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Permanent change? the paths of change of the European security organizations

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Chapter 3

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Apart from a reliable and a valid methodology for the analysis of all kinds of phenomenon under investigation, any researcher should always take up the challenge to use new methods of analysis, as stated by Bennet ‘...qualitative researchers need to continue to work on techniques for reliably assessing the identities, preferences, and perceptions of actors that are of interest to constructivists, rational choice theorists, and political psychologists’.¹ The challenge of this research is to explain the dynamics of the paths of change of the European security organizations from 1990 to 2016 individually and in comparison with each other based on one research framework. To unravel the mechanisms at play, therefore, the method of structured focused comparison together with process tracing is applied. Systematically reconstructing, analysing and comparing the paths of change makes it possible to reach a sound judgement, reliable and valid, with respect to whether the stated assumptions account for a convincing logic.

This chapter outlines the methodological aspects of the research. First, the unit of analysis is explained. Second, the research strategy will be elaborated on, describing the applied multiple case study. This is followed by addressing the method of analysis, including a description of the applied method of structured focused comparison and process tracing. The chapter then concludes with an overview of the limitations of the research.

3.2 The Unit of Analysis

The international arena is observed as a domain of anarchy where states are the main actors, and usually the only actors with power, as claimed by some theories of political science, including different approaches within new institutionalism, which is the theoretical lens of this research. The basic question within institutionalism is related to the structure-agency division; the paradox that, although institutions are human creations, once they are created they constrain the activity of the individuals within them, perhaps even the individuals who created them.² As a result, the argument of international cooperation as the ultimate domain of anarchy has been countered by diverse scholars. This research accepts international organizations as actors in their own right as justified, as was elaborated on in Chapter 2. States do not act in an autarkic system; they cooperate and influence other state and non-state actors and formalise these relations with agreements or treaties. These treaties and agreements can bind national and international actors. Furthermore, apart from influencing national and international actors, international

1 Bennet, A., Elman, C., ‘Case Study Methods in the International Relations Subfield’, Comparative Political Studies, Sage Publications, 2007, p. 189.

2 Grafstein, R., ‘Institutional Realism’, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1992.

organizations can impose rules upon other actors and possess a certain amount of authority as a result of specific expertise and capabilities and can thus be accepted as a coercive power. This acceptance of international organizations (in this research, security organizations) as actors in their own right having agency allows a focus on their development as units of analysis.

Besides the agent-structure debate, another debate within institutionalism, as in other social sciences, is engaged with the level of analysis of social phenomena. Therefore, the accountability of the research framework, as described in Chapter 2, needs further elaboration regarding the levels of analysis that are utilized when assessing security organizations. When analyzing a specific phenomenon of an organization, in this research change, the level of analysis can be defined by the nature of the dependent variable, according to Scott 'the level of these unit(s) whose structure or behavior is to be explained'.³ The acceptance of international organizations as actors in their own right has consequences for the levels of analysis that need to be addressed. When analysing international organizations, scholars can differentiate between levels of analysis varying from the state, to the regional, to the world system level.⁴ As a result of an increasing web of variation in membership, cross-membership and interaction between international organizations, more often in the relevant literature an organization is also positioned at 'the intermeshing of multiple systems': the individual, the state, the organization and its organs and, finally, the inter-organizational system.

In order to analyse the different selected security organizations and their paths of change, this research adopts a multi-level analysis approach that differentiates between four levels:

1. The individual level, meaning the possible role of key individuals of states (such as presidents) and international organizations (such as the secretary-general of NATO).
2. The national level, the influence of key states within the European security architecture from the national to the organizational level and vice versa.
3. The organizational level, meaning the influence of the permanent organizations' organs, such as NATO's NAC or the EU's Commission. The analysis also includes the non-permanent and ad-hoc international setups such as contact groups or bi- and multilateral cooperation schemes.
4. The inter-organizational level, which refers to the influence and interaction between organizations and their organs, such as EU-NATO relations.

In this research, the efforts of analysing change in organizations within the European security architecture are related to the way these levels intermesh.⁵ Thus, in this research,

3 Scott, W. R., 'Institutions and Organizations. Ideas, Interests, and Identities', Sage publications, 2014, p. 203.

4 This analysis can be seen as an extension of the level of analysis approach, first popularized in the field of international relations by Waltz 'three images' approach, in: Waltz, K. N., 'Man, The State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis', Columbia University Press, 2018, on the three levels of analysis (international system, national and individual). For a more contemporary and differentiated approach towards evaluating for instance the EU as an international actor, see: Koops, J. A., 'The European Union as an Integrative Power? Assessing the EU's 'Effective multilateralism' towards NATO and the United Nations', Brussels University Press, Brussels, 2011, p. 34-39; Scott, W.R., 'Institutions and Organizations. Ideas, Interests, and Identities', Sage Publications, 2014.

5 For an elaboration, see: March, J. G., Olsen, J.P., 'The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life', The American Political Science Review, 1984, Vol. 78, Nr. 3, p. 57; Biermann, R., Koops, J. A., 'Studying relations Among International Organizations in World Politics: Core Concepts and Challenges', in: Biermann, R., Koops, J. A., 'The Palgrave Handbook of Inter-Organizational Relations in World Politics', Palgrave Macmillan, 2017, p. 3-5.

the analysis of international organizations, it is assumed that these agents are not by definition 'operating independently of each other' as separate systems; these levels could intermesh and operate in an 'open system' and possible dynamics between these levels are therefore taken into account.⁶ The aim is to assess the possible correlation (interconnectedness) between the levels and paths of institutional change.

Furthermore, relations and interactions take place at and across these different levels. These relations can be horizontal, which refers to interaction between equal organizations or national governments, or vertical, which refers to linkages between higher and lower levels of national and international authority. In other words, hierarchical.

In addition, in defining the levels relevant for this research, the key underlining dimension is the scope of the phenomenon it encompasses, whether measured in terms of space, time or numbers affected. In this research, space is reflected by the 'events' in the security environment. In other words, the analysis of how the developments, such as crises and conflicts from within or outside the European security architecture, at all four levels influence one another. Time is then reflected by the limitation from 1990 until 2016 and numbers are reflected by the chosen actors that influence or could be influenced.⁷

3.3 Multiple Case Study

In this research, the case study method was chosen. The case study method in this research is a comparative case study between three interrelated security organizations, which will analyse the phenomenon of their paths of change.⁸ The comparative case study is a research strategy that is often used in the field of political science and international relations.⁹ Its benefit is that it allows identification of patterns of convergence and divergence between the security organizations selected, as there is an observed lack of systematic analysis of how and why these security organizations have changed in comparison, as elaborated in the research overview of Chapter 2. Therefore, this research not only focuses on the path of change of each security organization separately, but comparatively as well, as possible causes and dynamics of change could be neglected. The comparative case study method can contribute to the theory of new institutionalism, as it could have implications on theory development and could 'establish, strengthen, or weaken historical explanations of a case'.¹⁰ Given the explorative nature of this research, and the complexity and richness of the context, a case study approach is the most appropriate research strategy.¹¹

The case study method comprises several potential weaknesses, as unfolded by George

6 Scott, W. R., 'Institutions and Organizations. Ideas, Interests, and Identities', Sage Publications, 2014, p. 105.

7 Ibid, p. 92.

8 George, A. L., Bennet, A., 'Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences', MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 69.

9 For an elaboration on this method: George, A. L. and McKeown, T. J., 'Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision-making', *Advances in Information Processing in Organization*, 2 (1), 1985; King, G., Keohane, R. O., Verba, S., 'Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research', Princeton, 1994; Yin, R. K., Pollack, M. A., 'International Relations Theory and European integration', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 2001, p. 238.

10 George, A. L., Bennet, A., 'Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences', MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 109.

11 Ibid, complete work.

and Bennet.¹² However, the strength of the case study method includes conceptual validity, deriving propositions and exploring causal mechanism.¹³ Furthermore, its weaknesses can be contradicted by process tracing to test a theory's explanatory and predictive power where causal mechanisms are studied. Finally, although this research is a small-N study, this need not to be a limitation, as argued by Blatter and Haverland. Instead, case study research is very well suited to understanding perceptions and motivations, and tracing processes of change.¹⁴ Its limitation can be properly addressed by process tracing evidence.¹⁵

Case Selection

The process of case selection is crucial to making valid causal inferences, and one of the most important criteria for the case selection is its relevance to the research aim.¹⁶ For the method to collect the data required for the research aim, the method of process tracing was chosen to ask how a particular outcome (change of security organizations) came about and to uncover causal mechanisms posited by theoretical informed propositions.¹⁷ It is therefore important to select cases that gain¹⁸ 'a comprehensive overview over the temporal unfolding of the causal-process, the ability to provide a dense description of critical moments' and a plurality of cases with differences for the aim of comparison, within the conceptual frame of security organizations. At the same time, the cases must be as similar as possible within the context of the phenomenon to be analysed.¹⁹

Furthermore, the research of the paths of change of security cooperation and organizations is to some extent restricted by limited analysis, as the information provided is inexhaustible. This research therefore concentrates on a few selected cases, which allows a broader set of theoretical approaches to be taken into account and more complete empirical evidence to be collected.²⁰

Finally, this research tracks empirical developments over time and in a comprehensive approach, which, according to Haverland, makes it possible to explore two kinds of processes: the reconstitution of agents through social structures and vice versa.²¹ This method takes into account structure and agency, which is the aim of this research.

12 Possible weaknesses of case study method: case selection bias, lack of representativeness and potential lack of independence of cases, in: George, A. L., Bennet, A., 'Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences', MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 22-34.

13 George, A. L., Bennet, A., 'Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences', MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 19-22.

14 Blatter, J., Haverland, M., 'Designing Case Studies. Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research', Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

15 George, A. L., Bennet, A., 'Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences', MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 27.

16 Ibid, p. 83.

17 Ibid, p. 153.

18 Blatter, J., Haverland, M., 'Designing Case Studies. Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research', Palgrave Macmillan, 2014, p. 25.

19 Idem.

20 Ibid, p. 8.

21 Idem.

The three cases selected in this research are intended to ensure sufficient variety to overcome the limitations as described above.

On the one hand, the selected international security organizations, the EU, NATO and the OSCE, represent similarities and differences. The following similarities between the selected units of analysis are of interest. First, all three of these organizations have the highest degree of institutionalisation, authority and autonomy worldwide in security policy. Second, these organizations have an overlap in member states and partnerships with states and organizations. Third, they have an overlap in tasks and functions, operations and missions. Fourth, they have political and/or juridical networks or cooperation agreements with states and other international organizations. Fifth, they act in virtually the same security environment as a result of overlapping territory, tasks and members. Finally, the concepts of security organizations, defined as collective defence and collective security, can be traced in all three selected cases.

On the other hand, although these organizations overlap in tasks, members and partnerships, to a certain extent they differ as well with regard to history, mandate, autonomy and authority, institutionalization, members and partners, operations and missions. As a result of the variety, these cases are expected to yield evidence of the mechanisms that have driven their paths of change at large as they reflect some key changes in their development and are as such well suited for explaining the underlying dynamics of change.

So even though the security organizations selected to analyse the paths of change are different to a certain extent, they show similarities and are linked as well. This research states that change in one organization can only be understood in the context of a comparative analysis of the other organizations of the European security architecture.

The research includes a variety of (comparative) case studies, consisting of both within-case and cross-case analyses. Chapters 4 to 6 consist of a comprehensive analysis of each organization separately, in terms of broadening, widening and deepening, to assess the character of their paths of change in terms of level and form. Furthermore, each chapter is concluded with a comparative analysis, empirical as well as theoretical, of the three security organizations. Then in Chapter 7, the findings of the cross-path comparison, empirical and theoretical, of the three security organizations will be presented.

Finally, some specific remarks should be made with regard to the selected security organizations, as part of the European security architecture. This architecture generally contains four international organizations, including the CoE. In this research though, the CoE is not included, as the CoE lacks elements of defence policy tasks and functions. Furthermore, the WEU used to be a part of the European security architecture as a separate unit, but will be addressed within the context of the EU, as the WEU has become an integral part of the EU.

In conclusion, the variations between the units of analysis as described earlier are theoretically interesting. Systematically reconstructing and comparing the paths of change of the security organizations will allow a comprehensive assessment to be reached with

respect to whether the assumptions account for a convincing logic. The methods for collecting the data required for the research strategy will be elaborated on below.

3.4 Research Methods: Structured Focused Comparison and Process Tracing

The analysis is performed by the method of structured focused comparison. To be more precise, a chronological comparative perspective on the variation of the paths of change between related international (security) organizations. In this research, the method of structured focused comparison is used because it can be applied to research which involves case studies that aim to analyse developments and dynamics over time (sequences), rather than static points in time. The analysis of critical junctures and path dependence, as is the case in this research, is sensitive to the identification of the timing of key turning points or game changers.²²

Furthermore, the method of structured focused comparison can be used for comparative case studies when the results of the individual cases are drawn together within a common theoretical framework, as is the method in this research. Below, the three substantive components of this method will be discussed.

Structured Focused Comparison

Structured

The method is structured, because the analysis of the case studies in this research refers to the systematic comparison of change, as these cases are analysed in a similarly structured way.

First, in every identified path of change, either broadening, widening or deepening, the same type of sub-research questions are asked, derived from the theoretically founded central research question, which leads to a standardisation of the research strategy. These sub-questions are the following for each path of change of the units of analysis, NATO, the EU and the OSCE: 1) At what level are the observed paths of change? What form do these paths take? 2) What concrete results of the paths of change can be discerned? 3) What are the similarities and differences in and between the paths of change among the security organizations? 4) How can variation in the paths of change of the European security organizations be explained?

Second, the collection of data for the analysis of change of the European security organizations is mainly based on data obtained from document analysis from primary sources together with secondary sources. To prevent an impressionistic exercise,²³ the analysis of the cases will be mapped along the institutional development and formal decisions, because this research states that the institutional framework is more than just a simple projection of a rule-based order, as elaborated on in Chapter 1. This mapping of

22 Pierson, P., 'Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics', *American Political Science Review*, volume 94, issue 2, 2000, p. 261-262.

23 Börzel, T. A., 'Mind the gap! European integration between level and scope', *Journal of European Public Policy*, Routledge, 12:2 April 2005, p. 220.

the paths of change of the selected organizations will be executed in the form of treaties, agreements, and so forth, together with a varied overture of expert assessments. Primary sources contain political speeches, ministerial minutes, policy documents and NATO treaties, strategies and summit declarations, EU treaties, Presidency reports, Council Secretariat texts, Parliamentary and Commission reports and OSCE agreements and summit declarations, together with the UN treaties and agreements of other relevant actors. The focus of interest, the path of change of the European security architecture, is established by means of a deductive qualitative content analysis of key policy and legal documents.²⁴ To support this approach, this research is based on data obtained from document analysis from primary sources together with secondary sources, as stated above. The added value is sought in the variation in written sources interpreted by a combined theoretical framework. This source material enables the analysis of developing political structures that affect political interest, influence and behaviour and vice versa. This method of analysis will serve to establish whether practice is in line with the theoretical framework. In addition, key member state decision-making documents that were prepared or published are taken into account. Secondary sources contain historical analysis and extensive literature research on all institutional changes for comparative analysis and process tracing.

Third, the context, as described in Chapters 4 to 7, largely described how the paths of broadening, widening and deepening of the security organizations changed and why these paths of international cooperation responded to the same events in the presented security environment.

Fourth, the method is structured, as the scope of the phenomenon, whether measured in terms of space, time or numbers, is similar in all three cases.²⁵ The analysis of all three cases starts with the end of the Cold War, as a major game-changer for schemes of cooperation between actors, and is concluded 25 years after the end of the Cold War. This gives a sufficient frame in time and space of the paths of change of the selected security organizations.

A final issue is the scope of analysis that is similarly applied to all three security organizations. Although the starting point of analysis is the end of the Cold War, the complete life cycle of the selected security organizations will not be ignored, including the analysis of their creation. This will be followed by the analysis of the paths of change, which can vary from strengthening to weakening of the organizations and finally to de-institutionalization or irrelevance or ending of organizations.²⁶

Focused

The phenomenon of change in security organizations is analysed from theoretical angles, as was mentioned in Chapter 2. This research is thus focused on a selection of specific

24 Kohlbacher, F., 'The Use of Qualitative Content Analysis in Case Study Research', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7 (1), 2006, p. 1-30.

25 Scott, W. R., 'Institutions and Organizations. Ideas, Interests, and Identities', Sage publications, 2014, p. 92.

26 Further elaboration on the subject: Scott, W. R., 'Institutions and Organizations. Ideas, Interests, and Identities', Sage Publications, 2014, p. 95.

data based on the research aim and the theoretically founded research question based on the theory of new institutionalism and a limited set of approaches within it, presented in Chapter 2.

The research method is also focused, because the research framework is built from specifically selected approaches within new institutionalism, because these security organizations act in a dense and complex institutional security environment comprising multiple actors where none of the approaches separately can adequately explain the paths of change. The European security architecture is therefore difficult to analyse by a one-size-fits-all theory to encapsulate the various drivers of change. These approaches were chosen as they cover various actors and mechanisms that could cause change. This method is applied to see whether the causal processes can be properly explained by the variation between the cases.

Finally, the research method is focused, as it analyses specific aspects of the cases, the indicators of the paths of change of the selected security organizations, which will be elaborated below.

Process Tracing

The institutional development of the selected security organizations are concrete examples of the high-level, but diverse, institutionalized security cooperation schemes which justified the choice for new institutionalism as the theoretical lens for analysis. The choice was to include competing and complementary theoretical explanations of three approaches within new institutionalism. Where rational choice uncovers a starting point for debating the interest of actors, historical institutionalism offers a chronological analysis of the narrative of institutional developments and formal decisions, and constructivism captures the norms and values behind a different palette of actors, their behaviour and decisions. This research thus analyses multiple agents and structures, as it is argued that states, non-state actors and mechanisms cause change.

Although the choice was made to address rational choice, historical institutionalism and constructivist institutionalism, three of the mainstream approaches of new institutionalism to explain change, the question arises as to why three theories instead of one? The analysis of international security and defence cooperation is traditionally situated in the realist approaches, and together with constructivist institutionalism these two offer competing as well as complementary theoretical frameworks to account for the actors and mechanisms driving the paths of change of the security organizations, as elaborated in Chapter 2. Historical institutionalism then focuses on the prominent feature of this research, the institutionalization of the security organizations through paths of broadening, widening and deepening, which represents a converged point where the two 'opponents' meet. Each approach posits particular causal mechanisms and, together with the process-tracing method, this research acquired the tools to confirm or reject the theoretically informed assumptions and to reveal possible causal paths and synthesize multiple causal chains.

As the research framework is built from three approaches within new institutionalism, another question concerns the explanatory power of these different approaches when

assessing security organizations of the European security architecture. In other words, do the causal mechanisms provided by the three approaches account for the observed paths of change? This research is to apply theoretical reflections to empirical phenomena so as to understand the security organizations and their much-debated paths of change, as well as to make possible contributions to the existing academic debates. In addition, regarding the various debates of how the European security architecture evolved, theoretical reflections on its development will cast light on the general developing architecture in the future as well as possible ideas to address the issue concerned, and this is also a way to strengthen the bridge between theory and practice.

Process-tracing analysis, studies 'the unfolding of an event over time' and scrutinizing 'the chain of events' provides explanations for the changes of the dependent variable(s) caused by the independent variable(s) and specifies the causal chain or chains between the independent and dependent variables, thereby answering the 'how' as well as the 'why' question.

Central to this approach is a theory-led interpretation of the cases. In other words, a thorough reflection on the relationship between empirical evidence and abstract concepts. It is assumed that empirical observations can be used as proof for the correctness of assumptions and for checking the relevance of concepts and theories in their empirical context.²⁷ So this research engages in a detailed assessment of empirical material in a way that allows conclusions to be drawn about more abstract concepts. Also, to uncover models and underlying mechanisms, this research combines cross-case and within-case analyses.

According to Panke, there are at least two requirements to utilize process tracing. One is to 'specify the causal mechanisms expected by each of the hypotheses'. The other is to 'specify indicators for the mechanisms'.²⁸ Indeed, the crucial factor that contributes to a credible testing of the assumptions is to have a clear prescription of the indicators of the causal chains offered by the theoretical explanations of change apart from the general criteria in form and level presented in section 2.5. Therefore, in the reconstruction of the paths of change, in addition to the who or what question elaborated on in section 2.3, the how or why questions were involved in these paths and will be analysed through the theoretically formed assumptions and criteria, which provided the focus of the research. And whether the causal mechanisms, suggested by the assumptions drawn from each theoretical approach, are present in the selected cases. Hence, this combined research framework, derived from the selected theoretical lenses of new institutionalism, encompasses the actors, processes and causes of change and the criteria to analyse the paths of change is presented below in Table 3.1 which extended Table 2.1 of section 2.5. Finally, the institutional developments of the selected cases make up the 'most likely' cases to analyse the theory of new institutionalism and can be advanced out of empirical practice

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27 Blatter, J., Haverland, M., 'Designing Case Studies. Explanatory Approaches in Small-N Research', Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.

28 Panke, D., 'Process Tracing: Testing Multiple Hypotheses with a Small Number of Cases', in: Exadaktylos, T., Radaelli, C., 'Research Design in European Studies', the Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics, 2012, p. 129.

and the proposed causal mechanisms based on the observed developments within the European security architecture and the results thereof.

Change	Actor	Process	Cause	Criteria
Rational choice institutionalism	State	Stable and unstable. Utility maximisation: change is instrumental and dependent on state interest. Institutional strengthening or weakening.	Interest of state. Events: cooperation or conflict. Transaction cost approach (incentives or sanctions). Distribution of resources.	Balance of state power. (in) Stable institutional development. Degree of institutionalization: intergovernmental.
Historical institutionalism	State, non-state and mechanism	Stable and path dependent. According to legitimacy of institution: the logic of appropriateness. Punctuated equilibrium with possible critical junctures. Institutional strengthening.	Legitimacy and interest. Events. Historical development. Interest of all actors. Existing institutional design.	Historical legacy. Stable institutional development. Influence of other institutions. Degree of institutionalization: intergovernmental and supranational. Variation in form and level within and between the institutions.
Constructivist institutionalism	State, non-state and mechanism	Chaotic and constant. Institutional strengthening or weakening.	Interest and legitimacy of actors. Events: cooperation or conflict. Strength and weakness of bureaucratic rules/ structure, actors and processes. Values and norms. Old and new actors. Other actors: state and non-state.	Balance of state and organizational power. (in) Stable institutional development. Values and norms. Influence of other institutions, organs, officials and states. Variation in form and level inside and outside the institution. Degree of institutionalization: intergovernmental and supranational within and between institutions. Variation in form and level within, between and outside the institutions.

Table 3.1: Combined research framework derived from the theoretical lenses of new institutionalism encompassing the actors, processes and causes of change and the criteria to analyse the paths of change.

To analyse the paths of change of the selected security organizations the method of process tracing is applied for several reasons.

First, the world of international cooperation and conflict is unpredictable. International security prognostication and prescriptive research based on a single event is

therefore an unreliable basis for the validity and reliability of analysing phenomena in this environment. Consequently, analysing events over time with the method of process tracing is a more reliable and valid approach.

Second, a chronologic comparative analysis, tracing cases over time, helps to understand the paths of change of the security organizations by comparing these paths and discovering possible patterns and mechanisms.²⁹ The method of process tracing can be applied for within-case analysis as well as comparative case study analysis if the results of the individual cases are drawn together within a common theoretical framework, which is the case in this research.³⁰

Third, the method of process tracing is applied by tracing the links between possible causes and observed outcomes of change by examining histories, documents and other sources. This research comprises historical analysis linked to the analysis of relevant discourses. It also makes it possible to see whether the chosen approaches within new institutionalism apply to the cases.

Finally, process tracing can show whether the variation between the cases can be explained by the presented research framework.

In conclusion, by the application of process tracing, this research has the means to compare the paths of change of the security organizations and possibly discover new causal paths. Relying on a combination of different lenses for the purposes of the analysis of change allows for a more complete understanding of the characteristics of different actors, and interaction between these actors, and observed mechanisms than could be achieved by adhering to a strict division between the different lenses. Theoretical pluralism can strengthen new institutionalism, as each lens can benefit from interaction with another approach; each approach has something unique to offer in the analysis of paths of change of the selected security organizations. As was explained in Chapter 2, the intention is not to 'test' whether or not rational choice theory explains change in security organizations better than historical institutionalism, for instance. The aim is to combine the different aspects of these approaches to deal with the emergence of a complex institutional architecture in the security environment in which organizations broadened, widened and deepened in terms of activities, structure, membership and partnerships. With this in mind, the objective is to engage in academic bridge-building between opposing approaches by building a theoretical framework made up of different approaches.

3.5 Limitations

The primary goal of this research is the analysis of the paths of change of European security organizations in a comparative manner, based on one research framework inspired by the

29 Yin, R. K., 'Case Study Research. Design and Methods', Sage Publications, 2003, p. 125-127.

30 George, A. L., Bennet, A., 'Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences', MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 179.

theoretical approach of new institutionalism. Nevertheless, some remarks have to be made with regard to important limitations of this method.

First, the objective of this research is not to establish a new theory of institutionalism or one of its approaches, but to contribute to the approaches within the theory of institutionalism by combining them in one research framework, looking for their empirical differences and consistencies.

Second, the comparative perspective of this research can lead to more general insights regarding change of security organizations, but the analysis includes only three international security organizations, which makes a statistical generalisation concerning all security organizations difficult. However, with the research framework created in Chapter 2, there are clear possibilities for theoretical replication as developed by Yin.³¹

Third, although there are similarities between the selected security organizations as cases in point, as was elaborated above, some remarks have to be made with regard to the differences, as this could raise questions regarding the method of comparative analysis. One could say that analysing change of the selected European security organizations in a comparative manner is like comparing apples with oranges. In contrast with the claim accepting the units of analysis as actors in their own right, as described above, this so-called 'international actorhood' differs between the units of analysis, NATO, the EU and the OSCE, due to variations in the legal and political authority and autonomy, as well as various tasks and functions.

Fourth, the observations are drawn from key moments of change in time and possible game-changers for the paths of change of the selected security organizations in a sequence of 25 years. However, although predictions of the possible end of multilateralism and the end of the liberal world order are included, these observations and related conclusions are tentative, as not all key moments could be addressed, such as the marginal attention in this research to the election of US President Trump in 2016 and possible consequences for transatlantic relations, and the further development of Brexit for the EU and NATO as well.

Finally, in the search for a chronological narrative of the paths of change of the security organizations, interviews could contribute added value to reconstruct the policy-making process in order to explain important decisions. Then again, interviewing experts and elites as data gathering is often met with scepticism in political science.³² It is argued that it could present a biased picture that is drawn solely from the interpretation of a few people.³³ However, the approaches for data gathering, such as interviews, could contribute to a more complete picture of the analysis of change. These interviews could add to the understanding and interpretation of the primary and secondary sources used for this research and positions taken by different actors. They are therefore taken into account as one of the recommendations for further research in Chapter 8.

31 Yin, R. K., 'Case Study Research. Design and Methods', Sage Publications, 2003, p. 117.

32 Rathbun, B. C., 'Interviewing and Qualitative Field Methods: Pragmatism and Practicalities', in: Box-Steffensmeier, J. M., Brady, H. E., Collier, D., 'The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology', Oxford University Press, August 2008, p. 690.

33 George, A. L., Bennet, A., 'Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences', MIT Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 95.