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Macedonia's alignment to the NATO Security Community: Discussing Current implications

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1. Abstract

In the present study a constructivist analytical framework has been chosen to measure the degree of alignment of Macedonia to NATO. For this purpose, the *pluralistic security community* theory by Adler and Barnett (1998) is applied, offering the possibility to assign Macedonia to a phase of security community creation with NATO (*nascent, ascendant, mature*). Deriving from the theoretical construct, the following analytical categories have been established: creation of a collective identity, dependable expectations of peaceful change, collective actions and existence of mutual trust. Moreover, the level of institutionalization of each of these categories is assessed. The analysis showed that a collective identity between NATO and Macedonia is created. However, the degree of institutionalization of liberal norms in Macedonia needs to increase. Dependable expectations of peaceful change and collective actions are given, and their level of institutionalization is high. On this basis, mutual trust is created; hence the Macedonian alignment to the NATO security community has been allocated in the *ascendant* phase. Concluding, a further increase towards a *mature* phase can only be archived through a higher level of institutionalization. Furthermore, the sustainability and prospects of the security community creation process are conditional to domestic developments in Macedonia.

2. Background

This research aims to contribute to the scientific discussion about military security in Europe throughout international relation security studies. The study focuses on the Western Balkan region and particularly on Macedonia¹. The key actor providing military security in Europe is the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The subject to be analysed in this study is the level of alignment of Macedonia to NATO. Thus, the following research question has been formulated: *To what extent is Macedonia part of the NATO security community?*

NATO recently reaffirmed its open-door policy enabling membership to all European countries which are capable of matching the obligations of membership and can contribute to security in the Euro-Atlantic area (NATO, 2018a). Additionally, those states are expected to adhere the values of the North Atlantic Treaty. These criteria comprise a “functioning democratic political system based on a market economy; fair treatment of minority populations; a commitment to resolve conflicts peacefully; an ability and willingness to make a military contribution to NATO operations; and a commitment to democratic civil-military relations and institutions” (NATO, 2016b, p. 2). In the past years, several countries of the Western Balkan region joined NATO or started accession preparations. A key moment in the process of alignment of Western Balkan states to NATO has been the Bucharest summit in 2008. Among other issues, a potential NATO enlargement for Albania, Croatia, and Macedonia were discussed, as well as security issues in the Western Balkans region as a whole. (NATO, 2008). In the aftermath of the Bucharest summit, Albania and Croatia were invited to start accession negotiations to join NATO. For Macedonia, however, the prospect of joining the alliance was attached to the condition of finding a solution for the dispute over the country’s constitutional name with Greece. Furthermore, “Intensified Dialogues” started with Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the following, Albania and Croatia joined NATO in 2009. In 2010, the foreign ministers of the NATO Member States invited Bosnia and Herzegovina to join the Membership Action Plan (MAP) which ought to pave the way towards membership when immovable, regional property issues are resolved. In 2015, Montenegro was invited to start accession talks with NATO and Macedonia’s accession perspective was reaffirmed. Bosnia-Herzegovina was also encouraged to undertake necessary reforms in the framework of the MAP. As the last country of the region, Montenegro joined the alliance in 2017. Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina remain NATO partner countries having declared their aspiration of membership (NATO, 2018b).

¹ The country is “provisionally referred to for all purposes within the United Nations as *the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (FYROM) pending settlement of the difference that has arisen over the name of the State” – Republic of Macedonia (UN, 1993).

Bearing in mind the accession paths of the other Western Balkan countries towards NATO membership, it is obvious that the Macedonian accession process is stagnating. However, in the recent months movement come into the entrenched accession process (Barber, 2018). A renewed political intent to resolve the main obstacle to a potential NATO accession - the constitutional name issue (Republic of Macedonia) with Greece – is shown from the Macedonian and Greek government. Greece did not recognize the constitutional name because it beholds a similarly named province in the North of the country; therefore, the Greek government expressed the concern to face territorial claims on their northern province from the Macedonian side. Since the Macedonian government change in June 2017, the frequency of bilateral meetings has increased significantly. After a long process of negotiations - under the mediation of the United Nations (UN) - a mutually accepted solution has been found. The Macedonian and Greek government agreed to the new name “Republic of North Makedonia”. On the one side, the Macedonian government committed itself to add the geographical qualifier to the constitutional name and to amend the constitution in several areas. On the other side, the Greek government assured to no longer oppose aspirations of its Northern neighbour entering international organizations such as NATO or the European Union (EU) (Smith, 2018; Hope & Hopkins, 2018). The constitutional name changes still have to be adopted by the Macedonian parliament and the Macedonian public has to utter its support for the new name in a referendum in September 2018 (European Western Balkans, 2018b). Moreover, the solution has to be approved by the Greek parliament as well (Hope & Hopkins, 2018).

However, concerns against the agreed solutions have been uttered in both Macedonia and Greece. The signing of the provisional agreement by the Macedonian Prime Minister Zaev and the Greek counterpart Tsipras has been followed by nationalist protests on both sides. Moreover, the Macedonian President stressed that he would not support the constitutional name change and the largest Macedonian parliamentary party criticized the solution. Also, parts of the Greek opposition and members of the Greek parliament uttered concerns and stated that they would refuse to support the solution (The Telegraph, 2018; Smith, 2018).

Despite these obstacles, Zaev and Tsipras are optimistic that the challenges regarding the 27 years lasting conflict are going to be resolved. Zaev underscored the importance of the deal for stability and peace in the Western Balkan region (Smith, 2018). Tsipras expressed that the “historic and necessary step” is going to pave the way into a new era of friendship and bilateral partnership with Macedonia (The Telegraph, 2018). Moreover, support for the solution has been phrased by international organizations such as the UN, the EU or NATO. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg underlined that the agreement ought to build the basis for future NATO membership of the country (European Western Balkans, 2018c).

As already mentioned above, Macedonia clearly stated its intent to join NATO. Since the government change in Macedonia and especially since the reached solution on the “name issue”, optimism prevails regarding the possibility of a potential membership of the country on both the NATO and Macedonian side (European Western Balkans, 2018c). However, joining NATO requires more than just uttering the political will to join the alliance. Several reforms have to be conducted and formal obligations of NATO membership must be fulfilled. According to the NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg, Macedonia has already reached a high level of progress and has been encouraged to continue the initiated path of reform (NATO, 2018c). In the framework of this research, several aspects of the membership obligations will be analysed and the resulting consequences for the Macedonian NATO accession path will be discussed. Besides the obligations of membership, it remains to be seen to what extent Macedonia is part of the Euro-Atlantic security community. The main analysis of this research will focus on the alignment of Macedonia to the NATO security community.

At the end of the 20th century, security community studies attained more and more interest in international relations security studies. Several scholars focused their studies on the creation of security communities all over the globe. The concept of security community development was initially applied in Asia by Archaya (1991). Here, the creation of a security community on a regional level has been investigated with a focus on the countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). In his landmark study, Archaya (1991) putted focus on the region and particularly on aspects of a “Defence Community”, involving political and military cooperation among the ASEAN states. In the aftermath, several scholars focused on the ASEAN region in security community studies as well (see Khoo, 2004; Collins, 2007). However, the development of a security community has not only been analysed in the ASEAN regional context, but also in several other regions studies security community studies were conducted. For example, the Southern African area was investigated by Laakso (2007) and the Latin America region was examined by Hurrell (1998) and Villa (2017). Cruise and Grillot, who have focussed on the Western Balkan region, are of special interest for this study. In their study “Regional Security Community in the Western Balkans: A Cross-Comparative Analysis” Cruise and Grillot (2013) investigated early stage developments of a security community among Western Balkan societies with a special focus on the role of the public in this process. In another work “The Development of Security Community in Croatia: Leading the Pack”, Cruise and Grillot (2010) investigated the alignment of Croatia to the Western European security community.

Apart from the analysis of the creation of security communities on a regional level, various scholars focus their studies on the role of international organizations throughout the process of security community creation. Here one ought to mention, especially in the context

of this study, Grillot et al. (2009) who examined the ability of international organisations to facilitate the development of security communities in post conflict societies – the Western Balkan states. In addition, the paper of Bjola (2002) “NATO as a Factor of Security Community Building: Enlargement and Democratization in Central and Eastern Europe” is of particular interest. The author examined implications of a NATO enlargement on security community building in Central Eastern European countries, exemplifying the cases of Romania and Hungary, whilst focussing on the creation of shared identities.

Other studies analyse whether the NATO Member States jointly form a security community. Neumann and Williams (2000) argued in their work that NATO itself is considered to be a security community. Pouliot (2006) supported this finding in his study “The Alive and Well Transatlantic Security Community: A Theoretical Reply to Michael Cox” (2006). He underscored the ability of the transatlantic security community to peacefully solve internal conflicts. Moreover, he stated that the occurrence of conflicts among NATO members is not a contradiction to the fact that a security community is in existence as “a security community is neither conflict-free nor power-free” (Pouliot, 2006, p. 125). In the following, Pouliot (2008) supported his findings in an additional study concluding that NATO is a security community. These findings are of particular interest for this study as the existence of a NATO security community can be deemed as given.

Currently there are no studies available investigating Macedonia’s ability to join the Euro-Atlantic security community. There are also no studies focussing on the degree to which Macedonia is already matching features of the NATO security community. This study aims to contribute to this scientific field. Hence, the Macedonian alignment to the NATO security community is discussed and the following question is posed: ***To what extent is Macedonia part of the NATO security community?***

To be able to generate empirically valid results, several sub-questions have been formulated, highlighting and structuring the main units of analysis. The sub-questions, which all focussing on a specific aspect of analysis, are:

- A: To what extent is a collective identity developed between NATO and Macedonia?
- B: What is the likelihood of an occurrence of an armed conflict between members of the NATO security community and Macedonia, and what are the expectations of peaceful change?
- C: In which areas can one identify collective action between NATO and Macedonia?
- D: To which tier of security community development may the Macedonian case be assigned?

This study makes use of the following structure. First, the theoretical framework for this study is introduced. Measurable indicators are highlighted, enabling a classification of a potential stage of security community development between NATO and Macedonia. The current scientific state of art is depicted and some important works in the realm of security community studies are put forward. Second, the applied methods in the frame of this study are explained. The basis on which the Macedonian case selection has been informed is provided. In addition, the chosen research design is described, and the choice is justified. Third, an overview on the used data in the scope of this study is provided. The main issues of analysis deriving from the chosen theoretical framework are conceptualized and an operationalization is conducted. Then applied data sources from a Macedonian, NATO, and general context are distinctly stated. In the following, the main analysis of this study is conducted enabling a classification of Macedonia to one stage of security community development in regard to the North-Atlantic security community. Finally, a conclusion is drawn and potential implications deriving from this study are discussed.

3. Theory

The central theoretical concept applied in this study is security community. This constructivist analytical framework has been chosen to measure the degree of alignment of Macedonia to the NATO security community. By implying a constructivist approach, a plurality of forces in the international state order is acknowledged. Intersubjective meanings and state identities constitute the order that shapes state action (Wendt, 1992, p. 397, 406).

The concept of security community has been introduced to the international relations theory by Deutsch et al. in 1957. Within the framework of their study, Deutsch et al. (1957) focused on the interaction among states or societies and its potential to generate reciprocal collective identities (Deutsch, 1957, p. 5). The authors defined a security community as a “group of political units whose relations exhibit dependable expectations of peaceful change, based on the compatibility of the main values relevant to the prevailing political, economic and legal institutions and practice within the constituent units” (Deutsch, 1957, p. 5). Hence, a “sense of community” among a “group of people” is shown in the common expectation that social problems ought to be resolved in a process of “peaceful change” (Deutsch, 1957, p. 5). “Peaceful change” was described as a process in which social problems are resolved “without resort to large-scale physical force” in institutionalized procedures (Deutsch, 1957, p. 5).

Deutsch et al. (1957) differentiate between two major types of security communities: *amalgamated* security communities and *pluralistic* security communities. An amalgamated security community is created when two or more political units, which have previously been independent from one another, bound together creating one large community with a joint

government (Deutsch et al. 1957). The USA are an example for an amalgamated security community. However, the creation of such communities is generally rare. States forming a pluralistic security community retain their sovereignty and legal independence. As an example, one can mention Canada and the USA. The notion of “pluralistic security community” implies the conjecture that states cooperate on issues of mutual security (Deutsch et al., 1957, p. 5). Deutsch et al. (1957) found in their work that pluralistic security-communities are “easier to attain and easier to preserve” and hence are more resilient than their amalgamated counterparts (p. 29).

Nevertheless, security community studies remained a niche in constructivist international relations studies for a long time. Forty years after Deutsch et al. (1957) introduced the theoretical concept, security community studies attained more attention through the landmark work “A framework for the study of security communities” (1998) by Adler and Barnett. The authors further conceptualized the theory of pluralistic security communities and provided indicators to measure the development of security communities.

Adler and Barnett (1998) organized their framework around three tiers. The *first tier* describes a stage when states orientate themselves towards each other and develop the desire to cooperate due to endogenous or exogenous factors like changes in demography, technology, external threats, etc. The *second tier* is subdivided into the “structure” categories of knowledge and power and the “process” categories of transactions, social learning and international institutions and organizations. In the process of interaction between these two variables, mutual trust and collective identity can develop and dependable expectations of peaceful change might arise. Regarding the “structure” categories, power is a key factor for the development of pluralistic security communities. Power can account as a magnet, which can lead to the formation of a community around strong states, creating a knock-on effect to smaller states willing to benefit from collective security and further benefits of the community. “Process” categories involve social learning processes promoting the creation of mutual trust as normative expectations, self-understandings and perceptions of reality. This process promotes the diffusion of meanings in the countries which are part of the security community. *Tier three* depicts the positive and dynamic interaction of the above described variables as source for the creation of a collective identity and mutual trust. Identities are defined by the relationship to and by the interaction with other actors of the community. Trust is defined by beliefs about the other states of the community despite some level of uncertainty. Moreover, in tier three Adler and Barnett (1998) differentiate between loosely and tightly coupled pluralistic security communities. A special focus is put on tightly coupled security communities. Social identities generate identification among member states. A decrease in the collective cognitive distance causes an advance towards tightly coupled pluralistic security

communities. In addition, the community obtains a corporate identity which means that member states acquire their meanings, roles and purpose from the community (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 37-48).

Adler and Barnett (1998) further depict three phases of development of pluralistic security communities: nascent, ascendant and mature. The *nascent* phase defines a stage when governments consider how they can organise and coordinate their external relations in order to lower transition costs of future state interaction and enhance mutual security. The *ascendant* phase comprises the creation of increasingly dense networks among states: organisations and new institutions ensure comprising military cooperation and coordination as well as the creation of collective identities and cognitive structures enabling prospects of sustainable, peaceful change. In the third phase – *mature* – the occurrence of war becomes highly improbable as states share collective expectations on security. A pluralistic security community is created which can comprise the following indicators: a common definition of threat, unfortified borders, multilateralism, altered military doctrines as “worst case” scenarios are no longer included in the planning in pluralistic security communities and a common discourse is adopted among members of the community (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 50-57).

3.1 Security Community Theory in International Relations Studies

Most constructivist security community studies refer in some manner to the theoretical concepts provided by Deutsch et al. (1957) and Adler and Barnett (1998). Their general theoretical framework has been applied in various constructivist studies in the realm of security science. In the following, some scholars who conducted studies adding to the scientific discussion about security community creation will be discussed and an overview on the current scientific state of art will be provided. Focus will be put on theoretical aspects of security community creation processes, on their establishment and on particularities on regional levels.

As described in the *Background* section, various scholars investigated security community creation processes on a regional level. In the following, theoretical aspects of security communities are discussed.

To begin with, Emmerson (2005) stressed the importance of regional integration to enable the creation of security communities. Moreover, the author depicted the necessity of a shared identity both on the elite and on the public level to develop a sustainable security community (Emmerson, 2005, p. 182). Ditych (2014) uttered the importance of also investigating security community creation processes in regions, which had not been of major scientific interest yet. In this regard, he pointed out the example of the African continent, where

only the Southern African region had been analysed in international relations security community studies (see above) (Ditrych, 2014, p. 360). Moreover, the author stated that one ought to keep a scientific focus on the Transatlantic area as well - where Deutsch et al. (1957) initially applied the concept of security community. The author emphasized the need for further studies analyzing the current state of security community creation, especially in the light of rising Euroscepticism in public spheres. He pointed out that Europe might be threatened by a “re-securitisation against the background of an ongoing risk of institutional fragmentation and demontage of the compensatory allocation system” (p. 361). Moreover, to achieve valuable results and a high degree of empirical comparability, one ought to apply established theoretical frameworks (as provided by Adler and Barnett, 1998) to initially investigate to what extent such security communities are currently established (Ditrych, 2014, p. 361).

In a further study, Ayoob (1999) focussed on regional stability and regional conflict management. He underscored the importance “of insulation of a region from external intervention and undue extra regional influence” (p. 258) which according to the author is essential to create a feeling of cohesion. Ayoob (1999) saw regional stability as a precondition to ensure mutual security among states in a certain area. According to him, this was best exemplified in the Balkans after the regional upheavals in the 1990s (p. 247).

Williams and Neumann (2000) added the term democratic security community (p. 385) to the discussion on security communities. Democracy is considered to be an indicator for liberal norms and hence it is also being considered an important feature of security communities. Nevertheless, the authors acknowledged the possibility of the creation of community among states of non-democratic character (Williams and Neumann, 2000, pp. 384-387).

In an additional study, Pouliot (2008) investigated the creation of security communities from a more theoretical lens. He constructed “a theory of practice of security communities argu[ing] that peace exists in and through practice when security officials [...] make diplomacy the self-evident way to solving interstate disputes” (p. 257). The role of diplomacy in the process of nonviolent conflict solving was stressed and Pouliot argued that security communities “are about the practice of diplomacy” (2008, p. 279). As Adler and Barnett (1998), Pouliot (2008) also saw the existence of a collective identity as an immanent “condition for dependable expectations of peaceful change” (p. 278). Moreover, he agreed with Adler and Barnett (1998) to consider trust – which is defined as “believing despite uncertainty” – as a constitutive foundation of a security community. Pouliot (2008) highlighted that the creation of mutual trust is enabled from a practical sense based on a particular social context and on a collective and personal history (Adler and Barnett, 1998, p. 46). Therefore,

members of a security community could believe in one another despite some uncertainty. Trust is informed by the logic of practicality as “tacit experience and an embodied history of social relations” are key features for the creation (p. 278). Thus, according to Pouliot (2008) the creation of trust is of practical nature and he urged for a more central role of the logic of practicality in the framework of international relations security community theory. Pouliot (2008) furthermore hinted at the challenge to determine the constitutive practice of a security community which is depicted as “a social action endowed with intersubjective meanings that are shared by a given community” (p. 279). According to the author, peace is defined as a social fact which is not just given by practicing a security community (see Adler 2005). For this reason, Pouliot (2008) underscored the importance of the practice of “everyday” diplomacy enabling nonviolent interstate relations among participants of a security community (which also is the case for the Westphalian system as a whole). Hence, through the use of diplomacy, the occurrence of violence, as a possible way to solve conflicts among members of security communities, is excluded. This was observed by the example of the dispute among NATO members regarding an intervention in Iraq in 2003 (Pouliot, 2008, pp. 280-283). Pouliot (2008) concluded that “diplomacy becomes the shared background against which security elites interact [and] as a result, peaceful change can be dependably expected” (p. 283). With his article, Pouliot (2008) linked to Bourdieu’s sociology in the sense that “logic of practicality is meant to be an epistemic bridge between the practical and the theoretical relations to the world” (p. 283). Subsequently, Pouliot (2010) applied his theoretical approach in his review “International Security in Practice” (2010) on the post-Cold War diplomatic relations between the former enemies Russia and NATO. The author stressed the importance of diplomacy as a mean of communication ensuring peaceful dispute settlement.

In the article “Stable Peace Through Security Communities? Steps Towards Theory-Building” (2000), Väyrynen differentiated between different types of security communities. He focussed on the occurrence of intrastate security communities and on comprehensive security communities. Intrastate security communities are depicted in terms of the existence of peaceful intrastate relations and the absence of major societal conflict as for example civil wars (Väyrynen, 2000, p. 162-163). In order to define comprehensive security communities, Väyrynen used a definition provided by Ayoob (1997). Comprehensive security communities are established when “territorial satiation, societal cohesion, and political stability” prevail within countries (mostly in highly industrialized nations) (Ayoob, 1997, pp. 135-137). Hence, both an inter-societal and inter-state peace have to be present (Väyrynen, 2000, p. 162). Moreover, Väyrynen (2000) compared in his article the concepts of stable peace and security community. He viewed the existence of stable peace as a key characteristic of a security community (p. 184). However, he highlighted differences between these two concepts by describing methods how peace is maintained. The existence of stable peace is due to a

consensual and reciprocal decision of states to avoid territorial disputes. In contrast, peace in a security community is provided by values, norms, and the creation of common identities. These key features of a security community were also depicted by Kacowicz (1998), who highlighted that because of these aspects a security community is more institutionalized and goes beyond stable peace (pp. 10-11). Taking this differentiation into account, Väyrynen (2000) concluded that security communities are “value communities” producing “stable peace by sharing identities and meanings” (p.184). In addition, Väyrynen (2000) stressed that a security community generates security based on endogenous constructions of common identities and values. Additionally, liberal policies and values are essential components of a security community. Besides these aspects material factors, as for example the transfer of technologies in various realms, may account as a condition of a security community (Väyrynen, 2000, p. 185). However, these material factors have not yet been extensively examined in the international relation security studies.

Moreover, Väyrynen (2000) stated that “trust is [...] generated by the strengthening of norms and institutions, social learning, and the construction of common identities” (p. 186). According to him, identities, norms and values are core aspects in the formation process of security communities. As Väyrynen (2000), Nathan (2006) emphasized the significance of enduring peace as a necessary condition of a security community creation. In particular, domestic stability, which is described as “the absence of large-scale violence in a country”, was highlighted as an important feature (Nathan, 2006, p. 277). It is concluded that the absence of large scale violence within a country is as important as interstate peace (Nathan, 2006, pp. 293-294).

Tusicisny adopted in his study “Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously” (2007) the differentiation between intrastate security communities and comprehensive security communities provided by Väyrynen (2000) (see above). Hence, Tusicisny (2007) referred in his analysis to both intra - and interstate aspects of security communities. Regions, where “interstate war has become unthinkable while organized large-scale violence is still perceived as a possible (though not necessarily legitimate) mean of solving social conflicts within the state”, are referred to as intrastate security communities (p. 427). Comprehensive security communities are defined in terms of “peaceful change” in the Deutschian sense (Tusicisny, 2007, p. 427). Furthermore, the compatibility of values is perceived as a condition for the creation of a security community (compare to Deutsch et al., 1957). In his study, Tusicisny (2007) analysed social and political values which are held by people in (potential) security communities in Europe (European Security Community (ESC)), North America (North American Security Community (NAFTA)), South America (South American Security Community (MERCOSUR)), and South-East Asia (ASEAN). The author stressed that societies having a high level of liberal values did not experience war in recent

times and are “fairly difficult to distinguish [from] members of regional security communities from more isolated peaceful countries” (Tusicisny, 2007, p. 441). Hence, he concluded that liberal values are not an immanent feature of security community building on a societal level. Additionally, Tusicisny (2007) underscored that a plurality of factors (materialist reasons, e.g. a common threat) might lead to the creation of security communities. Additionally, trust and tolerance towards “strangers” are significantly higher among members of security communities. With his study, the author supported the findings by Deutsch et al. (1957) showing that a shared sense of community is not necessarily created by the existence of common values among societies (Tusicisny, 2007, p. 441). Beyond that, Tusicisny (2007) highlighted that security concerns play a key role in the creation process of security communities. However, by a peaceful interaction between previous rivals, trust may be created, and a security community can be developed. An example for this case is the relationship between Germany and France which altered from enemies to friends over time. Finally, Tusicisny (2007) called for a holistic approach, while analysing the creation of security communities including not only an elite perspective, but also a perspective of the general public as a whole (p. 442).

The importance of institutionalizing common values and norms to create a sense of community was emphasized by Möller (2003). He highlighted the risks of an insufficient institutionalization of reciprocal norms by the example of the alignment of former soviet countries to the Western security community. Anyhow, the importance of peaceful change is underscored as a basic criterion for security community development (see above Adler and Barnett, 1998; Möller, 2003, p. 316).

Koschut (2014) added to the scientific discussion on security communities an emotional component of shared norms which develops among members of such communities. He defined emotional communities as “groups in which people adhere to the same norms of emotional expression and value – or devalue – the same or related emotions” (Koschut, 2014, p. 534). According to the author, these reciprocally and emotionally shared norms had a stabilizing effect on security communities during inter-allied conflicts (2013, p. 533). The findings were exemplified on the case of the NATO military intervention in Libya in 2011. Germany decided to abstain from the UN Resolution 1973, thereby not supporting this intervention, which has been perceived as a “display of emotional indifference” by the US, France, and Britain (Koschut, 2014, p. 555). To regain its previous position within the community, German leaders publicly stressed the norm of amenity and hereby contributed to reconciliation within the community itself.

Krahmann (2003) focussed on increasingly fragmented and nuanced security structures in the Euro-Atlantic environment (p. 5). According to the author, a process of

decentralization has taken place since the end of the Cold-War era, leading to more stakeholders being involved in conflict management processes (2003, pp. 13-14). To explain this new security system, she introduced the concept of “security governance”. In her concept, importance was given to a variety of governmental and non-governmental actors. Krahmman (2003) uttered the necessity to include these actors in security community studies to attain as much of a holistic picture of the Euro-Atlantic security structure as possible (pp. 7-8; p. 20).

In the frame of this study a rather general classification of the Macedonian alignment to the NATO security community is provided, as there are no studies available investigating the creation of a security community in Macedonia – as a single case. Before one can focus on specific aspects of security community development, as for instance Pouliot (2008) did with his investigation of the role of diplomacy in security community creation processes, it is necessary to first investigate to what extent a security community is reciprocally developed. Thus, a broad, encompassing theoretical approach has been chosen. Moreover, only a few analyses of an alignment of a single country to an already established security community have been conducted in international relations studies. However, in the regional context of Eastern Europe, several studies do exist applying such an approach (see above Bjola (2002) or Cruise and Grillot (2010)). For this reason, the chosen method - a rather general one - seems to be appropriate in respect to the Macedonian case.

3.2 Applied Theoretical Approach

For this study the theoretical framework provided by Adler and Barnett (1998) is most suitable. The authors provide indicators to measure the degree of security community creation in general. For the Macedonian case, it is necessary to initially conduct a general analysis of the country’s alignment to the NATO security community. Therefore, the analysis builds on this version of pluralistic security communities theory. In addition, Adler and Barnett’s framework is most frequently applied in security community studies; hence, it has proven its suitability to measure the creation of pluralistic security communities in various studies. Moreover, Ditrych (2014) stressed the value of Adler and Barnett’s security community theory to attain generally comparable results measuring the creation of such a community in the Transatlantic area (p. 361).

The stages of development of pluralistic security communities of the conceptual theory of Adler and Barnett (1998) are discussed in regard to the Macedonian case. Special focus is put in the analysis on investigating the extent to which mutual trust is created between NATO and Macedonia. The creation of reciprocal trust is measured by analysing the potential

creation of a collective identity, dependable expectations of peaceful change and collective action. On the basis of the above described facets of a security community, Macedonia is assigned to one of the three tiers which Adler and Barnett (1998) have established. In addition, the analysis enables a statement on the current state of security community development – namely nascent, ascendant and mature (Adler and Barnett, 1998). Finally, future prospects of the Macedonian alignment to the Euro-Atlantic security community are discussed.

3.3 Constructivist Notion in Security Community Studies

As depicted above, a constructivist framework is applied in this study to measure the level of alignment of Macedonia to the NATO security community: the pluralistic security community theory by Adler and Barnett (1998).

In the landmark study, “Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics” Wendt (1992) introduced the theoretical concept of constructivism to international relations studies. In the international Westphalian state order anarchy is mediated by state practices, ideas, and norms. The author explains that “various structures of identity and interest [...] may exist under anarchy” (Wendt, 1992, p. 399). Anarchy is hereby seen as a flexible construct under which the creation of intersubjective meanings is enabled. Moreover, a social dimension in international politics is acknowledged (Wendt, 1992, p. 405).

Wendt (1995) defines a security community as a “social structure composed of shared knowledge in which states trust one another” to peacefully resolve interstate disputes (p. 73). This definition connects to the work provided by Deutsch et al. (1957) who initially introduced the security community theory to international relations security studies. Deutsch et al. (1957) state that sovereign states can develop a socially constructed relationship fostering cooperation based on shared identities. Moreover, the notion of community creation is enabled by a process of “social learning” based on common reciprocal identities and mutual undertraining (Laakso, 2007, p. 42; see Deutsch et al. 1957).

Among other scholars, Adler and Barnett (1998) build their theory of pluralistic security communities on a constructivist basis. The main aspect in which the constructivist approach is shown, is that national identities have a significant influence on security policies of states and multilateral security institutions. Therefore, shared identities and values take on a key role in security community creation processes (Adler and Barnett, 1998; Väyrynen, 2000, p. 175). In the constructivist approach, security communities are established in a process of social interaction between states which share norms and identities (mostly liberal ones) (Adler and Barnett, 1998, pp. 39-40; Väyrynen, 2000, pp. 172-173).

Moreover, threat is a key analytical unit in security community studies. Anyhow, a security issue only exists when members of security communities define an action (e.g. from a third party) as a threat; thus, security problems are socially constructed (Väyrynen, 2000 pp. 174-175). In this regard, Wendt (1992) explains that the manner how states perceive actions from third parties in an anarchical order is not only conditional to the distribution of power, but also to various factors like identities, values and social processes. In the context of security communities, an identified security issue may lead to collective action from the community (Väyrynen, 2000, p.174).

3.4 Hypothesizing theoretical implications

Based on the chosen theoretical framework, this study presents three hypotheses addressing the main research question: *To what extent is Macedonia part of the NATO security community?* Each of the three hypotheses builds on expectations derived from the theoretical framework by Adler and Barnett (1998) on pluralistic security communities; hence, these hypotheses are clearly theory driven. The chosen theory links to the constructivist thought of international relation studies. Therefore, the investigated hypotheses connect with constructivist elements of international relations theory. The examined hypotheses are separately presented below.

H1: *The creation of a collective identity leads to the establishment of mutual trust, which is an inherent feature of pluralistic security community creation.*

Adler and Barnett (1998) describe the existence of a collective identity as a necessary condition for the creation of pluralistic security communities. For this reason, the establishment of a collective identity among the NATO Member States and Macedonia is investigated in the frame of this study. The level of institutionalization of indicators of a collective identity - such as democratic values, norms and identities - is examined. In addition, such an analysis ought to enable a statement on the level to which mutual trust is created. A basis is provided to assign the Macedonian case to a tier of security community creation in regard to the NATO security community.

H2: *Conflicts are resolved without resort to large-scale physical force in institutionalized procedures; hence, expectations of peaceful change are given, and the occurrence of war is excluded.*

As depicted above, the expectation of peaceful change presents a precondition of pluralistic security community creation. Therefore, the Macedonian ability to

peacefully resolve disputes is examined. It is analysed to which level peaceful conflict resolution is institutionalized between NATO and Macedonia. Focus is put on intrastate conflicts (within Macedonia) and on interstate disputes (of Macedonia with NATO Member States).

H3: *Institutionalized military cooperation between states entails value and norm changes leading to the creation of mutual trust and reciprocal identities at the elite level.*

Adler and Barnett (1998) highlight that (military) cooperation has an influence on how states perceive others. Moreover, an institutionalization of cooperation between states may lead to value and norm changes resulting in the creation of a reciprocal identity. This is a required condition for the formation of mutual trust among security community members. Such an institutionalized cooperation can be shown in collective actions of states for creating a pluralistic security community; thus, this is also a necessary condition for the creation of a security community. For this reason, the degree of institutionalized military cooperation between NATO and Macedonia is examined in the present study.

Table 1. Overview Hypothesis

Theory	Constructivism *		
Applied Theoretical Framework	Pluralistic Security Community Theory **		
Expectations	The creation of a collective identity leads to the formation of mutual trust	Conflicts are resolved without resort to large-scale physical force in institutionalized procedures - the occurrence of war is excluded	Institutionalized military cooperation entails value and norm changes, leading to the creation of mutual trust and reciprocal identities at elite level
Enabling Mutual Trust	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hypothesis	Hypothesis 1	Hypothesis 2	Hypothesis 3

* integration theory perspective, constructivist notion

** see above, pluralistic security community theory by Adler and Barnett (1998)

As explained above, the institutionalization of the analytical units deriving from Adler and Barnett's (1998) pluralistic security community theory are core elements for either supporting or rejecting the posed hypothesis. Institutionalized procedures of peaceful conflict resolution (H2) and institutionalized military cooperation (H3) can only be visible if features of a collective identity are institutionalized to a high level (H1). For this reason, H1 sets up the institutional components of a security community which are examined in the following.

In the scope of the present study, institutions are investigated from a sociological perspective. Institutionalization is defined in a rather abstract and general sense. The process of institutionalization depicts the attempt to regulate societal behaviour among members of societies or within organizations. Max Weber (1981) described institutionalization as a process in which rules and procedures are established, adapted and altered in both the political and social dimension. Thus, an effect on the behaviour of political actors and individuals is expected. Institutionalized behaviour is created in a process of practices becoming shared rules which are in the following formalized within organizations or among societies (Weber, 1981, pp. 175-178; Keman, 2017).

4. Methods

In the framework of this research several methods are applied to measure Macedonia's alignment to the NATO security community. Initially, the basis on which the Macedonian case selection has been informed is discussed in detail. The focus is set on the accessibility of data and on the practical and theoretical relevance of the research problem. In the following, the chosen research design is illustrated and potential threats to validity such as a potential selection bias are put forward.

4.1 Case Selection and Sampling

In the introduction (*Background*) to the present study, the scientific and practical relevance of conducting this research has been explained. Here, however, the choice to examine the Macedonian case in the context of the country's alignment to the NATO security community is explained in detail. Blatter and Haverland (2012) depict to main criteria on which the case selection is informed: *accessibility* of data and *theoretical and practical relevance* of the findings.

The *accessibility* of data is given, as several scholars published papers in this realm, the Macedonian defence ministry is making national strategies publicly available (also in

English language) and NATO is providing several policy documents focussing on NATO missions and defence or enlargement strategies. Moreover, several other organizations deal with this issue and some surveys have been conducted dealing with public positions regarding a Macedonian NATO accession (as for example the survey *Public Opinion in Macedonia* conducted by the *Centre for Insights in Research Surveys*). However, there are also some limitations to the accessibility of official documents. Several documents are classified; and therefore, public access is restricted. Moreover, the responsiveness of officials – especially from the NATO side - has been limited.

The *practical relevance* of analysing this topic becomes clear when taking a closer look at the current efforts of the Macedonian government to align to the NATO security community. The Macedonian government has expressed its intent to join the Euro-Atlantic security community multiple times. Beyond that, the Euro-Atlantic integration is the top priority of the country's foreign policy (Stojanovski & Maralov, 2017, p. 282). Furthermore, the Macedonian government anticipate a positive impact going beyond the assurance of military security from a NATO alignment. NATO membership is expected to account as a stimulation in other policy areas which is thought to lead to increasing economic growth and more security for investments in the country (Stojanovski & Maralov, 2017, p. 289; Euscoop, 2018). Several large NATO member countries, like the United States of America (USA), uttered their readiness to integrate Macedonia - as soon as possible - into the NATO institutional structure (U.S. Department of State, 2008). However, one has to take into consideration that current statements of NATO officials stressing the importance of quick progress in regard to Macedonian NATO alignment might be driven by external triggers (NATO, 2018c). In recent time, China and Russia significantly increased their activities in the Western Balkan region which fostered a discussion within Western States about strategic alignment of the region (Krastev, 2018; Stojanovic, 2018). This study might help to better understand the complex plurality of interests which exist in the Western Balkan region. Anyhow, in the current political environment, NATO membership of Macedonia seems more likely than it used to be in previous years (see above). Thus, this paper discusses a current issue of NATO enlargement policy (NATO, 2018d). Moreover, the conducted process analysis in this study ought to constitute as an important input to present and future security strategies of NATO in coordination with Macedonia. In addition, implications resulting from this case study may be of significance for non-governmental organizations or researchers in and outside Macedonia; as a basis is provided to categorize the actual level of integration of the country to the Euro-Atlantic security community. Beyond this, the study can be of significance - not only in the Macedonian context - but also be partly applicable to further countries in the region who aim to join the Euro-Atlantic security community. Furthermore, this study aims to stress the need for NATO to keep its focus on the Western Balkan region, as security in NATO's direct

neighbourhood remains a persisting challenge (Klepo, 2018, pp. 138-142). An alignment of Macedonia to the NATO security community can contribute to long-term regional and Euro-Atlantic stability.

In addition, a *theoretical relevance* of this study is given. On the one hand, there are currently no studies available which investigate Macedonia's ability to join the Euro-Atlantic community and on the other hand, there are no studies existing which focus on the degree to which Macedonia is already matching dimensions of the NATO security community.

To be able to meet the above stated criteria, a descriptive research question is chosen in the framework of this study (*To what extent is Macedonia part of the NATO security community?*). The descriptive nature of the question becomes evident when looking at the chosen approach: Several theoretical aspects of a pluralistic security community are depicted and discussed in regard to what extent Macedonia is already fulfilling them. Furthermore, this research aims at understanding and scientifically measuring the degree to which Macedonia aligns to the NATO security community. As the applied theoretical framework does not entail a causal relationship, the descriptive approach of this study is appropriate for analysing the subject.

4.2 Research Design

In this research, the following approach is used to give an answer to the main research question: First, in the *Background* section general information on the NATO enlargement policy, the current state of political situation in Macedonia and the Macedonian relations to NATO are provided. Second, in the *Theory* part, the current scientific state of art of security community studies is presented and the constructivist notion of this empirical realm is discussed. In addition, the chosen theoretical concept is highlighted – pluralistic security community theory by Adler and Barnett (1998). In the following, three hypotheses are identified deriving from the theoretical construct and expectations regarding the analysis are discussed. Third, in the *Methods* section, the basis on which the Macedonian case selection has been informed is discussed and the applied research design is described. Moreover, threats to validity, such as a biased case selection, are listed. In the following *Data* section, the theoretical construct is conceptualized, and an operationalization of the deriving analytical units is conducted. Furthermore, the analysed data is discussed. The previously conceptualized analytical units are separately examined in the *Analysis* part. Finally, a conclusion is drawn, and the Macedonian case is allocated to one phase of security community development in respect to the alignment to the NATO security community.

The research design comprises the use of a congruence analysis. By using a congruence analysis, observations are being matched to expectations deriving from the theoretical framework of a security community theory (George and Bennett, 2005, pp. 181-204; Yin, 2017, pp. 106-110). Furthermore, Haverland (2010) clarifies that the validity of an explanation “depends on the degree to which empirical evidence is congruent with observable implications of this explanation” (Haverland, 2010, p. 68). In the present study, links are drawn between the theoretical concept and the made observations. The congruence method ought to enable an in-depth analysis of the Macedonian single case in regard to NATO alignment by the application of a security community theory. However, a concise conceptualisation stressing measurable units – which are derived from the applied theoretical frame – are conducted. Thereby, valid results ought to be attained.

Such an in-depth analysis of the theoretical grounds of a pluralistic security community is necessary to understand the current state of Macedonian alignment to the NATO security community; therefore, an answer to the main research question facilitated. By using empirically measurable indicators deriving from Adler and Barnett’s (1998) theory, this research ought to attain comparability to other studies making use of similar research designs. Moreover, this theory is – as already discussed above – the most frequently applied theory in security community studies. With a focus on this vividly discussed and frequently applied theory of constructivist international relations studies, a certain extent of generalizability of the obtained results might be achieved (in conjunction to comparable studies).

According to Maxwell (2009) and George and Bennett (2005) one ought to further consider possible threats to a biased case selection or data analysis. These can occur due to the selected theoretical approach, the researcher’s preconceptions and/or his values (Maxwell, 2009, p. 243; George & Bennett, 2005, p.22-25). This selection bias might lead to a systematic error in the process of analysis (Collier & Mahoney, 1996, p. 60). Moreover, the chosen theoretical approach and personal experience of the author might entail preconceived ideas about the topic. This might tackle the validity of attained results of this research. To counter this potential validity threat in the process of data selection, a variety of data sources is used. Moreover, the used sources are derived from trustworthy institutions, as NATO, the Macedonian government, the EU or the UN. In addition, the selection of data is informed by of quantitative and qualitative sources (see Maxwell, 2009, p.244). By means of implying divergent and supporting data the occurrence of pre-conceptualized conclusions is less prone.

Additionally, the validation of the results may be hampered by the phenomenon that the development of a security community requires a lot of time. Hence, this research is not

focussing on deriving absolute outcomes but rather on the process of security community building.

Generally, this research makes use of the triangulation method applying data of mostly qualitative nature. Anyhow, quantitative elements are - as stated above - also assessed in the frame of this study. The goal of using various data sources is to ensure an as holistic picture of the security community creation process as possible. Moreover, by the application of several methods, a high degree of validity regarding the obtained results is tried to be achieved. Using the triangulation method, this research aims to apply strengths of each method in the examination of the phenomenon of security community creation (see Flick, 2008; Blaikie, 1991, p. 115). For this study, a variety of data sources from NATO, the Macedonian side or independent institutions are utilized (e.g. official documents, public survey data, media reports or scientific publications etc.). Therefore, this research supports its conclusions on a diversified set of data ensuring a distinguished level of scientific integrity. The applied sources are distinctly discussed in the following *Data* section.

5. Data

This section describes the data sources applied in the analysis of this research. To be able to give a profound answer to the main research question, a variety of data sources are examined. First, the chosen theoretical framework by Adler and Barnett (1998) is conceptualized and an operationalization of the main theoretical aspects of analysis is conducted. Thereby, a specific focus lays on the analysis of the existence of mutual trust between NATO and Macedonia which is investigated by assessing the level of common identities, dependable expectations of peaceful change and collective action. These analytical units are indicators for a creation of a pluralistic security community.

Second, the applied data sources are presented in order to give an overview on the analytical basis of the study. Initially, Macedonian data sources are presented, then used NATO data sources are discussed and finally additional sources, which are not derived from official NATO or Macedonian institutions, are depicted.

5.1 Conceptualization and Operationalization

In the subsequent section the concept of pluralistic security community by Adler and Barnett (1998) is operationalized. The theory of pluralistic security communities provides several

measurable indicators, which enable a classification of the extent to which a security community is reciprocally developed between NATO and Macedonia. In the following, the independent analytical categories are conceptualized in regard to the Macedonian case.

As described in the theory section, Adler and Barnett (1998) defined three phases of development of pluralistic security communities: nascent, ascendant and mature (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 50-57). To be able to empirically analyse in which phase of development a security community currently is, the authors organised their theoretical construct around three tiers (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 37-48). Within each tier, they provide measurable indicators in order to allow for a definite allocation.

In this classification process to a particular tier, trust constitutes a key analytical unit. Therefore, measuring mutual trust is essential for establishing the stage of security community development. Adler and Barnett (1998) define trust in terms of beliefs about other states of the community - despite some degree of uncertainty. Collective identity, expectations of peaceful change, and collective action among members of community are identified as indicators for the creation of mutual trust. Adler and Barnett (1998) state that a collective identity is formed by the interaction with other actors of the community. Peaceful change is depicted in a Deutschian sense: social problems are peacefully resolved “without resort to large-scale physical force” in institutionalized procedures (Deutsch, 1957, p. 5; see Adler and Barnett, 1998, pp. 50-57).

As stated above, Adler and Barnett (1998) depict several aspects enabling a classification to a tier of pluralistic security community creation (pp. 50-57). By assessing the analytical categories of this study (collective identity, peaceful change, collective actions and mutual trust) a basis for an allocation is provided. *Tier I* describes the stage in which states orientate towards each other and develop the desire to cooperate. The development of a security community is in the first tier when an initial but rare cooperation between states is taking place. Furthermore, no collective identity is developed. *Tier II* – which discusses the interaction of the “structure” and the “process” categories (see above, *Section 3*) – entails the creation of mutual trust to a certain extent. The “process” categories are operationalized in terms of given expectations of peaceful change and a process of diffusion of meanings leading to a collective identity. The “structure” categories are defined in terms of benefiting from collective security (power). In this regard collective actions between NATO and Macedonia, which provide collective security, are discussed. Furthermore, the level of interaction between these two categories is discussed which may lead to an institutionalization of the relationship with other members of the community. *Tier III* depicts the positive and dynamic interaction of the above described variables as a source for the creation of a collective identity and mutual trust. The security community development is present in *Tier III* when state security is solely

provided through the community in institutionalized collective actions. In addition to that, a collective identity is created, the occurrence of war is inconceivable, and a high level of mutual trust is given (Adler and Barnett, 1998, pp. 50-57).

On the basis of the above-described allocation to a tier of pluralistic security community creation, it is possible to determine the phase of security community creation (*nascent*, *ascendant* and *mature*) (see above, *Section 3.2*). The *nascent* phase depicts an initial interaction between states and expects all aspects of *Tier I* - and some of *Tier II* - to be present. The *ascendant* phase indicates that a tighter relationship between states is created, which is strengthening over time. All aspects of *Tier II* and some aspects of *Tier III* are established. The *mature* is reached when a fully-fledged security community is created, and all aspects of *Tier III* are fulfilled.

In this study, the previously highlighted indicators of pluralistic security community creation by Adler and Barnett (1998) are distinctly analysed. They are applied in order to assign the Macedonian case to a phase of security community creation with respect to the NATO security community. For such a classification, measuring the level of reciprocal trust among NATO and Macedonia is necessary. For this reason, the following analytical categories are used: collective identity, peaceful change and collective action. To be able to investigate these units in an appropriate manner, the following sub-questions are formulated:

- A: To what extent is a collective identity developed between NATO and Macedonia?
- B: What is the likelihood of an occurrence of an armed conflict between NATO Member States and Macedonia, and what are the expectations of peaceful change?
- C: In which areas can one identify collective action between NATO and Macedonia?
- D: To which tier of security community development may the Macedonian case be assigned?

However, the stated analytical categories still have to be operationalized. The presence of a collective identity (see *sub-question A*) is evaluated by measuring the following analytical categories: *liberal norms*, a *common definition of threat*, *statements made by NATO and Macedonian officials* on the current level of alignment, and the *creation of a collective identity on public level*. Generally, *liberal norms* are expected to be present in democratic societies (see Danilovic & Clare, 2007; Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625). The existence of liberal norms is also assumed among political actors in democratic decision-making processes (Russett, 1993, p. 31). Hence, such a presence is expected on the public level as well as on the elite level (in the political and military dimension). In the scope of this study, a brief statement on the current state of democracy in Macedonia is provided. However, Bakker (2016) stresses the

importance to distinctly measure the existence of liberal norms among members of societies (p. 525). Therefore, analytical units indicating an existence of liberal norms, provided by Schimmelfennig (2001), are discussed in regard to the Macedonian case. First, the adherence and belief in *human rights*, which define “legitimate statehood and rightful state action in the domestic as well as the international realm”, is analysed (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p. 59). Second, the focus is put on liberal principles of the political and social order in the domestic sphere: the *rule of law*, *democratic political representation and participation*, *social pluralism*, *a market-based economy*, and *private property* (Schimmelfennig, 2001, pp. 59-60; see also Schimmelfennig, 1999). The selection of these analytical units to measure liberal norms is supported by Katz (2016), who noted that “the primary value [informing] governance within a liberal democratic state revolves around the rule of law and respect for minority rights, or the practice of bounded competition” (p.7). In the framework of the present study, concise statements for each analytical unit are provided for measuring the existence of liberal norms in Macedonia. To enable such an evaluation on the elite level, sources provided by international organizations (European Commission, Council of Europe, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), etc.) are assessed. The strength of liberal norms is discussed for each sub-unit by applying the measure of not existent/given, partially existent/given and existent/given. The aim is to attain a certain level of comparability between the sub-units, which measure the existence of liberal norms. The overall adherence to liberal norms is present if at least four of the six criteria are measured with existent/given. Moreover, none of the investigated scopes ought to be indicated with not existent/given.

To investigate the existence of a *common definition of threat* between NATO and Macedonia, the latter’s support for NATO policies and missions is discussed. If Macedonia acknowledges security challenges identified by NATO, one may assume the presence of a common definition of threat between NATO and Macedonia. Moreover, actions from the Macedonian side, which prove the recognition of common security threats, are discussed (see NATO, 2018e). Also, official statements from the NATO and Macedonia on security threats are discussed.

Within the analysis of the creation of a collective identity, *statements made by NATO and Macedonian officials*, indicating the creation of such a shared identity, are discussed. Hence, official statements and media reports are assessed from stakeholders of the Macedonian NATO integration process.

To enable a profound statement on the presence or absence of a collective identity between NATO and Macedonia, the public support for a NATO alignment in Macedonia is assessed. The importance of analysing public positions in the process of the creation of pluralistic security communities was underscored by Tuscisny (2007). Moreover, Emmerson

(2005) stressed that a collective identity has to be present on a public as well as on an elite level so as to enable the creation of a sustainable security community (p. 182). For this reason, public perceptions of the Macedonian NATO integration process are additionally assessed in the investigation of a shared identity. The analysis of public support for a NATO alignment in Macedonia mainly rests on the assessment of public opinion surveys and scientific papers. In addition, the electoral behaviour in regard to party positions on a potential Macedonian NATO accession is discussed.

The assessment of the public attitude towards a Macedonian NATO accession is the main source on which a conclusion is drawn. Additionally, discussed aspects, as for instance the conditionality of an Macedonian NATO accession to parliamentary support on the constitutional name change, are used to assess the sustainability of made decisions regarding the Macedonian NATO integration process.

If liberal norms, a common definition of threat, official statements from high-level NATO and Macedonian representatives indicating an alignment and public support are given, then the presence of a collective identity can be expected.

Peaceful change (*see sub-question B*) is measured by analysing data on the occurrence of both intrastate conflicts (within Macedonia) and interstate conflicts (between Macedonia and NATO Member States). The focus on intra – and interstate conflicts is informed by the work of Tusicisny (2007). The author stresses the necessity that both intra – and interstate conflicts have to be resolved without resort to use of large scale of physical force to enable peaceful change (Tusicisny, 2007, p. 427). Therefore, the specific focus is put on the manner in which conflicts have been resolved in practice. Large scale violence is defined in terms of at least “25 battle related deaths a year including military personnel and civilians” (Carmignani, 2003, p.4). Additionally, prospects of an occurrence of such conflicts are discussed in regard to the Macedonian case. In the analysis of expectations of peaceful change data from NATO, the Macedonian government, the EU and media reports are analysed.

If both intra- and interstate peace exists then one can expect dependable expectations of peaceful change in a Deutschian sense (1957).

Collective action (*see sub-question C*) is defined by the subsequent aspects: *cooperation, coordination and delegation of tasks*. In the context of this study, *cooperation* is defined in terms of military cooperation. Military cooperation is operationalized by assessing three main areas of bilateral defence engagement (*see NATO, 2018e*). First, the existence and quantity of common military exercises between NATO and Macedonia, including peacekeeping missions. Second, military technical cooperation, which comprises sales and licensing agreements of defence technology. In this regard, the export and import of the

following seven categories of major conventional arms are assessed: battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft and unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAV), attack helicopters, warships and missiles and missile launchers. Additionally, the trading of small arms and light weapons (SALW) is discussed. The selection of these categories is informed on the basis of the definition of major conventional arms of the *United Nations Register of Conventional Arms* (UNROCA) (UNROCA, 2018). Therefore, data provided by the Macedonian Defence Ministry, the Macedonian Army, the NATO and the UNROCA are analysed. Third, the degree of high level military-to-military and political contacts are listed within several dimensions (senior and top level). Such bilateral meetings offer a platform for NATO and Macedonia to “facilitate arms packages, prepare combined and joint exercises, and discuss regional and global security concerns” (Meick, 2017, p. 17). To analyse the frequency of such high-level meetings of NATO and Macedonian officials, NATO and Macedonian government publications, and media reports are discussed.

The scope of military coordination is analysed by measuring the degree of shared information (knowledge transfer) between NATO and Macedonia. Generally, the importance of military knowledge management has increased in the past years. The value of analysing such activities for studying military coordination is underlined by Şensoy et al. (2015). For analysing military cooperation, data is retrieved from the NATO Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence and the Macedonian Ministry of Defence. In addition, media reports are analysed.

In addition, the delegation of tasks from NATO to the Macedonian military forces is assessed. In this regard the Macedonian role in NATO missions in Afghanistan and Kosovo is examined. The focus will thereby be laid on the depth and duration of the Macedonian engagement in NATO missions in order to allow for a profound discussion of the degree of participation in practice. In this regard, data from the NATO Multimedia Library and the Macedonian Ministry of Defence are analysed. Once cooperation, coordination, and delegation of tasks between NATO and Macedonia is constantly taking place the level of collective action is high.

5.2 Macedonian Data Sources

In the following, data sources provided by the Macedonian government and official Macedonian institutions, are analysed. This present paper uses various sources, indicating official positions of the country concerning its Euro-Atlantic integration process. These sources provide the basis for measuring the extent to which the country aligns itself to the NATO security community from a Macedonian perspective. Therefore, military strategic reports, press releases and national defence strategies of the Macedonian Defence Ministry, and provisions formulated by the Macedonian Assembly are assessed. Among others, the following sources analysed in this context: the “Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia” (1991), the “Decision of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia for Accession of the Republic of Macedonia in NATO” (1993) and the “Annual National Programme of the Republic of Macedonia for NATO Membership 2017/2018”.

5.3 NATO Data Sources

In order to measure the level to which NATO considers Macedonia to be a part of the Euro-Atlantic alliance, official NATO texts and publications are evaluated. In addition, NATO regularly releases press statements and official opinions on current developments in Macedonia. The information basis comprises a variety of sources indicating official NATO positions in regard to its relationship with Macedonia. Beside other documents, the “NATO Allied Joint Doctrine February 2017” (2017)”, NATO Special Reports to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and NATO Summit Declarations are discussed.

5.4 Additional Data Sources

As depicted above, this study also makes use of data from different sources, which have not links to official institutions of NATO or the Macedonia government. These sources are of particular importance as they provide an independent perspective on aspects of the alignment of Macedonia to the NATO security community. Hereby, the main sources are scientific publications regarding the Macedonian NATO integration process, analyses conducted by non-governmental organizations, the EU or the OSCE, the Council of Europe, public opinion surveys and media reports. The following data sources compose the main basis for the analysis section: the “European Commission Progress Report 2018 on Macedonia” (2018), the Council of Europe – Human Rights Report 2017” (2017), the “OSCE – Macedonian Election

Observation 2017” (2017) and the “Public Opinion in Macedonia” (2017) survey conducted by the *International Research Institute*.

6. Analysis

In the analysis, focus is put on three analytical categories to measure the level of alignment to the NATO security community: *collective identity*, *peaceful change* and *collective action*.

The presence or absence of a collective identity between Macedonia and NATO is examined by measuring the existence of liberal norms, a common definition of threat, and official statements made by NATO and Macedonian high-level representatives. The ability to ensure peaceful conflict resolution (peaceful change) among NATO Member States and Macedonia is evaluated by focussing on the occurrence of intra – and interstate disputes. Collective action of NATO and Macedonia is analysed by establishing three analytical sub-categories: military cooperation, coordination and delegation of tasks. Moreover, on the basis of these analytical categories, a classification of the level of *mutual trust* between NATO and Macedonia is provided. As described above, these analytical categories are derived from the pluralistic security community theory by Adler and Barnett (1998) (see *Chapter 3.2* and *5.1*). After having analysed these aspects, a classification of the Macedonian case – based on the examination of the above depicted analytical units – to a *Tier* of pluralistic security community creation is conducted.

6.1 Collective Identity

This analytical section measures the existence of a collective identity between NATO and Macedonia. For this reason, the following sub-question is posed: *To what extent is a collective identity developed between NATO and Macedonia?*

The following indicators for the existence of a collective identity are discussed: liberal norms, a common definition of threat, and statements by NATO and Macedonian officials indicating a frequent interaction and a relationship based on mutual trust.

6.1.1 Liberal Norms

The level of liberal norms existing in Macedonia is analysed from two perspectives – an elite level and a public level perspective. To measure the elite perspectives, positions from external

institutions are evaluated. The public perspective is provided by public opinion surveys indicating politically liberal public positions.

It has previously been explained that a democratic system of governances is an indicator for the existence of liberal norms among members of societies (see Danilovic & Clare, 2007; Maoz & Russett, 1993, p. 625). The *Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia* underscores in the First Article that Macedonia is a democratic state. In the following, fundamental constitutional principles are listed. These are respect for basic freedoms and rights of the individual and citizen; free expression of national identity; rule of law; division of state powers into legislative, executive and judicial; political pluralism and free, direct and democratic elections; legal protection of property; freedom of the market and entrepreneurship; humanism, social justice and solidarity; local self-government; proper urban and rural planning to promote a congenial human environment, as well as ecological protection and development; and respect for the generally accepted norms of international law (see Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, Article 8). The guarantee of such basic democratic principles is also a key obligation for countries which aim to join NATO (NATO, 2016; NATO, 2018a).

Moreover, Schimmelfenning (2001) provides analytical units indicating a presence of liberal norms in societies. These are the following: adherence to human rights, rule of law, democratic political representation and participation, social pluralism, market-based economy, and private property (Schimmelfennig, 2001, pp. 59-60). These basic liberal features are granted by the Macedonian constitution; and hence, from a legal perspective a high level of liberal norms is present in Macedonia. However, one has to investigate the adherence to these basic liberal principles in practice. For this reason, the above depicted categories by Schimmelfennig (2001) are distinctly evaluated in the following analysis.

The European Commission provides a current evaluation of the state of the political, economic and social environment with the *Annual Progress Report 2018 on Macedonia*. The existence of the above-listed fundamental values in the country are assessed by making use of this evaluation. In the previous European Commission report on Macedonia in 2016 a variety of issues challenging the effective application of basic fundamental rights were identified (European Commission, 2016). In contrast, the latest 2018 European Commission report stresses significant progress made in guaranteeing those rights. In addition to that the Macedonian government recognizes the identified challenges in the *European Commission Progress Report 2018* and uttered its commitment to foster inclusive reforms tackling prevailing issues (DW, 2018). This recognition indicates an establishment of a collective identity on a high level.

The adherence to human rights is defined as a key characteristic of liberal norms in societies (Schimmelfennig, 2001, p. 59). In the realm of human rights Macedonia has adopted a legal framework, which is in compliance with international human rights standards. Free choice and practice of religion is granted and actively protected by state institutions. The key oversight institution for promotion and enforcement of human rights is the Ombudsman's Office. In recent months, Macedonia has conducted several reforms enhancing the level of protection for such rights in an inclusive manner. An external oversight mechanism of the law enforcement authorities has been established and the country adopted several human rights conventions, such as the *Istanbul Convention* on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in general. However, several challenges do persist. Since 2016, the European Court of Human Rights has identified violations of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in Macedonia in eight cases. Moreover, bodies involved in promoting and protecting human rights need to be strengthened (European Commission, 2018, p. 26). Also cases of hate speech and hate crime have to be followed up effectively, and the situation in prisons and other places of detention have to be improved (European Commission, 2018, pp. 26-28). Also the Council of Europe stresses the importance of improving conditions in Macedonian prisons. Additionally, the necessity of investments to ensure safe conditions within the prisons and the need to establish more effective programmes for the reintegration of people held into the community is stated (Council of Europe, 2017, p. 23).

Regarding the rule of law, an institutional structure in accordance with European standards² is established. However, the functioning of the legal bodies of the country has to be ensured in practice. According to the European Commission, good reform progress has been made in the recent months (European Commission, 2018, p. 18). However, an effective implementation of adopted reforms is essential. These reforms have to be in line with recommendations of the *Venice Commission* of the Council of Europe (European Commission, 2018, p. 18). The independence of the justice system has to be ensured to prevent a backsliding in this area, as it has been the case in the recent past. Hereby, the full implementation of the adopted government strategy for judicial reforms from 2017 until 2022 is necessary (European Commission, 2018, pp. 18-20). Moreover, progress in regard to the legal framework on non-discrimination has been made (European Commission, 2018, p.31). The main challenge in respect of the rule of law is corruption (European Commission, 2018, p.18). Adopted measures for fighting corruption have to be implemented. Furthermore, reforms regarding the systems

² The term *European standards* refers to the accession criteria for EU membership (*Copenhagen Criteria*), which comprise political, economic and administrative criteria (European Commission, 2016)

for appointment, promotion, discipline and dismissal of prosecutors and judges are necessary. In addition, the existing legal obligations ensuring an environment for freedom of expression, fostering professionalism, and accurate reporting have to be applied consequently. (European Commission, 2018, pp. 18-20).

In respect to the democratic political representation and participation a legal framework in line with European standards is in place. Since the latest elections, significant improvements have been made in ensuring inclusive governmental procedures in parliament. However, this pluralistic political environment still needs to be strengthened and institutionalized. In addition, the transparency of party funding should be increased and recommendations by the *Group of States against Corruption* (GRECO) of the Council of Europe have to be implemented (European Commission, 2018, pp. 12; Council of Europe, 2014). Furthermore, the OSCE published a report analysing the first elections held since the establishment of a new government in Macedonia, which are the municipal elections on the 15th October 2017. The report concludes that the “elections were held in a competitive environment with candidates generally able to campaign without restriction and fundamental freedoms were overall respected” and that the elections contributed to consolidating confidence in the democratic process. (OSCE, 2018, p. 1). However, pressure on voters and credible allegations of vote-buying occurred (OSCE, 2018, pp. 14, 21).

The Macedonian legislative framework fosters social pluralism and is generally in line with European standards. The inter-ethnic situation in Macedonia is calm but continues to be fragile. This may be observed in statements and occasional incidents (European Commission, 2018, p. 12). The fragility of the situation can be observed in the recent discussions of and protests against the adoption of the Law on the Use of the Albanian Language in the country (see Treneska-Deskoska, 2017, pp. 60-68; Marusic, 2018a). The Macedonian government committed itself to improve the overall inter-ethnic situation and to fully implement the *Ohrid Framework Agreement*, which settled tensions between Ethnic Albanians and Macedonians in 2001. In addition, the Macedonian government stressed its commitment to improve living conditions of Roma in the country. In this area many challenges persist in practice (European Commission, 2018, p. 8).

Macedonia has also established a market-based economy, which is in line with European standards (European Commission, 2018, p. 43). Although the respect for private property is given in Macedonia in practice, the efficiency of the execution of existing laws has some space for improvement (European Commission, 2018, pp. 31).

In general, Macedonia has a democratic system of governance, which initially accounts for an indicator of the existence of liberal norms. The previously examined analytical categories allow a statement about the extent to which liberal norms are present in Macedonia

(see Schimmelfennig, 2001). As stated above, the *Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia* stresses the basic fundamental principles depicted by Schimmelfennig (2001); hence, in the legal dimension, a basis is provided for the protection of liberal values.

In regard to the adherence to human rights, Macedonia has established an institutional structure for monitoring compliance, and has ratified international and European conventions in this regard. Despite persisting challenges, Macedonia has reached a “good adequate level of preparation” in regard to the protection of human rights in practice (European Commission, 2018, p. 26). The degree of human rights protection in Macedonia indicates the existence of liberal norms. Regarding the rule of law several challenges still persist. In general, all necessary bodies are established but their independence and capacities have to be strengthened. Fight against corruption remains the major issue for Macedonia. All in all, in this area most efforts are needed to ensure a resilient rule of law. The above-depicted challenges in respect to the respect for the rule of law provide for a partial existence of liberal norms in this regard. In Macedonia a democratic political representation and participation is enabled and protected by law. In the 2017, significant progress has been made in regard to inclusive governing, thus enabling a pluralistic political environment in the national parliament. However, the sustainability of these developments still has to be proven. In summary, the above described situation indicates the existence of liberal norms as a democratic political representation and participation is enabled. Social pluralism and protection of minorities is granted by the Macedonian Constitution. In addition, several laws are established, which define the constitutional obligations for creating a pluralistic social environment. Nevertheless, the interethnic situation in the country remains fragile and the situation of the Roma communities have to be improved in practice. Therefore, one can subsume that liberal norms are partially present in respect to social pluralism. Macedonia has established a market-based economy in line with standards of the European Economic Area and the respect for private property is given in the country. Hence, one can conclude that liberal norms exist in both areas.

By applying the chosen scale for measuring the level of liberal norms, one can conclude that they are existent in four out of six cases, while in two categories they are partially given. For this reason one can summarize that Macedonia adheres to liberal values and norms. However, more efforts of the country are necessary on the domestic level to fully comply with the liberal principles of the political and social order, which have been defined by Schimmelfennig (2001). All in all, liberal norms are existent in Macedonia.

6.1.2 Common Definition of Threat

To enable a statement on the existence of a collective identity between NATO and Macedonia, the presence of a common definition of threat is investigated in the following section.

In the *NATO Standard Allied Joint Doctrine* of 2017, NATO clearly defines threats the Alliance is facing in the 21st century. In this regard, NATO explains that threats can occur in various areas. Those include "ethnic, political and religious rivalries, territorial disputes, conflict over resources, inadequate or failed efforts at reform, the abuse of human rights and the dissolution of states" and potentially lead to regional instability (NATO, 2017, p. 38). Moreover, the "blurring of the boundaries between state and non-state actors" is highlighted as a potential source of destabilization (NATO, 2017, p. 39). Conventional and unconventional warfare including hybrid threats and the spread of nuclear weapons outside the Alliance are perceived as a threat to the collective security of NATO (NATO, 2017, pp. 38-44).

NATO identifies the relationship with Russia as one of the major current challenges it is facing. It highlights that "Russia's continued destabilising pattern of military activities and aggressive rhetoric, [going] well beyond Ukraine" (NATO, 2018f). However, at the same time NATO aims at keeping military and political channels of communication open so as to secure means of peaceful conflict resolution (NATO, 2018f; see NATO 2016a).

The Macedonian Defence Ministry does not provide explicit statements on actual threats to the country's security. However, general challenges of the international environment such as terrorism or issues related to cyber security are acknowledged. Macedonia stresses the importance of collective defence and common security systems for maintaining the national security. The country "determines itself to actively participate in these systems and to cooperate with regard to the construction of the new European security architecture based upon NATO, OSCE and EU" (Republic of Macedonia Defence Ministry, 2018a). The importance of entering NATO for Macedonia is underscored by the decision of the Macedonian Assembly to emphasize the NATO membership as a key strategic goal (Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, 1993). The intent to continue the NATO integration process of Macedonia is shown by the country's participation in the NATO MAP as well as recent statements made by the Macedonian government (NATO, 2017d; see European Western Balkans, 2018a). As Macedonia aims at an alignment to NATO, it also acknowledges the security threats identified by the latter. The Macedonian participation in NATO missions, thus, is an example for a collective definition of threat between NATO and Macedonia (Republic of Macedonia Defence Ministry, 2018b). More in particular, the Macedonian involvement in KOFOR and common training exercises of the Macedonian army with Hungarian and US military forces

shows that Macedonia actively balances against Russian aggressions as a high-end adversary in the Western Balkans (Arm of the Republic of Macedonia, 2017a). In addition, Macedonia reacted to the nerve agent attack against a former Russian spy in the British city of Salisbury in March 2018 in line with the NATO Member States by expelling one Russian diplomat. The Macedonian government also voiced its concerns over the infringement of international norms by Russia (NATO, 2018f; Borger et al., 2018).

As depicted above, Macedonia clearly expresses its intent to be part of the Euro-Atlantic security structure in respect to collective defence and deterrence. For this reason, Macedonia acknowledges the NATO defence policies and the identified challenges and threats for the Alliance. Moreover, Macedonian actions prove that the country defines threats in line with NATO (e.g. Afghanistan, Russia). For the above stated reasons, Macedonia defines threats to national security in line with NATO; thus, a common definition of threat is given.

6.1.3 Statements of NATO and Macedonian Officials

In the following, several official statements by NATO and Macedonian representatives are examined, in order to assess whether a common identity is existent or not.

Several high-level NATO and Macedonian representatives recently provided statements regarding the current state of alignment between the Alliance and Macedonia. From the Macedonian side, Prime Minister Zaev stressed the country's strategic goal to join the Euro-Atlantic security structure. Moreover, he phrased the commitment to continue with domestic reforms, to adhere to democratic values, respect for human rights, rule of law and to ensure a smooth functioning of institutions serving its citizens. Beyond this Zaev highlighted the fruitful partnership with NATO in the last 22 years and emphasized the Macedonian contribution to NATO missions, for example in Afghanistan (Yurou, 2018). Moreover, the Prime Minister stressed the importance of NATO's contribution to the consolidation of democratic procedures in the country (Macedonian Information Agency, 2018). In various occasions the Macedonian Defence Minister Shekerinska underscored the strategic aspirations of the county to join the NATO institutional security structure. The minister underscored the existing consensus among Macedonian politicians as well as citizens to become a full-fledged member to NATO (Republic of Macedonia Defence Ministry, 2018c).

NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg stressed Macedonia's "capacity to conduct reforms in the spirit of NATO's values" focussing on defence reforms and democratic processes, promoting good neighbourly relations, and being an important regional stability actor in the Western Balkans (Macedonian Defence Ministry, 2018c, p. 1). Moreover, he underscored the importance of Macedonia's "continuing contributions to NATO's training

mission in Afghanistan, [as] a clear sign of commitment to international security” (NATO, 2018c). In addition, Stoltenberg stressed that the Alliance commits itself to previously taken agreements on inviting the country once the “name issue” with Greece is resolved (Rettman, 2018). In regard to the recent developments, Stoltenberg announced that preparations for a full NATO membership of Macedonia would begin during the 11-12 July 2018 NATO summit (European Western Balkans, 2018c). NATO’s support for a Macedonian integration to the Alliance has also been stressed by the Assistant Secretary General Alvargonzález, who declared NATO’s commitment to previous resolutions “in line with the decisions made at the 2008 Bucharest Summit and reiterated in the Wales and Warsaw Summit declarations” (NATO, 2018g).

The recent statements made by NATO and Macedonian high-level political officials clearly indicate the intent to foster and maintain the current level of cooperation and to integrate Macedonia into the NATO institutional structure. Macedonia’s reform path has been encouraged and a clear perspective to join the Alliance is offered. However, the need for reforms in several realms is also stressed (NATO, 2018c). All in all, these statements taken by NATO and Macedonian officials account as an indicator for the existence of a collective identity between NATO and Macedonia.

6.1.4 Creation of a Collective Identity on a Public level

The existence of a collective identity on the public level is discussed on the basis of the analysis of public opinion surveys, scientific publications, and electoral behaviour regarding party positions on a potential Macedonian NATO accession.

In general, a Macedonian NATO accession is supported by the public on a large scale. Current surveys show a support for NATO membership in Macedonia of 77 to 85 per cent (European Western Balkans, 2018b). To discuss further aspects of a potential Macedonian NATO accession in detail, data from the survey “Public Opinion in Macedonia³” is assessed (IRI, 2017). Even if the general support for a Macedonian NATO integration has declined in the years since 2008, the support rate was still high in 2018 (IRI, 2017, p. 55). Moreover, nine per cent of the questioned people indicated that a NATO and EU integration ought to be the top priority of the Macedonian government for the years to come (IRI, 2017, p. 17). In addition, all major Macedonian parties committed themselves to support a NATO accession of the

³ The *Public Opinion in Macedonia* survey has been conducted by the *International Research Institute* from the 4-21. August 2017. Trained professionals conducted 1,105 interviews with an response rate of 71% (IRI, 2017).

country and declared its integration as a national strategic target (Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia, 1993).

However, some studies indicate that the support for a Macedonian NATO accession declines immensely if it is conditional on the change of the constitutional name of the country (Stojanovski & Maralov, 2017). Moreover, the largest opposition and parliamentary party, *Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity* (VMRO-DPMNE), rejects to support the proposed solution in respect to the “name issue” (Hopkins, 2018). As VMRO-DPMNE is strongly opposing the proposed solution, a significant level of rejection among the general public can also be expected. Anyhow, the ruling coalition holds the majority of seats in the assembly (with 69 to 51 seats⁴) and is unanimously supporting the reached agreement (Veljanova, 2016).

In conclusion, one can state that the support for a Macedonian NATO integration is high. However, a division in the Macedonian society becomes obvious when the country’s NATO integration becomes conditional on a constitutional name change. All in all, the existence of a collective identity is generally shown by the high level of support among Macedonian citizens for a NATO accession. But this collectively shared sense of belonging to the Euro-Atlantic security community is seriously challenged by nationalist Macedonian sentiments and hence the depth of such identity is questionable. For this reason, the existence of a collective identity on public level between NATO and Macedonia is moderate but given.

6.1.5 Conclusion Collective Identity

In the following, an answer to the first sub-question (A) posed in the present study is given:
To what extent is a collective identity developed between NATO and Macedonia?

Based on the previously discussed analytical categories (liberal norms, a common definition of threat, statements of NATO and Macedonian officials and the creation of a collective identity on a public level) the level of creation of a collective identity between Macedonia and NATO is assessed. In regard to the country’s adherence to liberal norms, one can summarize that liberal norms and values are present and an immanent feature of the Macedonian society - despite some persisting challenges in regard to the respect of the rule of law and the enabling of social pluralism in practice. Moreover, a common definition of threat between NATO and Macedonia is given, as the latter has clearly stated its intent to join the

⁴ Outcome of the Macedonian Parliamentary Elections 2017 – distribution of seats (total 120): Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) - 51 seats; Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) - 49 seats; Democratic Union for Integration (DUI) - 10 seats; Others - 10 seats (Veljanova, 2016).

Euro-Atlantic alliance, and additionally already is part of NATO missions ensuring collective security interests. Furthermore, officials from both the NATO and Macedonia issued statements that stress the Macedonian alignment to the NATO security structure. Also, the Macedonian public supports a NATO integration process. However, in this regard a societal division comes to light when a constitutional name change is the condition for a NATO accession. In spite of this situation the support of the general public is given.

The above discussed analytical categories that measure the creation of a collective identity show that such an identity is reciprocally developed between NATO and Macedonia. Nevertheless, the extent to which a collective identity is created between NATO and Macedonia varies. Developments in the recent past show that this collective identity has to be institutionalized in order to prevent a decline of collective alignment. The positive developments regarding a solution of the “name issue” between Greece and Macedonia are a historic chance for Macedonia to become entirely integrated into the NATO institutional security structure. Thus, the establishment of a fully-fledged collective identity between NATO and Macedonia is conditional on a solution to this long-lasting dispute.

The existence of a collective identify between NATO and Macedonia is partially given. Moreover, an institutionalization of the discussed units - especially of liberal norms - still has to be reached. For these reasons, mutual trust is created between NATO and Macedonia, though only to a partial extent. Nonetheless, deriving implications of H1 have been supported. With more time to come, a decrease of persisting uncertainties is expected, thus enabling the creation of a higher level of mutual trust.

The answer to the first sub-question is that a collective identity between NATO and Macedonia has already developed to a substantial degree. However, the creation of a fully-fledged collective identity can only be achieved with Macedonia becoming a NATO Member State.

6.2 Peaceful Change

In this section the probability of peaceful change between NATO and Macedonia is discussed. For this reason, the following sub-question has been formulated: *What is the likelihood of an occurrence of an armed conflict between members of the NATO security community and Macedonia, and what are the expectations of peaceful change?*

The prospects of peaceful change are examined from two perspectives: within Macedonia itself, and in the interaction of Macedonia with NATO Member States. For this reason, the occurrence of intra - and interstate disputes is assessed. This approach is informed

by the work of Tuscisny (2007), who stressed the need for both the resolution of intra - and interstate conflicts without resort to large-scale physical force; hence, a peaceful conflict resolution, which entails peaceful change, can be expected (p. 427). Thus, the analysis of dependable expectations of peaceful change implies the need to not only analyse the occurrence of disputes but also the manner in which those conflicts are resolved (see Deutsch et al. 1957; Adler and Barnett, 1998; Tuscisny, 2007). For this reason, the means for conflict resolution are discussed.

In general, both NATO and Macedonia commit themselves to peaceful conflict resolution. Moreover, maintaining good neighbourly relations is a common target enshrined in the NATO and Macedonian military doctrines (Republic of Macedonia Defence Ministry, 2018a; NATO, 2017a).

6.2.1 Intrastate Conflicts

In the following section describes the occurrence of intrastate conflicts within Macedonia as well as the manner in which conflict have been resolved is depicted.

Although a societal division between several ethnic groups can be observed, the European Commission describes the current inter-ethnic situation in Macedonia as calm (European Commission, 2018). This has not always been the case as in 2001 ethnic tensions rose, resulting in an uprising by ethnic Albanians in the country's North who requested equal rights for ethnic Albans. After five months in which violent incidents occurred, the Macedonian government and the rebels signed the Ochid Framework Agreement (OFA) guaranteeing greater rights to ethnic Albans in exchange for a disarmament of the rebel forces. The collection of 3,300 arms in total was carried out by NATO within the framework Operation Essential Harvest. Later in that year, the Macedonian government announced an amnesty for former rebel members. Until today, the OFA is perceived as an anchor for stability, which enables peaceful ethnic relations (BBC, 2018).

In the following years, the intrastate situation in Macedonia remained generally calm. Tensions rose again in 2012 when dozens of people were injured in two weeks of clashes between Albanian youths and ethnic Macedonians (BBC, 2018). In 2015, the latest riots occurred in the city of Kumanovo leaving fourteen rebels and eight police officers dead. The government identified ethnic Albanian "terrorists" from Kosovo as responsible for the unrest. However, the backgrounds of the incidents remain unclear as only little information is published despite calls for transparent investigations from NATO and the EU (BBC, 2015).

The information provided to the public ought to be interpreted with caution due to existing uncertainties regarding the course of the incident (The Guardian, 2015).

In conclusion, no clashes with large-scale violence occurred in the last years within Macedonia and the overall situation is largely stable. The 2015 riots cannot be classified as an inter-ethnic conflict with the use of large-scale violence and detained suspects had to undergo legal proceedings. However, the political environment is still refuelled with tension, an example being protests and violence triggered by recent governmental decisions, such as the name resolution (Marusic, 2018b).

6.2.3 Interstate Conflicts

In the following section, the occurrence of interstate conflicts between NATO Member States and Macedonia is assessed. In addition, the manner in which conflicts have been resolved is depicted.

Since the formation of Macedonia in 1991, no armed conflicts with NATO Member States have taken place. However, several sensible issues between NATO Members and Macedonia occurred. As depicted above, the long-lasting conflict of Macedonia and Greece on the Macedonian constitutional name *Republic of Macedonia* is a highly sensitive issue (see above). Despite this sensibility both countries strived for finding a mutually recognized solution in negotiations. Recently both the Macedonian and Greek governments signed an agreement in order to end the dispute after 27 years. This agreement obliges Macedonia to change its constitutional name to Republic of North-Macedonia and Greece to recognize the new name of the country and stop its veto on further progress in a Macedonian alignment to NATO and the EU. The name change is still conditional on the parliamentary adoption in both countries in addition to a public referendum in Macedonia (Kitsantonis, 2018). One has to point to the fact that diplomatic channels, and not violence, were the means to find a solution in this conflict.

Moreover, in recent months the Macedonian relations with Bulgaria enhanced significantly. Voices in Bulgarian (for example members of the opposition in Sofia) uttered concerns that Macedonia might pose territorial claims on the country. However, this issue has never been as tense as the “name issue” with Greece. Recently, the Macedonian and Bulgarian governments signed a good-neighbourliness treaty including a variety of areas in which bilateral cooperation is fostered (The Sofia Globe, 2018).

To summarize, no interstate conflicts that would challenge dependable expectations of peaceful change between NATO Member States and Macedonia have occurred.

6.2.4 Conclusion Peaceful Change

In the following, an answer to the second sub-question (B) is provided: *What is the likelihood of an occurrence of an armed conflict between members of the NATO security community and Macedonia, and what are the expectations of peaceful change?*

In regard to intrastate disputes in Macedonia, one may conclude that social tensions persist. However, since 2001 no major conflicts between members of the Macedonian society have been solved with the use of large-scale physical force, and the occurrence of a civil war is very unlikely. Nevertheless, the highly politicised social environment in Macedonia has to be observed with caution, especially in regard to the recent.

Concerning interstate disputes between Macedonia and NATO Member States, a peaceful conflict resolution can be expected. This is perfectly exemplified by the “name issue” of Greece and Macedonia.

The past has shown, that conflicts between Macedonia and third states are resolved without use of large-scale physical force. A high degree of institutionalization in respect to peaceful conflict resolution is given. For this reason, a high level of mutual trust regarding the expectations of peaceful change can be assumed. Although uncertainty regarding this fact potentially exists in Macedonia, a peaceful conflict settlement can still be expected (intrastate peace). Thus, dependable expectations of peaceful change are given, thus supporting H2.

All in all, the second sub-question can be clearly answered: the occurrence of an armed interstate conflict between NATO Member States and Macedonia is highly unlikely. Regarding intrastate disputes within Macedonia the overall situation is more fragile, but the past has shown that a peaceful conflict resolution can be expected.

6.3 Collective Action

In the subsequent section areas in which collective action between NATO and Macedonia takes place are discussed. For this reason, the following sub-question is posed: *In which areas can one identify collective action between NATO and Macedonia?*

To measure collective action three analytical sub-sections have been defined. First, the level of military cooperation between NATO and Macedonia is evaluated by discussing

three main areas of defence cooperation: quantity of common military exercises, military technical cooperation and quantity of high-level contacts. Second, the extent of military coordination between NATO and Macedonia is assessed. Here, areas in which knowledge transfer takes place are discussed. Third, the existence and the amount of a delegation of tasks from NATO to the Macedonian army are evaluated. Subsequently, the level of Macedonian integration into NATO Missions is assessed.

6.3.1 Cooperation

In this subsection, the areas in which cooperation between Macedonia and NATO takes place are defined. For this reason, three key areas of defence cooperation are separately discussed: *quantity of common military exercises, military technical cooperation and quantity of high-level contacts*. Moreover, cooperation is defined as military cooperation in the NATO security community context of this study. Based on the analysis of the separate analytical categories, a classification of the actual level of military cooperation between NATO and Macedonia is provided.

First, the quantity of common military exercises taking place between Macedonia and NATO are discussed. As Macedonia is part of the *Partnership Interoperability Initiative (PII)* of NATO, the country occasionally participates at NATO military exercises. The goal of the PII is to sustain and institutionalize cooperation between NATO and partner countries (NATO, 2017c; Army of the Republic of Macedonia, 2018a). The latest participation at a common NATO exercise of the Army of the Republic of Macedonia (ARM) took place in June 2016. At the exercise “Anaconda-16”, units of the ARM trained together with 31,000 soldiers from military forces of 24 countries involving all NATO Member States and countries of the *Partnership for Peace Programme* of NATO (Army of the Republic of Macedonia, 2016).

In addition, Macedonia participated in common exercises with NATO Member States training and coordination common defence capabilities. The exercise “Dragoon Guardian 17” has been conducted jointly by the ARM and the U.S Army Europe (USAREUR) in August 2017. The target of the exercise has been stated as follows: “improving interoperability of ARM with NATO standards, strengthening the ongoing partnership with the USA and demonstration of the capabilities of both armies in providing help and support for the general population” (Army of the Republic of Macedonia, 2017a). In a further exercise in June 2017, the “Saber Guardian 17”, Macedonian, Hungarian and US Army Special Forces jointly trained the interoperability of their defence capabilities (Army of the Republic of Macedonia, 2017b).

Besides these common exercises, the ARM regularly tests the operability of its troops. In the preparation for military trainings, the ARM cooperates with NATO Member States (Army of the Republic of Macedonia, 2018b). Moreover, the assistance of KOFOR troops to the ARM and Macedonian authorities in flood disaster relief operations in Skopje in 2016 is an additional indicator for cooperation (NATO, 2016c).

To conclude, the quantity of common military exercises taking place between NATO and Macedonian military forces is high and occurring on a regular basis.

Second, the level of *military technical cooperation* between Macedonia and NATO is evaluated. For this reason, the compatibility of the Macedonian military equipment with NATO capacities is assessed. In this regard, Macedonian military procurement processes are analysed. The two main analytical units which are being investigated are *major conventional arms* and *small arms and light weapons*.

Currently, Macedonia spends around 1,1 per cent of its GDP on defence. Since the Macedonian government change in 2017, the Macedonian military expenditures have risen by 15 per cent (Macedonian Information Agency, 2017). In this regard, the Macedonian government announced to increase investments into defence capacities to approximate the NATO spending target of two per cent of the national GDP. In addition, a general modernization of the existing military equipment – including tanks, planes and helicopters – as been decided by the Macedonian parliament. However, concrete information regarding future military procurement plans of the Macedonian government are not available to the public (Bozinovski, 2017).

From 1997 until 2001, Macedonia invested in its major conventional arm capacities. In this time, the country increased its defence capacities significantly by importing battle tanks, armoured combat vehicles, large-calibre artillery systems, combat aircraft and unmanned combat aerial vehicles (UCAV), attack helicopters as well as missiles and missile launchers⁵. Most of these imported major conventional arm systems are of Soviet production. In the following years, only the procurement of 16 armoured combat vehicles from the US have been reported. Regarding the export of major conventional arms to NATO Member States,

⁵ In the following, the officially reported imports of major conventional arms to Macedonia from 1997-2002 are listed per country:

125 battle tanks (T-55 and T-72A, Soviet production) from Bulgaria and Ukraine, 230 armoured combat vehicles from Bulgaria, Ukraine, Germany, Greece, Kazakhstan and the United States; 136 large-calibre artillery systems (M30 Howitz 122 and BM-21 GRAD, Soviet production; M101 A1 How 105, US production) from Bulgaria, Ukraine, Serbia and USA; 4 combat aircraft and unmanned combat aerial vehicles (SU-25, Soviet production) from Ukraine, 16 Attack helicopters (MI-24, Soviet production) from Ukraine and 12 missiles and missile launchers (Milan, French production) from Germany (UNORCA, 2018).

Macedonia has delivered two armoured vehicles and twelve large-calibre artillery systems to Bulgaria, and eleven missiles and missile launchers to Slovenia (UNORCA, 2018).

In regard to small arms and light weapons, Macedonia has modernized its arm stocks in the last years. Since 2008, approximately 4000 small arms and light weapons have been purchased from various NATO countries (predominantly the US and Italy). Serbia has been the only non-NATO country with which the Macedonian government agreed on arm deals in this time. Concerning the export of small arms and light weapons to NATO countries, no exports have been reported (UNORCA, 2018).

In summary, the Macedonian defence capabilities are compatible with NATO defence systems to a certain extent. Arms, which have been imported to Macedonia, are mainly produced in NATO Member States. Furthermore, recent procurement processes expose the willingness of the Macedonian government to increase the compatibility of military capacities with NATO standards. In this regard, the Macedonian government announced investments into the country's military infrastructure. One can state that military-technical cooperation is taking place between NATO and Macedonia. However, the compatibility of the Macedonian military equipment to NATO facilities has to be increased. All in all, the level of military technical cooperation between NATO and Macedonia is moderate, as not all major conventional arm capacities are compatible.

Third, the frequency of high-level contacts regarding military cooperation is discussed. Meetings are constantly taking place between NATO and Macedonian officials on different levels. These meetings are institutionalized in the framework of the MAP (NATO, 2017b). Moreover, numerous encounters of high level Macedonian representatives with NATO officials have taken place in the last six months. These comprise meetings on top level (for example Secretary General, Prime Minister, Defence Minister) and encounters on the military and administrative level (Army Generals, Secretary of State) (Republic of Macedonia Defence Ministry, 2018d).

Concluding, military cooperation between NATO and Macedonia has been identified in various realms. Common military exercises are taking place on a constant basis between NATO Member States and Macedonia. The level of military technical cooperation between Macedonia and NATO is moderate. However, recent procurement for the ARM show the Macedonian willingness to increase the level of compatibility of military capacities. Moreover, the frequency of high-level contacts between NATO and Macedonian officials is high on all on the political, administrative and military level. All in all, a high level of military cooperation between Macedonia is existing despite a moderate degree of military technical cooperation.

6.3.2 Coordination

The level of coordination between NATO and Macedonia is assessed by measuring the extent to which knowledge transfer takes place between NATO and Macedonia.

Macedonia is participating in various NATO programmes in which information on various aspects are exchanged. These are - among others - the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme and the NATO Defence Education Enhancement Programme (DEEP). In the framework of the SPS, Macedonian officials and soldiers are trained in cyber defence. Furthermore, the options facilitating military coordination and civil emergency management across the Western Balkan are evaluated. In the scope of the DEEP, support is provided for reforms of “professional military education institutions” (NATO, 2017). However, the MAP remains the main platform for knowledge exchange between NATO and Macedonia.

Moreover, the NATO Public Affairs Regional Centre (PTEC) in Skopje provides important work regarding the realm of public diplomacy and regional cooperation. In this regard the accredited Partnership Training and Education Centre tries to raise” awareness of NATO and Euro-Atlantic values, policies and activities, and [tries] to reinforce a regional common understanding” (NATO, 2018h, p. 1).

Besides these programmes, NATO organizes several training courses in Macedonia dealing with changing topics informed by current challenges. In this regard one can mention the Countering ISIS Radicalisation Activities through the Cyberspace in the Region of South-East Europe (CIRACRESEE) advanced training course organized in Ochid, Macedonia as an example (NATO, 2017d).

The ARM is also participating in NATO education programmes. In this regard Macedonian military officials are participating in the education and training of the Afghan Military in the framework of the NATO United Training Education and Doctrine Command. The goal of the programme is to integrate all Afghan training institutions under a unified command structure (NATO, 2018i).

Concluding, one can state that frequent knowledge transfer between NATO and Macedonia takes place. Moreover, the ARM even participates in NATO education and training programmes for third countries. For this reason, one can summarize that a high level of coordination between NATO and Macedonia is given.

6.3.3 Delegation of Tasks

In the following, the extent to which a delegation of tasks between NATO and Macedonia occurs is analysed. For this reason, the Macedonian level of engagement in NATO Missions is discussed. A participation in NATO missions entails delegation of tasks from NATO to the participation nations; hence, the engagement in such missions accounts as a measure for the delegation of tasks.

In practice Macedonia has been involved in various NATO led mission in recent years, for instance the country was part of the NATO led *International Security Assistance Force* (ISAF) in Afghanistan. In addition, Macedonia is also participating in the international lead *Kosovo Force* (KOFOR) in the peacekeeping mission in Kosovo. Macedonia also engaged in the NATO *Peace Support Operations* in Bosnia and Herzegovina (the command has been handed to the EU from 2004) (Army of the Republic of Macedonia, 2018a).

Furthermore, the ARM is part of several peacekeeping missions of international organizations. The country's engagement is closely coordinated with NATO; thus, Macedonia contributes to strategic goals of NATO and the protection a promotion of values of the Alliance. These missions are the *United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon* (UNIFIL), the *EU Crisis Management Military Operation* (ALTHEA) and the US led *Iraqi Freedom* mission (Army of the Republic of Macedonia, 2018a).

To sum up, various areas have been identified in which a delegation of tasks is occurring from the NATO to the Macedonian side. Moreover, members of the ARM even participated at collective trainings of foreign military troops.

6.3.4 Conclusion Collective Action

In the following, an answer to the third sub-question (C) posed in the present study is given: *In which areas can one identify collective action between NATO and Macedonia?*

After having evaluated the analytical units indicating the existence of collective actions, one can summarize that collective actions take place in various realms between NATO and Macedonia. First, military cooperation between NATO and Macedonia has been identified on a high margin in regard to common military exercises and the frequency of high-level contacts between NATO and Macedonian officials on the political, the administrative, and the military level. However, the military technical cooperation between Macedonia and NATO is moderate. Generally, military cooperation is given to a considerable extent. Second, coordination between NATO and Macedonia is taking place on a high level. Frequent

knowledge transfer between NATO and Macedonia is the case; hence, coordination between NATO and Macedonia occurs with a high frequency. Third, a delegation of tasks from NATO to Macedonia exists. The level of Macedonian engagement in NATO missions indicates a high level of such a delegation of duties.

After having assessed the analytical units indicating the existence of collective action, one can summarize that mutual actions between NATO and Macedonia take place in various realms. Moreover, the depth of the collective action and the extent indicate a high level of institutionalization. Due to these institutionalized collective actions, a high level of mutual trust is indicated, which clearly supports H3.

All in all, the third sub-question can be answered as follows: collective actions take place in various realms between NATO and Macedonia and the frequency and scope of the collective actions is wide.

6.4 Assignment to Tier of Pluralistic Security Community Creation

After having measured the existence of a *collective identity*, *peaceful change* and *collective action* as well as the *level of mutual trust* between NATO and Macedonia by answering the hypotheses, an assignment of the Macedonian case to one *tier* of pluralistic security community creation is conducted. For this reason, the following sub-question is posed: *To which tier of security community development may the Macedonian case be assigned?*

As stated above, Adler and Barnett (1998) have defined three *tiers* of pluralistic security community creation (Adler & Barnett, 1998, p. 37-48). On the basis of the allocation to a particular *tier* (Tier I, Tier II, or Tier III), a classification of the Macedonian case to a phase of pluralistic security community creation is enabled, thereby making it possible to answer the main research question.

To provide a basis for the allocation of the Macedonian case to a *tier*, the results of the previously assessed analytical units are discussed. Depending on the depth to which a collective identity, dependable expectations of peaceful change and collective actions are institutionalized, a classification of the existence of mutual trust between NATO and Macedonia is given. The actual level of mutual trust is the key unit to enable an allocation to a *tier* of pluralistic security community creation (see Adler and Barnett, p. 50-57). Moreover, in the allocation process, the level to which the interaction between “process” and “structure” categories is given provides a further measure on the level of institutionalization.

First, the analysis of a collective identity between NATO and Macedonia showed that a reciprocal identity is created on an elite level, despite limitations in some areas. On the public level, a collective identity is created only to a small extent. However, a collective identity between Macedonia and NATO is given, despite the restrictions of tensions in the internal political situation in Macedonia. It has been shown that the level of institutionalization of the reciprocal identity has to be increased in order to establish mutual trust, which is sustainable (see *H1*).

Second, the analysis of dependable expectations of peaceful change revealed that peaceful conflict resolution can be expected both among NATO Member States and Macedonia, and within Macedonia itself. Although intrastate peace is more questionable it is still given. Conflict resolution mechanisms are institutionalized to a high degree; hence, a high level of mutual trust between NATO and Macedonia in regard to peaceful conflict settlement is given (see *H2*).

Third, the assessment of the existence of collective actions between NATO and Macedonia proved a high level of mutual actions. Due to the institutionalization of these actions, a high level of mutual trust is shown between NATO and Macedonia (see *H3*).

An interaction between “structure” and “process” categories is also observable. For instance, a common definition of threat (“process” category) is necessary to participate jointly at military missions (“structure” category). Such an interaction is taking place in various occasions between NATO and Macedonia. Knowledge transfer in the area of military cooperation paves the way towards successful cooperation and execution of duties in joint missions or exercises. In all these aspects a high level of institutionalization is shown and the creation of mutual trust is enabled.

To conclude, the analysis of *H1* implies a moderate level of trust, while investigating *H2* and *H3* shows a high level of mutual trust. Moreover, the interaction between “structure” and “process” categories indicates a high degree of institutionalisation between these categories; therefore, reciprocal trust is enabled. However, an increasing institutionalization in regard to a collective identity between NATO and Macedonia – as a key feature of security community creation - is necessary to establish a higher level of mutual trust.

All in all, the posed sub-question (*To which tier of security community development may the Macedonian case be assigned*) can be answered as follows: In respect to the generally high level of mutual trust established between NATO and Macedonia and in regard to the high degree of institutionalization, the Macedonian case can be assigned to *Tier II* of pluralistic security community creation. An increase of the level of institutionalization of a common

identity can pave the way toward *Tier III* of pluralistic security community creation. However, already now, Macedonia meets several aspects of *Tier III*, such as institutionalized collective actions and institutionalized mechanisms of conflict resolution.

7. Conclusion and Reflection

In the present study, the level of alignment of Macedonia to the NATO security community has been investigated. Several analytical units – deriving from the pluralistic security community theory of Adler and Barnett (1998) – have been analysed. The analytical categories comprise the creation of a collective identity, dependable expectations of peaceful change, collective actions and the existence of mutual trust between NATO and Macedonia.

7.1 Summary Empirical Findings

The analysis of the existence of a collective identity showed that a reciprocal identity is established between NATO and Macedonia. Moreover, on the elite level, the established degree of a collective identity is higher than on the public level. For this reason, the institutionalization of norms and values is partially given. Moreover, the investigation of dependable expectations of peaceful change showed that peaceful conflict resolution in institutionalized procedures can be expected between NATO and Macedonia. In this regard, a high level of mutual trust is present. Furthermore, collective actions – such as the Macedonian participation in NATO Missions - take place in institutionalized procedures on a frequent basis. Thereby, also a high level of mutual trust is shown. Moreover, the institutionalized interaction between the “structure” categories (expectations of peaceful change in a collective security structure) and the “process” categories (diffusion of meanings, leading to the creation of a collective identity) demonstrate the existence of mutual trust between NATO and Macedonia.

Based on these findings, the Macedonian case has been categorized to *Tier II* of the pluralistic security community creation on the basis of Adler and Barnett’s theoretical framework (1998). The assignment is informed by the generally high level of mutual trust which is established between NATO and Macedonia (see above). An increased level of institutionalization regarding the existence of a collective identity can potentially enable the advance towards *Tier III* of the pluralistic security community creation.

7.2 Answer to Main Research Question

The answer to the main research question will be based on the analysis of the analytical units based on the pluralistic security community theory of Adler and Barnett (1998).

To what extent is Macedonia part of the NATO security community?

Informed on the generally high degree of mutual trust and institutionalized procedures between NATO and Macedonia, the Macedonian case has been allocated to *Tier II* of pluralistic security creation. Moreover, Macedonia already matches several elements of *Tier III* of pluralistic security community creation in respect to institutionalized collective actions and institutionalized mechanisms of conflict resolution. For this reason, the Macedonian case is classified as being located in the *ascendant* phase of pluralistic security community creation, as all aspects of Tier II and some of Tier III have to be existent (see *Chapter 5.1*). Future progress in the institutionalization of a collective identity – both on the elite and public level – determine whether Macedonia will advance towards the formation of a *mature* security community with NATO.

7.3 Reflection and Discussion

In the following, strengths and limitations of this research, the practical and theoretical contributions to the scientific discussion on security community studies as well as potential implications for future studies are discussed.

The present paper provides a contribution to security studies in the Western Balkan region. Especially in regard to the current developments in Macedonia – the potential solution of the “name dispute” with Greece and the deriving chances for an integration into the Euro-Atlantic security structure – the present study offers a scientific evaluation and an important assessment of the Macedonian NATO accession process. Moreover, the pluralistic security community theory of Adler and Barnett (1998) widely accepted in the scientific community and thus frequently applied. A basis for comparing the results of this work with further research applying the same theoretical approach is given (see for instance Cruise and Grillot, 2010).

Moreover, the results provided in this study could have varied if another theory of the international relations had been applied. However, it has been tried to ensure a high level of scientific integrity by making use of data from various sources (Macedonian, NATO and independent organizations). Due to a limited responsiveness to interview requests, an

additional perspective by officials from NATO and the Macedonian government could not be provided. However, since the positions of NATO and Macedonia have been assessed by making use of a wide range of official documents, this was not problematic for the analysis of this study.

Moreover, this study only provides an initial contribution to the understanding of the security community creation process between NATO and Macedonia. The applied scope of measures may be extended, and further analytical units may be included in future research (see *Chapter 3.1*). To attain a picture of security community creation between NATO and Macedonia, which is as holistic as possible additional research is necessary. Next to the theoretical relevance, this study also contributes some practical implications. It has been shown that NATO has the capacity to promote its basic principals in the direct environment – in this case in the Western Balkan region – if it offers a clear membership perspective. Even when NATO membership is not realistic due to persisting challenges (e.g. “name issue”) NATO still has the capacity to ensure its security interests by a high level of military cooperation and coordination. This is also the case in regard to Macedonia’s alignment to NATO. To conclude, NATO should not loose its focus on the Western Balkan region if it continues striving to ensure stability in its direct environment.

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