Global NATO:

An Identity Based Account of the Alliance in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is one of the most active international entities in the world today. Its scope and purpose have grown incredibly over the past decade and its operations have become increasingly complex and diverse. The purpose of this paper is thus to seek the reasons behind such developments. More specifically, unlike mainstream IR studies which usually focus on interest and power politics, the present thesis is interested in determining the extent to which the Alliance's behavior in the 21st century has been driven by identity. Guided by the postulates of social constructivism, the paper builds an identity based narrative founded on four methodological benchmarks, developed by Erik Ringmar (1996), and aimed at accounting for an identity driven behavior. As a second purpose, the study also looks to test the usefulness of this four step model, subsequently demonstrating that (1) interest based accounts of NATO have proven faulty or inefficient, (2) that 9/11 represented a turning point in the history of the Alliance, bringing about change, (3) that upon this formative moment NATO developed a new "self", a new (global) identity and projected it to the world and (4) that this new image was somewhat rejected and undermined due to the difficulties encountered by the Alliance in Afghanistan and due to the war between Russia and Georgia. Finally, and also in line with Ringmar's framework, the paper reveals the Alliance's attachment to this global identity and its desire to project it even further, through the 2010 Strategic Concept and through the intervention in Libya.

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1 Introduction

The North Atlantic Treaty organization is probably one of the most enduring and complex entities on the international scene today. During its more than 60 years of existence, NATO has been studied, analyzed, reanalyzed and commented upon, but IR theorists are still struggling to understand and explain its character, behavior and functioning (Gillingham; Heller, 1992: 1). In this sense, NATO's presence in world politics has been described in various manners, ranging from the most simple and obvious – a military alliance (usually within realist studies) – to more and more complex depictions like security (management) institution (in neoliberal or institutionalist studies - Wallander, Keohane, Flockhart) or (pluralistic) security community (Schimmelfenning, Risse-Kappen, Deutsch, Adler & Barnett and constructivists in general). What is even more interesting is the fact that, if we are to follow the "Alliance's" trajectory from 1949 up till now, we realize that all of the depictions mentioned above are more or less correct, depending on the historical period we are looking at and the theoretical lens we use for it. Either way, what has been commonly acknowledged is the fact that NATO has changed incredibly during the years, adjusting not only its purpose, but also its preferences, its needs and implicitly its behavior (Flockhart, 2010: 9). The reasons behind these shifts are various and quite complex. Naturally, the mainstream perception is that entities like NATO act and behave in accordance with their interests. Yet, as I attempt to reveal within this paper, that is not always the case. Actors do not only act according to what they want, but also according to who they are (Wendt, 1999: 224). In other words, besides interest, identity should be taken into account as well.

Bearing this in mind, the present thesis plans to investigate "the extent to which NATO's actions in the 21st century have been driven by such identity related impulses". Along this ambitious venture I will be guided by the theoretical framework of social constructivism due to its particular emphasis on identity and its substantial focus on the way in which identities manifest themselves within international organizations. Also, as a second purpose, this study plans to test the

usefulness of an identity based framework for explaining action, developed by Erik Ringmar (1996) and utilized as a research method within the present paper.

However, as innovative as it may seem, the account draws upon an already consistent body of literature, focusing even on NATO itself. Nevertheless, it should be noted that most of the studies dealing with the Alliance and its behavior have been dominated by more materialistic (power or interest based) approaches (Orfy, 2007; Rupp, 2006; Kaplan, 2004; Duignan, 2000). Still, as mentioned above, there is no shortage of identity-based endeavors when it comes to NATO, the majority of which are provided by the constructivist school. In considering the Alliance not just a material structure, but an ideational one, and thus a locus of shared beliefs, constructivists have mainly focused on the effects that these shared meanings have had on the Alliance's behavior in the post Cold War period, effects which are best explained using the concept of identity (Guzzini, 2003: 8). The precursors of such approaches were Ned Lebow (1995) and Risse Kappen (1996) who not only analyzed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization through an identity-based lens, but they also attempted to re-conceive the entire Cold War dynamics, as a set of interactions defined by an array of shared beliefs, which produce social roles and which have become part of the self definition of agents. (ibid: 8-9). Related to these studies I may also refer to Schimmelfenning's insightful work on NATO enlargement. Using a constructivist perspective he explains the Alliance's enlargement to the East as a process of international socialization based on shared values, shared norms and a common identity (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 198).

Moreover, relevant for the present work are also constructivist accounts of NATO's formation related to what Karl Deutsch called "security communities". Initially developed in order to explain the cooperation among states in the North Atlantic region, the notion has been developed and redefined (especially by Adler and Barnett, 1998), coming to be a sort of constructivist definition for international organizations and implicitly NATO (Acharya, 2009: 3). In the words of Jackson, "constructivist accounts of the formation of NATO revolve around the central idea of security community" (Jackson, 2003: 228) defined as "a transnational region comprised of sovereign states whose people maintain dependable expectations of peaceful change" (Adler and Barnett, 1998 in Jackson, 2003: 228).

Last but not least, this paper also builds on constructivist (identity based) insights into the functioning and behavior of other international organizations such as

Lars Erik Cederman's (2001) analysis on the European Union and Amitav Acharya's (2009) accounts on ASEAN. If Cederman is more focused on the idea that all communities (be it a nation, an international body or even a civilizational entity – like Europe for example) are culturally constructed, drawing their common identity from a complex process of inclusion and exclusion (Cederman, 2001: 9), Acharya is specifically focused on identity formation in the Association of South East Asian Nations (Acharya, 2009: 7).

Finally, if I am to get closer to the time span which I want to investigate, namely the 21st century, I cannot leave out Trine Flockhart (2010), who argues that NATO is currently engaged in a process of re-constituting its self-identity (from a defense alliance to a security management institution) and with it, the collective identity of its members and partners (Flockhart, 2010: 6). Her work is completed by Rynning and Ringsmose (2009) who claim that the Alliance is now facing two competing visions of itself and its role in world politics. One of them is the so called "come home NATO", which calls for a regionally anchored organization while the other, the "globalized stupid" vision accounts for a more globally present Alliance (Rynning; Ringsmose, 2009: 16).

However, as already stated, one of the most insightful works with regard to the present paper is that of Erik Ringmar, a study in which the author investigates why Sweden decided to enter the 30 years war. He discovers that Sweden was driven to act by the need and desire of defending its self-attributed identity. Along this venture, Ringmar develops a framework which comprises 4 requirements that have to be met in order for such a situation to occur. Consequently, the present study proposes to test Ringmar's benchmarks against the actions of NATO in the 21st century, thus trying to establish the usefulness of the framework and with it, to prove the fact that NATO's behavior from the respective period was driven by the same identity-related impulse as that for which Ringmar was arguing.

Therefore, the study proposes a novel way of explaining NATO's actions, different from traditional rationalist-materialist accounts and in doing so it also adds more empirical and explanatory consistency to constructivist and identity-based accounts as well as to the explanatory capacity of the narrative framework adopted by Ringmar. In addition, the novelty of my study also stems from the fact that, unlike recent accounts of NATO, the present thesis has the opportunity of investigating the Alliance's new strategic concept (launched in November 2010) and thus of offering

an inside perspective on what NATO as a whole, as a common body and voice had and has to say about its ambitions and behavior both throughout the first decade of the 21st century, but also in the years to come. Consequently, the paper will be divided as follows:

The first part will deal with questions of theory and methodology. The theory, social constructivism, has already been briefly described above. As revealed before, special attention will be paid to identity formation and projection as well as to the notion of security community and the way in which it can be identified with NATO. With regard to methodology, there will be a short outline of the method to be used, narrative construction, as well as a more thorough description of Ringmar's framework and its relevance within this study.

Finally, for the analysis part, the paper will begin with a brief historical account of NATO, from its formation up to 1999; this will contain a strong constructivist (identity based) emphasis, highlighting the deficiencies of rationalistic explanations; the study will then proceed with a presentation of 9/11 as a formative moment, a moment which triggered a change of identity within NATO, followed by the Alliance's attempt to project this newly established identity; the paper will then investigate how NATO's new "self" was received and subsequently questioned and finally, how NATO refused to accept these contestations and attempted to project its identity once more, to impose it to the world.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Identity and International Organizations

From the outset, a paper dealing with identity and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization needs to provide at least a minimal explanation with regard to the way in which the idea of identity manifests itself within an entity as large and as intricate as NATO. Generally, we are used to conceive identity at the individual level (as advocated by sociologists and social-psychologists), where it may be characterized as "an individual's theory of oneself" (Puusa; Tolvanen, 2006: 29). To have an identity is simply to hold "certain ideas about who one is in a given situation" (Wendt, 1999: 170), to have an image of one's individuality and distinctiveness (Katzenstein et al., 1996: 59).

However, this self-image is not at all bound to the individual level. Groups of people or even larger entities can develop a common self-image and thus an identity of their own (Habermas, 1975, in Hall, 1999: 42). Usually referred to as collective identity, this type of identity can be described as a sort of collective consciousness that creates what Durkheim calls an organic solidarity among individuals. Related to this, Kratochwill (who draws upon Freud) explains that "identity is obtained with reference to the structure of relations the individual desires, with respect to cherished persons and institutions (love objects). In other words, one identifies with those which one loves and cherishes, which are familiar and comfortable" (Kratochwill, 1989, in Hall, 1999: 35), be it a group, a community, or even a state. In this sense, national identity is already a taken for granted term which encompasses "all of the spaces and spans, the specific cultural, ethnic, territorial contexts within which collective identities arise" (Hall, 1999: 24). As such, a state may be considered just the "rational bureaucratic, institutional manifestation of societal collective identities" (ibid: 27).

Consequently, if states can acquire identities, so should organizations, whether national or international. After all, if we are to judge it broadly, identity is nothing

more than "the core of what something is, what fundamentally defines that entity" (Ashforth; Mael, 1996: 20). As such, when referring to organizations, Albert and Whetten clearly point out that "an organizations' identity consists of those attributes that members feel are fundamental to that organization, uniquely descriptive of it and persisting within it over time" (Albert and Whetten, 1985, in Puusa; Tolvanen, 2006: 30). Organizational identity is thus considered the property of a collective, defining a more or less shared and collective sense of "who we are as an organization" (Puusa; Tolvanen, 2006: 30).

Therefore, if states can bear identities independent of the individuals that compose them, international organizations may also come to bear identities independent of the states that form them. As the Weberian logic states, the "rational-legal" authority which the international organizations embody due to their individual bureaucracy, grants them an independent status from the entities which comprise it, namely the states (Barnett; Finnemore, 1999: 699). Put more concisely, "international organizations are sites of identity and interest formation" (Adler, 1997: 345).

2.2   Theoretical Discussions

The above mentioned statement is not commonly accepted within the field of International Relations. There are many theories which tend to ignore identity related issues and question their relevance and importance both when it comes to national or international entities and also with regard to the international environment in general. For example, neorealism, which may still be considered the leading theory in the field of IR, regards identities as exogenously given and stable (Browning, 2008: 42). It assumes that all actors on the international scene are "like units" (Waltz, 1979: 76), characterized primarily by egoism and individualism (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 200). Neorealism is basically a materialist theory, in the sense that it focuses on how the distribution of material power, understood as military forces and economic capabilities influences the balance of power between states and determines their behavior (Jackson, Sorensen, 2007: 162). According to neorealists, states are the most important actors in the international system and they have the universal goal of surviving in a hostile world (Fierke, 2007: 169). In this sense, the best way to survive in such an unfriendly environment is to deter aggression by "matching the capabilities

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of one's rival, either through building up one's own power (internal balancing), or, if it is not enough, by recruiting allies (external balancing)" (Wendt, 1999: 102). Unfortunately, the problem is that all other states are doing the same thing, so enmity and arms races are inevitable, stemming from the constant uncertainty with regard to what the other is doing (the so-called security dilemma) (Jackson; Sorensen, 2007: 169). What's more, because of this uncertainty, states can only assume the worst about each other, so the chances for cooperation are minimum (Waltz, 1979: 105-106). In addition, things are also not very likely to change, since the anarchical international system is constant and there are no possible ways to transform or to transcend it.

Consequently, neorealists have a really difficult time in accounting for less material changes. One such example would be their accounts of NATO's persistence after the Cold War. In their view, NATO was nothing more than an alliance designed to increase the material capabilities of its members in balancing against the Soviet threat; thus, once the danger has perished there would no point in maintaining the unity of alliance. Guided by this belief, many neorealist advocates predicted NATO's demise in the years following the Cold War (Mearsheimer 1990; Waltz 1993) (Wallander, 2000: 705), reason for which neorealism may not be the best option when trying to provide an identity based account of an international organization.

On the other hand, neoliberalism, neorealism's main challenging theory within IR studies, promotes a more open-minded approach with regard to NATO and international institutions. Rather than considering them "creatures of the dominant actors" (states), with little autonomous power, initiative or effectiveness (Ness; Brechin, 1988, 246), neoliberals have fought to demonstrate that ideas and institutions posses at least a relative capacity of independently determining international affairs (Wendt, 1999: 93-94). For them, entities like NATO are to be viewed as instrumental associations, or in this particular case, security institutions designed to maximize the welfare of their members (Schimmelfening, 2001: 165), not just to balance against potential perils. In this sense, according to neoliberals, international organizations will not disband in the absence of a threat (Fierke, 2007: 178), but they will survive and maybe even prosper as long as they remain useful in catering to the needs and interests of their members (Wallander, 2000: 705). As such, neoliberals argue that states create international institutions in order to manage interdependence and to increase gains from international cooperation (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 204). Thus,

by implying the possibility of cooperation and relative gains under appropriate conditions, neoliberals acknowledge the possibility of peaceful change through the work of international institutions. (Acharya, 2009: 3). In this sense, they prove to be more positive than neorealists, who assume that you always have to expect the worse in an anarchic selfish world (Keohane; Martin, 1995: 44). In the neoliberal view, states can jointly benefit from the creation and participation within institutions, because such organisms regulate behavior through norms (Checkel, 1998: 327), thus providing information, reducing transaction costs, making commitments more credible and, most importantly, reducing the likelihood of cheating (Keohane; Martin, 1995: 42; Acharya, 2009: 3).

However, in spite of this more optimistic approach, neoliberals do not wonder very far off the neorealist path of individualism, egoism and instrumentalism (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 200). Actors remain egoists, but rational ones, with predefined identities and interests, constantly searching for ways of maximizing their gains (Copeland, 2000: 197). As such, although present in neoliberal accounts (states need not necessarily regard one another as enemies from the outset - they can also view each other as partners), identities still enjoy a rather limited role within this theory, remaining materially bound and stable, and being constantly overshadowed by the distribution of power in the international system. (Acharya, 2009: 3). As Wendt argues, neoliberalism's only significant difference from neorealism is that on top of the latter's material base the former added an institutional superstructure (Wendt, 1999: 5). Therefore, neoliberalism would prove quite limited in accounting for the extent to which identity was behind NATO's behavior in the 21st century.

By contrast, social constructivism, a rather novel approach within the field of international relations (I call it approach because it has not yet been fully accepted as a theory within IR studies) is more than equipped to tackle such an issue. Its genuine perspective is extremely suitable for the topic at hand and thus it will constitute the theoretical framework of this paper. Accordingly, a more detailed account of this theory is warranted.

In its original form, Social Constructivism (as it emerged within the field of social studies) deals with and emphasizes the idea that reality is not only conditioned, but also constructed and constituted through social phenomena (Bucchi, 2004: 62). Conceived as a reaction to social scientific positivism, the constructivist approach argues that the social world is not given: "it is not something 'out there' that exists

independent of the thoughts and ideas of the people involved in it. On the contrary, the social world is an "inter-subjective domain, constructed by the men and women who inhabit it". (Jackson; Sorensen 2007: 164-165). Thus, the primary reality in which we live is social rather than material and the institutions and structures that come to be formed are predominantly determined by people's actions and interactions (Sismondo, 2004: 52-53).

Building on these beliefs, social constructivism entered into the field of international relations with the idea that the most important aspect of world politics is social, not material and that the arena of international affairs is a world of our making (Onuf, 1989 in Fierke, 2007: 168). The social and political world, including the world of international relations, is not a physical entity or a material object that exists outside human consciousness. It does not subside on its own. It is present only as an "inter-subjective awareness among people, in the sense that the system is constituted primarily by ideas, and only secondarily by material forces" (Jackson; Sorensen 2007: 162).

Moreover, as a reaction to the over-determination of structure in rationalist theories, constructivists introduced the possibility of agency and have emphasized the process of interaction. It is not that actors are free to chose their circumstances, but rather that they make choices, not prior to the interaction as rational choice advocates would have it, but upon it or even in the process of interacting with others (Fierke, 2007: 168). For constructivists, agents do not act in respect to the rationalistic logic of consequence (what happens to me if I act in a certain way?*), but according to the so called logic of appropriateness: how should I act in this situation? (Pevehouse; Goldstein, 2008: 94), thus bringing "historically, culturally and politically distinct realities into being" (Fierke, 2007: 169). As Wendt points out, "people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them. States act differently toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not"(Wendt, 1992: 396). This would explain why for example The United States are extremely worried by the fact that North Korea is developing weapons of mass destruction, but when Great Britain is doing the same thing they feel no fear at all, although the force and magnitude of the British military is far greater then the one of North Korea. (Pevehouse; Goldstein, 2008: 94)

Therefore, constructivists stress that when it comes to action it is not only the interests and military capacities of the adversary that count (rationalist perspective),

but also its identity. What's more, in a constructivist view, identities not only matter, but they are essential in grasping the interests and behaviors of actors on the international scene. Conceptualized in constructivist terms, identities and interests are endogenous to actors and not exogenously given as rationalists would have it (Wendt, 1994, 385). For constructivists identity is an inter-subjective notion. Its formation entails developing a collective sense of not only who one is, but also of how it differs from others. (Acharya, 2009: 28). As Ted Hopf underlines "in telling you who you are, identities strongly imply a particular set of interests or preferences with respect to choices of action in particular domains and with respect to particular actors" (Hopf, 1998: 175). In other words, identities determine not only interests but also action: "an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is" (Wendt, 1999: 234). And since this notion of self is to a large extent formed during or upon interacting with the "other" identities cannot be fixed, but relative and relational (Karacasulu; Uzgoren, 2007: 33), always in the process of being formed or reformed (Atkinson, 2006: 534). They are fluid not only across time and space but even as they pertain to the same objects at the same point in time and space (Neuman, 2001: 144). Thus, identities are subject to social change, being the products of intersubjective social structures (culture, institutions) and social interaction (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 210).

In this respect, according to Katzenstein et al., identities come in two basic forms - those that are intrinsic to an actor (and relative to a given social structure) and those that are relationally defined within a social structure. "Being democratic, for example, is an intrinsic feature of the United States, relative to the structure of the international system. Being sovereign is a relational identity that exists only by virtue of inter-subjective relationships at the systemic level". (Katzenstein et al., 1996: 59).

This distinction is essential for the purpose of this paper because it reveals the fact that actors (be they states or larger entities) do not posses a single overarching identity but several types of identities whose importance shifts according to context and according to the audience against which it is presented (Hopf, 1998: 175). Thus, in trying to prove that NATO's actions in the 21st century were determined by identity, the present paper will first have to determine which type of identity was primordial for NATO at that given time. In order to do this, I found it extremely useful to use and build upon Wendt's typology of state identities. According to Wendt, international actors can have four types of identity: 1) personal or corporate, 2) type, 3) role and 4) collective (Wendt, 1999: 224). Although, "all four kinds of

identity have reproductive imperatives" (ibid: 232), I will prove in the following pages, that the most prone to change in the case of NATO and also the type of identity which this paper will focus on is that of "role identity".

Yet, before we step into any more analytical endeavors, it is important to end our theoretical discussions by highlighting the fact that, as it has been shown above, from a constructivist viewpoint, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization is best understood neither simply as a form of alignment (as in neorealism) nor as a functional international institution (as in neoliberalism), but as a community of values and norms (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 211-214). This type of community (often referred to as security community) is held together not merely by shared interests (as neoliberals have it) but also by shared identities (Jackson, 2003: 228). As noted earlier, "international organizations are sites of identity formation" (Adler, 1997: 345); and "if the identities being reproduced by the social practices constituting that institution have gone beyond the strategic game-planning of self-regarding units poised by neoliberals and have developed an understanding of each other as partners in some common enterprise, then the institution will persist, even if apparent underlying power and interests have shifted."(Sindal 1985 in Hopf, 1998: 191)

Thus, due to its ideational approach towards international organizations and the emphasis it places on identity, constructivism would be by far the most appropriate theoretical approach in addressing the purpose of this paper. However, before we move on to the next chapter, one last explanation needs to be provided. Even though the Alliance is in fact a security community, its purposes are still military and thus somewhat material. As such, the theoretical framework of this paper will be provided by conventional constructivism (due to its materialist/positivist epistemology), understood in opposition to critical constructivism which can be linked to critical theory (and which proposes an social/idealist epistemology).

Basically, the fundamental difference between the two approaches is the fact that conventional constructivism accepts the existence of an objective reality while critical constructivism emphasize that everything is constructed through language and discourse (Fierke, 2007: 174). Conventional constructivists reject this last presumption and argue that it cannot be "ideas all the way down" since ideas are based on and are regulated by an independently existing physical reality (Wendt, 1999: 110). In this sense, constructivists believe not only in the existence of a material world but also that this material world offers resistance when acted upon

(Knorr Cetina 1993 in Adler, 1997: 323). For example, the meaning of a hotel fire for those trapped inside depends on their beliefs, but those whose beliefs prevent them from escaping (it's God's will for instance) will die (Wendt, 1999: 157). Likewise, armies with spears will most likely not succeed in defeating armies with tanks even though they really believed that they could (ibid: 110). Thus, "constructivism should not proceed as if nature did not matter" (ibid: 111). Consequently, when investigating the behavior of NATO, one could not proceed as if its military capabilities did not matter.

Yet, the purpose of this section is not to provide an account for conventional constructivism, but to emphasize the fact that, for the issue at hand a more moderate form of constructivism is warranted. Critical constructivism is indeed an interesting perspective, but the aim of this paper is to investigate and explain NATO's behavior in the 21st century, not to deconstruct it.

Therefore, in the following chapter I will present the methodological imperatives of this paper and lay out the framework which will lie at the basis of this venture.

3 Methodology

By definition, the research methods adopted within a study should be aligned to the researcher's style of reasoning (Pouliot, 2007: 360), namely to the theoretical framework adopted within the paper. As such, due to the fact that the style of reasoning of the present thesis is provided by a moderate type of constructivism, the subsequent methodology has to be developed correspondingly.

In this sense, according to Hopf, "conventional constructivism presumes that we should be looking for communities of intersubjectivity in world politics, domains within which actors share understandings of themselves and each other, yielding predictable and replicable patterns of action within a specific context" (Hopf, 1998: 199). Pouliot is much more concise by saying that 'a constructivist methodology needs to be inductive, interpretive and historical' (Pouliot, 2007: 360), while Adler argues that moderate constructivism "results from a combination of objective hermeneutics with a conservative cognitive interest in understanding and explaining social reality" (Adler, 2002: 97-98). Also, there is a large number of scholars who would agree that for constructivism, the only suitable methodology is an interpretative one, a methodology "that seeks to grasp the relationship between inter-subjective meanings which derive from self-interpretations and self-definition and the social practices in which they are embedded and which they constitute" (Reuss-Smit, 2001: 223). On the contrary, others (Wendt, 1999; Jackson 2011, etc) argue convincingly that there is no reason why constructivists should not be successful when using more positivist (or neopositivist) research tools. Naturally, this list of opinions can go on and on, but the only obvious conclusion that stems from such an enumeration is one which has already been widely acknowledged (Jackson, 2011; Adler, 2002; Pouliot, 2007; etc), namely the fact that "there is no such thing as a constructivist methodology and there probably never is going to be one" (Jackson, 2011: 204)…or, to put it milder, " methodology is the major missing link in constructivist theory and research" (Adler, 2002: 109).

Yet, this may not necessarily be an inconvenience; the fact that constructivism does not have "a distinct modus operandi designed for the study of the social

construction of meaningful realities" (Pouliot, 2007: 359) does not mean it (or the researcher) necessarily needs to develop one. On the contrary, constructivism has proved not only compatible with, but also quite successful in utilizing existing methods of research belonging to social and political sciences alike (Finnemore ; Sikkink, 2001: 392). As Adler explains, "constructivists use a large variety of methods: positivist, post-positivist, quantitative, qualitative and combinations thereof" (Adler, 2002: 101), just as I have presented above.

However, this does not mean that the researcher can just pick a research method and he or she is good to go. As with any scientific inquiry, the research methods are chosen not only according to theory, but also in relation to the research question and the aim of the analysis to be conducted (Titscher et al., 2000: 6).

Consequently, since the present paper concerns itself with investigating a succession of events - those of NATO in the 21st century - and the extent to which identity was the driving force behind them, the explanatory endeavor should revolve around an evolutionary approach, in which the researcher performs a historical reconstruction of social facts (Dessler 1999, in Adler, 2002: 109), through the use of narratives (Adler, 2002: 109). According to Adler, such a venture is extremely appealing for constructivists because it offers both practical and empirical possibilities of studying the mutual constitutive effects that take place between social reality and knowledge: "how events affect our knowledge, which then affects us and the world" (ibid). As Pouliot further explains, no social realities are natural (only naturalized); they are the result of political and social processes, all being rooted in history. Thus, in order to trace them, "the analyst needs to build a narrative – a dynamic account that tells the story of a variety of historical processes as they unfold over time" (Pouliot, 2007: 367). In other words, what the researcher does is use the narrative as a retrospective device so that he or she is able to impose order on "what would otherwise be a confusing and chaotic world" (Browning, 2008: 67). More precisely put, the best way to make sense of something is to insert that something into the context of a narrative. By doing so, the meaning of the action or event becomes clearer once it is determined what role it played in a certain story and what contribution it had to the unfolding of a certain plot (Ringmar, 1996: 27).

Thus, when it comes to constructivism, the "construction" of such narratives fits like a glove, so the approach does not lack attempts of this sort (Reuss-Smit, 1999; Hall, 1999; Finnemore, 2003; Browning, 2008, etc). In this sense, one

particularly interesting study with regard to this paper is Ringmar's (1996) historical account of Sweden's changing identities and interests in the 17th century. In his study, the Swedish scholar proposes a framework based on four essential instances (benchmarks), which (he argues) have to be met, so that a country could be considered to act in order to defend its identity and not its interest.

Although very different when it comes to both the subject of inquiry and the spatio-temporal context, the two papers (Ringmar's work and the present thesis) are extremely similar with regard to their purpose: accounting for identity and understanding how it may influence and be influenced by actions and events that are both internal and external to the subject under inquiry. As such, I believe that the framework proposed by Ringmar should also apply when investigating the extent to which identity was behind the Alliance's actions the 21st century.

In spite of this fact, Ringmar's model cannot be simply taken for granted. Thus, rather than merely borrowing his framework, I also intend to test this ideal-type categorization against the case of NATO; my aim will thus be to assess the usefulness of such a model, not to investigate and subsequently appraise its general validity. It is important to point this out because my investigation should not be viewed in the traditional neopositivist sense, but in a more analytical (analyticist) manner[1]. In order to better account for my intentions, it is therefore necessary to engage in a brief methodological discussion with the emphasis placed on methodology, understood in more abstract terms, as "those basic assumptions about the world we study" (Fierke 2004 in Pouliot, 2007: 360) or better yet as a "logical structure and procedure of scientific inquiry" (Sartori, 1970 in Jackson, 2011: 25)...as opposed to research method, regarded as a mere tool of analyzing and gathering data (Pouliot, 2007: 360). In this sense (based on a typology developed by Patrick Jackson), one has to distinguish between the traditional, commonly used neopositivist methodology (mind world dualism + phenomenalism) which proposes hypothesis testing as a way of establishing "systematic and generalized connections between inputs and outputs" (Jackson, 2011: 68) and an analyticist methodology (mind world monism +

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[1] For more details see Jackson, Patrick-Thaddeus, (2011) *The Conduct of Inquiry: Philosophy of Science and Its Implications for the Study of World Politics,* Routledge, New York

phenomenalism)[2] that concentrates on tracing and mapping "how particular configurations of ideal-typified factors come together to generate historically specific outcomes in particular cases" (ibid: 114). Therefore, due to its commitments to constructivism and thus to an idealist (mind-world monist) ontology, it would be inappropriate for the present paper to account for Ringmar's model in a neopositivist (mind-world dualist), "hypothesis-testing" sort of way. In this sense, a more suitable variant would be to "test" Ringmar's framework in an "analyticist" manner. Consequently, it should be emphasized once more that analyticism proceeds "not by proposing falsifiable hypotheses or transcendentally specifying indispensable elements of social and political life, but instead, by postulating an ideal-typical account of a process or setting and then utilizing that ideal type to organize empirical observations into systematic facts". (ibid: 151). With regard to this paper, Ringmar's identity based model for explaining action represents exactly such an ideal-type. As Weber points out, these ideal types are found nowhere in the empirical reality; they are simply an analytical construct - a utopia (Weber, 1999, in Jackson, 2011: 143). In other words, they are an oversimplified (ideal) version of reality, meant for constructing and enabling case-specific explanations. As such, ideal types "prove their worth not at the level of empirical generalization, but in the specific cases where they function", usually as components of an analytical narrative (Jackson, 2011: 154). Accordingly, if they fail to accomplish the pragmatic explanatory goals for which they were crafted, they can be discarded, not for being false, but for being useless (ibid: 143).

Therefore, the secondary purpose of this paper is not to test the validity of Ringmar's model, but to test its usefulness. Yet, before any further comments I present below Ringmar's framework:

1. "Traditional explanations phrased in terms of interests should produce ambiguous, highly contested or perverse results. If there was no obvious interest to be defended, or if the scholars who have studied the case are deeply divided regarding which interest the action was designed to further, then we have an a priori reason to be suspicious of these explanations". (Ringmar, 1996: 90)

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[2] Mind-world monism/dualism reflects the relationship between the knower and the known while phenomenalism reflects the relationship between knowledge and observation (Jackson, 2011: 36)

2. The period in which the action took place should correspond to what Ringmar has called a formative moment. According to him, a formative moment is a time "when meaning is up for grabs; a time when old metaphors are replaced by new ones; when new stories are told about these metaphors, new identities established and new social practices initiated" (ibid: 85). Authors like Barnett (1999) or Finnemore and Sikkink (1998) refer to such formative moments as "world historical events" (like major wars or depressions) that bring about new ways of understanding the world. (Browning, 2008: 59)

3. "The particular person or group whose actions we want to explain must be engaged in a process of identity creation. It must be someone who tells constitutive stories and tries to establish a presence in both time and space; someone who constructs an affective geography of friends and enemies; someone who pays careful attention to the rules of the social system to which he or she seeks to belong" (ibid: 91);

4. We must identify an occasion or a series of occasions on which recognition was denied under humiliating circumstances. We need to prove that our person or group suffered as a result and that the failure of recognition was indeed experienced as a loss of dignity. (Ringmar, 1996: 91)

According to Ringmar, "if we can fulfill these requirements we are justified in explaining the subsequent action undertaken by a person or the group as a defense of an identity rather than of an interest". (ibid)

With regard to the present thesis, as mentioned before, although similar in purpose with Ringmar's work, the present paper poles apart from it in two important respects. First of all, the essential difference is given by the fact that, unlike Ringmar, this study does not try to explain a single action, but an entire succession of events. As such, the focus is not placed on the final action itself, but on the entire process of identity construction and action, with a special emphasis on how this relationship is mutually constituted. Basically, the aim of this paper is that of investigating how NATO acted in order to project (or even impose) a new kind of identity, rather than defending an already established one, as in Ringmar's case.

Nevertheless, the framework presented above is flexible enough to accommodate these differences and does not need further adjustment. As mentioned before, the distinction is one of emphasis rather than purpose. Still, when it comes to the first instance, it should be noted that "the point" has already received some attention within the theoretical part of the paper in the sense that, characteristic to the rationalistic approaches tackled, interest-based accounts of NATO have been proven faulty when it comes to explaining and understanding NATO's evolution and persistence in time.

Therefore, keeping in line with the theoretical framework of this paper, namely conventional constructivism, the "ambiguity" and "inappropriateness" (to use Ringmar's terms) of interest-based accounts will be highlighted in relation to this approach. As such, the narrative will begin with a constructivist account of NATO, understood as a security community rather than a mere military, interest-driven alliance. Having established this background (comprising the period between the Alliance's formation and the 1999 strategic concept), the narrative will try to reveal the fact that interest-based accounts, although useful, have always had difficulties explaining NATO's evolution and persistence through time (instance 1). These inadequacies will then be supplemented by interest-based reactions with regard to NATO's transformation upon 9/11 (thus stepping into the 21st century – the period which this paper focuses on) an event which, as it will be demonstrated, marked a formative moment (instance 2) in the Alliance's history. It was a moment when new ways of understanding world politics emerged, but also an instant upon which NATO began forging a new type of identity (a global one), an identity that was subsequently projected to the entire world (instance 3). Then, the paper will proceed by revealing how certain international events (the unexpected lengthening of the war in Afghanistan and the military conflict between Russia and Georgia) have undermined NATO's self-attributed identity (instance 4) and finally, the last part of the study will the way in which NATO acted (through the adoption of the 2010 strategic concept and through the recent intervention in Libya) in order to demonstrate the validity of its self-description, in order to prove that its new identity did actually apply to the Alliance (Ringmar, 1996: 145).

4   Once Upon a Time

4.1   The Beginnings

In keeping with Ringmar's model, the present chapter should begin by arguing for the inappropriateness of interest based explanations concerning the action under investigation (instance 1). Yet, as mentioned before, since the present paper does not wish to account for a single action or event, but an entire succession of occurrences, determining (or better yet picking) which explanations to counter may seem subjective. As such, in order to enhance the validity of the study, I intend to begin by offering an identity based account of NATO, from its formation up till the 21st century, namely up until the time span which this paper will investigate. Guided by the theoretical framework (social constructivism), the chapter will thus look to highlight the general fallacy of gains related approaches, when it comes to accounting for NATO's evolution and persistence through time, as well as to emphasize the appropriateness of identity-related approaches as a viable alternative. Moreover, choosing to present this historical background is also in line with the methodological commitments of this study, since, like any good story, the narrative has to start from the beginning; in this sense, selecting any other moment to commence from would be arbitrary. Last but not least, it should be noted that constructivists too underline the importance of history, a statement which is even more significant when speaking about identity, because identity is not formed over night, but something that is forged in time. Hence, any story focused on identity has to start from the initial moment, a moment which in our case represents the formation of NATO.

As outlined in the theoretical section, from a constructivist perspective, NATO is to be regarded not just as an instrumental alliance, but also as a living organism, a locus of shared ideas and common beliefs. For constructivists, the formation of NATO did not represent a grouping of individual states united by their need to balance against a common material threat (the USSR, as interest-based

accounts would have it), but a self conscious coming together of like-minded entities in the name of a common idea, or better yet, a common identity greater then themselves: the western civilization. (Jackson, 2003: 224)

As one of the "founding fathers" of NATO explained, "NATO purports to be far more than a defensive arrangement. It is an affirmation of the moral and spiritual values which we hold in common" (Dean Acheson in Jackson, 2003: 224).

Thus, according to constructivists, the emergence of NATO had very little to do with the raising material power of the Soviet Union. This so called threat may have "strengthened the sense of common purpose amongst the allies, but it din not create the community in the first place" (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 372). As Risse-Kappen explains, "NATO was preceded by the wartime alliance of the U.S., Great Britain and France, which also collaborated closely to create various postwar regimes in the economic area" (the famous Marshall Plan) (ibid). Moscow itself was even invited to take part in the grand liberal project of the United States which was to be based upon an open international order, free trade, free-market economies, and liberal systems of governance (ibid: 374).

However, Stalin's refusal coupled with the growing presence of communism in Eastern Europe did raise awareness both in Washington, but especially in Western Europe. The most wary were the British. They were particularly interested in keeping the United States close to Europe in order to prevent a similar scenario to that of post World War One (ibid: 372-374). The old continent was again in socio-economic collapse and officials in London were beginning to feel the raising pressures of communism. Thus, it was the British who launched the initiative of defending Western Europe from such pressures, insisting that the United States be integrated in a certain manner. Still, in order to lure the United States into the picture, the community had to be extended outside European boarders so as to justify a formal American presence…thus, the western civilization was born (Jackson, 2003: 240); And it was the defense of this community that NATO would have to perform (ibid: 224). Yet, the nature of the defense would not necessarily be a military, interest-based one since the nature of the community was not thought of in material terms. As Ernst Bevin (then British Foreign Secretary) put it, "if we are to have an organism in the West, it must be a spiritual union. While, no doubt there must be treaties, or at least understandings, the union must primarily be a fusion derived from the basic freedoms and ethical principles for which we all stand." (ibid: 241).

This statement is confirmed by the preamble of NATO's founding document, the Washington Treaty, where the signatory states declared the protection of their values (not material gains or the balance of threat) as the basic purpose of the alliance (NATO, 1949). In fact, the Soviet Union is hardly even mentioned within this initial document (and if it is, its threat is regarded as ideological, not material) (McCalla, 1996: 446). Therefore, the purpose of the Alliance would be "...to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of its peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law"[3] (NATO, 1949: Preamble)

Still, article 5 of the Treaty reminds us that NATO is nonetheless a military alliance, by stating that "the parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them...will assist the Party or Parties" (NATO, 1949: article 5). However, according to Jackson, this article builds on the above mentioned logic of a "civilizational commonality" (as he calls it), by proposing an indivisible notion of security (Jackson, 2003: 246); all for one and one for all.

Consequently, although military in nature, constructivists argue that NATO was designed to safeguard values rather than material capabilities or interests and is thus to be regarded as a security community ("a community of shared values and norms") (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 221), not an instrumental alliance, understood in rationalist terms. As such, NATO does not possess a single, unchangeable identity (that of a military defense alliance or that of a gains maximizing institution), but multiple identities which can change over time both in their nature and in their importance, being influenced both from within and from the outside (Wendt, 1999: 224).

As a result, if we accept the claim that an entity like NATO may have several simultaneous and interchanging "selves", in order to argue that the Alliance's

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[3] With regard to this situation, I feel the need to explain a potential issue that may be considered to undermine the entire thesis...namely Turkey's presence within NATO. As argued throughout the whole paper, NATO is to be considered a security community based on common values and identity. In this sense Turkey does not seem to fit since it is an Islamic state and definitely not part of the Western Civilization. Still, in 1952 (when it entered NATO), maybe even more than now, the country was still very much under the influence of the Ataturkian ideal , who wanted to forge a democratic, modern, secular and implicitly western state in Turkey (Karabelias, 2009: 58-59). Thus, the country was firmly directed towards the West, a direction which it has kept to this day, being nowadays the most successful, if not the only true Islamic democracy.

behavior in the 21st century was driven by identity, it must first be determined which type of identity was predominant (primordial) for NATO during that period. As such, I find it extremely useful to employ Wendt's categorization of state identities also brought up in the theoretical section. If the four types of identity proposed by the British scholar (personal or corporate; type; role and collective) have already been mentioned, it is now time to define them and relate them to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization:

1) "Personal or corporate (in the case of organizations) identities are constituted by self-organizing, homeostatic structures that make actors distinct entities. An actor can only have one such identity. It always has a material base (body in case of humans, territory in case of states), but what makes this identity intentional (different from that of bicycles) is a consciousness and memory of self (a sense of "I") as a separate locus of thought and activity. Personal/corporate identity is a site or platform for other identities."

2) "Type identity refers to a social category or label applied to actors who share (or are thought to share) some characteristic or characteristics in appearance, behavioral traits, attitudes, values, skills, etc. (ex. Heterosexual, teenager, or in our case the regime type or government form of the state: fascist, democratic, etc)". (Wendt, 1999: 224-225)

As Copeland explains, whereas corporate and type identities are developed through processes within the state, reflecting the self-organizing aspect of the unit and do not require recognition of other states for their meaning, role and collective identities on the other hand are constituted only through interaction with other actors.(Copeland, 2000: 203). Therefore:

3) Role identity is not based on intrinsic properties and thus cannot be enacted by oneself. "A student is a student or a master a master only by occupying a position in a social structure and following behavioral norms toward Others possessing relevant counter-identities" (Wendt, 1999: 227). "Role-identities are subjective self-understandings" (ibid: 259)

4) "Finally, collective identity takes the relationship between self and "others" to its logical conclusion, identification, which entails extending the boundaries of self in order to include the other". (ibid: 229). As Bruce Hall explains, "collective identity carries with it the means by which it becomes institutionalized. This institutionalization mechanism is the will of the participants in a collective identity that the identity be perpetuated. This will to manifest identity is an expression of the agency of the collective identity and constituted individual identities of those who share it". (Hall, 1999: 37).

Finally, Wendt highlights the fact that "all four kinds of identity have reproductive imperatives". In this sense, he offers the example of the United States:

"The U.S. cannot be a state without its monopoly on organized violence (corporate), a capitalist state without enforcing private property rights (type), a hegemon without its clients (role) and a member of the West without its solidarity with other western states (collective)". (Wendt, 1999: 232)

Naturally, this example can be adapted to any other actor on the international scene, including the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. If we are to follow Wendt's model, we can say that, in its early years, NATO could be defined in the following manner: an international organization of the North Atlantic (corporate identity), a security community with a military outlook (type identity) and a defense alliance (role identity) aimed at protecting the values of the Western Civilization (collective identity).

However, although this exercise undermines interest based accounts and proves that NATO may indeed have a multitude of identities (not just a single overarching one) it also seems to deliver a blow to constructivists since, if we are to be honest, all throughout the Cold War, these four types of identity remained more or less constant (and constructivism is commonly and often erroneously thought of as a theory of change). Yet, rather than infirming constructivism and identity based accounts, this stability confirms Wendt's hypotheses that even though the approach promotes the possibility of change, transformations are never easy, especially when certain identities, beliefs or values are not only shared, but also institutionalized and legitimized (as in the case of security communities) (ibid: 134; 278). As Moravcsik argues, constructivism is "better at explaining continuity and how norms develop and are propagated" rather than accounting for change (Moravcsik, 1999: 671).

4.2   Beyond the Cold War

The above mentioned hypothesis is further confirmed by the fall of communism, an event that brought about the disappearance of the prominent "other" against which NATO had been used to project its identity (Flockhart, 2010: 13). However, in spite of the fact that the Alliance was left without a clear sense of belonging and was forced to re-conceptualize its "self" in order to survive, at least three of the four types of identity mentioned above were almost unharmed within the process. For example, the corporate identity suffered just a slight modification due to

the process of enlargement, and came to comprise not just a North Atlantic area, but a Euro-Atlantic one; in addition, the type identity was also left unharmed, except maybe for some structural and logistical changes (the military outlook became more complex, capable of handling an enhanced number of issues), while the collective identity was not only left intact (during its 40 years of existence, NATO had forged an almost unbreakable sense of belonging to the Western community, based on common values, shared ideas and mutual beliefs) but might have also gained even more credibility, upon its ideological victory against the communist adversary.

However, not the same thing can be said about the role identity, which was literally shattered by the Cold War's sudden end. I have to mention here that I find this situation to be natural since role identities are primarily exposed to outside influences, being those kinds of identities (based of course on all the others) that determine actions, practices and behavior (and thus represents the most suitable type of identity for the purposes of this paper). Their vulnerability to change also stems from the fact that role identities are always dependent on both spatial and temporal contexts, being those kinds of identities which are most commonly presented in an interaction or portrayed to particular audiences - as mentioned before, role identities are formed in relation and thus depend a lot on the "Other" (Wendt, 1999: 227). Consequently, with the Soviet Union collapsing, NATO's role identity, that of a defense alliance, a security guarantor for its members, became meaningless since there was nothing left (at least not that obvious) to defend from.

According to interest based accounts, this event would mark the dismemberment of the Alliance since, with the communist threat gone, it is no longer in the allies' interest to maintain an alliance left without a purpose. Realists like Waltz (1990) and Mearsheimer (1991; 1994) postulated that NATO's days are numbered while neoliberal institutionalists like Keohane (1989; 1993) and Nye (1993) were a bit more reserved by arguing that international institutions are important and that NATO will remain relevant only if its members are interested in keeping it that way (yet, institutionalists were generally ambivalent if not negative with regard to such a possibility in the post-Cold War environment)[4] (Anderson, Goodman, 1993: 25). However, as it was becoming more and more clear that NATO

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[4] See Keohane, Robert, O., Nye, Joseph, S., Hoffman, Stanley (eds), (1993), *International Institutions and State Strategies in Europe: 1989-1991,* Harvard University Press, United States.

was far from becoming extinct, both theoretical camps started developing arguments as to why this had happened. Realists argued that the soviet threat had not been completely abolished, so there was still need for some sort of collective defense, since the danger could reappear at any moment (Glaser, 1993: 9-11). Such an explanation was probably one of the simplest possible, but it was nevertheless very hard to counter; after all, although in decline, Russia was still Russia. Yet, this is exactly where the problem lies when it comes to realism, because every single choice that international actors make can be accommodated in one way or another by realist thinking. As Risse-Kappen exemplifies, if NATO would survive the end of the Cold War it would do so because the threat has survived with it; if it would disappear, then it means that the peril has "withered away" (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 364).

With regard to neoliberals, they managed to come up with several explanations, some of which were quite convincing. Their first attempt was based on Keohane's famous 1984 work (After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy) where he argued that due to "transaction costs and uncertainty, it is easier to maintain than to create new institutions" (Navari, 2008: 42). Adjusting this argument onto post Cold War NATO, it was argued (Duffield, 1992) that the Alliance persisted because it was simply less costly to maintain it (although the organism was not longer of much use to its members), than to tear it down and/or create a new organization to replace it. Then, building somewhat on this argument, neoliberal insitutionalists sophisticated their explanations and claimed that NATO survived after the Cold War, not only because it already existed, but because of the internal mechanisms and assets that NATO developed over the years, which proved to be not only functional, but also quite adaptable. As a result, once the Soviet threat disappeared (and with it NATO's raison d'etre) the existing mechanisms within the alliance allowed it to adjust itself to new security missions. (Wallander, 2000: 711-712)

However, although much more valid than realist accounts, the neoliberal line of reasoning was perfected only when it was already clear that the Alliance would survive (the same as realist explanations) and it also presented sever difficulties in explaining why NATO decided to enlarge and get involved in operations outside of its boarders. According to neoliberals, NATO would want to expand only if it would be more profitable to do so than not to. In this sense, the only gains which NATO could possibly acquire through such a process would be the financial contributions of

the new members to the NATO budget. Yet, the amount of money received (which was anyway not very large) could not adequately compensate for the fact that, by enlarging, the Alliance was entering unknown territory (Hungary had all of its borders with non-NATO countries), it was getting deep into the former USSR's sphere of influence and it was integrating 3 national armies which were in pretty bad shape and needed development (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 204-209). In other words, judging from a neoliberal perspective, the Alliance would have nothing to gain by expanding and therefore should not have been interested in performing such actions (Fierke, 2007: 178). Still, if interest was not the driving force, what was?

Well, constructivists would have to say identity. In their view, NATO decided to enlarge as a statement with regard to its new (role) identity, that of a security guarantor in Europe (designer of Europe's new security architecture). Also, the desire was enhanced by the willingness and availability of the former soviet states from Central and Eastern Europe to become part of the Western family, to devote themselves to its values and norms (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 217), as well as the West's own enthusiasm to receive them. A lot of emphasis was placed at that time on the idea that Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic shared a common past, a common culture and a common civilization with the West. Thus, the integration of the first three countries from the former Eastern bloc was highlighted as a sort of coming home on their behalf, as the first step towards the reintegration of the European whole which was unnaturally shattered by the totalitarian communist regimes (Solana, 1999). As such, it would seem that although there were maybe certain types of interests involved, an identity related account of NATO's expansion proves much more plausible and probable than those offered by neorealists and neoliberals alike.

However, NATO's transformation upon the Cold War was a lot harder in practice than on paper. If with regard to its collective identity it was other states that needed to adapt to it rather than NATO operating changes, the role identity was in a constant struggle since the Alliance was engaged in a process of forging a new mission, a new role to play on the international scene. As such, by trying to adjust itself to the changed political circumstances, NATO took on several new role identities, defined according to context or in relation to certain international events. Therefore, the Alliance developed and subsequently portrayed various perceptions of its position within the new world order. Besides that of a European security guarantor

(mentioned above), other "selves" were also recognized by various authors, ranging from that of a democracy promoter (Wolf 2009) or an agent of socialization (Flockhart, 2010) to that of a global interventionist (Wolff, 2009).

Since within the paper I will be focusing precisely on the Alliance's role identity, arguing that it is this kind of identity and its implicit transformation that will lie at the foundation of NATO's behavior in the 21st century, I have to say that the categorizations presented above, although correct and well conceptualized, are a bit narrow for the purpose of this thesis and also extremely hard to differentiate. As Wolff himself notes, the role identities mentioned above are constantly overlapping and conflicting (Wolff, 2009: 482). For example, when acting as a global interventionist NATO also acts as a democracy promoter or when acting as a democracy promoter it also acts as an agent of socialization. Also, judging from a constructivist perspective, the Alliance could posses and maybe even exercise all these roles at the same time (the idea of multiple identities). Yet, as just revealed, thinking in these terms may be confusing.

Consequently, within this paper, I intend to focus on two role identities which are broader, much more comprehensive and also extremely present both in the scholarly knowledge on NATO and with regard to the Alliance's own conceptualization of itself upon the end of the Cold War. These two identities are that of *regional actor* and *global actor*. I find them relevant because, in my view, these two conceptualizations comprise all of the other role identities mentioned above, adding to them a sense of spatial belonging. As a regional actor, NATO can be both a security guarantor, an agent of socialization and a democracy promoter, while as a global actor the alliance can be all these plus a global interventionist.

As such, at the end of this section the paper will present the evolution of NATO's role identity upon the end of the Cold War, based on this "regional vs global" relationship. Placing emphasis on this duality is important, since it is the struggle between these two types of role identity that will define NATO and its subsequent actions in the 21st century.

In this sense, once the Soviet threat was gone and the Cold War was over, the Alliance's geographical boundaries were left somewhat void, as was the idea of defending them. Thus, along with the London Summit of 1990 and the strategic concept of 1991, NATO engaged in a process of massive transformations. The first step was to give up its defensive posture (which dominated the alliance during the

Cold War) and take on a more flexible outlook characterized by an expanded geographical scope, enhanced operational roles and a new mission: that of constructing Europe's post-cold war security architecture based on NATO's fundamental values: democracy, friendship, liberalism and the rule of law (Wolff, 2009: 477). As such, the Alliance remained somewhat regional both in scope and in reach.

By looking at things from this perspective, NATO's involvement in Bosnia comes as natural, since the Alliance would not be able to construct a more peaceful Europe without putting a stop to the vicious war that was raging the continent (ibid: 481). Kosovo might be considered a similar case, especially since the conflict between Serbs and Albanians was taking place right next to NATO territory (due to the acceptance of Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic as part of the Alliance).

However, if we are to look at things from a different perspective, we might perceive these two interventions as part of NATO's incipient global ambitions and its shift from a defensive security regime to an "offensive" crisis management institution (Flockhart, 2010: 14). Viewed from this angle, the two conflicts may be considered out-of-area operations, since they went beyond not only NATO's boundaries, but also beyond NATO's circle of trust which included now Central and Eastern European countries (freshly converted to democracy,) but did not go as far as Bosnia or Serbia. Moreover, the Kosovo intervention was initiated without UN approval, thus asserting the Alliance's presence on a "supra-regional level" (Wolff, 2009: 481). In this sense, NATO could be considered an incipient global interventionist…but not yet a true global actor.

This position is somewhat confirmed by the 1999 strategic concept which NATO launched upon the Washington Summit, held in April that same year. This important document is relevant to our case because it does not merely represent a handbook for future actions, for adjusting the Alliance's strategies to new security-related circumstances, but also a way of promoting the alliance to the world (Ringsmose; Rynning, 2009: 8). In this sense, the NATO that was being projected within the 1999 version of this document was that of a regionally anchored actor, with modest out-of area ambitions: "the Alliance has been at the heart of efforts to establish new patterns of cooperation and mutual understanding across the Euro-Atlantic region and has committed itself to essential new activities in the interest of a wider stability" (referring essentially to crisis management and peacekeeping

operations as well as enlargement and out of area partnerships – the most notable being the Mediterranean Dialogue[5]) (NATO, 1999: article 3). Although still adjusting, NATO has certainly parted from its Cold War identity. The emphasis placed on the Euro-Atlantic region reveals the change in NATO's corporate identity (from a North-Atlantic alliance to a Euro-Atlantic one) and with it the new role identity that NATO held, namely that of a stabilizing agent in Europe. Thus, anchored in this region, NATO was to step into the 21st century with the purpose of "preserving the transatlantic link", "reinforcing Euro-Atlantic security and stability", "maintaining its capability of managing crises successfully" and reaching out for new partners and members (ibid: article 26-31).

In sum, at the beginning of the 21st century, NATO's focus and aspirations were still attached to the European security project, with little ambition to go beyond it. However, at that time, nobody was anticipating 9/11.

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[5] Established in 1994 with initially 5 Mediterranean states (Morocco, Egypt, Israel, Tunisia and Mauritania); Subsequently, the dialogue extended to 7 states with the inclusion of Jordan (1995) and Algeria (2000)

5   Entering the 21st century

Within the previous part I have tried to provide a brief, yet comprehensive history of NATO (from its beginnings up to the 21st century) told from an identity-based (constructivist) perspective. The purpose was that of revealing the inappropriateness of interest-based explanations when it comes to NATO's evolution in time (thus meeting requirement one on Ringmar's list), as well as to highlight the plausibility of a constructivist – identity based – account as an alternative. Also the chapter has tried to introduce and set the context for what will be discussed and analyzed in the following sections, namely NATO's transformation in the 21st century. Thus, in the present part I will deal with Ringmar's second instance, by trying to show that the events of 9/11 represented a formative moment for the North Atlantic Alliance, a moment which brought about change. Also, in order to keep the narrative relevant I will touch upon the first benchmark once more, since the World Trade Centre incident sparked new interest based predictions and interpretations with regard to NATO.

5.1 9/11 – A Formative Moment

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre conducted on September 11th 2001 came as a shock to people all over the world, be they politicians, scholars or just ordinary citizens. Naturally, the events sparked an incredible amount of debate with regard to the causes and the effects of attacks, debates which have covered an extremely wide variety of fields, from international relations and security, to religion, economy and even inter-personal relations (Booth; Dunne, 2002). Not surprisingly, a lot of emphasis was placed on the aftermath of 9/11 (as it was conventionally called), scholars, politicians and analysts of the event positioning themselves in various places along the famous antithetical line of "nothing has changed" versus "everything has changed" (Halliday, 2002: 235).

Still, just by sparkling this much amount of debate it is more than obvious that the 11th of September 2001 was indeed a historical moment. As Booth and Dunne put it, "it is curious how a specific date – not a year, but a specific month and a specific day – have almost universally come to define a world historical crisis". They go on to explain that the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Centre were something "that we all shared" (Booth; Dunne, 2002: 1). As such, like any other event of this magnitude, 9/11 also brought about certain changes, although what has changed, the extent to which it has changed and if it would have changed anyway, remain highly debated issues, their answers depending on the view point or theoretical background used to explain them.

However, transcending all attempts to downplay the formative character of this moment, IR scholars cannot but acknowledge that in their field at least, especially when it comes to security, traditional understandings were definitely challenged. According to Francis Fukuyama, "world politics, it would seem, shifted gears abruptly after September 11" (Fukuyama, 2002: 27). Indeed, just like a formative moment should, 9/11 marked a time when new metaphors were launched, when individuals and groups told new stories about themselves and when new sets of rules emerged through which identity was classified (Ringmar, 1996: 91). In this sense we cannot ignore the redundant use of words or expressions like "terrorism", "war on terror", "clash of civilizations" (metaphors) and so on; also, we are all familiar with the various stories that were launched in relation to these expressions, one of the most famous being that constructed by president Bush and his Administration when speaking about the Manichaean struggle between good (represented primarily by the U.S., along with its allies – as defenders of freedom, peace and democracy) and evil (portrayed by Islamic fundamentalists – as unlawful aggressors, representing barbaric and autocratic regimes and guided by anger, frustration and envy towards the values and freedoms of the West) (Bush, 2001). At the other end, there was a different story, a story of the oppressed that looked upon Western Civilization (especially America) as an imperialist "Satan", who, after years of "exploitation" and "humiliation", has now received what it has been constantly delivering upon others (Wallerstein, 2003:198).

Although both sets of stories had their momentum, what was left in concrete terms was an international delegitimation of terrorism as a means of political action (Keohane, 2002: 142). The factual conclusion of 9/11 was that mischievous non-state

transnational actors were now able to acquire power, and could inflict serious damage on anyone, anywhere (unlike before, when terrorist groups were more nationally bound and orchestrated their attacks within those same borders). As such, terrorism became, somewhat overnight, the ultimate global menace and almost all political issues, from 9/11 onwards, had to take it into account. Even states came to be generally categorized according to their position with regard to this new phenomenon, being identified and divided into states that fight against and condemn terrorism and states (which are somehow failed) that are harboring terrorists and supporting them. Thus, with the emergence of this new, global threat, conventional ways of thinking about security had to be rethought.

Consequently, as a security community, NATO had to be adjusted as well. However this could not have been done instantaneously. Just like the rest of the world, the North Atlantic Alliance was taken by surprise when the hijacked planes hit the World Trade Centre. Yet, it tried to react quickly and already on the 12th of September NATO enacted Article 5 of the Washington Treaty for the first time in history, by declaring the attacks on the U.S. an attack on all the members states (Flockhart; Kristensen, 2008: 9; Hamilton et al., 2009: IV). This was followed in the subsequent weeks by an agreement on steps to assist the U.S. lead coalition that attacked Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan just a month later. Although the United States refused NATO's assistance and decided to act independently, the Alliance's willingness to participate in Afghanistan set an important precedent, in the sense that, commitment to Article 5 of its founding Treaty could stretch NATO beyond its regional sphere of action (de Nevers, 2007: 37). It seems that the attacks of September 11th made it clear for the allies that the most important security threats to their integrity emanated from outside Europe and that such dangers needed to be handled. (Schmidt, 2006-2007: 97) In other words, 9/11 had a clear formative effect on NATO.

Relevant in this sense is NATO's Prague Summit, which took place in November 2002, a moment when Alliance members met in order to discuss a way forward following 9/11 (Williams, 2008: 71). It was for the first time in NATO's history when the word "transformation" was at the heart of a major summit (Wolff, 2009: 477). As NATO officials put it, "recalling the tragic events of September 11, 2001 and our subsequent decision to invoke Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, we have approved a comprehensive package of measures, based on NATO's Strategic

Concept, to strengthen our ability to meet the challenges to the security of our forces, populations and territory, from wherever they may come". Thus, "we commit ourselves to transforming NATO with new members, new capabilities and new relationships with our partners"(NATO, 2002: articles 1-3). In other words, the allies acknowledge the historical importance of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre and their severe impact on world politics. As a result, the new purpose of the Alliance in the 21st century would be that of adjusting itself to these changed circumstances.

However, such an adjustment proved to be much tougher in reality than it was on paper. As many constructivists have stressed, change is never easy and it is definitely not smooth. They are completed by Ringmar who explains that formative moments are not only times of "freedom and creativity", but also times of struggle, of uncertainty, of instability and self-discovery (Ringmar, 1996: 151).Thus, on the road towards its new identity, NATO was faced with what probably was one of the tensest periods in its history, a period when the supposed division between the U.S. and Europe, escaladed into a genuine rupture. Everything allegedly started with the already mentioned refusal of the U.S. to accept NATO support in its Afghanistan campaign, in spite of the fact that NATO activated Article 5 of its Treaty, for the first time in history, and expressed its availability to assist any American response just 24 hours after the 9/11 incident (Williams, 2008: 68). Still, this was just the beginning. The United States' constant unilateral approach in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks caused further relapse in North-Atlantic relations, frictions which developed into a full blown crisis, just one year later when the Bush Administration tried to integrate a subsequent offensive against Iraq into the "war on terror" campaign. In this sense, the U.S. sought to involve NATO into the conflict, but was met by a vigorous refusal from the leading European members, visibly irritated by America's one sided approach on things, ever since the 9/11 incident (de Nevers, 2007: 52). Finally, the internal strife reached its peak when, within the NATO Council, Belgium, France and Germany refused to contribute to operations in Iraq even under the pretext of providing defense for Turkey (a fellow ally), against possible Iraqi retaliation (Schmidt, 2006-2007 98). Upon this incident, U.S. ambassador to NATO, Nicholas Burns, accused the European allies (especially France and Germany) of "gambling with NATO's future". (Williams, 2008: 71).

Thus, just like Ringmar suggested, although the members of the Alliance were creative enough and managed to forge a new direction for NATO upon the formative moment of 9/11, they were still uncertain and possessed opposing views with regard what this new direction actually meant and how it should be put into practice.

5.2   Back to Square One

This situation offered realists and interest based approaches in general a good opportunity of highlighting the fallacy of security communities and the inoperativeness of cultural or identity related accounts. Also, in the light of such developments, various rationalist voices started remembering what they were predicting upon the fall of the Berlin Wall and announced once again that NATO's demise was near. However, the accounts offered were as varied as those who launched them, being even contradictory at times. For example, Richard E. Rupp argued that NATO will prove "less and less valuable to its members with each passing year" (Rupp, 2006 in Giannakos, 2007: 114) because there is no sufficient common threat to the integrity of the allies. What he means is that upon 9/11 the member states of NATO no longer perceive threats in the same manner: "a threat to a specific state is not the same as a threat to all states". Thus, those members who do not feel threatened are less willing to act, which makes the Alliance inoperative. (Rupp, 2006 in Giannakos, 114-115). By contrast, Michael Cox suggests that all of NATO's operations have demonstrated the incredible military gap between the US and the rest of the allies, a gap that will most likely increase in the coming years. Yet, he maintains that, although evident, this void will not undermine NATO as an organization because it is simply too important for American interests as it is also vital for European security. (Cox, 2002: 159). This position is somewhat in line with Collin Gray's opinion that international institutions or even collective alliances could only act in order to add legitimacy to the will of the hegemon (Gray, 2002: 231). As such, when this legitimacy is not needed, the presence and aid of international organizations is both irrelevant and unwarranted, as it was illustrated by the tensions surrounding NATO with regard to Afghanistan (where the Alliance was not involved because legitimacy was already acquired) and Iraq (where the U.S. wanted to involve the Alliance because it was lacking legitimacy).

In sum, what these authors were saying was that the events of 9/11 did not bring about any important change in the international system; on the contrary, the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon simply reconfirmed interest and power based assumptions about world politics: that military power matters most, that threats exist everywhere and that states are still the most powerful agents, acting according to their selfish interests (Gray, 2002: 228). The only real transformation that occurred after 9/11 was that of enabling the United States to be even more unilateralistic and hegemonic, by revealing and endorsing its military might in a spectacular manner (Waltz, 2002: 348-350).

However, as many constructivists have noted (Wendt, 1999; Risse-Kappen, 1996) the problem with the arguments and the conclusion presented above as well as with such explanations in general, is not that they are wrong, but that they cannot go wrong (Guzzini, 2010: 7). Either way you turn it, interest based accounts will still provide a sound answer to the aftermath of 9/11. For example, when referring to NATO, it could be argued that the Alliance is becoming increasingly irrelevant since individual state interests have been proved to be more important than collective interests (as Rupp postulates); yet, if the Alliance persists it does so because it is again vital to the interests of the states that form it, in the sense that it assures both security and legitimacy (as Cox and Gray suggest). These contradictory arguments confirm once more the first requirement on Ringmar's framework, proving the inappropriateness of interest-based accounts when it comes to NATO's evolution and persistence in time.

What's more, with regard to the second benchmark, even if convincing, the rationalist explanation concerning the unchanged character of the international arena upon 9/11 does not undermine the idea that, the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre, did actually represent a formative moment. First, even if the interest/power based accounts presented above were to be totally accurate, this says very little about how NATO perceived 9/11 and its aftermath; and second, the accurateness of such accounts is questionable in the first place, since, as I have shown above with NATO, the majority of actors on the international scene (ranging from states to international organizations, ethnic and religious groups and even ordinary individuals) also started seeing things differently upon 9/11. In the words of Shearman and Sussex "the most enduring message of the September 11, 2001 attacks…was that they fundamentally changed the world" (Shearman, Sussex, 2004: 3)

6   Forging a new identity

The present chapter will introduce and deal with Ringmar's third requirement, namely the fact that NATO has to be engaged in a process of identity formation as a result of the formative moment. Yet, as mentioned above, forging a new identity is not an easy task, often coming at a price. Nevertheless, the struggles highlighted previously and used by rationalists to advocate NATO's weakening, tell only one side of the story. The other side, or better yet the prologue, goes as follows: yes, there were tensions amongst the allies; yes, there was a severe crisis; but this was not the first time in NATO's history when such disagreements appeared and it was also not the first time when they would remain unsolved. If we look closely at the course of the events we realize that, regardless of their disparities, both the U.S. and Europe were constantly in search of consensus. For example, in spite of refusing NATO assistance in Afghanistan, the United States did not defy the Alliance and valued still its role within the campaign. In this sense, it made 8 specific requests to NATO in assisting the Afghanistan invasion, the most notable being that of requesting the Alliance's aircrafts to patrol U.S. airspace while American forces were performing their intervention (de Nevers, 2007: 49). Even though the gesture was more or less symbolic, U.S. Secretary of State Collin Powel emphasized that NATO's contribution represented the "viability of the alliance" (Williams, 2008: 68). This statement was doubled by the notorious U.S. National Security Strategy (often regarded as an example of American exceptionalism and unilateralism) launched by the Bush Administration, where it is clearly stated that "there is little of lasting consequence that the U.S. can accomplish in the world without the sustained cooperation of its allies and friends…in Europe" (Peterson, 2004: 615).

Moreover, besides friendly declarations, a concrete sign of consensus came just a few months later, when NATO members set down as a common body and tried to figure out a way forward following the attacks of 9/11. The Prague summit (November 2002), which I am referring to (and which I have already mentioned), was just the final part of an entire negotiation process (with regard to the new identity) which took place all throughout the preparations and initial intervention in

Afghanistan. Thus, whatever tensions may have surrounded the U.S.'s decision to act unilaterally, they seemed to have cooled off along with these common attempts to provide NATO with a new direction, a new outlook, a new role identity.

Still, I feel I must emphasize once more the struggles and unpleasantness that come with change, especially concerning identity, a fact maintained both by constructivists, but also by Ringmar, in his methodological framework. Consequently, although a general consensus was reached with regard to NATO's new direction (the global identity), disputes reappeared concerning 'how', or 'how fast' should this transformation occur. This is what sparked the crisis surrounding the war in Iraq, as different actors had different views on the way in which the new identity was to be enacted. Naturally, it was also maybe a question of contradicting interests at times, but these divergent interests stemmed from different ways of identifying with the new, common "self". Therefore, the rupture does not necessarily imply the fallacy of the Alliance as a security community in the constructivist sense. As explained by Risse-Kappen when referring to the Suez and the Cuban Missile Crises, frictions and disputes are not necessarily determined by conflicts of interest alone (Risse-Kappen, 1996: 385). As was the case back then, the crisis in Iraq along with the tensions regarding Afghanistan can be explained by referring to identity and the sense of attachment to a shared community. In this sense, the U.S.'s refusal of incorporating NATO into its Afghanistan campaign can be seen as a violation of the "community of purpose" (ibid: 381). As Lionel Jospin, the French prime minister, put it, "our conception of the world [...] is based on a multilateral approach" (Jospin, 2002, in Sands, 2002: 85). Unfortunately, America did not seem to get this message, so when the U.S. pushed for an Allied intervention in Iraq, without having substantial evidence to support it, the European members felt betrayed once more and vehemently condemned the U.S. for acting only in accordance with its own egoistic purposes. Relevant in this sense were Jacques Chirac's words, who declared that "we are also seeing the first stirrings of the temptation to legitimize the unilateral and preventive use of force. This development is worrying. It is at odds with France's concept of collective security" (Chirac, 2002). He was completed by Gerhard Schroeder, the German Chancellor, who emphasized that "false priorities are being set in relation to the entire Middle East" (Schroeder, 2002, in Rippert, Schwarz, 2002)

At the same time, America also felt cheated with regard to the fact that, in spite of its immense contribution to NATO and the newly agreed direction/identity of

the Alliance, some allies (maybe the most important ones) refused to support the U.S. when it was requesting their help. Even today, we still refer to the memorable words of Donald Rumsfeld (American Secretary of Defense) who divided the European continent into "Old Europe" and "New Europe": "Now, you're thinking of Europe as Germany and France. I don't. I think that's old Europe. If you look at the entire NATO Europe today, the center of gravity is shifting to the east. And there are a lot of new members", which…"are not with France and Germany on this (referring to the War in Iraq), they're with the United States" (Rumsfeld, 2003).

As such, if we are to sum it all up, each side felt that the other was breaking its commitments to the community. Yet, given the fact that NATO is an organization of friends, there is always an effort to settle the differences and move on; that is what happened after the Suez Crisis, after the Cuban Missile Crisis and also after the "Iraq crisis" if it can be called like that. Just a few months after the "scandal" surrounding operation Iraqi Freedom, NATO, as a common, united body made its first steps towards reconciliation and also its first real steps on the path of asserting the new, global identity: it took over the ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) mission in Afghanistan, thus engaging itself into the biggest out of area operation in its history (Webber, 2009: 55). Moreover, another sign that the rupture within NATO had been surpassed (and also another way of asserting the global identity) was provided by the Alliance's contribution in Iraq, upon the request of the Polish government who had just taken over the leadership of one sector of the stabilization force in this country (de Nevers, 2007: 52).

Then, by June 2004, due to the increasing difficulties in dealing with Iraqi insurgents, even the U.S. president acknowledged its past errors and pleaded humbly that "NATO ought to be involved" in Iraq (Williams, 2008: 73). As such, although it refused to take on peacekeeping operations, the Alliance became engaged in training Iraqi security forces, to which it also donated important military equipment (de Nevers, 2007: 52-53). Thus, agreements could once again be reached, help could once more be provided and cooperation came to redefine relations within the Alliance.

6.1   Projecting the New Identity: Global NATO

Having surpassed these internal disagreements and struggles, NATO was now able to focus on projecting its new global identity. The first steps in this direction were taken at the Prague Summit, when this new outlook was announced, along with a more practical change, namely that of establishing a single, multinational, European-centered, NATO Response Force (NRF), trained and equipped to the highest standards and capable of acting quickly wherever it was needed (upon a decision by the NAC - NATO Advisory Council) (Schmidt, 2006-2007: 98; Flockhart, Kristensen, 2008: 10).

When it comes to the external assertion of this novel identity, the first concrete actions were those of taking over ISAF and the training mission in Iraq (already mentioned) as well as maintaining the desire to expand further to the East (by accepting seven new members - Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia - in 2004, and two others, Albania and Croatia, in 2009). These new members were already introduced to the global identity that NATO was projecting and immediately involved in the two out of area initiatives mentioned above. What's more, besides this internal expansion, NATO also extended its external network of partners, way beyond the traditional boundaries of the Alliance, thus creating what Ringmar called "a new geography of friends" (Ringmar, 1996: 91; see also instance 3). After establishing the Mediterranean Dialogue in 1994, the initiative was elevated at the Istanbul Summit (2004) to a genuine partnership, "to include more practical cooperation, especially in the fight against terrorism", but also in order to enhance security and stability in the region (Flockhart; Kristensen, 2008: 18). The same premises were behind the creation of the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative which further expanded NATO's geographical scope by adding four Middle Eastern countries (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates), to the Alliance's list of partners (Flockhart, 2010: 20). Last but not least, during the Istanbul Summit, NATO officials emphasized once more that the actions mentioned above are in line with NATO's transformational process which began upon the Prague summit in 2002 (NATO, 2004: article 2) and they also noted their openness to increasing contacts and closer ties with countries from Central Asia, with more problematic states like Bosnia or Serbia and even with soviet-bound states such as Ukraine and Georgia (all of

which are formally included within the Partnership for Peace Program) (ibid: articles 25 - 40).

However, the Alliance was not to stop here. Its desire to firmly ground its new global identity was also revealed during the 2006 Riga Summit, when NATO discussed the creation of a "Global Partnership" with "likeminded" states (Australia, New Zeeland, Japan and South Korea) which have always supported and even contributed to the Alliance's operations (most notably Australia and New Zeeland who took part in the ISAF mission). Unfortunately, "it was almost impossible to establish a new category of partners with more formal ties to NATO" due to pragmatic reasons, explained concisely by Australian Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer: "I don't think we want to be travelling over to Brussels week by week for formal meetings and arrangements. It's just a logistical nightmare". (Flockhart; Kristensen, 2008: 21). In spite of this fact, the Declaration of the Riga Summit emphasized the need for closer ties and consultations with these "Contact Countries" (NATO, 2006a: articles 11 - 17) and Victoria Nuland, the American ambassador to NATO stressed that "NATO should focus on deepening its cooperation with countries such as Australia and Japan and becoming a genuine globally deployable military force". (Nuland, 2006, in Flockhart; Kristensen, 2008: 22). Finally, Rick Olson, the U.S.'s Deputy Chief of Mission to NATO completed this position by implying that "surely there are other democratic security providers with whom we can build partnerships" (Olson 2007, in Flockhart; Kristensen, 2008: 22).

To sum up, ever since 2002, when NATO agreed on its new identity, the Alliance has been constantly promoting this global image in various ways: by creating the NATO Response Force (NRF) – capable of acting quickly anywhere in the world -, by taking over the peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan, by undertaking the training mission of Iraq's security forces, by expanding to the East with the acceptance of 7 (at that time) new European members, by elevating the Mediterranean Dialogue to the level of Partnership, by initiating the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, by strengthening its relations with non-European Contact Countries and also by engaging itself into several smaller scale actions like: launching an extensive humanitarian relief operation for Pakistan after the massive earthquake in 2005, helping victims of Hurricane Katrina in the United States, providing security support to the 2004 and 2006 Olympics and the 2006 World Cup and assisting the African Union with strategic airlift into Darfur and Somalia (Hamilton et al., 2009:

21); and if this multitude of actions are not convincing enough, NATO also formulated an official document which would attest the Alliance's new direction upon 9/11, a document released at the Riga Summit, which is formally known as the Comprehensive Political Guidance (CPG). Often regarded as an interim strategic concept (Flockhart, 2010: 15), the document "provides a framework and political direction for NATO's continuing transformation" (NATO, 2006b: article 1). The reason the CPG was launched is because the 1999 Strategic Concept, which was supposed to guide the Alliance through the beginning of the 21st century became obsolete after 9/11 and NATO's shift. As such, the new document stressed the importance of this change in accordance with the changes in the international environment and emphasized that the Alliance must continue on this path so that it could better handle and respond quicker to unforeseen circumstances, wherever they may stem from. In addition, the CPG announced that the main threat to NATO in the next 10-15 years will be terrorism, increasingly global in scope and more interconnected than ever. Yet, mirroring this ever present depiction of the enemy is an ever present Alliance, ready and more than capable of dealing with any problem or disturbance that may rise and being equipped to conduct a full range of missions, whether high or low in intensity, regardless of where they may be (NATO, 2006b: articles 6-7)[6].

As such, it would appear or better yet, it was evident that, "NATO's interventionist strategy of the 1990s has, at the start of the 21st century, become globalised" (Flockhart; Kristensen, 2008: 10).

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[6] This portrayal confirms Rinmar's suppositions, that descriptions of the enemy will be conveyed in such a way as to bolster the new identity (Ringmar, 1996: 165)

7 Contesting the Identity: Is NATO Really Global?

As a global actor NATO seemed (or better yet felt) as confident as ever and its purpose of bringing peace and stability to troubled parts of the world (especially those predisposed to terrorism) looked like it was running smoothly.

However, if we are to follow Ringmar's framework things should not have gone so well for the Alliance. In fact, this newly established identity should be challenged or even rejected by various (important) actors, preferably under humiliating circumstances (instance 4). As mentioned at the outset of this venture, such a situation would be extremely unlikely given the difference between a powerful military alliance in the 21st century and a small North-European country in the 17th century (as in Ringmar's case). Nevertheless, although its new identity was never formally rejected and NATO felt anything but humiliated in the last part of the 21st century's initial decade, the Alliance's global role was by all means contested and even undermined. Naturally, such contestations did not come out of the blue, but were triggered by certain international events which proved the Alliance's own inefficiency in sustaining this global role.

7.1 The War in Afghanistan

The first problems appeared with regard to the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan, an operation that was advancing at a very slow pace. By late 2006, around the time when NATO launched the Comprehensive Political Guidance (CPG), thus anchoring its new identity in an official document, the ISAF operation was on the verge of completing phase two on its agenda[7], namely that of expanding its geographical scope all throughout Afghanistan (Morelli; Belkin, 2009: 10). Although

the mission was advancing according to plan, the unexpected resistance of the Taliban, especially in the southern provinces, raised for the first time the question of whether ISAF and implicitly NATO would actually be able to fulfill the purpose of its mission: that of creating a secure, peaceful and democratic Afghanistan (Webber, 2009: 55).

Nevertheless, it became clear that in order to reach its objectives, NATO was in desperate need of more troops, a requirement which member states were reluctant to follow through (de Nevers, 2007: 50). The reasons behind this reluctance were mainly financial ones, due to the high costs of maintaining armed forces away from home, but also related to strong opposition against the war and the pressures exercised in this sense by the civil societies and the populations of many, especially European countries (Morelli; Belkin, 20). Yet, the allies could not remain indifferent towards the deadly attack suffered by the Norwegian-Finnish PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team)[8], "facilitated" by the fact that "no NATO combat unit was in the region and thus able to protect the ISAF personnel" (Gallis, 2006: 7). As such, after intense insistence on this issue, Poland (de Nevers, 2007 50) and then Canada, the Netherlands and Britain were the first to deploy additional troops for phase three of the mission, namely that of "stabilization" (Morelli; Belkin, 2009: 18). However, in spite of these enhanced capabilities, NATO was soon to discover that the task of providing security and stability in Afghanistan was a lot harder than simply acquiring control over various parts of the country (phase two). The lack of infrastructure, the persistent counter-offensives carried out by the Taliban and the difficulty with which the allies agreed upon a certain course of action transformed what was initially thought of as a simple crisis management operation, into a complex guerrilla war against a very impudent adversary. Still, if the erroneous assessment of the situation on the ground is somewhat understandable, what came as a surprise was the lack of coordination and the disastrous efficiency on behalf of the Alliance.

One of the biggest problems in this sense, besides the lack of troops, was the fact that the soldiers and personnel which were actually deployed, operated under

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[7] NATO planned that the ISAF operations in Afghanistan would have five phases: assessment and preparation; geographic expansion; stabilization; transition; redeployment (Morelli, Belkin, 2009: 10)
[8] Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are civilian-military units of varying sizes designed to "extend the authority of the central government into the countryside, provide security, and undertake projects (such as infrastructure development) to boost the Afghan economy" (Gallis, 2006: 4)

national caveats. These so called "caveats" are written restrictions formulated by the particular country (government) that delivers forces and their purpose is to limit how the respective country's military contingent may be used (Thruelsen, 2007: 19). For example, some caveats prevent troops from undertaking combat missions, from acting during nighttime or from operating in certain areas (Gallis, 2006: 3). Obviously, these restrictions have had dire consequences for the operational effectiveness of ISAF (especially when they were revealed ad hoc – when clearance for operational use was sought – and not beforehand) (Thruelsen, 2007: 20) and also for the so called "risk equality", which caused numerous frictions amongst the allies (de Nevers, 2007: 51).

Such animosities were also brought about by the already famous cases concerning the U.S.'s treatment and abuse of prisoners at the Abu Ghraib penitentiary in Iraq, as well as at the detention centre in Guantanamo Bay, where some prisoners captured in Afghanistan have been sent since 2001 (Gallis, 2006: 8). Although the allies specifically insisted that insurgents and detainees should be turned over and then handled by the Afghan government, some still ended up in the notorious detention centers mentioned above, controlled by the United States (Morelli; Belkin, 2009: 21). Thus, due to all these quarrels it seemed that instead of solving problems NATO was adding to them, and as these problems grew both in number and in magnitude, the Alliance's credibility as a global actor, as an entity able to reconstruct Afghanistan (the ultimate out-of area test for the Alliance), was doing the exact opposite, namely going down.

Naturally, this general doubt with regard to NATO's ability of fulfilling its mission could not but deepen the „crisis" on the ground, where the Taliban were making use of this situation in order to portray NATO as a distant invader with a selfish agenda and themselves as the saviours of the country (Wolff, 2009: 483). This type of propaganda was especially fruitful in the southern parts of Afghanistan where the Talibans were most present and where people saw that instead of bringing them security, stability and development, NATO only managed to provide security, some stability and not a lot of development (Thruelsen, 2007: 23).

This assessment of things was also shared by most of the European allies whose populations were vehemently demanding the withdrawal of troops, not to mention supporting the supplementation of forces, as the U.S. or NATO commanders were requesting. For example, in March 2007, Germany had a debate over committing military equipment (Tornado jet fighters) to Afghanistan. During

negotiations, due to intense voter pressure, who wanted to prohibit the deployment of the aircrafts and insisted for a full withdrawal from Afghanistan, some SPD (Sozialdemocratische Partei Deutschlands – Social Democratic Party of Germany) members stepped aside from Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition (Wolff, 2009: 486).

Relevant is also the case of Italy, where Prime Minister Romano Prodi resigned in February 2007, due to the fact that "his government could not garner enough votes to re-authorize Italian troop participation in Afghanistan". The large number of politicians who did not support the motion and also the huge public disapproval of the action eventually led to this surprising outcome. What is interesting is that never had an Italian or even any other government collapsed "over the question of participating in a NATO activity" (ibid: 487). As American secretary of defense Robert Gates, noted in 2008, "I worry that for many Europeans the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan are confused…Many of them…have a problem with our involvement in Iraq and project that to Afghanistan". (Robert Gates, 2008 in Morelli; Belkin, 2009: 4)

Indeed, there are many preconceived ideas or misinterpretations with regard to NATO's Afghan operation, but this does not absolve the Alliance from the mistakes and failures that it did actually suffer on the ground. True, many problems stemmed not so much from NATO's clumsiness, but from the unending strings of corruption and from the discontented warlords and drug traffickers who not only provided for the Taliban but also undermined the already shaky Afghan economy which was poorly handled by the government anyhow. (Morelli; Belkin, 2009: 32). As ISAF commander, General Dan McNeil emphasized "the Taliban are not going to beat us. It's not them that are crippling the economy. What is killing this country is corruption and drugs. That is not for NATO to deal with; that is for the Afghan government to deal with". (Wolff, 2009: 483).

Yet, regardless of who was responsible for what, NATO was not fulfilling its promise, it was far away from its declared purpose and with this, its was also distancing itself as well as its audiences from the global self it had adopted and proposed. In late 2008 or at the beginning of 2009, it was extremely hard to believe that the Alliance would indeed be capable of launching and sustaining "concurrent major joint operations and smaller operations for collective defense and crisis management, on and beyond alliance territory, on its periphery and at a strategic

distance" (NATO, 2006b, in Rynning; Ringsmose, 2009: 22). As Rynning and Rigsmose explain "the CPG tells us that NATO must at a minimum be able to do 2+2 (two large and two small operations)". However, the reality is that since 2006, "NATO has operated with a formula of 2+6 (two large and six small operations), where strategic distance is defined as 15, 000 km from Brussels" (Rynning; Ringsmose, 2009: 22). Thus, judging in these terms, we cannot but acknowledge that, in 2009, NATO was "undertaking operations akin to 1+1 (Afghanistan and Kosovo) and it was already at the point of exhaustion" (ibid). Therefore, it was somewhat obvious that, for practical reasons, NATO was actually far from being a global actor.

7.2   The Russo-Georgian Conflict

If the war in Afghanistan undermined NATO's global identity at a concrete, logistical level, another, often undersized event, weakened its validity even further, but this time on a more theoretical plane. I am of course referring to the small conflict between Russia and Georgia, which took place in August 2008.

The causes and the exact nature of the conflict are still debated to this day (Light, 2010: 1579). As Joenniemi explains, the clash is most commonly viewed as a "classical power political war with a major power attacking a small one in the context of more general power political context (Allison, 2008; Fedorov, 2008; Friedman, 2008)". Yet, other variants have also been advanced, such as "a small country engaging in war out of an acute sense of insecurity", due to an increased Russian presence in South Osetia. Finally, more "intricate" accounts have regarded the encounter as a war between Russia and the United States, (where Georgia is being supported by the U.S., while South Osetia and Abhazia by the Russians), or even as a minor ethnic conflict, secondary in importance and magnitude (opposed to the larger and more famous war in Afghanistan) (Joenniemi, 2010: 7).

Nonetheless, judging purely from the standards of modern warfare, the skirmish can hardly be called a war at all. It can be at most considered a minor conflict since it was low in intensity, the fighting lasted for less than a week, there was no question of territorial gains and the casualties barely reached a few hundreds (ibid).

Yet, its importance for European security was incredible. As Rynning and Ringsmose pointed out, the conflict marked the re-entry onto the European scene of traditional Realpolitik, thus ruining not only the postulate that conventional warfare was a thing of the past (advocated many times by NATO), but also the dream "of an emerging post-modern security system in Europe where states reject the use of force for resolving their disputes" (Rynning; Ringsmose, 2009: 17). In addition, Russia's firm action reasserted its presence if not as a great power, at least as a regional one, keen on maintaining strategic control over former soviet satellites and their resources (Hamilton et al., 2009: 17).

Necessarily, the unfolding of such events had a tremendously negative impact on NATO's global and even European ambitions. Although short and low in intensity, the conflict was so significant not only because it was a classical inter-state war (it had nothing to do with terrorism, nuclear proliferation or other unconventional threats that the alliance was highlighting in the CPG) but also and especially since it happened in NATO's backyard (Georgia being a potential candidate for NATO membership). And what was even more alarming was the fact that other than condemning the incident, NATO could do nothing. In fact "western diplomats and leaders could not even formulate a proper cease-fire document" – providing for Georgia's integrity and demanding Russian troop withdrawals - let alone "devising an effective plan for action against Moscow's aggression" (Blank, 2008: 383).

As such, questions were raised with regard to the Alliance's capacity of protecting its members (one of NATO's fundamental desiderates), not to mention expanding even further or playing a significant role at a global level. In this sense, Poland and Norway raised public doubts with regard to the viability of article 5 guarantees (an attack on any member state will be considered an attack on all the states of the Alliance and will be responded to, collectively) and also with regard to NATO's extended deterrence capacities (ibid: 384). Added to these doubts was a somewhat general curbing of enthusiasm when it comes to the Alliance as a global actor, on behalf the Central and Eastern European members. This group, led by Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia stressed that NATO should rethink its policy towards Russia and should include this aggressively resurrected power at the top of its threat list. (Rynning; Ringsmose, 2009: 17). If we are to say it bluntly, over the course of a few weeks NATO's image as a global actor has been all but shattered and its security

strategy severely challenged…and all this without mentioning the problems in Afghanistan, which, in 2008, were also at their peak[9].

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[9] Worth mentioning here is also the often neglected but nevertheless important cybernetic attack on Estonia, which targeted key government infrastructure. This was a type of aggression which NATO did not encounter before, proving that the challenges of the 21st century were much more complex than the Alliance had expected. Still, NATO managed to formulate a prompt answer, declaring that it was not an Article 5 invoking attack, although it was a clear assault on an allied member (Wolff, 2009: 478). Thus, although it can be argued that the incident caught NATO by surprise and the Alliance was ill prepared to respond to it, its importance in undermining the global identity of NATO was minor, reason for which it was not dealt with more extensively within this paper.

8   Re-stating the identity

In spite of the unpleasant situation in which it had gotten, NATO did not seem to have been shaken that much by the previously mentioned developments. Of course, it can be argued that, due to its consultation and cooperation based relationship with Russia, NATO managed to cool off any tensions and picked up its amiable relations with Moscow quite swiftly (Joenniemi, 2010: 25). Moreover, it can be also argued that by the end of 2009, the allies declared that the mission in Afghanistan was heading on the right track (Rasmussen, 2009) and thus started preparing for phase IV of the operation (transition). Nevertheless, doubts still lingered on and the validity of these happy endings remained open for questioning, as did NATO's global ambitions and credibility.

As such, just like Ringmar would suggest, NATO did not feel too comfortable with the widely spread lack of faith concerning its transformation. Even though "humiliated" (as in Ringmar's case) would not be the most suitable word to describe the Alliance in the wake of the second decade of the 21st century, NATO was nonetheless affected by its tainted credibility on the international arena. Therefore, according to Ringmar, the Alliance would have three options: the first would be to accept the corrections that others suggested, to internalize them and to make them its own; the second would be to rethink its descriptions of itself and to come up with an improved story that better corresponds to the facts as they have been revealed. Yet, both these options entail recognizing defeat (Ringmar, 1996: 82). Thus, there is the third and last option, which would entail standing by its own original story and trying to convince the audiences that the identity it chose does in fact apply to and best suits NATO. (ibid: 83)

According to Ringmar, the desired option would be revealed either through discourses, declarations or official documents, or through the more convincing gesture…of action (Ringmar, 1996: 82). In NATO's case, the Alliance did both, as it decided to go with the third option and impose its new identity, its new story to internal and external audiences alike; and what better way to do this than through a new Strategic Concept (launched in November 2010, upon the Lisbon Summit), a

document which, as stated before in this paper, serves not only as a strategic guide, but also as a way of promoting the Alliance to the world (Rynning; Ringsmose, 2009: 8). The existing Strategic Concept, adopted in 1999, was clearly outdated since it was conceived before 9/11, before the terrorist attacks in Europe, before Alliance engagement in Afghanistan, before the war in Iraq and the transatlantic crisis, before additional waves of NATO enlargement, before the cyber attacks on Estonia, and also before the reappearance of an assertive Russia and many other global trends (Hamilton et al., 2009: V). Yet, if we take into account the Comprehensive Political Guidance (considered an interim strategic concept) we realize that the only proceedings not covered by a strategic document of the Alliance were the cyber attacks of Estonia, the latest developments in Afghanistan and Russia's reassertion at a Eurasian level, a clear sign that these events were indeed important for NATO and that the Alliance felt the need to respond to them.

Thus, being under an increasing wave of skepticism concerning its global presence (due to the above mentioned incidents), NATO used the 2010 strategic concept in order to reassert its out of area capacities and ambitions, emphasizing once more the Alliance's importance and relevance on the international scene. In this sense, right from the outset, the strategic concept portrays a confident NATO, unwilling to give up its global status. From the first page of the document, the alliance already talks about its openness to further enlargement in Europe, its commitment to international partnerships, its intention of continuing the reform "towards a more effective, efficient and flexible Alliance" and its availability of deploying its military forces wherever and whenever they are required (NATO, 2010 : preface). Also, what is more than evident all throughout the document is the fact that NATO's emphasis when talking about itself is no longer placed on Europe or the Euro-Atlantic region, but on the international scene in general. In this respect, although it stresses that the essential mission of the Alliance remains that of safeguarding "the freedom and security of all its members", in the exact same paragraph NATO characterizes itself as "a source of stability in an unpredictable world" (NATO, 2010: article 1), and then pledges its support to the UN mission of maintaining "international peace and security" (ibid: article 2). Thus, besides the classical tasks and principles of the Alliance (security, consultation, deterrence and

defense), the 2010 strategic concept also introduces that of cooperative security[10], namely NATO's engagement to "actively enhance international security" by undertaking operations within or even "beyond its borders"…"through partnership with relevant countries or other international organizations" (ibid: article 4c).

In addition, in spite of the problems encountered in the years prior to the Lisbon Summit (I am referring here especially to the Russian-Georgian conflict), NATO foresees or better yet re-states that a conventional attack against NATO territory is low (ibid: article 7). Still, it acknowledges the possibility of such an attack but it suggests that the only way it may occur is through ballistic missile proliferation (ibid: article 8), not at all through conventional military assaults (thus somewhat defying those who predicted a return of Realpolitik after the Russo-Georgian clash in August 2008). Amongst the other potential dangers, the Alliance mentions terrorism, nuclear proliferation and narcotics, all being issues which NATO has focused on upon 9/11, upon its identity shift. Special attention is also given to potential cyber attacks and other technology related threats, a sign that the Alliance has learned its lesson and wants to be prepared for everything.

Therefore, in a world full of the unpredictable, NATO also highlights its capabilities in undertaking crisis management operations, post-conflict stabilization missions, reconstruction missions, conflict prevention maneuvers as well as engaging itself in actual ongoing hostilities (ibid: article 20 - 23). In spite of everything that happened in Afghanistan, NATO appears very confident with regard to its abilities of effectively carrying out all of the above mentioned tasks, insisting on the Alliance's "unparalleled" capacity "to deploy and sustain robust military forces" (ibid: article 23). Still, as stated before, NATO seems to have learned its lesson and thus notes that, in order to continually make an "indispensable contribution to international conflict management efforts" (ibid: article 24) it needs to widen and strengthen its network of partners, to "countries and organizations around the globe" (ibid: article 28).

This network of partners is likely to include even Russia, the ever present entity within NATO declarations and documents, a country which, as many have argued, should be regarded as NATO's top adversary and the most vivid threat to the security and purposes of the Alliance. Frightened or not by Russia's assertive action

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[10] Building probably on the 1999 strategic concept which introduced the new, post-Cold War tasks of "Crisis management" and "Partnership" (NATO, 1999)

into Georgia, NATO stresses once more (as it has done constantly since 9/11) that the North Atlantic Community should not be regarded as a threat to Russia. Instead, the security of the two entities should be acknowledged as being intertwined and thus the former super-power is informally (or maybe even formally) invited to join NATO its is fight against terrorism, drugs, piracy, organized crime and so on, as well as to support and participate alongside NATO at the installment of an anti-ballistic shield which the alliance plans to set up in Europe (ibid: article 33 - 34).

Although these statements may portray a humble NATO in relation to its traditional adversary, the Alliance is more likely just cautious, knowing that a hostile Russia will certainly not help the its global ambitions…and also knowing that with Russia as a partner, NATO's goal of finally establishing "a Europe whole and free" is much closer to fulfillment (NATO also announces its intention of deepening the partnerships it has with Georgia and Ukraine as well as facilitating the integration within the Alliance of the Western-Balkan states) (ibid: article 35) .

Yet, NATO's purposes are far from being just European since it also stresses the desire to deepen and extend both the Mediteraneean Dialogue and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative. According to the strategic concept itself, "*unique in history*, NATO is a security Alliance that fields military forces able to operate together in *any environment*, that can control operations *anywhere* through its integrated military command structure; (NATO, 2010: article 36 – emphasis added).

In conclusion, the final paragraph of the Strategic Concept summarizes perfectly all that I have argued so far, revealing the allied desire of projecting a global security community (understood in constructivist terms).

> "We, the political leaders of NATO, are determined to continue renewal of our Alliance so that it is fit for the purpose in addressing the 21st century security challenges. We are firmly committed to preserve its effectiveness as the globe's most successful political-military Alliance. Our alliance thrives as a source of hope because it is based on common values of individual liberty, democracy, human rights and the rule of law and because our common essential and enduring purpose is to safeguard the freedom and security of its members. These values and objectives are universal and perpetual and we are determined to defend them through unity, solidarity, strength and resolve" (ibid: article 38).

However, if this statement and the document as a whole were not convincing enough, then the Alliance made things crystal clear (with regard to its global intentions) when it took command over the operations in Libya (March 2011), following the raising tensions between the forces of president Muammar Gaddafi and the vast group of rebels contesting his rule (BBC, 2011).

Unfortunately, due to the novelty of this event and the lack of literature concerning it, placing too much emphasis on it would be unwise. Yet, my intention is to note the things that are already certain and which are more than relevant for the purposes of this thesis. As such, if we are to look at things from the beginning we must mention that, initially, the uprising in Libya came about as part of the revolutionary domino effect which swept North Africa and the Middle East at the beginning of 2011 (NATO, 2011). Still, unlike the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt, which were tense, but eventually brought to a peaceful end, the Libyan revolt took a violent turn when Colonel Gaddafi tried to brutally repress the protests (ibid).

Nevertheless, this was a local problem which had no connection and did not pose any threat whatsoever to the security of NATO or any of its members. As such, NATO should not have had even the slightest interest to get involved in this internal strife let alone gain something from doing it. Still, in accordance with its identity as a global actor, as a global security guarantor, the Alliance could not simply remain indifferent, especially once the situation got out of proportion and the number of civilian casualties started growing. Seen from this perspective, NATO would have every reason to intervene, as it subsequently did.

However, the Alliance was not at the forefront of the operations from the beginning. The lead was taken by the United Nations' Security Council which passed on two resolutions against Libyan leaders, the last of which, resolution 1973, invited " member states and regional organizations to take "all necessary measures" to protect civilians in Libya" (UN, 2011). It was only upon this official decision that NATO began its involvement in the African country, following the stabilization attempts of an international coalition made up of voluntary states and led by France (Golovina; Georgy, 2011). In this sense, the Alliance showed great composure as it took over the operations only after it was invited to do so, both by the UN and by the members of the above mentioned coalition (most of which were NATO countries, but acting independently of the Alliance) (BBC, 2011). In other words, what is relevant for the purposes of this paper is that NATO did not impose its identity in an aggressive

manner and by its own will, as was the case in Ringmar's study. This however, does not necessarily undermine neither the employed framework nor its relevance with regard to the present study, since the overall preceding conditions were different, in the sense that NATO's identity was not previously rejected under humiliating circumstances (just challenged a little) and thus the Alliance's need of re-asserting itself was not that great (as was the case for Sweden in the 17th century). Still, the subsequent effects of NATO's action may have been even more successful due to the fact that, through its responsible attitude, the Alliance proved that it is not only reliable, but also able to act wherever and whenever it is needed (just like the 2010 strategic concept argued). In addition, by offering its services when the international community was in need of help, NATO made its point even clearer, in the sense that, by seizing a favorable moment, the Alliance did not even have to impose its identity on others; instead it allowed the others to realize and recognize it on their own; and if NATO manages to fulfill this somewhat easy mission successfully it will not only be acknowledged as a global actor but also as a reliable and efficient global actor and all the drawbacks caused by the Afghanistan and the Russo-Georgian War may wither away in the wind. Nevertheless, regardless of the outcome, NATO made it clear to the world that it is here to stay and that it is not willing to back down from its global aspirations.

9   Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was twofold. The primary task was that of investigating "the extent to which NATO's behavior in the 21st century was driven by identity", while the secondary aim was that of testing an identity based framework for explaining action developed by Erik Ringmar (1996). The overall idea of the paper stemmed from, and was subsequently based on, the constructivist belief that NATO is not merely an instrumental, military, power and interest anchored organization, but a security community, a community of shared values and beliefs, a community brought together by a mutual sense of belonging, by a common identity (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 221-224).

Thus, by building a narrative based on the four requirements of Ringmar's model, the paper set out to show that even one of the toughest, most materialistic organisms on the international scene thinks about who it is, before it acts according to what it wants (Wendt, 1999: 224). In this sense, in order for things to be as explicit as possible the chapters of the thesis were divided according to these "instances", as I have referred to them. Therefore, when it comes to the first benchmark - *interest based accounts of the action to be explained should be proven inappropriate or contradictory* - I tried to reveal that the North Atlantic Alliance was thought of as more than just a military, interest based coalition; instead, it was conceived as an actual security community of like minded states, brought together by their common values and beliefs. In this sense, I presented how, immediately after the Cold War, power and interest driven theories were predicting NATO's demise (realists) or its silent survival (neoliberals) and how after it became clear that the Alliance would not only persist, but play an important role in world politics, such accounts struggled to find explanations with regard to this situation. Still, even when adequate explanations were forged, they proved to be either unfalsifiable (realists) or incomplete (neoliberals).

When it comes to instance number two - *the action should be preceded by a formative moment (a world historical moment, a crisis or simply an event in which new ways of understanding the world are forged) in which the actor (in this case*

NATO) has to be engaged – the paper portrayed how the events of September 11, 2001 have changed international politics (by introducing terrorism as a global threat and thus modifying traditional ways of understanding and conceptualizing security). In addition, the thesis also stressed the formative effect which these events have had on NATO in particular, revealed by the Prague summit of 2002, when the Alliance was for the first time and specifically employing the term "transformation" to describe its direction forward.

Hence, as instance numbers three describes - t*he actor should be involved in a process of identity formation, coming up with new ways of identifying and portraying itself* – the transformation which started at the Prague Summit was to turn NATO, form a Euro-Atlantic alliance into a true global actor, an identity that NATO presented to the world both within an official document (the CPG, which highlights the Alliance as no longer geographically bound) and through a series of self-explanatory actions: creating the NATO Response Force (NRF) – capable of acting quickly anywhere in the world -, taking over the peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan, undertaking the training mission of Iraq's security forces, expanding to the East with the acceptance of 7 new European members (subsequently 9 after the acceptance of Albania and Croatia in 2009), elevating the Mediterranean Dialogue to the level of Partnership, initiating the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative with states like Qatar, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates or Kuwait and strengthening its relations with non-European Contact Countries (Australia, New Zeeland, Japan and South Koreea), to name just the most important (Hamilton et al., 2009: 21).

Finally, just like Ringmar's forth instance suggests - *the newly, self-attributed identity should be rejected under humiliating circumstances* – NATO's identity, although not necessarily refused under shameful conditions, was nevertheless undermined. The two main events responsible were (1) the unforeseen lengthening of the Afghanistan campaign, which raised doubts with regard to NATO's capability of logistically handling out of area operations and (2) the Russo-Georgian War, which revealed a humble NATO, incapable of countering Russia's re-assertion as a regional power and thus questioned NATO's essential desiderate, namely its capability of actually protecting all of its member states (given that Georgia was a potential candidate for membership).

Consequently, the final chapter reveals how, as a response to these critics and as a token of its attachment to the new, global identity, the North Atlantic Alliance

reiterated its global aspirations through the 2010 strategic concept, the Alliance's "promoting document", in which it reemphasized its worldly character and its intention of keeping it that way. What's more, if words on paper were not convincing enough, NATO's intervention in Libya proved once and for all that the Alliance is not only willing, but also capable of sustaining such a global role.

This being said, the first obvious conclusion that can be drawn is the fact that Ringmar's framework proves extremely useful and appropriate in accounting for NATO's behavior and actions in the 21st century, thus fulfilling the secondary purpose of this paper. When it comes to the primary purpose, it can be concluded that interest-based accounts do provide, at times, plausible explanations for NATO's behavior, but they have proven faulty on numerous occasions and are still encountering difficulties in accounting for the Alliance's expansive evolution. On the other hand, the identity based explanation provided here seems to be extremely suitable for justifying not only NATO's actions in the 21st century, but also its overall behavior throughout history and especially those "exceptional" situations (turning points) which interest based accounts usually fail to vindicate. As such, based on what has been presented above it would be safe to conclude that, NATO's behavior in the 21st century was to a large extent influenced, if not particularly driven by identity related impulses.

10 Executive Summary

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was probably one of the most active international organisms in the first decade of the 21st century. It has been engaged in operations all over the world, from the more popular campaigns carried out in Afghanistan, Kosovo, or Libya to smaller scale missions like those in Pakistan (after the 2005 flooding), Germany (at the 2006 World Cup) or the United States (after hurricane Katrina). Accordingly, the present paper intends to look into the reasons for which the Alliance took on such operations. More specifically, unlike mainstream positions that regard NATO as a power driven and gains maximizing organization (acting only in accordance with materialistic desiderates), the present thesis chooses to look at NATO from an identity based (constructivist) perspective and is interested in determining the extent to which the Alliance's behavior in the 21st century has been driven by identity.

The basic premise of the paper is the fact that NATO does not represent just an instrumental, power and interest anchored organization, but a security community, a community of shared values and beliefs, whose members are brought together by a mutual sense of belonging, by a common identity (Schimmelfenning, 1998: 221-224). Building on this belief, the paper utilizes an identity based model for explaining action (a model developed by Erik Ringmar – 1996 - in his study on why Sweden entered the 30 years war), in order to illustrate and reveal how identity related issues may influence the behavior of the Alliance. Yet, instead of taking the above mentioned framework for granted, the present thesis plans on adding more composure to the thesis and thus, as a secondary purpose, it plans to test the model against the case of NATO[11]. As such, in order to make the things more comprehensible and easier to follow, the paper is divided according to the four requirements prescribed by Ringmar.

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[11] This "testing" should not be understood in a neopositivist sense, that of appraising its general validity, but in an analyticist way, namely of assessing its usefulness in a case-specific way. (see Jackson, 2011)

Consequently, when it comes to the first benchmark - *interest based accounts of the action to be explained should be proven inappropriate or contradictory* - given the fact that the present thesis is focused on investigating the behavior of NATO in the 21st century (understood as a series of actions, not a single, particular one) choosing which accounts to counter would be subjective. Accordingly, in order to make the study more compelling, the paper does not start directly with the events of the 21st century (also considering such an attempt arbitrary), but with the initial, constitutive moment, namely the moment of NATO's formation, and then works its way up to the time span under investigation. By doing so, the thesis is able to show more convincingly that identity related motives have accompanied the Alliance all throughout its history and that it is thus plausible to assume that they have done the same in the 21st century and will continue to do so even further. Also, with regard to the requirement mentioned above, this historical endeavor is extremely useful since it offers a better grounded justification with regard to the general fallacy and inappropriateness of interest based accounts in explaining NATO's evolution and persistence in time. The most relevant example is that of the post-Cold War period when power and interest driven theories were predicting either NATO's demise (realists) or its silent survival (neoliberals). However, after it became clear that the Alliance would not only persist, but also play an important role in both European and even international politics, such accounts struggled to accommodate this situation to their theoretical reasoning. Still, even when adequate explanations were forged, they proved to be either unfalsifiable (realists) or incomplete (neoliberals).

The inadequacies are further supplemented by interest-based reactions with regard to NATO's transformation upon 9/11 (thus stepping into the 21st century). This event is closely linked to the second requirement featured by Ringmar's model, namely that, *the action under investigation should be preceded by a formative moment (a world historical occurrence, a crisis or simply an event that brings about new ways of understanding the world) in which the actor (in this case NATO) has to be engaged.* In this sense, the paper clearly shows how the events of September 11, 2001 have changed international politics (by introducing terrorism as a global threat and thus modifying traditional ways of understanding and conceptualizing security), also stressing the formative effect which the incident has had on NATO in particular. This outcome is revealed the Prague Summit of 2002, when the Alliance was for the

first time and specifically employing the term "transformation" to describe its direction forward.

Hence, as instance numbers three describes - *the actor should be involved in a process of identity formation, coming up with new ways of identifying and portraying itself* – the transformation which started at the Prague Summit was to turn NATO, form a Euro-Atlantic alliance into a true global actor, an identity which NATO presented to the world both within an official document (the Comprehensive Political Guidance – 2006 -, which highlights the Alliance as no longer geographically bound) and through a series of self-explanatory actions: the already mentioned operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Germany, Pakistan and the U.S., doubled by an eastward expansion through the acceptance of 9 new members and a tighter cooperation with countries ranging from Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (Istanbul Cooperation Initiative - 2004), to Japan, Australia, South Korea or New Zeeland (Contact Countries) (Hamilton et al., 2009: 21).

Last but not least, with regard to the forth instance - *the new, self-attributed identity should be rejected under humiliating circumstances* – it would be farfetched to say that NATO's new identity was refused under shameful circumstances. Yet, this global identity was nevertheless undermined. The two main events responsible were (1) the unforeseen lengthening of the Afghanistan campaign, which raised doubts with regard to NATO's capability of handling out of area operations and (2) the Russo-Georgian War, which revealed a humble NATO, incapable of countering Russia's re-assertion as a regional power and thus questioned NATO's essential desiderate, namely its capability of protecting all of its member states (given that Georgia was a potential future member).

Finally, the last part of the study portrays a 5th instance (personal emphasis), that in which the actor tries to re-affirm its identity, to demonstrate the validity of its self-description (in our case the global outlook). According to Ringmar, such a re-assertion can be done either through declarations or through the more suggestive gesture…of action (Ringmar, 1996: 82). With regard to the Alliance, NATO did both: it adopted a new Strategic Concept (the essential guidebook of the Alliance), launched in November 2010 and it intervened in Libya in order to protect the civilian population from president Gaddafi's random air raids, directed against the so called "rebels" who contested his rule. In other words, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization acted in order to prove that its new global image does indeed apply to

the Alliance, thus revealing to the world that NATO is not only willing but also capable of sustaining such a global role.

Based on these events, the paper concludes that NATO's behavior in the 21st century fits perfectly into the pattern of Ringmar's model, proving its usefulness (and therefore fulfilling the second purpose of the paper) and also (implicitly) attesting that, although interests cannot be discarded, identity was to a large extent the driving force behind NATO's behavior in the 21st century (and thus satisfying the primary aim of the study as well).

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