATO to provide Ukraine with an accelerated membership plan (Zelenskyy, 2022). It is possible that the rapid membership applications of two other EOP states- Finland and Sweden- had inspired President Zelenskyy to request a similar process from NATO. Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine has therefore potentially brought NATO and Ukraine closer through NATO’s policy reversal in providing material military support to Ukraine and the renewed Ukrainian push for NATO membership.

To summarize this chapter, Ukraine’s initial attempts at gaining membership through a MAP prior to 2014 faltered due to political opposition from NATO states. Following Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the Russian-led war in Eastern Ukraine,

Ukraine's military increased interoperability with NATO in the face of Russian aggression. The EOP was awarded to Ukraine given this progress in interoperability with NATO and has continued to exist as Ukraine's main NATO cooperation agreement despite the latest 2022 Russian invasion. This brings into focus the aim of this thesis which is to understand the reason for why Ukraine has been provided with the EOP rather than NATO membership.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

With this thesis having now set up the historical and geopolitical setting surrounding the NATO-Ukraine EOP, it is important to explore the previous academic understandings that relate to the area of focus for this thesis. The aim of this chapter will be to analyze how other scholars have interpreted the meaning behind three significant concepts in this thesis- partnership, membership and interoperability. It will also aim to describe the key International Relations (IR) theory academic debates surrounding NATO expansion and illustrate why constructivism is the most appropriate IR theory to explain the NATO-Ukraine EOP.

Conceptual Literature Review

A conceptual literature review has been designed to develop the three concepts which directly relate to the thesis research questions:

Research question	Related concept
How has the EOP been presented in Ukrainian and NATO discourses?	Partnership
Why has NATO given Ukraine the EOP status rather than giving nothing or offering NATO membership?	Membership
To what extent have NATO and Ukraine furthered their interoperability through the EOP?	Interoperability

2.1 Partnership

The central concept to this thesis studying the NATO-Ukraine EOP is the concept of partnership. Given that the primary research question of this thesis is “how has the EOP been presented in Ukrainian and NATO discourses?,” the concept of partnership is relevant for understanding the meaning behind the EOP. Since the EOP was created in 2014 and Ukraine only became an EOP state recently in 2020, there has

been a lack of academic research focused on the EOP. The majority of academic research on the topic of NATO partnerships relates to the PfP which differs from the EOP in that it includes much more partners (20 states) and is not targeted at partners regarded as having contributed significantly to NATO missions like the EOP (NATO, 2020). Nevertheless, previous academic studies are useful for providing a broader understanding of why NATO forms partnerships and the meaning prescribed to being a NATO partner.

Edstrom, Matlary and Petersson's 2011 book titled 'NATO: The Power of Partnerships' is the main academic source that has explored the rationale behind NATO partnerships (Edstrom, Matlary, & Petersson, 2011). According to these authors, NATO partnerships are an excellent way for NATO to extend its influence without having to provide security guarantees (Ibid, p. 2). For the partner state, the benefit is that they don't have to reform in order to meet the demands of membership and they receive symbolic security value from being associated with NATO under a partnership agreement (Ibid). This reading of NATO's partnership agenda towards Ukraine is arguably accurate given that NATO has expanded NATO training for Ukraine but refused to provide any security guarantees or intervene militarily. However, the authors' rationale for partner states is arguably unsuited to Ukraine's partnership agenda from the post-2014 period onwards. The pace of defense reforms taken by Ukraine since 2014 is indicative of Ukraine's desire to obtain membership rather than simply partnership. Additionally, Russia's annexation of Crimea and full-scale invasion of Ukraine suggest that the symbolism of a NATO partnership has little security value in deterring Russian aggression.

Despite the lack of specific research on the NATO-Ukraine EOP, commentaries by Ukrainian policy experts provide greater clarity on Ukraine's partnership agenda in the post-2014 period. Alyona Getmanchuk argues that Ukraine's decision to enter into the EOP was a way of highlighting to Ukrainian society that progress is being made toward integrating with NATO standards (Atlantic Council, 2020). Volodymyr Yermolenko furthers this argument by saying that Ukraine's agenda for partnering with NATO under the EOP is based ultimately on its desire to gain NATO membership (Ibid). Partnership can therefore be conceptualized as a tool used by a military alliance to extend its influence without providing security guarantees and by partner states to develop integration into that military alliance.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge that the dramatic impacts of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine could impact the level of partnership between NATO and Ukraine. Although there has been a lack of published research on the impacts of this latest 2022 invasion on NATO's partnership agenda, a 2021 scenario outlook by Rachel Ellehuus highlights factors that could potentially alter NATO's future position (Ellehuus, 2021). In a more positive scenario, Ellehuus sees NATO's collective defense and partnerships increase as a way to deter Russian and Chinese aggression (Ibid, p. 4). In the post-February 2022 context, continued Ukrainian battlefield successes and further Russian mass war crimes are two possible factors that may lead to NATO increasing its level of partnership with Ukraine as a counter to Russian aggression.

An alternative negative scenario by Ellehuus sees NATO cohesion diminish and partnerships reduced following mass migration, economic shocks and the risk of confrontation with Russia (Ibid, p. 6). Within the post-February 2022 context, there are multiple instances of these factors which may lead to a decline in NATO cohesion and partnerships. On the migration front, Russia's 2022 invasion has led to Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War Two with millions of refugees fleeing Ukraine (Vierlinger, 2022). Economically, NATO states have experienced surging energy prices as demand for Russian energy falls and Ukrainian energy production falters due to Russian airstrikes (European Council, 2022). Added to the energy crisis, food insecurity has risen with Russia's exit from a grain export deal (Ibid). Russian nuclear threats are also a factor that may dissuade some NATO states from agreeing to greater NATO support to Ukraine (Applebaum, 2022).

2.2 Membership

Since Ukraine seeks membership of NATO, the logical question deduced from the partnership concept is why has NATO given Ukraine the EOP status rather than offering NATO membership? The previous section on partnership accounted for the benefits for NATO in choosing partnership for Ukraine over selecting to give nothing at all. This however does not fully explain why NATO membership has not been given to Ukraine. To conceptualize membership, it is important to go beyond the official NATO Washington Treaty and look at what previous academic literature has produced

on the rationale behind NATO's membership decision-making. On the surface level, NATO has an open-door policy under its Washington Treaty meaning that any state in the Euro-Atlantic area is able to join (NATO, 2016a). The Washington Treaty does not account for the political positions and threat perceptions of NATO states which can prevent aspiring states from becoming members. Several Ukrainian academics have provided examples of inconsistency in the alliance's membership policy and argued the case for Ukraine meeting the requirements for membership.

Taras Kuzio has challenged a number of assumptions about Ukraine's ineligibility for membership through examples of previous membership decisions (Kuzio, 2018). Firstly, Russia's control over parts of Ukrainian territory should not hinder Ukraine's membership eligibility given that West Germany was accepted into NATO without having full control over Germany (Ibid). Secondly, Ukraine's military is one of the largest in Europe at 500,000 personnel, compared to Montenegro which was accepted into NATO in 2017 with only 2,000 (Ibid). Furthermore, Ukraine is now arguably one of the most capable militaries in Europe because of its combat experience gained from defending against a full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. Thirdly, the majority of the Ukrainian population views NATO membership positively and this is arguably higher than a number of states who are currently NATO members. Lastly, arguments that Ukraine is unsuitable for membership due to Russian interference are unsubstantiated since Montenegro was accepted by NATO in the year following a Russian attempted political coup (Ibid).

Other Ukrainian researchers such as Hanna Shelest have additionally questioned NATO's recent logic in extending membership to Finland since it also shares a border with Russia (Shelest, 2022). Despite Ukrainian researchers presenting a strong case for NATO to give Ukraine membership, NATO's fear of Russian escalation from Ukrainian membership has been rationalized by several western academics as a cause for NATO hesitancy. Andreas Umland has argued that NATO had neglected the threat of Russian nationalism during the early 2000's (Umland, 2016, p. 2). According to Umland, NATO would not have had extended membership to Russia's neighboring states in the Baltics in 2004 if the alliance had the same Russian escalation fear that it has now for Georgian and Ukrainian NATO membership (Ibid).

Umland's argument can be partially challenged by the fact that NATO does appear to be enlarging its membership close to Russia with the likely admission of Finland and Sweden. Other western academics have therefore drawn on the importance of the political interests of NATO members in addition to threat perception for NATO membership decisions. Michael Hanlon has argued that military alliances represent the particular political interests of member states and there is no inherent right for states to be able to join NATO (Hanlon, 2017, p. 72). Examples of political interests delaying NATO membership have been witnessed with Greece's decision to veto Macedonian NATO membership until the country's name was changed to North Macedonia (Papadimas & Georgiopoulos, 2019). More recently, Turkey's decision to veto the accession of Finland and Sweden over terrorism concerns has highlighted the political interests of NATO members in membership decision-making (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2022).

Membership is therefore conceptualized as a recognition that an aspiring state does not conflict with the political agenda of NATO members and does not present a security escalation risk for the alliance. Within the context of the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, it is also beneficial to briefly outline the broad political categories of threat perception related to Russia which exist within NATO and how this can relate to Ukraine's NATO membership prospects. Ivan Krastev has split NATO state perception of Russia and the desired outcome from the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine into three categories: realists, optimists and revisionists (Krastev, 2022).

Firstly, Krastev defines the NATO realist states as being the most concerned by Russian threats and desire that neither Russia nor Ukraine wins the war decisively, favoring limited arms supplies to Ukraine to avoid the risk of a Russian nuclear escalation (Ibid). Examples of NATO states which are realists are France, Hungary and Germany, who have also shown previous opposition to Ukrainian NATO membership because of this Russian escalation fear (Forsberg & Herd, 2015, p. 49). Realists are pushing for a negotiated settlement in Ukraine, with French President Emmanuel Macron stating that the West should "not humiliate Russia" and instead push for a diplomatic solution (Macron, 2022).

Secondly, optimists are described by Krastev as those NATO states which have some concerns about Russian escalation threats but are adamant that Russia can and

should be defeated militarily in Ukraine to restore occupied territories back to Ukraine (Krastev, 2022). The optimists support President Zelenskyy's unwillingness to negotiate a settlement with Russia and are committed to sending further arms shipments to the Ukrainian military for achieving a Russian military defeat in Ukraine (Ibid). Optimist NATO state examples include the UK and the USA who have both openly called for the Russian military to be defeated in Ukraine and are willing to continue supplying weapons to Ukraine for achieving this goal (Mcfall, 2022). Although optimists are not openly supportive of giving Ukraine immediate NATO membership, the optimists are favorable to NATO expansion and would arguably get behind Ukrainian NATO membership provided it is able to fully push Russian forces out of Ukrainian territory.

Thirdly, Krastev defines revisionist NATO states as the least concerned by Russian escalation threats and desires the dissolution of the Russian Federation to prevent future incursions into other bordering states (Krastev, 2022). Revisionist states seek to go beyond seeing simply a Russian military defeat in Ukraine and are focused on stopping Russia from launching similar invasions in the future through a complete change of government in Moscow. Krastev places the three Baltic states and Poland in the revisionist category due to their fears of facing a similar Russian invasion to Ukraine (Ibid). Coincidentally, these four revisionist NATO states have already given public support in September 2022 to Ukrainian NATO membership given their lack of concern that Russia will retaliate (Ukrinform, 2022a).

For Ukraine, future NATO membership will be reliant on the political agreement of NATO state realists, optimists and revisionists to form cohesion around supporting Ukrainian membership. Of the three categories, Ukraine will likely find the most difficulty in convincing the realist NATO states to support their membership bid given the realist escalation concerns related to Russia. However, the impacting factors discussed in the previous partnership section also extend to Ukraine's NATO membership prospects, with factors such as Ukraine's battlefield successes/Russian battlefield failures arguably impacting whether realist NATO states shift position to become more or less supportive of Ukraine's NATO membership. As will be highlighted later in the thesis findings, Ukraine faces ongoing NATO political opposition that prevents their inclusion into the alliance, encouraging NATO to instead offer partnership as an alternative.

2.3 Interoperability

The third and final concept for this thesis is interoperability which helps to address our third research question: To what extent have NATO and Ukraine furthered their interoperability through the EOP? With the first two concepts addressing the more symbolic meaning of partnership and membership, this third interoperability concept evaluates the more practical element of the EOP. According to NATO, “interoperability remains the backbone of NATO’s instrument of power, across all domains (NATO ACT, 2021).” Moreover, at the 2014 Wales Summit, interoperability was presented as the main benefit for creating the EOP. NATO’s official definition of interoperability provides a basis for understanding its importance for the alliance and the overall EOP agenda.

NATO defines interoperability as “the ability for Allies to act together coherently, effectively and efficiently to achieve tactical, operational and strategic objectives (NATO, 2022d).” For an alliance of 30 member states who are committed to collective security in the event of a member being attacked, interoperability between NATO states is essential for ensuring a coordinated and effective collective defense effort (Ibid). Interoperability with NATO EOP partners is also a way for NATO to extend this collective defense policy to closely aligned non-member states. As will be evidenced later in this thesis, Ukraine has contributed to a number of NATO missions such as in Afghanistan and Kosovo which have highlighted its experience in being interoperable with NATO despite lacking membership status.

Magnus Petersson has rationalized NATO’s primacy for interoperability as being a consequence of military deficiencies within the alliance and the need to pull resources together for achieving collective defense (Petersson, 2017, p. 106). Petersson has created a framework through which interoperability can be assessed and makes a distinction between horizontal and vertical interoperability for military operations (Ibid). Horizontal interoperability is the degree of co-ordination of operations i.e., working on the same overall operation but operating for your own individual country. Whereas vertical interoperability is much harder to achieve as it is about integration of operations i.e., conducting operations as one standardized NATO military force. To achieve these levels of interoperability, NATO states are required to be synchronized across the strategic, operational and tactical levels (Ibid). From the NATO perspective,

the EOP can enhance partners military integration to allow them to be part of a future vertical interoperable NATO force.

On the other hand, given that Ukraine has withdrawn from its NATO peacekeeping commitments due to the manpower requirement for defending against the 2022 Russian invasion, Petersson's framework does not fully encompass interoperability following this latest invasion. Since NATO is not deployed in Ukraine and Ukraine is no longer contributing substantially to NATO missions, the framework would indicate that Ukraine is reducing in interoperability with NATO. As will be identified later in the thesis findings, Ukraine's interoperability has potentially increased following Russia's 2022 invasion since the Ukrainian military has become interoperable with growing inflows of equipment from NATO nations. For this thesis, interoperability is conceptualized as the ability of a partner state (Ukraine) to be integrated with a military alliance (NATO) for cooperative defense.

By using a conceptual literature review, this chapter has provided an in-depth analysis of previous academic approaches and subsequently produced three concepts that are directly relevant for understanding the NATO-Ukraine EOP. Further in this thesis, these concepts will be analyzed against the official NATO-Ukraine EOP discourses. Through combining the perspectives of different scholars, this chapter has identified key areas of debate that are significant to explaining the NATO-Ukraine relationship. The next stage of this literature review will be to present the theory of constructivism and illustrate its relevance as a theoretical approach for explaining the NATO-Ukraine EOP.

Significance of Constructivist Theory for Analyzing the NATO-Ukraine EOP

In addition to the conceptual literature review analysis just conducted, it is also crucial to situate this thesis literature review within relevant IR theoretical frameworks. A theoretical IR explanation is essential for ensuring the relevance of this thesis topic within Ukrainian security studies and for developing an understanding of the NATO-Ukraine EOP through the lens of constructivism. For the purposes of this thesis, the three main IR theories which will be discussed are neorealism, neoliberalism and

constructivism due to their applicability for the study of NATO. Given the lack of published works on the NATO-Ukraine EOP, this thesis will deduce an explanation of the NATO-Ukraine EOP through a wider analysis of theoretical works related to NATO expansion.

In the first analysis, this thesis will put forward why the traditional IR theories of neorealism and neoliberalism are insufficient to explain the NATO-Ukraine EOP before highlighting the suitability of constructivism to this thesis topic. Both neorealism and neoliberalism share rationalist premises associated with states in the international system being self-interested and driven by a set of given and stable interests. For the neorealists, states operate in a system of anarchy where they prioritize short-term relative gains over longer-term absolute gains (Nayef, 2013, p. 337). A neorealist explanation for NATO enlargement posits that NATO expanded into parts of the post-Soviet space to exploit the relative weakness of Russia in the short-term (Schimmelfennig, 1998, p. 207).

The neorealist argument has perhaps some validity in explaining the recent accelerated accession membership process for Finland and Sweden given the relative weakness of Russia from battlefield failures in the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine. At the same time, the neo-realist argument cannot explain why NATO would not have just extended membership to all of the post-soviet states bordering Russia (including Ukraine) in the immediate years following the breakup of the Soviet Union (Ibid). Similarly, there would be more relative gains in extending NATO membership to Ukraine rather than partnership since the neorealist viewpoint is that states seek to maximize their relative security utility (Ibid). As identified by Taras Kuzio in the conceptual literature section, Ukraine's military is now one of the largest and most experienced in Europe, which provides significantly more relative security value to NATO than other recently added states such as North Macedonia and Montenegro (Kuzio, 2018).

Neoliberalism is able to challenge the neorealist perspective on relative security gains by instead arguing that NATO expansion is rationalized by the desire for absolute (primarily economic) gains which encourage the need for interdependence (Schimmelfennig, 1998, p. 204). However, since international organizations do not have a set hierarchy of relevant issues or goals, neoliberalism can be challenged as it

is difficult to assess what absolute gains would be achieved from NATO expansion (Ibid). From an economic perspective, Ukraine has significant benefits for NATO nations based on their agricultural, mining and technology sectors which would suggest NATO membership rather than partnership would be a more appropriate route for NATO to follow (Ullrich, 2022). Also, the severe economic consequences (e.g. energy and grain crises) which Europe is now facing from the 2022 Russian invasion would indicate that NATO membership would have been more appropriate to protect Ukraine and offset the current economic consequences of Russia's invasion (European Council, 2022).

Based on the above analysis, it is clear that neither neorealism nor neoliberalism are able to comprehensively explain why NATO has not extended membership to Ukraine and decided to instead pursue partnership. Constructivism is able to rectify the issues with rationalist IR theories by offering a theory rooted in international socialization (Schimmelfennig, 1998, p. 210). In contrast to neorealism and neoliberalism, constructivists do not see actors' interests as being given or stable, with them instead being socially constructed and subject to social change. As opposed to the rationalist emphasis on material gains, constructivists instead place focus on the importance of ideas, values and identities for shaping the international environment (Ibid). Ted Hopf has argued that constructivism is able to account for the lack of security dilemmas between certain states as evident in the example of NATO and Ukraine's successful formation of a partnership agreement (Farrell, 2002, p. 65). Although NATO is a nuclear alliance that militarily has troops in four states bordering Ukraine and an overall military capability superiority over Russia, Ukraine views NATO as a partner in direct contrast to Russia.

For constructivists, identities have significant explanatory power with Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity a driving factor for its continued commitment to joining NATO (Ibid). Ukraine's strong defense against Russian aggression highlights the importance of identity as opposed to purely material factors for explaining why Ukraine has sided with NATO over Russia. Vincent Pouliot's constructivist analysis has given an alternative example in showing why partnership between NATO and Russia failed due to the clashing ideas, values and identities of each side (Pouliot, 2011). Whereas Ukraine seeks to align with NATO's values and accept the status of being one of the NATO states, Russia views itself as being of equal importance to the entirety of the

NATO alliance and refuses the status of being a junior partner despite its substantially weaker military capabilities (Ibid). For example, Russia entered into negotiations with only the US and NATO in January 2022 and refused to allow Ukraine to enter negotiations before invading Ukraine in February 2022 (Tokariuk, 2022).

Within the context of the EOP, Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity and desire to align with NATO's values account for why Ukraine has chosen to form a partnership, despite the absence of NATO security guarantees or immediate prospects of membership. For certain NATO states, the idea that Russia is a threat to the alliance discourages them from wanting to extend membership to Ukraine for fear of provoking a Russian response, instead offering the EOP as the alternative. Hence, constructivism is the most applicable IR theory for explaining the EOP and the next part of this thesis will be to provide the appropriate research methods which align with constructivism. Later in the findings and analysis section, the explanation of the values to which both NATO and Ukraine are committed (security, freedom, rule of law, equality and democracy) will be identified through an analysis of discourses.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Since this thesis has provided historical and literature review chapters for context, a methodology chapter will now be outlined to discuss the research strategy for analyzing the NATO-Ukraine EOP. Building on the use of a constructivist IR framework, the appropriate research methods of discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews will be discussed. Additionally, limitations and strategies for overcoming these issues will be presented in this chapter.

3.1 Research Strategy

The research strategy for this thesis is to use an interpretivist, comparative case study approach looking at NATO and Ukraine in the context of the EOP. By conducting a comparative case study, it is able to reveal potential differences in how NATO and Ukraine view the EOP. With constructivism identified as the most relevant IR theory for the NATO-Ukraine EOP, an interpretivist approach using qualitative research methods will be able to bring out the key ideas, identities and values which shape the NATO-Ukraine relationship. This research strategy is inspired by Vincent Pouliot's qualitative comparative case study approach which identified the conflicting positions of NATO and Russia through discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews (Pouliot, 2010). Under a constructivist lens, Pouliot was able to extract why these differing positions resulted in failures of co-operation between NATO and Russia (Ibid). For this thesis on NATO and Ukraine, a similar interpretivist approach focused on the concepts of partnership, membership and interoperability will provide the necessary insights to answer the three research questions of this thesis.

The objects of study for this thesis are NATO (both as an alliance and as member states) and Ukraine (as a government). For the thesis research period of focus, I decided to include the period following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Although this decision was risky given the unpredictability of the war, it has brought greater timeliness to this thesis and allowed for the analysis of new sources. The thesis period of focus is from June 2020 (the signing of the NATO-Ukraine EOP) to the end of September 2022 (President Zelenskyy's formal request for accelerated NATO membership).

3.2 Methods and Data Sources

A. Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis is part of the constructivist approach within social sciences due to its basic assumptions that the world is socially constructed by individuals in a context which is produced and reproduced by their speech acts (Pedersen, 2009, p. 3). As such, discourse analysis is an appropriate method for assessing NATO-Ukraine EOP sources in line with a constructivist perspective. Pouliot notes that discourse analysis illuminates webs of meaning across multiple sources which is termed as 'intertextuality' (Pouliot, 2010, p. 72). Lisa Hansen has created discourse analysis models for analyzing intertextuality across sources. With Hansen's model 1 discourse analysis approach, the aim is to investigate the constructions of identity across a number of official discourses (Hansen, 2006, pp. 53-54). For this thesis, identity is understood through Ted Hopf's constructivist explanation that identity is how states view themselves and others in the international system (Hopf & Allan, 2016, p. 5). According to Alexander Wendt, identity is socially constructed from the convergence of values (i.e. democratic values) since identity is not naturally given or fixed (Wendt, 1994, p. 390). Using the Hansen model 1 approach, this thesis will aim to identify both the identity present across NATO and Ukraine official discourses as well as the values underpinning this identity.

Hansen defines official discourses as those sources such as documents, speeches or interviews which are either from political leaders with direct foreign policy decision-making power e.g. President Zelenskyy or from the organizations/individuals that contribute to decision making e.g. NATO officials (Hansen, 2006, pp. 53-54). Given Hansen's model 1 focuses on analyzing official discourses, this thesis will use this model to identify the main identities constructed across official NATO and Ukrainian partnership sources. The identities derived from this discourse analysis will allow for the generation of linkages between the sources and the three key thesis concepts (partnership, membership and interoperability). The sources for analysis will be official NATO and Ukrainian speeches by officials, organizational statements and strategic documents. Visual analysis is also incorporated into the research through the examination of a NATO-Ukraine exhibit which I was able to visit in person during my studies in Ukraine. The sources chosen are those which specifically mention the

NATO-Ukraine EOP or those which refer more broadly to the NATO-Ukraine partnership e.g. NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept. Moreover, the sources used for the discourse analysis are limited to those which fall within this thesis period of focus.

B. Semi-Structured Interviews

In addition to the use of discourse analysis, it is necessary to combine this with semi-structured interviews for forming a mixed-methods approach. Even though discourse analysis is able to provide a good insight into the positions of NATO and Ukraine in public media, there is information which is often unclear. For example, NATO's public support for Ukraine and its open-door membership policy are contradictory to its current position of denying Ukraine NATO membership. To provide greater clarity and further in-depth analysis needed to answer the research questions of this thesis, semi-structured interviews with four high-level subject matter experts were conducted. The choice of subject matter experts was inspired by Pouliot who utilized semi-structured interviews with expert participants on both the NATO and Russia side to develop his findings on the NATO-Russia relationship (Pouliot, 2010).

By using a semi-structured interview format, it allowed me to ask further clarification questions to develop the responses from the structured questions [refer to Appendix C]. As a result of the sensitivity of the NATO-Ukraine topic, interviews were conducted anonymously to protect the identities of the interviewees [refer to Appendix D]. Interviewees were selected based on their academic or practical expertise with the NATO-Ukraine partnership and recruited through connections at my university in Kyiv or through my master's internship placement at the Centre for Defense Strategies in Ukraine. I sought to achieve a balance with my interviewees by recruiting two experts from the NATO side and two from the Ukraine side. Additionally, a balance of experience was achieved by recruiting one NATO academic, one Ukrainian academic, one former NATO defense official and one former Ukrainian defense official. The backgrounds of the interviewees are as follows:

- NATO academic- An academic expert on NATO and Ukraine who lectures at a NATO defense institution.
- Ukrainian academic- A Ukrainian academic expert who has published extensively on the relationship between NATO and Ukraine.

- Former NATO defense official- A former senior military officer who served as a Staff Officer at a NATO headquarters and as the Defense Attaché to Ukraine for a NATO nation.
- Former Ukrainian government defense official- A former high-ranking Ukrainian government defense official with experience in negotiations with NATO.

3.3 Limitations

Given the dramatic geopolitical implications of Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, it has been essential to constantly keep pace with events for ensuring that the EOP topic remains relevant. This has been made more difficult due to the frequently unexpected direction that the war has taken and failures of most policy experts to effectively predict the course of the war. As Kuzio notes, almost all western policy experts failed to predict Russia's 2022 invasion and many expected Ukraine to collapse within three days (Kuzio, 2022). Had Russia been able to take control of Ukraine's government in February 2022, it is quite likely that the current NATO-Ukraine EOP would no longer exist. Additionally, very few would have anticipated before February 2022 that Finland and Sweden would dramatically shift their long-standing foreign policy positions from their EOP status to seeking NATO membership.

As a strategy to manage the geopolitical developments brought on by the 2022 Russian invasion, a thesis extension was taken to give time for evaluating the impacts for this NATO-Ukraine EOP topic. On a personal level, the 2022 Russian invasion forced me to evacuate from Ukraine to Poland which resulted in difficulties contacting more sources in Ukraine to be interviewed and initially hampered communications with my university in Kyiv. Ongoing electricity issues from Russian airstrikes also made interviewing further Ukraine-based participants difficult. I had originally planned to conduct interviews in person during my studies in Kyiv but elected to conduct them remotely given the location issues brought on from the war.

Another limitation associated with this topic is that a lot of information on the NATO-Ukraine EOP will be classified. The thesis is therefore focused on only publicly available information which may not entirely reflect the true classified positions of NATO/Ukraine. All of the NATO sources are published in English which posed no language issues. Since I have intermediate Ukrainian language skills, I firstly

conducted translations of Ukrainian language sources before utilizing online translation services for confirmation. For my interviews with Ukrainian participants, I was reliant on those who could speak fluent English due to my Ukrainian speaking limitations. As the topic of NATO-Ukraine relations is highly sensitive in the current geopolitical environment, I was unable to secure interviews with currently serving NATO or Ukrainian government officials. I was however able to secure interviews with former senior NATO and Ukrainian government officials as well as NATO/Ukraine academic experts as the closest alternative.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Analysis

As this thesis has provided detailed historical, literature and methodology sections, it is essential to now outline the key findings of this thesis. With the analysis of sources through the research methods of discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews, the main identities and values from the NATO-Ukraine EOP will be identified. This thesis has produced four key findings which will be developed in this chapter: the centrality of Euro-Atlantic identity to the EOP, the dominance of a political rather than military logic in NATO's approach to membership for Ukraine, differing threat perceptions of Russia within the EOP context and the success of the EOP in achieving greater interoperability between NATO and Ukraine. Each of these will begin with a discussion of the finding before moving onto the analysis which will provide answers to the research questions. The three thesis concepts (partnership, membership and interoperability) will be used to assist with this analysis for understanding the NATO-Ukraine EOP.

4.1 Centrality of Euro-Atlantic Identity to the NATO-Ukraine EOP

With this thesis using a constructivist lens that prioritizes the importance of identities and values for analysis, it is essential to figure out what these identities and values are from a discourse analysis of official sources. The thesis will use Hansen's model 1 discourse analysis approach discussed in the previous chapter to assess official sources and extract the identity invoked. In this finding, identity for NATO and Ukraine is understood based on Hopf's definition provided in the methodology section. As will be shown from this finding, Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity is of central importance to how NATO and Ukraine view the EOP, with differing perspectives observed between the two sides as to the level of this identity. Through a focus on discourse analysis, this finding will provide an answer to the first research question (how has the EOP been presented in Ukrainian and NATO discourses?). It will also provide an answer to the first part the second research question (why has NATO given Ukraine the EOP status rather than giving nothing or offering NATO membership?) by showing the value for NATO in partnership with Ukraine rather than giving nothing. Following the identification of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity from sources, this finding will move on to an analysis of how this identity relates to the concept of partnership.

Firstly, amongst NATO sources there is an evident Euro-Atlantic discourse presented when discussing the NATO-Ukraine EOP. A good starting source for understanding NATO's position is its NATO-Ukraine EOP webpage which was created in June 2020 straight after the signing of the EOP (NATO, 2020). This source is useful for gauging the official NATO narrative on the EOP with Ukraine and NATO's reasoning for signing the agreement. NATO's official justification for giving the EOP status to Ukraine in June 2020 was as a recognition that Ukraine had provided significant troops to Allied operations such as in Afghanistan and Kosovo, in addition to support for NATO exercises and the NATO Response Force (Ibid). In outlining these practical contributions from Ukraine, NATO mentions that the individual NATO nations subsequently voted to grant the EOP for these contributions. More importantly, NATO argues that Ukraine's contributions to NATO highlight its "commitment to Euro-Atlantic security" (Ibid). From this source published at the start of the NATO-Ukraine EOP, there is a strong emphasis that NATO perceives the benefit of partnership with Ukraine as being based on security benefits for the Euro-Atlantic area.

With NATO's official NATO-Ukraine EOP webpage from June 2020 emphasizing a lot of the practical military contributions of Ukraine, there is significance in additionally studying more recent sources from after Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. As previously mentioned, Ukraine has been forced to remove its military contingents from NATO peacekeeping missions in order to re-deploy them back to fighting against Russia's full-scale invasion (Ukrinform, 2022b). Hence, Ukraine's current peacekeeping contributions to NATO are not present within post-February 2022 NATO discourses. On NATO's official webpage on relations with Ukraine updated in September 2022, the discourse is more general with NATO stating that "a strong, independent Ukraine is vital for the stability of the Euro-Atlantic area" (NATO, 2022b). NATO is adamant as well that cooperation with Ukraine did not begin in 2014 or 2022 but since the period of Ukrainian independence in 1991 (Ibid). This is further evidence that NATO views Ukraine's value as being rooted in its consistent security contribution to the Euro-Atlantic area, with the EOP as a way for NATO to utilize Ukraine's security value.

Perhaps the most high-profile strategic document to be produced by NATO since the February 2022 Russian invasion is the 2022 NATO Strategic Concept which was adopted at the NATO Madrid Summit by all 30 heads of state. As an update to the

previous Strategic Concept released in 2010, the 2022 Strategic Concept defines the main security challenges facing the alliance and how NATO will deal with them (NATO, 2022e). Since the Strategic Concept is a political document produced by NATO HQ in Brussels, there are no mentions of specific military initiatives such as the EOP and the EOP states are more broadly just referred to as partners. In this strategic document, partnerships are said to contribute to the stability of NATO's borders and enhance security at home (Ibid). Additionally, Ukraine is mentioned alongside Georgia and Bosnia as being partners which advance a common interest in Euro-Atlantic peace, stability and security (Ibid). Again, there is a strong indication from the NATO discourse that the partnership with Ukraine benefits NATO primarily from a Euro-Atlantic security perspective.

Aside from NATO's official organizational statements on the NATO-Ukraine EOP, it is beneficial to also look at what NATO officials have commented on the NATO-Ukraine EOP. Hansen's model 1 discourse analysis approach sees officials who contribute to decision making as important objects of analysis and there are useful insights to be gained on the NATO-Ukraine relationship from statements by NATO officials. For example, the NATO Deputy Assistant General for Operations, Jonathan Parish, articulates that the NATO-Ukraine partnership advances Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic aspirations (Ibid). NATO Deputy Secretary General, Mircea Geoana, has similarly encouraged Ukraine to advance its Euro-Atlantic aspirations by utilizing its EOP with NATO (NATO, 2021). Individual NATO states such as the USA have also noted their commitment to helping Ukraine achieve its Euro-Atlantic aspirations (The White House, 2021). From Hansen's model 1 discourse analysis approach, it is observed that NATO views itself as having a Euro-Atlantic identity, with Ukraine presented as aspiring to achieve this identity. As will now be shown from the analysis of Ukrainian sources, Ukraine discourses differ in that they view Ukraine as having already constructed NATO's Euro-Atlantic identity rather than simply aspiring to achieve it.

Based on the previous insights given from NATO's 2022 Strategic Concept, it is useful to compare this with the Ukrainian language strategic documents produced by the Ukrainian government. Since June 2020 when the NATO-Ukraine EOP was formed, the three most significant strategic documents for Ukraine are the Law on National Security, the National Security Strategy and the Military Security Strategy (Ibid). The Law on National Security is the legal framework for which Ukrainian defense operates

under, with the other two documents being strategic-level policy documents. The National Security Strategy most closely resembles the NATO 2022 Strategic Concept, although all three of these documents have value in showing similarities within Ukraine's NATO discourse.

Firstly, the Law on National Security (originally published in 2018 but updated in 2022) details the specific roles and legal responsibilities of each part of Ukraine's military for state defense (Verkhovna Rada, 2022). Even though the document is focused specifically on military structure, there is a section on national interests which is of relevance to this thesis. The Law on National Security puts forward that one of Ukraine's several national interests is the integration of Ukraine into the European political, economic, security and legal space, with NATO specifically mentioned (Ibid). This national interest goes beyond simply security as seen in the NATO example with additional mentions of political, economic and legal spaces included. This is the first indication from the Ukrainian official discourse that Ukraine sees its identity as being fundamentally ingrained within the Euro-Atlantic area. Based on the national interest of NATO integration detailed in the Law on National Security, the EOP is therefore essential given its status as the official mechanism for which NATO and Ukraine interact.

Within the National Security Strategy, there are even clearer examples showing Ukraine's national interests being centered on the Euro-Atlantic area within Ukrainian discourses. Perhaps intentionally, the National Security Strategy was released shortly after the signing of NATO-Ukraine EOP in June 2020 and the document reaffirms Ukraine's desire for further Euro-Atlantic integration (President of Ukraine, 2020). Taking into account the multiple national interests laid out in the Law on National Security, the National Security Strategy narrows the focus by arguing that the priority national interest for Ukraine is European and Euro-Atlantic integration (Ibid). To achieve this national interest, the National Security Strategy states that Ukraine should develop strategic relations with the EU, NATO and the associated member states (Ibid). The National Security Strategy adds further evidence of Ukraine's relationship with NATO being driven by its Euro-Atlantic identity given that Euro-Atlantic integration is listed as the main priority within the Ukrainian discourse.

The third and most recent of Ukraine's significant strategic documents is the Military Security Strategy which was released in August 2021. The Military Security Strategy outlines an implementation plan for defense reforms in Ukraine and the role of each branch of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in achieving Ukraine's defense goals (Verkhovna Rada, 2021). The main goal of the Military Security Strategy stated in the document is to promote stability and the integration of Ukraine into the Euro-Atlantic security space (Ibid). As shown by both the National Security Strategy and the Military Security Strategy, there was a change in discourse from the period of the signing of the EOP in June 2020, with Euro-Atlantic integration listed as the main security driver for Ukraine rather than one of multiple drivers. The model 1 discourse analysis approach used on these strategic documents has therefore highlighted that Ukraine's identity construction is a Euro-Atlantic one and that Ukraine sees itself as being integrated into NATO's own Euro-Atlantic identity.

Statements by senior Ukrainian government officials have also directly addressed the EOP and the ways in which it allows Ukraine to become closer with NATO. The Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration of Ukraine, Olha Stefanishyna, said during an interview in September 2020 that the EOP is an opportunity to bring Ukraine physically more into NATO (Ukrainian Prism, 2020). Furthermore, Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba argued in an August 2021 press statement that Ukraine is fundamentally part of the West, thereby demonstrating that it has already constructed NATO's Euro-Atlantic identity (Kuleba, 2021). In the current period following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, discourses from Kuleba invoke that Ukraine is now defending this Euro-Atlantic identity against Russian invaders (Kuleba, 2022).

Since the discourse analysis of official sources has identified the strong presence of a Euro-Atlantic identity for both NATO and Ukraine, it is important to establish what values underpin this identity. A photo exhibition titled "NATO-Ukraine: Common Values, Common Path" details the five key values which underpin the NATO-Ukraine partnership: security, freedom, rule of law, equality and democracy (State Border Service of Ukraine, 2021). The exhibition was created by the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense with input from NATO and presented publicly in October 2021 at the departure area of Kyiv Boryspil International Airport (ArmyInform.UA, 2021). As the main art exhibition at the busiest airport in Ukraine, it shows the importance for which

the Ukrainian Government places in conveying its partnership with NATO to the public. Following the success of the exhibit at Boryspil Airport, the exhibit was additionally placed at Lviv International Airport, the third busiest passenger airport in Ukraine (Zahid Espresso , 2021). In my research, I was able to view the exhibition in person at both the locations in Kyiv and Lviv to take the following images:

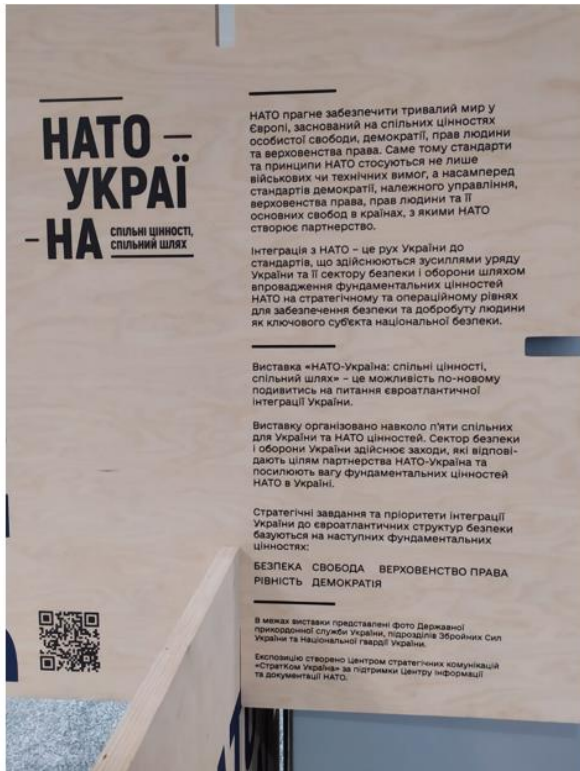


Figure 1: Exhibit description panel; Kyiv Boryspil International Airport, Ukraine. Photo taken: 01/11/2021



Figure 2: Exhibit rule of law panel; Kyiv Boryspil International Airport, Ukraine. Photo taken: 01/11/2021

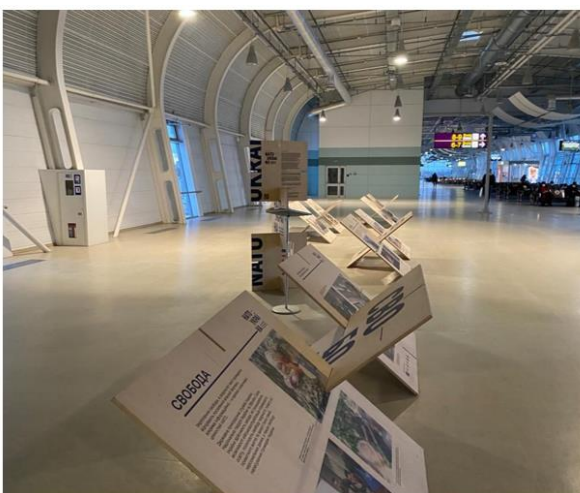


Figure 3: Image of full exhibit; Lviv International Airport, Ukraine. Photo taken: 15/01/2022



Figure 4: Exhibit democracy panel; Lviv International Airport, Ukraine. Photo taken: 15/01/2022

The images taken above show that the exhibit was designed as a series of interlocking cardboard panels that contain Ukrainian military pictures under each of the five NATO values. In the description panel, it outlines that the five key values which underpin the partnership between NATO and Ukraine are essential for achieving peace. The description panel states that the purpose of the exhibition is to show how Ukraine's military has aligned itself with these five NATO Euro-Atlantic values. For example, the above rule of law panel shows the image of Ukrainian border guards holding hands with their children in a sign of preventing corruption for future generations in line with NATO guidance (State Border Service of Ukraine, 2021). The other above democracy panel contains the image of disabled NATO and Ukrainian veterans playing sports as part of Ukrainian efforts to promote inclusivity in the military (Ibid). Since the exhibition is purely in Ukrainian language, it indicates that the exhibit is aimed at showing a Ukrainian audience the progress made in adopting NATO's values.

To analyze this overall finding on the centrality of Euro-Atlantic values to the NATO-Ukraine EOP, it is important to re-cap the ways in which partnership is presented in each sides official discourses. By doing so, this addresses the first research question on how the EOP is presented in official discourses. Given the significance of the constructivist focus on values and identities for the EOP topic, this thesis applied Hansen's model 1 discourse analysis approach to identify the main identity and values present in official sources. In line with this discourse analysis approach, official partnership sources which were looked at were strategic documents, organizational/individual statements and a NATO-Ukraine exhibit about the partnership. From these sources, it was deduced that a Euro-Atlantic identity is present in the official discourses of each side. NATO sees itself as being the center of this Euro-Atlantic identity but views Ukraine as instead aspiring to achieve this identity within the EOP framework.

By contrast, Ukraine sees itself as already having constructed this Euro-Atlantic identity and seeks further integration through the EOP, with Russia's 2022 invasion having further entrenched Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity. In order to analyze and explain why NATO and Ukraine may have these differing EOP perspectives, it is useful to apply the partnership concept discussed earlier in the conceptual literature review. Based on the previous academic literature on NATO partnerships, this thesis conceptualized partnership as a tool used by a military alliance to extend its influence

without providing security guarantees and by partner states to develop integration into that military alliance. In the discourse analysis of the above sources, the partnership concept is arguably reflective of the situation with the NATO-Ukraine EOP.

In NATO's EOP discourse, the alliance's security is enhanced through the military contributions of Ukraine to NATO peacekeeping missions and a common interest in Euro-Atlantic security. Examples of this were most evident in the official NATO EOP webpages and in the statements by NATO officials. As shown from the NATO-Ukraine exhibition, NATO has been able to promote its five key values in Ukraine through partnership and extend its influence. At the same time, the NATO discourse was indicatively cautious with regards to saying that Ukraine is integrated into NATO structures or that NATO is willing to provide security to Ukraine as shown from the 2022 Strategic Concept. The NATO EOP discourse is clarified with the explanation given from the partnership concept as to why NATO would seek a partnership rather than just simply offering nothing to Ukraine. NATO is benefiting from the EOP with Ukraine through the extension of its influence which sees Ukraine aspiring to achieve NATO's own Euro-Atlantic identity and values. Moreover, partnership allows NATO to extend its influence without having to offer any security guarantees to Ukraine.

On the other side, Ukraine's EOP discourse illustrates Ukraine's desire for integration into NATO in line with the partnership concept's definition. Ukraine's discourse presents the EOP as a way for Ukraine to gain deeper integration into NATO and the wider Euro-Atlantic area. In all three of the Ukrainian strategic documents assessed, Euro-Atlantic integration was presented as a priority for Ukraine and this was reiterated by statements from senior Ukrainian government officials. Ukraine's Foreign Minister Kuleba for example argued that Ukraine is now defending its Euro-Atlantic identity from Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. The NATO-Ukraine exhibition also highlighted the importance for Ukraine of incorporating NATO's values as part of its Euro-Atlantic identity. Ukraine's decision to become an EOP state is a testament to the importance Ukraine sees in NATO's values despite NATO not providing any security guarantees in return. Whereas Pouliot's research was able to show how NATO and Russia failed to form an effective partnership due to Russia's inability to accept NATO's values, this thesis has shown why NATO and Ukraine formed an effective partnership because of Ukraine's willingness to incorporate NATO's values.

In addition, the centrality of the Euro-Atlantic identity for the EOP is an important factor for underscoring the relevance of constructivism to this topic. Since Ukraine has been forced to withdraw peacekeeping troop contributions to NATO because of Russia's 2022 invasion, NATO is no longer receiving the main asset which it said justified Ukraine's original inclusion into the EOP. Similarly, Ukraine has remained committed to NATO even though NATO continues to refuse providing Ukraine any security guarantees. Ukraine views itself as having constructed a Euro-Atlantic identity in line with NATO's which motivates its continued participation in the EOP and hopes for eventual membership. NATO by contrast does not perceive Ukraine as having fully constructed this Euro-Atlantic identity despite Ukraine's aspirations and instead offers the EOP as an alternative. Hence, this finding has shown why the constructivist lens which focuses on the importance of identities and values is able to explain the current situation with the NATO-Ukraine EOP.

To summarize this finding, a discourse analysis of relevant official sources on both sides has established the centrality of Euro-Atlantic identity to the EOP. This has answered research question 1 on how the EOP is presented in NATO and Ukrainian discourses. There are differing perspectives to the level of Euro-Atlantic identity which Ukraine has constructed with the NATO discourse placing Ukraine as aspiring to achieve the identity and Ukraine's discourse suggesting it has already constructed it. Analysis of this finding through the partnership concept identified that this Euro-Atlantic identity is key to explaining the reason for why NATO and Ukraine formed the EOP. In doing so, this also answers the first part of the second research question in showing why it is more beneficial for NATO to offer the EOP as opposed to nothing at all. However, a further finding is needed to explain the latter part of the second research question on why NATO has offered the EOP rather than membership.

4.2 Dominance of a Political Rather than Military Logic in NATO's Approach to Membership for Ukraine

In the previous finding, this thesis explained the reasoning for why it made sense for NATO to give Ukraine the EOP instead of offering nothing at all. With the EOP acting as a way for NATO to extend its influence, it is relevant to ask why NATO does not go further than this by offering membership. Rather than offering the halfway option with

the EOP, it is puzzling as to why NATO would not just take a full-on approach with membership for Ukraine as a way to further cement its influence. The answer to this research puzzle lies in the political logic which dominates NATO's decision making. As with the structure of the previous section, a Hansen model 1 discourse analysis will be conducted to identify the ways in which a Euro-Atlantic identity manifests itself within the membership discourses of NATO and Ukraine. To supplement the discourse analysis, a review of the semi-structured interviews conducted will be summarized to expand on the argument that NATO's political logic dominates its Ukraine membership approach. The concept of membership from the literature review will then be applied to analyze how Ukraine conflicts with the political agenda of certain NATO members and is therefore denied the prospect of NATO membership.

From Hansen's model 1 discourse analysis on the official Ukrainian government documents mentioned before, NATO membership features heavily as a national priority and this is further evidence of Ukraine's perspective that it has a Euro-Atlantic identity. In the Law on National Security, the Ukrainian Government lists membership of the EU and NATO as a fundamental national interest (Verkhovna Rada, 2022). With the Military Security Strategy, the acquisition of NATO membership is also mentioned as the main goal for Ukraine's military going forward (Verkhovna Rada, 2021). Lastly, the National Security Strategy repeats these messages in saying that Ukraine will form a special partnership with NATO to gain full membership (President of Ukraine, 2020). Since the National Security Strategy was released just after the signing of the NATO-Ukraine EOP, Ukraine is likely asserting here that it ultimately desires more than what the EOP offers and is undeterred in its goal of NATO membership. It can be deduced that these three strategic documents are all articulating that NATO membership is the focal point for Ukraine's future and that the EOP is insufficient to meet Ukraine's security needs.

In speeches by Ukrainian officials, there are more direct examples where they have outlined the relationship between the EOP and NATO membership. Deputy Prime Minister Stefanishyna puts forward that the EOP is not something which goes against Ukraine's aspirations for NATO membership and that Ukraine is implementing the reforms necessary to meet NATO's membership criteria through the EOP (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, 2021b). Since the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, it should be noted that President Zelenskyy has been critical of NATO on several

occasions for its approach to the Ukrainian NATO membership question. President Zelenskyy has argued that NATO membership would have prevented the 2022 Russian invasion and it was a mistake by NATO not to extend membership to Ukraine (Reuters, 2022). Furthermore, in announcing Ukraine's request for accelerated NATO membership in September 2022, President Zelenskyy has articulated that membership is the only way to secure Ukraine's future from Russian aggression (Zelenskyy, 2022). Interestingly, President Zelenskyy communicates in this latest request that Ukraine's application should be judged equally to the other EOP states of Finland and Sweden because of Ukraine's own commitment to Euro-Atlantic values (Ibid).

From the Ukrainian discourse, the EOP is therefore inextricably linked to NATO membership, with the EOP acting as a steppingstone for Ukraine to achieve this goal. Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity hinted throughout the strategic documents and government official speeches are key to gauging Ukraine's perspective on the EOP. Given that Ukraine perceives that it has already constructed a Euro-Atlantic identity, it views itself as having a right to membership in line with the other NATO member states which share this identity. In a contrasting perspective, NATO is very explicit in its discourse that the EOP is completely separate from membership and that the EOP does not contribute to a state's chances of gaining membership. NATO's official organizational website statement on the NATO-Ukraine EOP states that the EOP does not imply prospects of NATO membership for Ukraine (NATO, 2020). Rather than Ukraine benefitting from the EOP with improved membership prospects, NATO notes that Ukraine benefits from a tailor-made relationship with consultations, interoperability programs and lessons learned (Ibid).

NATO's description of the EOP from its official website statement is arguably at odds with the view presented in the 2022 Strategic Concept. Whereas this official statement presented a clear binary separation between the EOP and NATO membership, the Strategic Concept alludes to partnership leading to eventual membership for Ukraine (NATO, 2022e). NATO states in the Strategic Concept that it is committed to its decision on Ukraine made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit (Ibid). NATO pledged at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine would one day be a member of NATO and has maintained this pledge despite Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine (Ibid). Based on the 2008 Bucharest Summit pledge that Ukraine will be a future member of NATO, it is

unclear as to why NATO is adamant that the EOP is completely separate from Ukraine's membership prospects. Moreover, it is puzzling that NATO continues to refuse to offer Ukraine a MAP given that the Bucharest Summit pledge was made over 14 years ago and Ukraine has since made significant progress in advancing its military capability.

Ukraine presents an opportunity for NATO to extend membership to a state which has the most recent experience in directly fighting Russia and achieving major battlefield successes. As discussed by Kuzio in the literature review, Ukraine has arguably now the most capable and experienced military in Europe following the 2022 Russian invasion (Kuzio, 2018). Given Ukraine's recent military experience, there is military logic for NATO to extend membership to Ukraine in order to utilize this capability. Although NATO is a military alliance, it is governed by democratic principles which mean that it has to balance both the military and political agendas of member states. However, it is the political rather than military logic which dominates NATO's decision making and this accounts for why NATO has been reluctant to extend membership to Ukraine despite the military benefits of expansion. Even though NATO rarely addresses publicly the political agendas in the alliance, speeches by certain officials have hinted at the dominance of a political logic within NATO.

In response to President Zelenskyy's ongoing calls for a MAP, the NATO Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Political Affairs and Security Policy, James Appathurai, said that technical results alone are insufficient for acquiring membership (German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2021). According to Appathurai, there is no clear criteria for which Ukraine can follow to gain a MAP (Ibid). Regardless of the defense reforms made by Ukraine and the capabilities of the Ukrainian military, the decision to grant membership rests on the political will of all NATO members. As NATO official discourses do not provide any detail on the political divisions that exist in the alliance, it is beneficial to use semi-structured interviews with subject matter experts for clarity on this issue. The four experts interviewed for this thesis have provided the necessary depth on the political logic which dominates NATO's decision making and the insights from these interviews will now be assessed.

A good starting voice for gauging the issue of NATO's approach to Ukraine is the former NATO defense official interviewed for this thesis. The former NATO defense

official was able to provide important insights on the NATO perspective based on their experience of working as a Staff Officer at a NATO headquarters and as a Defense Attaché to Ukraine for a NATO nation in the post-2014 period. Firstly, the former NATO defense official recognized that Ukraine should receive membership based on its impressive defense against Russia's 2022 invasion, the speed of defense reforms and its commitment to Euro-Atlantic security. On the other hand, the official noted that NATO will only expand if all 30 member states feel that the aspiring state fully shares the same values as the alliance and this is not the case for Ukraine. This observation links with the previous finding that NATO views Ukraine as a state aspiring rather than having already constructed the necessary Euro-Atlantic identity and values for membership. The political preferences are potentially subject to change however with the ongoing European energy crisis from Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine being just one factor which the official noted may improve Ukraine's membership chances if the energy situation eventually stabilizes.

Additionally, the former NATO defense official noted that the more NATO has expanded, the more difficult it has become to gain membership as only one state is needed to derail a membership application. The official gave the example of territorial issues between Hungary and Ukraine as just one way that a NATO state could potentially jeopardize Ukraine's membership chances. The interview with the NATO academic provided other examples for the predicament which NATO now faces with Ukraine. Since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, there is a territorial integrity issue which prevents NATO from providing membership as Ukraine does not have full control over its own borders. It was however acknowledged that this viewpoint is problematic as Russia has occupied Crimea and parts of Eastern/Southern Ukraine with the intention of preventing Ukraine from joining NATO. Regardless of Russia's intentions, both the former NATO defense official and the NATO academic highlighted in their interviews that these political concerns have been enough to dissuade NATO from offering Ukraine a MAP.

On the other side, the Ukrainian interviewees were both skeptical of NATO's frequent reasoning for denying Ukraine membership. The Ukrainian academic believes that NATO is coming up with excuses for avoiding extending membership to Ukraine. Reflecting on the latest NATO Strategic Concept, the Ukrainian academic views NATO's reaffirmation of its 2008 Bucharest Summit pledges as empty and

unconvincing. The Ukrainian academic argued that NATO's pledge will be tested if Ukraine does achieve territorial integrity and still continues to deny Ukraine membership. For the Ukrainian academic, Ukraine missed an opportunity to pursue NATO membership under former US President George W. Bush as he was the most in favor of extending membership and all US Presidents since 2008 have not been committed to integrating Ukraine into NATO. Furthermore, other states such as Germany and France will remain a problem given that they prioritize good relations with Russia in the Ukrainian academics view. The reason then for denying membership rests on NATO's otherness perception of Ukraine which sees Ukraine as being outside of the alliance's own Euro-Atlantic identity.

Similarly, the former Ukrainian defense official believes that NATO is accustomed to finding excuses for its continued opposition to Ukrainian membership. For the former Ukrainian defense official, NATO membership is decided predominantly by political rather than military reasoning. If NATO did prioritize its military logic over its political logic, it would have already admitted Ukraine over the four most recent members of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Albania and Croatia given Ukraine's military superiority. The former Ukrainian defense official lists the political positions of France, Germany and Hungary as the key members blocking Ukraine's accession to NATO. On top of that, the official casts doubt on whether these three states would actually intervene militarily if one of the Baltic states were attacked by Russia. As the NATO Article 5 on collective defense has only been activated once (following 9/11), it is yet to be seen whether all members would respond militarily to an attack on a European NATO member. Hence, both Ukrainian interviewees are aligned in their skepticism of NATO's 2008 Bucharest Summit pledges and have highlighted that the political positions of certain NATO members are responsible for the continued blocking of Ukraine's membership bid.

With this thesis having now discussed the main insights identified regarding membership, it is useful to re-cap the main differences between the NATO and Ukraine sides. In the Ukrainian discourse, it is clear that the main strategic goal with NATO is ultimately membership and that NATO is a highly relevant organization for Ukraine's future security. All three of the main strategic documents released by the Ukrainian government since June 2020 emphasize that membership is a central national priority which the Ukrainian military is aiming towards. The public statements by Ukrainian

officials shortly after the NATO-Ukraine EOP was signed also seek to show that membership rather than partnership is the national priority. It is notable that Ukraine's national priority of NATO membership has remained consistent despite the refusal of NATO to directly intervene against Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine. Even though President Zelenskyy has criticized the decision making of NATO for not incorporating Ukraine, membership remains the priority for President Zelenskyy as seen with the September 2022 request for accelerated membership. Again, Ukraine's strong Euro-Atlantic identity is able to account for this consistency in maintaining a goal of NATO membership.

The NATO discourse differs heavily from the Ukrainian one in its unambiguous messaging that the EOP is completely separate from membership. The NATO official organizational statements released shortly after June 2020 are particularly emphatic in conveying that the NATO decision to grant Ukraine EOP status has no bearing on its future chances of membership. With Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, NATO has been slightly more willing to discuss Ukraine's membership by confirming the alliance stands by its pledges made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit. The statement by James Appathurai hints that the reason for the delay to Ukraine's accession process lies in the political interests of member states. From the NATO official discourses, there is a lack of clarity over why Ukraine has not received membership despite the 2008 Bucharest Summit pledge. Based on the insights gained from the interviewees of the NATO side, it was suggested that issues around territorial integrity are responsible for the absence of a MAP for Ukraine. On the Ukrainian interviewee side, there was skepticism that the issue lies with Ukraine's territory and instead both Ukrainian interviewees argued that it is the political views of certain NATO members which will continue to prevent Ukraine from joining the alliance.

In the interviews, it was identified from all four participants that Ukraine's battlefield successes against Russia in 2022 are evidence of Ukraine's military strengths as a potential future member of NATO. This correlates with the military logic argument mentioned earlier that it would be more beneficial for NATO to incorporate Ukraine as a member given NATO is a military alliance. The Ukrainian interviewees especially were able to illuminate that a political logic is dominating NATO's decision making. As rightly discussed by the former NATO defense official, it only takes a single member to block the accession of an aspiring NATO state with France, Germany and Hungary

listed as the states most likely to block Ukraine's membership bid. In the literature review section, Krastev termed these three states as realists meaning that they are politically opposed to Ukrainian membership of NATO. It should however be mentioned that this political standpoint is not shared by the optimist NATO states (e.g. UK, USA) or the revisionist NATO states (e.g. Baltics, Poland) who would likely be willing to support Ukraine's membership bid. Hence, political opposition from a small number of NATO states will continue to have the effect of derailing any chances of Ukraine gaining membership.

For conducting deeper analysis on the above discourse analysis and interview findings, it is important to apply the membership concept discussed in the conceptual literature review. Based on previous academic literature, it was formulated that membership is a recognition that an aspiring state does not conflict with the political agenda of NATO members and does not present a security escalation risk for the alliance. In the above sources and interviews, it was evident that Ukraine as the aspiring state does conflict with the political agenda of the realist NATO members and this explains its inability to gain membership. At the same time, a further finding is required to assess whether Ukraine also represents a security escalation risk for the alliance per the membership conceptualization. In the next finding, NATO's concern over escalation with Russia will be explored and shown as the other element which prevents Ukraine from gaining NATO membership. By combining this finding on NATO's dominating political logic with the next finding on the Russia escalation threat, this thesis will be able to fully answer the latter part of the second research question on why NATO has given the EOP to Ukraine rather than offering membership.

4.3 Differing Threat Perceptions of Russia Within the EOP Context

With Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and previous annexations of Ukrainian territory since 2014, it is essential to understand how Russia is perceived within the context of the NATO-Ukraine EOP. Although Russia is not a direct part of discussions between NATO and Ukraine, its actions have consequences for how far the NATO-Ukraine relationship is potentially able to develop. From official sources assessed using the Hansen model 1 discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews, this finding will identify that NATO and Ukraine are significantly different in their perception

of the threat of Russia. This accounts for why Ukraine is more adamant on membership compared to NATO and the reasons for this will be analyzed in this finding. By developing this finding on the threat perception of Russia, this thesis will be able to fully answer the second research question on why NATO has offered the EOP to Ukraine rather than giving nothing or offering membership.

Ukraine's continued defiance against Russian aggression has highlighted the strength of opposition to repeated Russian attempts at controlling Ukraine's territory. Recent secondary sources such as journalistic reports have shed light on Russia's misplaced perception that Ukraine would fall within days of a full-scale invasion, with Russian troops given orders to prepare for victory marches in Kyiv (New York Times, 2022). In reality, Ukraine mobilized successful defensive efforts across Ukraine which resulted in the start of a major counter-offensive against Russia in September 2022 (Ibid). President Putin's response to this counter-offensive has been to publicly threaten Ukraine and the West with the possibility of Russia using all military means (including nuclear) if Russia's territory is threatened (Ivanov, 2022). Since Russia annexed four additional Ukrainian oblasts following illegitimate referendums at the end of September 2022, President Putin is likely giving this threat so that Ukraine will cease its counter-offensive. Ukraine has instead maintained its counter-offensive on all four of these Ukrainian oblasts (Duggal, 2022).

Ukraine's military actions have signaled an aim of regaining full control over Russian-controlled Ukrainian territories and that Ukraine is undeterred in the face of Russian nuclear threats. It is now important to see the way in which Russia is perceived politically in the Ukrainian official statements to assess if this also matches the military actions which Ukraine has taken in response to Russia's 2022 invasion. In the period after the signing of the NATO-Ukraine EOP in June 2020, Ukrainian government officials were insistent that the EOP did not present a threat to Russia. The head of Ukraine's Mission to NATO, Georgiy Tolkachov, responding to a question on whether the EOP would provoke Russia asserted that Russia is an enemy to Ukraine and its viewpoint on the EOP is irrelevant (YPFP Brussels, 2020). In the month prior to Russia's 2022 invasion, President Zelenskyy stated that the threat from Russia was being overblown by western politicians and that he was willing to enter discussions with President Putin, saying that Ukraine was not a danger to Russia (The Economist, 2022). Ukrainian officials prior to the February 2022 Russian invasion were in the belief

that the EOP would not provoke Russia but did acknowledge that Russia was a threat to Ukraine.

With the benefit of hindsight, President Zelenskyy has since revealed the reason for the Ukrainian government's skepticism of Russia's 2022 invasion plans. President Zelenskyy disclosed that the Ukrainian government wanted to avoid alerting the public to the imminent threat of a Russian invasion due to the potential for a mass exodus and domestic crisis (The Washington Post, 2022). In the post-February 2022 invasion period, President Zelenskyy has been more vocal about the imminent threat Russia presents to European security (Zelenskyy, 2022). In arguing for Ukraine's right to accelerated NATO membership in September 2022, President Zelenskyy has stated that Russia would have continued its advance on other European states had Ukraine not stood in defiance against Russia's invasion (Ibid). According to President Zelenskyy, Ukraine has proven to NATO the strength of its Euro-Atlantic values by opposing Russia. Interestingly, President Zelenskyy goes beyond simply listing certain NATO states at risk of Russian attack by additionally mentioning Georgia, Kazakhstan and Moldova (Ibid). From President Zelenskyy's statements, Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity is again heavily invoked when discussing Russia, with Ukraine's response to the 2022 Russian invasion a symbol of its commitment to upholding this identity and ensuring peace in states beyond NATO's borders.

Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine has also led to shifts in the relationship between Ukraine and Russia, with President Zelenskyy confirming that he will not negotiate with the Russian government until President Putin is no longer the leader. The justification for this is that President Putin has attempted to "redraw borders with murder, torture, blackmail and lies" (Ibid). Evidence of mass Russian human rights abuses in Ukraine such as in Bucha, Irpin and Mariupol amongst many others have led to the deterioration of any current prospects in peace negotiations between both sides (US Embassy In Ukraine, 2022). As President Zelensky notes, the focus for Ukraine is to liberate the entire territory of Ukraine from the enemy Russia (Zelenskyy, 2022). Consequently, there is little concern on the Ukrainian side of provoking Russia given that Russia has already attempted a full-scale invasion. Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Stefanishyna has argued that NATO going forward should ignore Russia's objections to Ukrainian NATO membership (Stefanishnya, 2022). More significantly,

Stefanishyna has cast doubt on whether Ukraine will even discuss the issue of Ukraine's NATO membership with Russia at any future meetings (Ibid).

With the Ukrainian official discourse clearly highlighting a lack of concern for provoking Russia, it is essential to see how the NATO discourse compares. Whereas the Ukrainian discourse consistently highlighted the enduring threat which Russia presents, the NATO discourse has been more inconsistent in its description of Russia. In the period before Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, NATO officials emphasized that Russia was not in direct opposition to the Alliance. In responding to the question of whether the EOP would provoke Russia, NATO's Director of Security Policy and Partnerships, James Mackay, said that NATO is not seeking to have Russia as an enemy and that Russia plays an important role in European security (YFPF Brussels, 2020). Similarly, the 2010 Strategic Concept which guided the strategic direction of NATO until 2022 put forward that NATO should seek a strategic partnership with Russia (NATO, 2010). The 2010 Strategic Concept listed several initiatives such as political consultations for NATO to actively cooperate with Russia and develop its partnership (Ibid). NATO officials such as the Deputy Secretary General, Mircea Geoana, have additionally said that third parties such as Russia do not have any impact on NATO's decisions to grant membership (Geoana, 2021).

After Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, the NATO discourse on Russia changed to reflect the threat posed to the Euro-Atlantic area. NATO's strategic direction with Russia changed in its 2022 Strategic Concept in that Russia is now characterized as a threat to the alliance (NATO, 2022e, p. 4). Russia is listed alongside terrorist groups as the two current major threats to NATO under the 2022 Strategic Concept (Ibid). The NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has elaborated that NATO has taken the side of Ukraine in the war because Russia is the aggressor (Stoltenberg, 2022a). Unlike the Ukrainian discourse which heavily invoked Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity, the NATO discourse portrays Ukraine fighting for its own independence. For example, Stoltenberg acknowledges that Ukraine would fail to exist as an independent state if it stopped fighting against Russia's invasion (Ibid). However, Stoltenberg has downplayed the threat of a potential Russian nuclear attack stating that NATO is not observing any changes in Russia's nuclear posture (Ibid). From the official NATO discourse on Russia, there are two points which are puzzling with regards to NATO not providing membership to Ukraine. Firstly, why does NATO not provide

membership to Ukraine given that NATO membership decisions are not impacted by third parties (as shown in the Geoana statement). Secondly, why does NATO not want to give membership to Ukraine if NATO is not observing a Russian nuclear threat (as shown in the Stoltenberg statement).

The thesis interviews with subject matter experts are able to answer the two above points by showing that certain NATO members do actually perceive Ukraine as an escalation risk because of the potential Russian nuclear risk. The NATO academic interviewed noted that prior to Russia's 2022 invasion, almost all NATO states were in opposition to sending Ukraine offensive weapons for fear of provoking a Russian invasion. Since Russia decided to invade Ukraine anyway regardless of NATO's actions, it is relevant to ask why NATO would now be concerned with provoking Russia. For the NATO academic, the reason for this is that several NATO states are concerned that a NATO military response would either drag the alliance into the war or encourage Russia to use a nuclear weapon in Ukraine. Given how tense the situation is with Russia, it would be potentially very easy for NATO or Russia to come directly into contact with each other if NATO mobilized forces to Ukraine. The NATO academic did acknowledge that this sentiment is not felt by the entirety of the alliance states, with the Baltic states and Poland cited as example members that are less concerned about the threat of provoking Russia.

The former NATO defense official shared this viewpoint by arguing that the alliance is now more divided than ever despite the decision to grant offensive weapons to Ukraine. Although it would make sense for NATO to intervene in Ukraine to stabilize the economic and humanitarian situation, a fear of Russia is preventing direct NATO action. It was however noted that manipulation is part of Russia's hybrid warfare tactics and it is in President Putin's interest to convey that he is not afraid to use nuclear weapons. By stating more generally that Russia will utilize all military means in the event of a threat to Russia's territorial integrity, it leaves it open to interpretation the red lines which Russia is applying in Ukraine. Since Russia has now illegally annexed four additional Ukrainian oblasts in addition to Crimea, President Putin could theoretically decide to use the argument of protecting Russia's territorial integrity if it chooses to escalate the situation further in Ukraine. The level of nuclear threats which President Putin may use will likely depend on the situation on the ground, with

continued forced Russian withdrawals potentially prompting Russia to increase its nuclear escalation rhetoric.

With many NATO states and western analysts failing to predict that Russia would carry out its invasion, it is possible that a level of uncertainty remains over how Russia may choose to escalate in Ukraine. For the former NATO defense official, different NATO states have interpreted this Russia escalation threat differently with some showing concern for nuclear escalation and others convinced that Russia's threats are unsubstantiated. Furthermore, Russia's intention will be to exploit this uncertainty to discourage further NATO weapons assistance to Ukraine and discussions on Ukraine joining the alliance. The former Ukrainian defense official interviewed said that President Putin had been attempting to create disagreement between NATO states through economic diplomacy for many years. By making NATO states more reliant on Russian gas supplies, Russia hoped that they would be less willing to support Ukraine in the event of invasion. Although Russia has partly achieved this aim as NATO did not intervene in Ukraine, Russia has been severely economically impacted through western sanctions and the closure of the Nord Stream II gas pipeline development (Wall Street Journal, 2022).

In the experience of the former Ukrainian defense official, similar concerns about provoking Russia were raised during the accession of Poland and the Baltic states to NATO. The Ukrainian academic when interviewed believes that the reason for NATO's inconsistency in approach is that NATO accepted after 2008 that Ukraine was within Russia's sphere of influence. Despite Ukraine's clear desire to be aligned with NATO rather than Russia, NATO has accepted that membership for Ukraine would escalate the situation with Russia. For the Ukrainian academic, the term of escalation is relative and constantly changing based on NATO state perspectives. As an example, Poland and the USA reneged on plans to send MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine in March 2022. The USA has alternatively sent HIMARS and Patriot long-range missile systems to Ukraine (Time, 2022). The Ukrainian academic has questioned therefore why fighter jets are escalatory but long-range missile systems are not. Moreover, Ukraine is being attacked constantly by Russian airstrikes but is being frequently advised by NATO states not to launch retaliatory strikes on Russia due to the potential for escalation (Ray, 2022). Based on the examples provided by the interviewees, it is evident that

NATO does perceive a threat of Russian escalation in Ukraine and this is a significant factor preventing Ukraine from obtaining NATO membership.

As this thesis has outlined the main insights from the discourse analysis and interviews, it is important to extract and analyze the key differences in the perspectives between NATO and Ukraine on the threat of Russia. Before the 2022 Russian invasion, Ukrainian officials were concerned with the threat of Russia but publicly unconvinced that a Russian invasion would occur as shown by President Zelenskyy's statements. Following the 2022 Russian invasion, a significant change is observed in the Ukrainian discourse whereby Ukrainian officials begin to show no interest in negotiating with President Putin and are more vocal about the threat of Russia. At the same time, Ukraine's huge battlefield successes in its counter-offensive have likely led to a lack of willingness to cede territory to Russia and given President Zelenskyy more confidence to ask for accelerated NATO membership. It can be deduced that Ukraine has little concern for provoking Russia and the political rhetoric from Ukrainian officials aligns with its defiant military response. In requesting accelerated membership, President Zelenskyy is asserting that Ukrainian NATO membership is the only way to secure peace in the Euro-Atlantic area from the Russia threat and this emphasizes the strength of Ukraine's own perceived Euro-Atlantic identity.

Rather than conveying that Ukraine is fighting for the security of NATO's Euro-Atlantic area similar to President Zelenskyy, NATO officials have communicated this war more narrowly as Ukraine's fight for its independence and territorial integrity. NATO officials such as Secretary General Stoltenberg have painted the Ukrainian response to Russia's 2022 invasion as Ukraine's own battle against Russian aggression. The Ukrainian academic interviewed was able to provide a good explanation for why NATO and Ukraine have these differing discourses on the 2022 Russian invasion. As Ukraine perceives that it has constructed a Euro-Atlantic identity, it views its response to the 2022 Russian invasion as being a fight to preserve NATO's own Euro-Atlantic identity against the Russia threat. By contrast, NATO does not associate Ukraine as having constructed the alliances Euro-Atlantic identity and values, thereby viewing the war only as Ukraine's fight for independence. This explanation links heavily with the theory of constructivism given the importance here of identities.

The other aspect which contributes to NATO and Ukraine having differing discourses on Russia's 2022 invasion is the contrasting perceptions of the threat which Russia presents. As previously mentioned, Ukraine has little concern now for provoking Russia and has not succumbed to Russia's nuclear threats given its lack of interest in pursuing negotiations with President Putin. Although NATO's official discourse portrays that it does not see a nuclear threat from Russia in Ukraine and is not persuaded by third parties like Russia, the interviews illuminated a different picture on the alliance. The interviewees were able to highlight that NATO is divided in its perception of Russia and this reflects the differing threat perceptions of NATO member states. Using Krastev's framework, there are the realist NATO states which do genuinely perceive a threat of nuclear escalation from Russia in Ukraine and they are heavily against giving Ukraine membership. Optimist and revisionist NATO states are instead less convinced that Russia is serious about its nuclear threats and are more supportive of providing Ukraine with membership.

Prior to Russia's 2022 invasion, there was concern from several NATO states that providing Ukraine with offensive weapons would escalate the situation and provoke Russia to invade. With Russia having now conducted its invasion, the escalation threat is currently that deeper NATO involvement would provoke Russia to use tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine. Owing to the dynamic nature of the 2022 Russian invasion, the definition of what arms supplies to Ukraine constitute an escalation appears to be constantly changing in the eyes of NATO states. The significance of this idea of escalation is further evidence of constructivism's relevance since certain NATO states perceive Russia's nuclear threats as genuine and others are ultimately unconvinced. Russia's ability to threaten NATO with nuclear escalation is an example of how Russia can effectively facilitate division within the alliance to block Ukraine's chances of gaining NATO membership. For this reason, Ukraine does represent an escalation threat to the alliance and this explains why Ukraine has only been provided with the EOP rather than membership.

To summarize, both this finding and the previous one combined have answered the latter part of the second research question of why has NATO given Ukraine the EOP status rather than offering NATO membership? Through applying the concept of membership from the literature review, it was identified that Ukraine would likely be denied membership if it clashed politically with the alliance and presented a security

threat of escalation. In the previous finding, it was shown that a political logic dominates the alliance, with certain NATO states thereby opposing Ukraine's NATO membership. In this finding, Ukraine was shown to be perceived as an escalation threat by certain NATO states who view Ukrainian membership as potentially provoking Russian escalation. With this thesis having addressed the why questions surrounding the NATO-Ukraine EOP's existence, it is important to now look at how this EOP has been implemented in practice. In the next finding, the practical implementation of the NATO-Ukraine EOP will be analyzed.

4.4 Success of the EOP in Achieving Greater Interoperability Between NATO and Ukraine

The purpose of this final finding is to answer the third question on the extent to which NATO and Ukraine have furthered their interoperability through the EOP. As identified in the literature review, interoperability is the key to NATO's function as a military alliance due to the resource limitations of member states. To assess whether the EOP has enhanced the interoperability between NATO and Ukraine, the framework introduced by Petersson in the literature review section will be used. Petersson made the distinction between horizontal and vertical interoperability when assessing interoperability between NATO and individual states, with horizontal interoperability being the coordination of operations and vertical interoperability being the integration of operations. More simply, horizontal interoperability is a state operating individually on NATO operations whereas vertical interoperability is a state operating as a collective NATO force. For Ukraine to present a strong case for NATO membership, displaying vertical interoperability is essential for achieving integration into NATO's military structures. To assess whether the NATO-Ukraine EOP has met the characteristics of horizontal and vertical interoperability, the insights from a discourse analysis of relevant sources and interviews will now be outlined.

In the historical overview section, it was shown that the EOP is broken down into four main areas for interoperability: political consultations, enhanced access to exercises, information sharing on lessons learned and crisis preparation (NATO, 2022a). A Ukrainian military officer from the Department of Military Cooperation and Verification of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, Captain Yulia Shchukina, confirmed that Ukraine is

working on all four of the EOP areas with NATO (Shchukina, 2020). Arguably, Ukraine had already achieved an enhanced level of horizontal interoperability prior to the EOP as Captain Shchukina notes that the EOP was provided to Ukraine for its individual contributions to NATO missions (Ibid). The NATO-Ukraine EOP has instead worked to improve Ukraine's vertical interoperability, with Captain Shchukina listing the ways in which Ukraine has become more integrated into collective NATO operations through the EOP (Ibid). Captain Shchukina mentions that exercises have been an area of significant cooperation from the EOP, particularly joint cyber security exercises (Ibid). In contrast to expectations from many western analysts that Russian cyber-attacks would cripple Ukraine's ability to fight after Russia's invasion in 2022, the Ukrainian military have been successful in limiting the impact of Russia's cyber capabilities (Wilde, 2022, p. 5). Hence, there is a strong likelihood that Ukraine's participation in these NATO cyber security exercises through the EOP enhanced its effectiveness in dealing with Russian cyber threats from the 2022 Russian invasion.

In addition to the military achievements from the EOP, it is also worth exploring the reasons for why Ukraine seeks greater interoperability with NATO from the official Ukrainian discourse. The Deputy Head of the Office of the Ukrainian President, Ihor Zhovkva, put forward in 2021 that Ukraine had insufficient security guarantees and sought practical support rather than simply words from NATO (Zhovkva, 2021). For this reason, Ukraine has developed interoperability with NATO as the most effective means of protecting its European values. Using the Hansen model 1 discourse analysis, it can be extracted that Zhovkva is arguing that NATO should be required to protect the Euro-Atlantic identity of Ukraine. Zhovkva mentions that this goal of getting a MAP is enshrined in the National Security Strategy, with this thesis earlier showing how that document invokes a Euro-Atlantic identity for Ukraine (Ibid). For NATO to protect Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity, the alliance needs to extend membership to Ukraine, with Zhovkva viewing the EOP as a steppingstone for Ukraine to get a MAP (Ibid).

In the post-2022 period, interoperability statements from Ukrainian officials have changed substantially to reflect the progress of the Ukrainian military in deterring Russia's invasion. Whereas the goal of the EOP for Ukraine was previously as a steppingstone to a MAP, Ukrainian officials now argue that membership should be given without this requirement. Deputy Prime Minister Stefanishyna has asserted that

Ukraine should no longer need a Membership Action Plan since Finland and Sweden are in the process of gaining membership without requiring one (Stefanishnya, 2022). President Zelensky has reinforced this argument by stating that Ukraine is now fully interoperable with NATO from its battlefield experiences against Russia's 2022 invasion (Zelenskyy, 2022). Ukrainian officials are now adamant that Ukraine has achieved full vertical interoperability with NATO which should allow it to join the alliance. It is possible that the achievements from the EOP in furthering interoperability between NATO and Ukraine can account for the Ukrainian official view that it has already achieved vertical interoperability.

On the NATO side, the EOP is discussed as furthering Ukraine's interoperability with the alliance but the membership aspect is not mentioned (Geoana, 2021). This again correlates with NATO viewing Ukraine as merely an aspiring state which has not constructed the necessary Euro-Atlantic identity for membership. Rather than mentioning the EOP as a steppingstone to membership, the NATO Deputy Secretary General Geoana puts forward that the key benefit for partner countries from the EOP is greater access to exercises (Ibid). There is strong evidence that NATO's interoperability exercises with Ukraine through the EOP have contributed to Ukraine's battlefield successes in 2022. Prior to the 2022 Russian invasion when troops from NATO states still operated in Ukraine, there were at least 11 NATO interoperability exercises run in Ukraine (Ibid). One of the most notable of these was Exercise Sea Breeze 2021, which was a major naval exercise consisting of NATO states and Ukraine (Bal, 2021). Although Russia's 2022 invasion has largely been a land campaign, Exercise Sea Breeze provided Ukraine with practice in using Turkey's precision-strike Bayraktar TB2 drones (Ibid). As witnessed on the battlefield in Ukraine, this type of drone has been incredibly effective for the Ukrainian forces in striking Russian targets (Witt, 2022).

Additionally, NATO states have hosted interoperability military exercises in Ukraine specifically aimed at countering a full-scale invasion prior to Russia's 2022 invasion. For example, Poland and Lithuania organized Exercise Three Swords in 2021 for conducting defensive military operations with Ukrainian forces (Ukrinform, 2021). Similarly, the UK led Exercise Cossack Mace in 2021 with the aim of training and testing Ukrainian forces with both defensively repelling a full-scale invasion and in leading an offensive operation to regain territory (Kotova, 2021). With Russia's 2022

full-scale invasion, the Ukrainian military has been able to implement this relevant practice having successfully defended Ukraine and currently being in the process of offensive operations. Another military factor which Ukrainian forces were able to develop with EOP NATO exercises was the speed of its reaction to a full-scale invasion. Under the US-led Exercise Rapid Trident 2021, Ukrainian land forces gained experience in tactical-level firing and reacting to an enemy attack (US Army, 2021). According to the US Commander in charge of Exercise Rapid Trident, Colonel Michael Hanson, the exercise is a significant development in Ukraine's European integration (Ibid). Consequently, Ukrainian forces have shown a decisive advantage against Russia in tactical level land battles which explains its rapid counter-advance across Ukraine (US Department of Defense, 2022).

Following Russia's 2022 invasion, NATO's EOP relationship with Ukraine has changed from joint exercising to weapons supplies. Since NATO states pre-emptively left Ukraine before the invasion and have refused to return for fear of contact with Russia, the level of joint exercising between NATO and Ukraine has declined (Macias, 2022). However, Ukraine has become increasingly interoperable with NATO equipment despite it no longer being able to host NATO exercises in Ukrainian territory. As the war has progressed, the weapons supplies provided to Ukraine from NATO states have increased and become ever more technologically advanced (Stoltenberg, 2022b). In the early stage of the war, Ukraine was mainly receiving light weapons such as NLAW and Javelin anti-tank missile systems (US Department of Defense, 2022). Based on Ukrainian successes in pushing back Russia's offensive, Ukraine has received more advanced long-range heavy weapons such as HIMARS and M777 Howitzer missile systems capable of targeting Russian military installations inside Russian territory (Ibid). Individual NATO states such as the UK have also pulled out Ukrainian forces for combat training before sending them back into Ukraine (British Army, 2022). The NATO-Ukraine EOP has thereby changed from its inception where joint exercising in Ukraine was conducted to the current war state where NATO is limited to the provision of weapons and external trainings.

It is important to now gauge from the interviews with the four experts what this change in the NATO-Ukraine relationship means for interoperability. At face value, Ukrainian forces could be perceived as becoming less interoperable given the cancellation of exercises and removal of Ukrainian troops from NATO troop missions. On the other

hand, all four interviewees agreed that Russia's 2022 invasion has actually made Ukraine even more interoperable with NATO because of the experience gained in using NATO weapons systems. Moreover, all four interviewees were more optimistic that Ukraine's interoperability with NATO weapons systems has increased its membership prospects in the long run. However, all of the interviewees were skeptical that this increased interoperability would lead to membership unless Ukraine is able to push Russia fully out of Ukrainian territory. The NATO academic when interviewed gave the analogy of a venture capitalist approach to start-up investments for explaining NATO's dynamic approach to providing weapons to Ukraine. If a start-up business proves successful on initial investments, the venture capitalist will likely invest more money. Similarly, the NATO academic observed that the alliance has increased its arms supplies to Ukraine as Ukrainian battlefield successes against Russia have developed. Based on this logic, it is quite possible that NATO weapons supplies will become even more advanced to Ukraine if it can show further significant progress in retaking territory back from Russia.

The NATO academic also put forward that Ukraine has likely been gifted with greater weapons supplies from NATO states for its show of restraint in responding to Russia. In contrast to Russia which has committed vast human rights abuses across Ukraine since the beginning of its invasion, Ukrainian forces have been notably restrained. Furthermore, Ukraine has avoided conducting indiscriminate airstrikes on Russian civilian infrastructure inside Russia similar to Russia's current air campaign. By avoiding the adoption of tactics similar to the Russian military, Ukrainian forces have proven that they can operate long-range NATO weapons systems without causing mass civilian casualties. The former NATO defense official when interviewed additionally raised that Ukraine's military adaptability has been a factor in encouraging NATO states to provide more weapons. The speed with which Ukrainian forces have adapted to using the delivered NATO weapon systems and utilizing them to decisive effects against Russian forces has accelerated Ukraine's interoperability with NATO. As an example, Ukraine has already been able to destroy significant numbers of Russian ammunition storage areas using its recently delivered HIMARS rocket launcher systems (Atlantic Council Digital Forensic Research Lab, 2022).

In addition to Ukraine achieving battlefield success, showing restraint and adaptability, the Ukrainian academic when interviewed brought up a further reason why NATO has

likely provided progressively more weapons to Ukraine. Ukraine has challenged a perception of corruption being so heavily present throughout the Ukrainian military that NATO state equipment would inevitably be stolen. Rather than displaying widespread misappropriation of military equipment similar to the Russian military, Ukraine has used NATO supplies for the intended purpose on the battlefield and cases of corruption are minimal (New York Times, 2022). By effectively using the NATO weapons it has been given, Ukraine has proven a trustworthiness which will be beneficial for receiving further arms supplies. According to the Ukrainian academic, there is no question that states which adopt NATO standards and equipment are successful on the battlefield, which has been clearly evident in the case of Ukraine. The former Ukrainian defense official similarly agreed in the interview that Ukraine has now proven full interoperability with NATO based on its experiences from Russia's 2022 invasion. In the view of the former Ukrainian defense official, NATO should instead be aiming to achieve interoperability with Ukraine given how impactful Ukraine has been in fighting Russia.

In analyzing this finding, it is noted that the NATO-Ukraine EOP has experienced a significant change since its inception and that it is heavily influenced by ongoing developments from Russia's 2022 invasion. From the initial stages, Ukraine worked with NATO to ensure that the four main areas of the EOP (political consultations, enhanced access to exercises, information sharing on lessons learned and crisis preparation) were collaboratively achieved. With Russia's 2022 invasion forcing NATO states to withdraw missions from Ukraine and limiting the resource ability of Ukraine to send troops to NATO missions, the EOP then took the form of NATO weapons assistance and external training. On the other hand, this change in the EOP has not meant a decline in interoperability between NATO and Ukraine. Instead, Ukraine has actually continued to experience increased interoperability through the EOP as a result of becoming capable in operating advanced NATO military assets. Ukrainian forces also continue to be trained by NATO states outside of Ukraine's borders, allowing for coherence in NATO's EOP interoperability training with Ukraine.

By using Petersson's framework, it was identified that Ukraine had already largely achieved horizontal interoperability with the alliance before the creation of the NATO-Ukraine EOP in June 2020. Achieving greater vertical interoperability was a driver for Ukraine to join the EOP as this would improve its chances of membership by becoming

more integrated into NATO's military structures. The principal method found for ensuring greater vertical interoperability within the EOP was NATO and Ukrainian exercises, with Ukraine evidently achieving vertical interoperability by becoming experienced in NATO procedures and equipment. An in-depth analysis of the NATO states which led the EOP exercises in Ukraine correlates with previous findings identified in this thesis. The NATO states which led the exercises in Ukraine were the optimist and revisionist NATO states such as Poland, Lithuania, the UK and the USA. Realist states such as France, Germany and Hungary were noticeably absent from this training which reflects their concern of potentially provoking Russia. Both the optimist and revisionist NATO states are more supportive of Ukraine's membership ambitions and this explains why these NATO states provided Ukraine training which ensured greater interoperability with NATO standards.

It is also evident that the EOP's interoperability exercises were geared towards Ukraine defending against a full-scale Russian invasion and then conducting subsequent offensive maneuvers to regain lost territory. The military benefits from these exercises have been witnessed during Ukraine's response to Russia's 2022 invasion such as with cyber, rapid reaction and defensive maneuver training. The interviewees all asserted that Ukraine's membership chances have improved with Ukraine's access to a growing amount of sophisticated NATO state weaponry. Provided that Ukraine is able to continue with its counter-offensive and eventually achieve its goal of reaffirming full Ukrainian territorial control, the interviewees all agreed that Ukraine would present a strong case for being incorporated into the alliance. The diverging perspectives however between NATO and Ukraine on this membership question surrounding interoperability are a further indication of the relevancy of constructivism. Since Ukraine believes that it already has constructed the necessary Euro-Atlantic identity for membership, it has used its enhanced interoperability achievements as a way of justifying accelerated membership. By contrast, NATO has separated the interoperability achievements of Ukraine from any discussion of membership, further evidencing an otherness that it still does not view Ukraine as yet having constructed this Euro-Atlantic identity.

To develop a thorough analysis of this finding, it is beneficial to apply the concept of interoperability formulated in the literature review section. This thesis conceptualized interoperability as the ability for a partner state (Ukraine) to be integrated with a

military alliance (NATO) for cooperative defense. Based on this finding, it has been shown that Ukraine has achieved this conceptualization of interoperability with NATO through the EOP. The extent to which Ukraine and NATO have furthered their interoperability from the EOP is evident with the increase in vertical interoperability. In addition to developing all four of the listed EOP areas, Ukraine has become vertically interoperable with NATO by effectively utilizing NATO advanced weapons on the battlefield against Russia. Hence, the EOP has furthered interoperability between NATO and Ukraine to the extent that Ukraine could now be comfortably integrated into NATO military structures. This therefore answers the third research question as to what extent have NATO and Ukraine furthered their interoperability through the EOP. On the other hand, interoperability alone will not allow Ukraine to achieve its goal of NATO membership, with NATO's dominating political logic remaining an obstructing factor.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis has identified that NATO and Ukraine have differing perspectives on the EOP and the purpose for its continued existence. A research puzzle lies at the center of the NATO-Ukraine EOP given that Ukraine ultimately desires membership instead and there is military utility for NATO to incorporate Ukraine as a member. As the first academic study of the NATO-Ukraine EOP, this thesis was able to provide an explanation for why this research puzzle exists by showing that NATO does not view Ukraine as being yet suitable for membership despite Ukraine's best efforts. Building on previous relevant academic literature, this thesis deduced three key concepts (partnership, membership and interoperability) based around three research questions created for understanding the NATO-Ukraine EOP. Inspired heavily by the previous work of Pouliot who analyzed the NATO-Russia partnership, this thesis applied an interpretivist methodological framework and the theory of constructivism to the NATO-Ukraine partnership. Central to this methodological approach were the two research methods of Hansen's model 1 discourse analysis and semi-structured interviews to produce findings on the NATO-Ukraine EOP.

The first task for this thesis was to see how the EOP was presented in NATO and Ukrainian official discourses. By using Hansen's model 1 discourse analysis, the main identities produced in NATO and Ukrainian officials discourses were found. Across Ukrainian EOP official statements, strategic documents and a specific NATO-Ukraine exhibit, it was shown that Ukraine perceives that it has constructed a Euro-Atlantic identity equal to that of NATO's. In this first finding, the relevance of constructivism was highlighted since identity and values are key drivers for the differing perspectives between NATO and Ukraine on the EOP. The strength of Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic identity justifies why it continues to partner with NATO despite receiving no security guarantees in return. The NATO discourse instead views Ukraine as only aspiring to achieve NATO's Euro-Atlantic identity rather than having already constructed it. Additionally, NATO benefits from the extension of its influence to Ukraine without having to give any security guarantees and this accounts for the NATO rationale in offering the EOP rather than providing nothing.

At the same time, this thesis identified that there is military utility for NATO as a military alliance to extend membership to Ukraine given how capable and experienced the Ukrainian military has become since 2014. Ukraine's military is substantially larger and better equipped than states which NATO has most recently extended membership. Moreover, if NATO had extended membership security guarantees to Ukraine, it is quite possible that Russia may have been dissuaded from its 2022 invasion and the associated humanitarian/economic impacts could have been avoided. From Ukraine's official discourse, it was clear that Ukraine sees the EOP as being inextricably linked to the prospect of membership. Within the NATO official discourse, there were inherent contradictions as NATO officials were publicly stating that NATO is committed to the 2008 Bucharest Summit pledge on Ukraine's future membership but in practice the alliance refuses to grant Ukraine with membership. For this reason, semi-structured interviews were conducted with four subject matter experts to ascertain the reason for NATO's hesitancy towards membership for Ukraine. The second and third findings combined were able to explain the NATO reasoning for why the EOP was offered to Ukraine over membership.

As shown from the concept of membership, it was put forward that membership is granted on the condition that an aspiring state does not conflict with the political agendas of NATO member states and does not present a security escalation risk for the alliance. In the second finding, it was found that a political rather than military logic dominates NATO's decision-making meaning that Ukraine is denied membership based on the political opposition of certain NATO states. From the third finding, it was also shown that certain NATO states perceive that extending membership to Ukraine would provoke Russia and lead to a Russian escalation such as a tactical nuclear strike on Ukraine. The interviews were able to shed light on the fact that not all NATO states perceive the Russian threat equally and that the opposition to Ukraine's membership is not felt by every member of NATO. This again details the importance of constructivism to understanding the EOP given that NATO states view the idea of Russia's threat and the level of Euro-Atlantic identity obtained by Ukraine differently. Since NATO is a consensus-based organization, the opposition of certain NATO states (termed as realists by Krastev) has derailed any possibility of Ukraine gaining membership.

The final finding aimed to analyze the practical element of how the EOP has been implemented and the extent to which interoperability has been furthered between NATO and Ukraine from the EOP. To make this assessment, the thesis used Petersson's interoperability framework to display the ways in which interoperability has improved since the signing of the NATO-Ukraine EOP in June 2020. Aside from enhancing interoperability through the four key areas of the EOP, the EOP created tangible military training benefits for Ukraine particularly with exercises. Ukraine's success in implementing the training given in NATO tactics and equipment from EOP exercises has brought substantial military benefits for Ukraine in defending against Russia's 2022 invasion. Ukraine's official discourse now is that it has achieved full interoperability with NATO and is thereby deserving of an accelerated membership process. By contrast, NATO has separated any Ukrainian achievements in improving interoperability with the EOP from the discussion of membership. However, this thesis has consistently identified that the partnership between NATO and Ukraine remains dynamic. The future prospect of NATO moving Ukraine from the EOP to membership is expected to be dependent on the outcomes from Russia's ongoing invasion, with Ukraine's continued defiance against Russian aggression highlighting its commitment to defending the Euro-Atlantic area and ultimately becoming a NATO member.

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Appendices

Appendix A- Main NATO Partnership Initiatives (Arts & Keil, 2021)

<u>Partnership Initiative</u>	<u>States</u>
NATO Interoperability Platform (formed in 2014)	Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Mongolia, Morocco, New Zealand, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine, and the United Arab Emirates
NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (formed in 2014)	Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, and Sweden
NATO Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (formed in 2004)	Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and UAE
NATO Partnership for Peace (formed in 1994)	Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Finland, Georgia, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Malta, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan
NATO Mediterranean Dialogue (formed in 1994)	Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia

Appendix B- NATO's European Membership Expansion Since 1949 (Kirk-Wade & Balakrishnan, 2022)

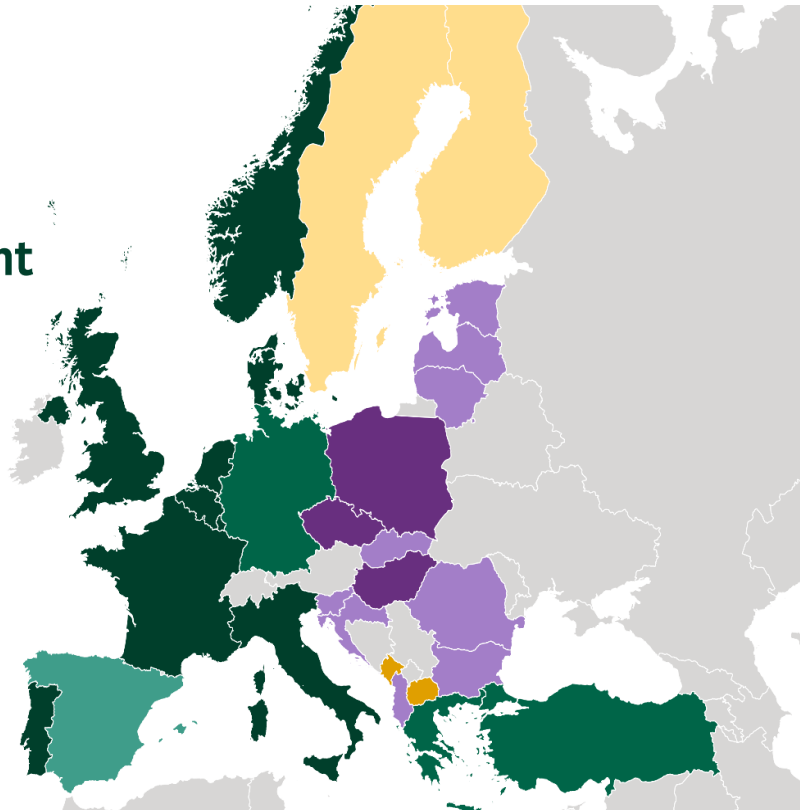
NATO enlargement in Europe

Date of joining

- 1949
- 1952-1955*
- 1982
- 1999
- 2004-2009
- 2017-20
- 2022**

* East Germany was not a member until reunification in 1990.

** Finland and Sweden are awaiting NATO membership.



Appendix C- Interview Questions Information Sheet



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Thesis Overview

Thesis title: Differing perspectives on military partnership: Understanding the NATO-Ukraine Enhanced Opportunities Partnership (EOP).

Thesis overview: This thesis is the first academic study of the 2020 NATO-Ukraine Enhanced Opportunities Partnership. It will analyze the official NATO and Ukraine discourses which explain why the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership was signed and how it has been implemented. The thesis aims to understand why NATO has given Ukraine the status of an Enhanced Opportunities Partner rather than a NATO member.

With Ukraine continuing to be a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner, this thesis is particularly relevant given Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and will add to ongoing research being conducted on the NATO-Ukraine relationship.

Proposed interview questions

Based on the above research overview, I plan to ask the following questions during interview:

- Why has NATO given Ukraine the Enhanced Opportunities Partner status rather than NATO membership?
- How does the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership assist Ukraine with its goal of NATO membership?
- How has the NATO-Ukraine relationship developed following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine?
- Why have NATO nations provided weapons to Ukraine following the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine given Ukraine is not a NATO member?

Schedule for interviews:

Thesis interviews will be conducted from Mid October 2022 and finished by the end of November 2022. The individual interviews should take no longer than one hour to complete.

Appendix D- Participant Information Sheet for Interviewees



University
of Glasgow

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Sciences



You are being invited to take part in a research study as part of my postgraduate master's thesis.

Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with myself if required. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Thank you for reading this and I hope you can participate in my master's thesis research study.

Purpose of the study

This thesis is the first academic study of the 2020 NATO-Ukraine Enhanced Opportunities Partnership. It will analyze the NATO and Ukraine discourses which explain why the Enhanced Opportunities Partnership was signed and how it has been implemented. The thesis aims to therefore understand why NATO has given Ukraine the status of an Enhanced Opportunities Partner rather than a NATO member.

With Ukraine continuing to be a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner, this thesis is particularly relevant given Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine and will add to ongoing research being conducted on the NATO-Ukraine relationship.

Why you have been chosen

You have been chosen as an interview participant in this study given your expertise and knowledge of Ukrainian security issues. I hope to gauge your expertise and knowledge during the interview to produce a detailed and analytical final thesis.

Your participation

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

Your involvement with the study

I plan to interview you as part of this master's thesis at a selected time of your choosing. This interview will be online on MS Teams or Zoom depending on your preference. I plan to record the audio of these for my own reference which will be securely stored on an encrypted drive and deleted after the study. The interview should take no longer than one hour to complete.

Confidentiality

All information which is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number and any information about you will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it.

However, given the small participant population pool of this study, it is possible that even with a pseudonym someone may be identified because few people fit the category being interviewed.

Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

Results of the research study

The data and results of the data will be stored securely on an encrypted online drive account. The thesis will be sent to you after final submission in January 2023. You will not be named or identified in any publication nor will your identity be clear in any part of the thesis. Personal data will be deleted immediately following submission of my thesis from the drive in line with the University of Glasgow guidelines.

Review of the study

The project has been reviewed by the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Forum.

Contact for Further Information

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the School of Social and Political Science Ethics Officer, Dr. Ammon Cheskin
email: ammon.cheskin@glasgow.ac.uk