Introduction – A New Paradigm for NATO?

Ellen Hallams, Luca Ratti and Benjamin Zyla

Historians and political scientists tend to yearn for turning points. The history of the Atlantic Alliance has been no exception in this regard and is one ripe with defining moments. Since the signing of the Washington Treaty on 4 April 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has been a principal witness to some of the seminal events of the Cold War, from the Korean War that paved the way for the creation of NATO’s integrated military command structure and the integration of West Germany into the alliance in 1955 to the travails of Suez and Vietnam. Its members have had to face the perils of the Berlin blockade and the Cuban Missile Crisis in the early 1960s and confront the spectre of nuclear war. A sense of crisis has often accompanied the alliance on its long, and sometimes turbulent, path through its 64 years; on gloomier occasions, such as the French withdrawal in 1966 and the Soviet deployment of SS-20 missiles in 1977, and on more joyful days, as when the Berlin Wall came down in November 1989 and the Soviet Union disintegrated in December 1991, NATO has been no stranger to drama and tension. The end of the Cold War was perhaps the most defining moment of all, creating a sense of significant political discontinuity. In the absence of the Soviet threat that had defined its existence for 40-plus years, NATO’s very being was called into question, and the alliance struggled to articulate a new raison d’être. It became fertile grist for critics who claimed that NATO was no longer relevant to what seemed a radically altered strategic environment or that the maintenance of a vast military alliance could simply not be justified in the absence of an overriding threat to member states’ interests. For others it was inconceivable and potentially harmful that NATO would be disbanded, given the uncertainties generated by the end of the Cold War. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher captured the prevailing mood when she declared, ‘You don’t cancel your home insurance policy just because there have been fewer burglaries on your street in the last 12 months!’

Throughout its history NATO has experienced many defining moments, such as the formation of the military structure, the entry of the Federal
Republic of Germany, the Suez Canal divisions and the French withdrawal. The end of the Cold War was, however, more than simply a defining historical marker; indeed, it can be understood more as a ‘paradigm shift’ for the alliance, as the tectonic plates that generated its formation and supported its early life for so long finally gave way to a new and unfamiliar landscape, one in which existing assumptions and ideas had to be rethought.

But what does the term paradigm shift mean in the study of international politics? In 1962 Thomas Kuhn famously identified paradigms as coherent traditions of scientific research, based on an ‘entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community’. While often liberally used and quoted in the social sciences literature, it is worthwhile to reflect a little deeper as to how the paradigm concept, developed by a natural scientist, could apply to the study of International Relations (IR) in general and to NATO in particular, and what precise explanatory value it may hold for scholars studying the alliance.

At the most abstract level, a concept (i.e. paradigm shift) is a general or abstract idea that basically serves to organize observations and ideas about some particular aspects of the social world. A paradigm can be thought of as an analytical concept that connotes a particular set or cluster of beliefs and assumptions (sometimes unstated) ‘that influence views on what should be studied, how research should be done, and how results should be interpreted’. In short, a paradigm is an analytical tool that helps us to see and structure the world according to a particular pattern. It provides assumptions as to how the world works and how new knowledge is created.

In his groundbreaking book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* Kuhn applied the concept of paradigms to the natural sciences. For Kuhn, a shifting paradigm causes a scientific revolution, in which existing paradigms are challenged or even replaced with new ones that are found to be increasingly inconsistent with the former because of their fundamentally diverse ontological and epistemological assumptions. Important to recall from Kuhn is the definition of a paradigm, which is an ‘existing scientific achievement, specific concrete problem–solution which has gained universal acceptance throughout a scientific field as a valid procedure, and as a model of valid procedure for pedagogic use’. Kuhn argues that procedures in scientific training – he called them scientific cultures – rest on accepted terminologies of a particular field, a particular method and modes of perception and are passed on to other generations through their practice. Put differently, in a process of growing anomalies that produces dissatisfaction with conventional scientific practices, major procedural and conceptual reorientations are taking place and produce a change in the character of research (i.e. research culture). Old paradigms that increasingly hold unsatisfactory predictive powers and have become perhaps limited in scope are slowly being replaced with new ones. Important to note, according to Kuhn, are two
things: (1) it is not the single occasion of a paradigm challenge that triggers a scientific revolution, but indeed the frequency of such that challenges one routinized practice to another; (2) a scientific revolution radically transforms the existing scientific culture of the researchers, that is, the paradigm with which they are used to analysing scientific problems and issues. Thus, a radical reconstruction of existing practices is taking place. In turn, the revolution ceases to exist when the research community has accepted new practices and procedures for conducting scientific research, which ultimately leads to the adoption of a new paradigm.

As John Naughton notes, Kuhn's ideas about paradigms as an intellectual framework 'quickly escaped into the wild and took on a life of its own' to be used and abused. Still, the fact that Kuhn's ideas were specific to the world of science and scientific revolutions does not mean that they cannot have utility to political scientists trying to understand the significance of certain events or periods of time when new thinking emerges to challenge previous assumptions. If a paradigm is understood as a common intellectual framework, then, in essence, the question we have asked in this volume is whether 9/11, and the events that flowed from it, caused the alliance to rethink existing assumptions and ideas about its role in international security affairs; to be sure, the alliance had been engaged in an intellectual process of rethinking its role since the latter stages of the Cold War. NATO began to make the shift from an organization dedicated only to the collective defence of member states' territories and into a wider collective security institution predicated on crisis management in the early 1990s, but it did so with a sense of uncertainty and tentativeness. Its Balkans' missions were the alliance's first foray into these unchartered waters, but in many ways they demonstrated an alliance both ill at ease and ill-equipped for such new tasks. In addition to continuing European dependence on the United States. NATO remained firmly anchored as a regional alliance, whose ambitions remained limited to security and stability in Europe and North America. In contrast, the alliance's transition to a more globally oriented, expeditionary alliance, engaging in operations well beyond the Euro-Atlantic zone, working with a network of global partners, is one that took place after 9/11. These two poles naturally stimulate a central question: was this transition the result of 9/11? Was it one already under way within the alliance and would likely have happened organically, or did it need a catalysing event such as 9/11 that would thrust NATO onto this path, whether it was ready for it or not? Can this be understood as NATO's paradigmatic moment, when existing assumptions about the alliance's role and purpose fundamentally shifted giving rise to new patterns of thought? Or does such an approach risk attributing to one event a significance it does not warrant; is, in fact, 9/11 an 'anomaly' that can be considered only alongside the collapse of the Soviet Union as ushering a 'revolution' in NATO's practices, cultures and beliefs, one that has perhaps not yet run its full course and
which has caused analysts, scholars and commentators to think differently about the alliance’s role, purpose and identity?

In the fields of IR and history, indeed, the collapse of the Soviet Union was a ‘strategic shock’ that caught many in the academic community off guard, forcing them to rethink existing assumptions, ideas and beliefs. It could thus be seen as a paradigm change that heralded the shift from a bipolar to a unipolar international order, and created an environment in which the dominant theoretical approach to IR, neo-realism, found itself challenged by constructivist and post-positivist approaches. The perceived stability of what John Lewis Gaddis termed ‘the Long Peace’ gave way to what Robert Kaplan described as ‘The Coming Anarchy’, a world likely to be dominated by ‘disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources, refugee migrations, the increasing erosion of nation-states and international borders, and the empowerment of private armies, security firms, and international drug cartels’. Although scholars and academics viewed the end of the Cold War through different interpretive lenses, there was a groundswell of consensus that it was a momentous and transformative event in world history.

For NATO the paradigm shift from Cold War to post-Cold War had profound consequences, forcing the Atlantic community to rethink the ideas, beliefs and assumptions that had guided it for half a century. New ways of thinking were required to adapt the alliance to a changed strategic environment dominated by uncertainty over what future threats to member states would look like. Ethnic cleansing, humanitarian conflicts, the rise of non-state actors, terrorism, climate change, global poverty and weapons of mass destruction all seemed to constitute what US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright termed a ‘viper’s nest of perils’. At its 1991 Rome Summit, the alliance acknowledged the new paradigm that had emerged out of the ruins of the Cold War, commenting that

The security challenges and risks which NATO faces are different in nature from what they were in the past… In contrast with the predominant threat of the past, the risks to Allied security that remain are multi-faceted in nature and multi-directional, which makes them hard to predict and assess… Risks to Allied security are less likely to result from calculated aggression against the territory of the Allies, but rather from the adverse consequences of instabilities that may arise from the serious economic, social and political difficulties, including ethnic rivalries and territorial disputes, which are faced by many countries in central and eastern Europe.

Such predictions proved prescient, as instability and ethnic violence erupted in the Balkans, offering NATO an opportunity to demonstrate that it could
successfully deal with the new security threats. Although ultimately successful, NATO missions in both Bosnia and Kosovo exposed fault lines within the alliance as differences over tactics and strategy saw member states become embroiled in costly debates that did little to enhance NATO’s credibility.\textsuperscript{13} Lengthy deliberations over how to respond to the crisis in Bosnia led one commentator to suggest that the alliance’s mission had more to do with ‘saving NATO’ than it did with saving Bosnia.\textsuperscript{14} Although the alliance responded with greater speed and determination to the unfolding violence in Kosovo, allegations that NATO was fighting a ‘war by committee’ fuelled recriminations and resentments, and exposed the fault lines that lay at the heart of the alliance – fault lines which would be further exposed by the events of 9/11. Still, new ideas and thinking emerged in the 1990s as NATO sought to adjust to the post-Cold War paradigm, not least that the alliance should begin a parallel process of enlarging eastwards, while seeking to forge a new and more cooperative relationship with Russia, a process many critics saw as inherently contradictory. Many feared that enlarging the alliance would only serve to heighten Russian fears and concerns, and further fuel instability in Europe.\textsuperscript{15} While the United States foresaw a more ‘global’ role for the alliance in dealing with threats beyond Europe’s borders, the former Warsaw Pact nations that joined the alliance found it harder to shake off old assumptions and beliefs, continuing to view NATO’s primary purpose as safeguarding European security and hedging against the possibility of a resurgent Russia. Other European nations saw their priorities shift to European integration, with efforts to develop a European Security and Defence Identity (ESDI). A decision at the 1996 Berlin ministerial meeting to integrate ESDI within NATO, and allow the European Union (EU) access to NATO planning capabilities, gave way in 1999 to the establishment of a European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) that sought to provide the EU with the capacity for autonomous action when NATO was not involved. ESDP fuelled US concerns that a separate European defence capability would undermine the centrality of the alliance, and left many questions unanswered as to the nature of the relationship between the two institutions.\textsuperscript{16}

In short, by the end of the decade diverging views and forces within the alliance had manifested themselves; NATO seemed to have become an alliance whose purpose and aims were increasingly blurred and driven by domestic politics rather than by questions of Atlantic cohesion or unity. These three central developments – NATO’s Balkans’ missions, enlargement and the emergence of ESDP – were all pivotal to NATO’s post-Cold War transformation; paradoxically, however, they also served to illuminate the fissures and fault lines that were emerging within the alliance, and the structural impediments to NATO’s efforts to successfully adapt to the changed strategic environment.

The first decade of NATO’s life after the collapse of the Soviet Union thus saw the alliance struggling to bridge the divide between the old Cold
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War paradigm and the new post-Cold War paradigm that had emerged to replace it. As alliance leaders gathered at the 50th anniversary summit in Washington DC, they did so amidst an atmosphere of growing levels of mistrust and tension, and European efforts to forge ESDP. NATO’s 1999 New Strategic Concept sought to address many of the debates and disagreements among NATO allies that had persisted throughout the 1990s. It stated that the alliance would ‘stand ready, case-by-case and by consensus . . . to contribute to effective conflict prevention and to engage actively in crisis management, including crisis response operations, to enhance the stability and security of the Euro-Atlantic region’.17 The belief that NATO had to go ‘out of area or out of business’ was a popular one within the United States, but disagreement remained as to the geographic boundaries within which such ‘crisis response operations’ should be conducted, with the Europeans primarily concerned with peacekeeping and crisis management operations within Europe, and the United States keen to see NATO evolve into a ‘global’ alliance, taking on missions well beyond its borders, particularly in the Persian Gulf and Middle East.

It was against this backdrop that NATO found itself forced to confront yet another shift to the foundations on which it stood. On the morning of 11 September, 2001, Al-Qaeda terrorists hijacked three aircrafts and flew them into the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington DC, causing the loss of nearly 3,000 lives and incalculable economic and emotional turmoil. With the events captured live on global news networks, the attacks instantly became an iconic moment in international history, seeming to herald the emergence of a new and infinitely more dangerous form of international terrorism. In the immediate aftermath, no one could predict with any certainty just how transformative an event 9/11 would be. As with the end of the Cold War, scholars and academics rushed to interpret the meaning and significance of what had taken place. Barry Buzan, for example, asked: ‘Is it to be largely a one-off spectacular with a tail of minor follow-ons, and fairly effective countermeasures? Or is it to be a more sustained and vigorous assault triggering diverse countermeasures of varying degrees of effectiveness?’ Buzan did not foresee that 9/11 would lead to any fundamental challenging of the main theoretical frameworks governing the study of IR, nor would it give rise to new theoretical approaches or debates. In this context, Buzan argued that 9/11 was not a paradigm shift in the same way that the end of the Cold War was, but saw it as more analogous to the Cuban Missile Crisis, a ‘relatively short, sharp event which caused a lasting change of perspective and a reconsideration of various policies among the leading powers’.18 Like Buzan, Michael Cox claimed that ‘we do not and cannot know the full extent of what 11 September signifies historically because we do not know whether it is a one-off event or the beginning of something much bigger’.19
We now know, however, that 9/11 was the ‘beginning of something much bigger’. It has continued to shape the discourse of IR over a decade on, not because of what happened on that particular day, but because of what happened in the weeks, months and years that followed, and the train of events that the attacks and the Bush administration’s subsequent declaration of a ‘War on Terror’ set in motion. Few could have anticipated in 2001 that the attacks would give rise to a decade of war, or that ten years on, the transatlantic alliance would still be waging a counter-insurgency campaign in Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, the French newspaper *Le Monde* made headlines around the world with the phrase ‘Nous Sommes tous Americains’ (We Are All Americans). The phrase seemed to capture a moment of unparalleled unity in the transatlantic relationship, and suggested a new dawning in transatlantic relations. For NATO, the events of 9/11 initially appeared to suggest that a further paradigm shift might be about to take place, one that looked certain to usher in another seismic change to the tectonic plates on which the alliance had stood, shakily, since the end of the Cold War. It provided an overarching narrative for a transatlantic alliance that had been searching for a common vision and purpose since the fall of the Berlin Wall, but it also put America’s relations with its European allies under immense strain, and exposed the fault lines and schisms that were already evident, casting yet more doubt on the alliance’s future.

There is, of course, a danger in becoming fixated on such events, and in attributing to one single event a significance it does not warrant. Future scholars may well look back on the global economic crisis of 2009 or the ‘Arab Spring’ of 2011 as equally transformative events that led to a profound rethinking of existing ideas and assumptions. For Christopher Coker, it is the 1994 Partnership for Peace, the 1997 NATO–Russia Founding Act and the 1999 enlargement of the alliance that are the ‘keystones in NATO’s path to becoming a post-modern alliance’.20 Viewed in this light, 9/11 is little more than the ‘short, sharp event’, Buzan predicted. Moreover, the killing of Osama Bin Laden in May 2011, NATO’s operation in Libya, the ten-year anniversary of the attacks in September 2011 and calls from President Obama to move on from a ‘decade of war’21 suggest that 9/11 may be receding ever further into the shadows of history. In 2010 Rob de Wijk emphasized three fundamental security challenges facing the alliance in the future: (1) the impact of rising powers such as China, India and Russia; (2) the security implications of resource scarcity; and (3) the impact of climate change.22 US Ambassador to NATO Ivo H. Daalder has suggested that NATO’s 2010 New Strategic Concept represents a ‘NATO 3.0’ that marks a new era in the alliance’s history, one in which it is able to move forward from the debates and divisions that have marked the post-Cold War, or ‘2.0’ NATO.23 Indeed, many of the core issues and challenges now facing
the alliance continue to stem from the systemic changes brought about by
the end of the Cold War, not least the proliferation of nuclear weapons and
the emergence of the new security agenda. In the absence of an event such
as 9/11, it is likely that NATO would have continued its enlargement and
outreach programme, developed global partnerships, and sought to forge
effective relationships with Russia, the EU, the United Nations (UN) and
other security organizations. Similarly, the idea that NATO should act ‘out
of area’ had been firmly established by the late 1990s, even if it did not
always command universal support, as had a commitment to improving and
enhancing the alliance’s military capabilities.

Yet while 9/11 may not have fundamentally altered the trajectory on
which NATO was heading, it remains a transformative event for the alliance,
one that has played a major role in shaping the alliance in the decade that
followed. The purpose of this book – which developed from the many reflec-
tions on the alliance’s post-9/11 development and transformation offered by
scholars on NATO panels the editors have convened at the annual Transat-
lantic Studies Conference – is thus to reflect on the wider significance of
9/11 for NATO, an alliance that, on the eve of the attacks, was arguably
still trying to adjust to the paradigmatic shift brought about by the col-
lapse of the Soviet Union. 9/11 certainly heralded a decisive moment for
the alliance after the challenges of the post-Cold War years and ushered in
a time of great uncertainty and adaptation for NATO. On the one hand,
it seemed to offer NATO an opportunity to reconfigure its identity around
the specific challenges posed by the terrorist threat, after a decade in which
the alliance had struggled to adjust to a world without a single, unifying
threat to member states’ interests. The attacks marked the first time that
NATO invoked its Article V guarantee, declaring an attack on one to be
an attack on all, and undertook operations well beyond Europe’s borders.
They also led to a major process of reform and transformation, resulting in
new political and military structures and capabilities. On the other hand,
9/11 also threatened to further expose the tensions and disagreements that
had manifested themselves over the 1990s between the United States and
its European allies. With the unilateralist orientation of the Bush adminis-
tration alienating many in Europe, and concerns in the United States over
what contributions European members of NATO could make to the US-
led ‘War on Terror’, many commentators and analysts predicted that 9/11
might mark the final nail in the coffin of an alliance that had lacked a
clear purpose since the fall of the Soviet Union. Divisions and disagree-
ments over burden-sharing, the war in Iraq, operations in Afghanistan,
and relations with non-member states have at times threatened to funda-
mentally rupture alliance unity, and have fuelled notions of a two-tier or
multi-tier alliance. Moreover, 9/11 undoubtedly had a profound impact
on the alliance’s relationship with the United States, changed the dynamics
of the alliance’s relationships with Russia and the EU and gave renewed
vigour to those seeking to turn NATO into a ‘global’ alliance. It brought into sharp focus the complexities and challenges of international terrorism and failing states, and has seen NATO leave a lasting footprint in the Middle East, fight a major war in Afghanistan and teeter on the brink of collapse over the war in Iraq. Indeed, in retrospect, the events of a single day set in motion a decade of war, with ramifications that continue to reverberate for the Atlantic Alliance today. As a result, NATO’s relationships with the EU and the UN have come under intense scrutiny, and have appeared ever more important as the alliance seeks to chart its way through troubled waters. NATO’s image and credibility has been tarnished in the Arab world, given its controversial and still ongoing mission in Afghanistan, and public diplomacy has become an increasingly critical tool in the alliance’s arsenal as it seeks to explain and justify not only its actions and decisions, but also its ongoing relevance. Moreover, the transformation of NATO’s military capabilities has often appeared stuttering at best, with initiatives like the NATO Response Force (NRF) suffering from a lack of political will amongst member states to equip it with the forces it needs to be operationally effective.

Against this backdrop and as NATO seeks to move beyond the events of that tumultuous decade, it seems timely to ask: How significant a turning point was 9/11 for NATO? Did it indeed induce a paradigm shift in NATO? To what extent did the attacks provide an opportunity for the alliance to reconfigure its identity around a new threat to member states’ interests? What impact did 9/11 have on US perceptions of the alliance, NATO’s relationship with Russia, the EU and UN, and on perceptions of it in the Middle East? As 9/11 recedes further into the past, will it continue to have a long-term impact on the alliance or will it be viewed as simply a ‘short, sharp event’ that did little to alter the fundamental trajectory on which NATO was travelling? In other words, the volume seeks to ask whether 9/11 represented a paradigm shift for NATO, a defining moment for the alliance in which previous assumptions, mindsets, and beliefs changed, leading to a major reshaping of the alliance in the decade that followed, or whether it will be viewed simply as an important historical marker accelerating changes and developments already under way.

NATO and 9/11: The theoretical debate

9/11 had without doubt a significant impact on international research of the alliance. However, whereas IR theorists had paid a great deal of attention to the shift from the Cold War to the post-Cold War era, theoretical analysis of the impact of 9/11 on NATO has been less substantive, particularly in the European context; above all, it never adequately distinguished from the literature addressing the alliance’s post-Cold War role. Whereas a number of academics in the United States endeavoured to provide theoretically
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informed analyses of the implications of the 9/11 attacks for the alliance – particularly in the context of the American response to the terrorist network of Osama Bin Laden, US foreign policy, and the Bush administration’s ‘War on Terror’ – the significance of 9/11 for the transatlantic alliance has only been marginally discussed, if not neglected, in the European context. With the exception of a small number of scholars the attention of European academics has continued to retain a pre-9/11 focus and has failed to deliver a comprehensive evaluation of the attacks on New York and Washington for the alliance. Instead, this body of literature has focused on more traditional issues, such as NATO’s ongoing contribution to European security, particularly in the context of US–European relations, its involvement in the Balkans, the process of Eastern enlargement and relations with Russia. Although NATO’s role in counter-terrorism and in tackling a number of new issues of growing relevance for the alliance’s members, such as energy, piracy, and cyber security, has been at least partially addressed, a thorough theoretical evaluation of the significance of the 9/11 attacks for NATO has been lacking. By contrast, scholars and analysts have applied theory to explain some aspects of NATO’s policy, for instance, enlargement, policymaking and socialization. Questions about the implications of 9/11 on NATO’s cohesion, identity and leadership have, however, only been marginally touched upon, although a number of theoretical interpretations have been advanced, including those formulated by neo-realists and neo-classical realists, institutional theorists, social constructivists and public choice theory scholars. Others have attempted a theoretical synthesis – for example, the constructivist realism of Gow – or favoured theoretical pluralism. However, the majority of this scholarship has tended to address questions such as ‘what is NATO for?’ or ‘where is it going?’ rather than systematically evaluating the consequence of 9/11 for the alliance. The result is a theoretical underdevelopment, bearing little or no insight into the implications of 9/11 for NATO. The majority of this scholarship has in fact been policy and empirically focused, while theoretical treatments of NATO have often been subsumed under broader studies of transatlantic relations and European security. As a result, theoretical treatments of NATO are often hurried and based on an ill-fitting attachment to ‘alliance theory’, while conceptualizations of NATO have been confined to the liberal ‘multilateral arrangement’, to the constructivist notion of security community or in terms of its inherent character as a ‘community organization’ or a ‘postmodern alliance’. The lack of comprehensive theoretical analysis has often made debates about the alliance, on NATO ‘decline’ or ‘crisis’, for example, meaningless as a result of the lack of a proper definition and operationalization of those terms, while innovative theoretical approaches have not engaged with NATO to any significant degree. Moreover, European scholarship has tended to defer to debates popularized by American scholars, such as the neo-realist/neo-liberal debate on the future of NATO.
In light of the above, the purpose of this book is twofold: to further theoretically informed work on NATO and to conduct a retrospective analysis of the implications of 9/11 for the alliance. The Bush administration’s proclamation of the ‘War on Terror’, later renamed by President Obama as the ‘Long War’, and the projection of Western power into Afghanistan and Iraq are events that have profoundly shaped NATO’s evolution in the last decade, contributing to a reconfiguration that has taken the alliance to a variety of areas, including terrorism, failing states, energy, cyber security, health and natural disasters, that bear little or no resemblance with the pre-9/11 period. IR theory provides contending arguments as a result of divergent methodological approaches that shape the ways in which these events are analysed and interpreted. This volume will explore how competing approaches have defined and assessed the consequences of 9/11 for the alliance, and how those varying interpretations have led to quite different conclusions. More specifically, the volume will seek to address the following questions: How do diverse theoretical perspectives help us to understand the implications of 9/11 on the alliance’s evolution and investigate NATO’s institutional, ideational and functional development? Are there regional divides in assessing what 9/11 has meant for NATO and do they lead to contending evaluations? In what ways has the alliance managed to develop approaches, understandings and solutions to post-9/11 challenges? Is there substantial theoretical diversity in addressing the consequences of 9/11 for NATO? What has been the impact of 9/11 on the alliance’s agenda, decision-making, intergovernmental bargaining, burden-sharing and policy formulation and implementation? Can multidimensional theoretical approaches improve our understandings and conceptualization of the alliance and explore the relevance of theory to practical problems of NATO operation, the status of the alliance in relation to international law, defence ‘free riding’, decision-making and institutional reform? The book will not embrace a specific theoretical approach but will promote a theoretical dialogue, and further conceptual, comparative and case-study analysis of NATO, while exploring the contours of new theoretical approaches distinct from the rationalist, ‘neo-neo’ tendencies of mainstream scholarship. It will thus appeal both to established scholars of NATO seeking to widen their expertise and to younger students and researchers.

Let us briefly review some theoretical propositions on NATO, to be explored in greater depth in Mark Webber’s chapter. For realist scholars 9/11 exacerbated existing divisions within the alliance, weakening NATO’s cohesion and exposing its increasing limited utility for the United States and Western European members. This pessimistic judgement reflects realist scepticism about the role of international institutions and is substantiated by the argument that they hold out only a ‘false promise’ as a foundation for new security structures and by historical experience. In the realist view, coalitions and alliances will form and prosper only in the presence of a common
threat to two or more states. Without a clear threat or a clearly defined adversary, coalitions and alliances will atrophy, as their members will be unlikely to subordinate individual interests to group interests. As a result, in the realist perspective, the lack of a clearly identifiable external danger will reduce the coalition’s cohesion and in the longer term will weaken and break up the alliance, making it less cohesive and leading to eventual irrelevance or breakup.\textsuperscript{27} However, realist theory makes no specific prediction about how much time should elapse before this will happen.\textsuperscript{28} NATO spent the first decade of the post-Cold War era deeply engaged in holding back the consequences of the Soviet bloc’s collapse. The attacks of 9/11 were an intervening seminal event in this regard, as they aggravated for the alliance the lack of purpose created by the Soviet Union’s disintegration. As long as NATO’s raison d’être was to keep the United States in, the Russians out and the Germans down, the alliance’s dynamic of American leadership, Russian exclusion and European complacency was both inevitable and appropriate. However, following the disintegration of the Soviet threat, it became increasingly complicated to achieve consensus within the alliance and to reconcile the national interests of its members.

This trend was further accelerated by the events of 9/11. Although for the first time in its history NATO invoked Article 5 on 12 September, the attacks and the subsequent US invasion of Afghanistan demonstrated that the most important security threats to NATO members, military or otherwise, emanated from outside of Europe and that the alliance was poorly equipped to handle them. The nature of the post-9/11 strategic environment made it increasingly complicated for NATO members to reconcile their national interests, when the most critical threats are varied and diffuse. According to the realist perspective, the real problem was not 9/11 per se, but the fact that, in the absence of the Soviet threat, the alliance’s member states do not really know what they want from NATO. In the military sphere, NATO is no longer the primary instrument of US choice. Although 9/11 generated an intense debate as to whether NATO needed to extend its mandate beyond the traditional borders of Europe, and despite the alliance having just invoked the Article 5 mutual defence clause, the United States, in preparing for Operation Enduring Freedom, did not give any thought to acting through NATO. Rather, Washington believed it would be able to exercise much more control and freedom of action over major combat operations by working through coalitions of the willing than within the heavily bureaucratized NATO alliance structure. Washington later endeavoured to continue to use the alliance as a multilateral framework for the legitimization of its global leadership and influence; however, calls to reinvigorate the alliance were met with reluctance by many Europeans and in 2003 NATO found itself deeply enmeshed in one of the most serious crises in its history. This incident and the following Iraq War deeply divided the allies, further unravelling what was left of the Cold War consensus. Subsequent US efforts at giving NATO a
more global reach and at expanding its European core to embrace the wider world, although reflecting a grand vision, have been clearly at odds with reality, bringing about a dramatic decline in the relative enthusiasm of American decision-makers for the alliance. Although in the immediate aftermath of the Iraqi crisis NATO agreed to assume command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) peacekeeping operation in Afghanistan, the first out-of-area operation in the history of the alliance, attempts to reinvigorate the alliance and repeated demonstrations of resilience have not masked US distrust of Europe and European uneasiness to go along with US policies. Many of NATO’s European members continue to perceive the alliance through what is essentially a Cold War prism, making it of limited use as a diplomatic actor. Yet, even from a realist viewpoint, in some cases the advantages of operating under the NATO umbrella continue to outweigh the negatives. NATO can provide putative legal legitimacy to operations that cannot achieve UN endorsement due to Russian or Chinese opposition in the Security Council. However, although NATO remains an alliance that still counts for more than the sum of its parts, it is not now and will almost certainly never again be the NATO of its founding fathers. By contrast, quixotic visions of dramatic new NATO roles and missions are in the interests of neither the United States nor the alliance’s European members, bear little relationship to actual NATO competencies and have no chance of succeeding in the real world. In the realist perspective, the glue that holds the post-9/11 alliance together is unquestionably weaker than it was during the Cold War.

Liberalist and constructivist theories provide different lenses through which to examine the implications of 9/11 for the alliance. While liberal scholars see NATO’s reform and transformation as the key to its adaptation to a post-9/11 world, constructivists are interested in the degree to which the alliance has reaffirmed/reconfigured its Western and democratic identity in the face of new threats and challenges originating outside this identity. In the liberal view, since NATO’s establishment in 1949, besides its stated purpose of maintaining common security against external aggression, the alliance has been traditionally linked to notions of democracy and freedom. More specifically, the alliance has proved itself as one of the most capable international regimes in avoiding military conflicts and building up peace and stability. Its members have embraced and promoted a set of liberal democratic values traditionally associated with the notion of the West. Through its expansion process, the alliance has served as a tool for an array of civilian issues, such as interstate relations, democracy, economic growth, and the protection of minority rights. In this view, after 9/11 NATO has continued to have significant value for the United States and its European allies. On a political and psychological level, the alliance remains a palpable hedge against an uncertain future, while its historical legacy continues to exercise a hold over its members, old and new, sustaining a reservoir
of goodwill and sense of shared destiny. On a practical level, NATO is the one place where US, European and partner militaries, and also those from the Middle Eastern states, can systematically learn to work and operate together and is likely to remain the primary vehicle for mounting important peacekeeping and peace-enforcement operations outside Europe. Despite dissonances over Iraq, the United States has continued to press an ambitious agenda on NATO. In Afghanistan, both the Bush and Obama administrations steadily pressured allies to broaden the risk they are willing to shoulder in conducting peace operations. In the run-up to the Riga summit in November 2006, the Bush administration proposed that NATO expand its contacts with non-European Western allies, such as Japan, Australia and South Korea, in order to give the alliance an even more global focus. Washington has also pressed NATO to take on a more substantial role in the Middle East and Africa. According to the liberal perspective, these initiatives map out an ambitious vision of an increasingly globally focused alliance taking on a progressively wider range of potential issues, activities and missions. A similar role could also await the alliance in a number of security issues that are not primarily military in nature, such as terrorism or energy security. Finally, thanks to substantial US expeditionary military capabilities, NATO possesses a unique capacity to mount and sustain substantial peacekeeping operations around the globe. The key question here is how far European allies will be willing to follow the US lead, especially in light of the conflicting reflections NATO’s mission in Afghanistan is generating among its members. Developing partnerships with key non-NATO Western allies will only further enhance this capacity. Organizational theory further reinforces this argument, pointing out how bureaucracies endeavour to secure an institution’s survival, justify its continuing existence, and extend its life, once the latter has outlived its initial purpose.

A similarly optimistic judgement is shared by social-constructivist scholars. Social constructivism portrays NATO not as a conventional alliance defined by the existence of external threats but as an organization whose essential identity and history is correctly understood as one of cultural commonality centred on the shared democratic foundations of its members. From a social-constructivist viewpoint, the alliance is therefore not a mere tool of statecraft or a ‘security community’ in the liberal sense in which the use of force by member states against each other is no longer conceivable, but a ‘constitutive entity’, which can influence and shape state perceptions and preferences. The discursive pillar of its existence is Western civilian values and practices. In other words, social constructivists regard NATO as a ‘security community’, whose essential identity and cohesion is based upon common cultural and democratic bonds, not primarily upon a shared military threat. As argued by Thomas Risse-Kappen, we would be missing the point about NATO if we were to conceive of it as ‘just another military alliance’. The alliance’s endurance after the end of the Cold War
demonstrates the causal preponderance of social over material structures: the web of social interactions among its members allowed NATO to survive the collapse of the Soviet bloc, providing inspiration for former Soviet satellites to institute wide-ranging democratic and economic reforms and contributing decisively to the pacification and stabilization of the Balkan region.

According to social-constructivist scholars, NATO’s evolution since 9/11 further corroborates the interpretation of the alliance as a ‘security community’ among like-minded states based on liberal-democratic principles and values. The raisons d’être of this community are the same liberal and democratic norms which govern the domestic political systems of its members rather than a sense of common external threat. The alliance’s members rely on cooperative security practices and share a disposition of self-restraint, in particular the abstention from the use of force in mutual relations. In the social-constructivist perspective, NATO has become a ‘community of practice’ with the potential of cognitive authority over non-member countries. 9/11 has further strengthened the alliance’s communitarian character. By continuing its Eastern enlargement and fostering cooperative agreements with Middle Eastern states and the Gulf region, cooperation with the alliance has become a precondition for being recognized as a modern, mature democratic subject while socialization is achieved not through negative categories of threat but when the principles and values which are shared by the members of the community have been internalized by the partner state through a process of social learning.

Finally, post-positivist perspectives view the alliance as fundamentally unfit to address the structural causes of terrorism, failing states and transnational violence. For them, NATO is simply a tool of Western imperialism and a vehicle used by Western states to band together and advance their interests in the rampant geostrategic race for influence and power over key Eurasian regions, from the Middle East to the Caspian Sea, that are rich in either oil or gas. For neo-Marxist scholars NATO’s survival and enlargement is about preserving old, and acquiring new, markets for the US military industry, while the destiny of the alliance is firmly tied to the needs of the military–industrial complex rather than to the actual interests of its member states. The book will discuss these contending theoretical outlooks, as it reflects upon the consequences of 9/11 on the alliance and the future directions and challenges that NATO is likely to take on.

Structure of the book

In examining and discussing some of the most significant issues that NATO has faced in a decade of war and to infer conclusions of this experience for the alliance in the decade to come, the book starts by discussing the main theoretical, methodological and historical tenets of this study in Part I. Mark Webber leads this discussion by introducing us to competing theoretical perspectives of the study of alliances. He will thereby contrast the
ontological and epistemological underpinnings of the theoretical paradigms used in the literature to allow for a pluralist overview of theories and methods currently employed for the study of NATO. To reiterate, the purpose of this section is not to introduce (or convince) the reader of one particular theoretical paradigm but to map out the maincontending rationalist and reflectivist theories of IR. This also provides the contributors to this volume with ‘theoretical flexibility’ in their chapters and allows, more generally, for the possibilities to infer about NATO’s future in the next decade and refinement of the theoretical paradigms. The second chapter in Part I by Michael Rühle provides critical reflections on 9/11 from the perspective of NATO HQ in Brussels. He argues that the terrorist attacks that day marked the shift from a geographical to a functional approach to security while the price of this paradigm shift induced by a globalized security environment is high. Given NATO is likely to face global, rather than merely regional, security challenges, the requirement for increased expeditionary military capabilities, extensive transatlantic consultations, and, above all, the development of a ‘global’ collective mindset have become ever more urgent. The third chapter in this section by Carl Hodge argues that with the Libyan campaign the alliance has exhausted the transformative changes of the post-Cold War and post-9/11 decades, but it has not proven to be impotent. The future favours burden-sharing in line with the limited military capabilities and circumstantial political will of its member states, that is, in the form of ‘coalitions of the willing’. Because the United States is simultaneously reordering its security priorities, the alliance finds itself in a phase of strategic retrenchment.

Part II, ‘The Transformation of NATO’, discusses the transformative aspects the alliance has struggled with over the last decade, including the process of military transformation, organizational transformation and questions of pooling and sharing. These issues were perhaps most visible in NATO’s two most recent operations in Libya and Afghanistan. Terry Terriff opens this section with his chapter on NATO transformation, which discusses the continuities and constants in this debate. He takes us on the ‘transformative path’ of NATO, and discusses the scope, extent and intensity of the way NATO has transformed militarily and politically over the last decade. Further, he explores what meaning this process of transformation had for the organization in general, and its role in Atlantic and global security in particular. After 2001, transformation was heralded as critical to NATO’s future role and relevance, yet a lack of political will and funding from member states has cast doubt over whether reform to NATO’s military capabilities can deliver what it promised. This chapter also asks: what can NATO’s new force structure and military posturing tell us about future force generations, common funding and operational capabilities? Is it time for the alliance to undertake strategic consolidation and reflection? Tim Bird follows with a critical analysis of NATO’s Afghanistan campaign and the war on terror more generally.
To some, the Afghan mission has become the most salient dimension of NATO’s out-of-area commitments and to global security more generally. Yet it remains a deeply divisive campaign that has both exacerbated existing fissures within the alliance over NATO’s role and future direction and caused new ruptures and tensions. In reality, the war in Afghanistan is not led by NATO but by the United States, which does not wish to see its forces run by the alliance. Furthermore, restrictions and caveats on forces have hampered operational success, while divisions over strategic aims and objectives have fundamentally weakened the alliance’s claim to nation-building and caused one commentator to suggest that NATO has become little more than an American foreign legion.36 Magnus Petersson’s chapter moves beyond the focus on 9/11 to introduce some of the most pertinent ‘soft’ security threats that the alliance has increasingly faced, notably energy, cyber and maritime security. Although these threats can be considered ‘non-conventional’ issues of Atlantic security, they nonetheless raise important questions as to the nature and meanings assigned to NATO’s collective defence clause enshrined in Article 5. To put it simply, do cyber attacks to Estonian security and defence installations pose a vital security threat to the alliance and in case of a breach does it set in motion a collective military response by NATO? Steve Marsh and Alan Dobson continue the discussion of the latest strategic challenges that NATO is facing, and critically reflect on the alliance’s New Strategic Concept and its predecessor from 1999. The 2010 Strategic Concept was published amidst much hype and expectation, and was seen as a necessary step in recognizing the enormous changes NATO has undergone in the decade since 2001 – and in providing strategic guidance for the years ahead. The chapter assesses whether the current Strategic Concept provides a reasonable benchmark for the added value and utility of NATO in the 21st century and whether it sufficiently balances the often competing demands of NATO’s core purpose of collective defence alongside the desire for NATO to adopt a more global orientation.

Jeff Michaels concludes Part II with a critical reflection on the alliance’s operation in Libya and the consequences for NATO’s ongoing transformation process. Specifically, it explores the degree to which this operation succeeded, despite a number of initial problems. Operation Unified Protector has seen the alliance rely heavily on the use of air power to prevent the Gaddafi regime from harming its own citizens, with the reticence to put ‘boots on the ground’ largely a legacy of its interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. With the British and French playing a leading role, and the United States taking a less active role in operations, the chapter asks whether Libya might offer an insight into future burden-sharing within the alliance. The justification for NATO’s involvement in Libya quickly changed; a mission to protect civilians became an intervention in a civil war, and more broadly to bring about regime change. In the process it once again exposed divisions and tensions between the allies, but the ultimate success of the operation
has also served to dampen criticism that after the alliance’s campaign in Afghanistan, it would be unable or unwilling to take decisive military action. Thus, the chapter asks whether the mission in Libya might portend a new model of burden-sharing based on coalitions of the willing within the alliance, or whether it has in fact served to further expose NATO’s inability to provide a convincing answer to the uncertainties and challenges that have marked its post-9/11 path.

Part III introduces NATO’s relationships with other international organizations and partner countries in Europe and the world. This is a debate that has followed the alliance since the Cold War’s end. NATO, as some experts hold, should deepen its partnerships with countries outside the Euro-Atlantic region by increasing its shared activities and by exploring new links with regional political and security groupings, including the Organization of American States (OAS), the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Indeed, if NATO continues to act globally, it is only as good as its contacts. Its network becomes a pivotal resource for being a successful global actor. A network exhibits force multiplier effects, offers an additional source of intelligence information, military planning, consultation and possibly troop contributions. NATO’s ties with non-NATO countries have become ever more important as its operational reach and mandate has widened, though with the exception of Australia, Finland, Japan, New Zealand and Sweden, these ties remain largely underdeveloped. However, a proposal introduced by the United States to set up a unit at NATO HQ to nourish these new partnerships was rejected. Some European members of the alliance in particular feared that NATO would lose its transatlantic focus. The proposal also failed because some EU states preferred ‘functional institutionalism’ – that is, deep institutional ties with other international organizations and like-minded states on an ad hoc and issue-by-issue basis. There is some currency to this argument in so far as NATO cannot and should not respond to every global crisis, but on cases and issues where it holds a comparative advantage. This increases the chances for success, and averts strategic fatigue. Ellen Hallams picks up on this discussion and analyses the most pertinent and enduring relationship that NATO has built since its inception in 1949, namely, that with the United States. By virtue of the United States holding superpower status in Atlantic security, the well-being and robustness of the NATO–US relationship is considered a primary indicator for the vitality and future of the alliance. US criticism of the alliance has been a constant theme over the past two decades, but the events of 9/11 starkly exposed divergent US–European perceptions and led to a profound weakening of transatlantic unity. Hallams explores the shifting dynamics of the US–NATO relationship since 2001, and asks whether the Obama administration’s renewed commitment to the alliance will be sufficient to guarantee NATO’s survival and continuing vitality. The financial crisis, both in the United States and in Europe, has exposed the need for a much-needed
clarification of the transatlantic bargain in order to strike a fair balance of interest and counter the risk of NATO losing relevance. Eliminating transatlantic disagreements might prove, however, a daunting task at a time when defence expenditures are bound to decline further, as European governments adopt tough fiscal austerity measures in order to tackle the effects of the financial crisis on their troubled finances.

Without a doubt, the second most important relationship that NATO maintains is that with the EU. Above all, the two organizations have 21 members in common, which produces an institutional overlap in terms of strategic interests and diplomatic practices. The NATO–EU institutional relationship has flourished since the EU declared its foreign and security policy fully operational. This has led to a substantive number of civilian and autonomous military operations that were led by the EU, partially in competition to NATO. Given NATO’s increasingly global orientation since 9/11, coupled with the EU’s expertise in civilian crisis management, the NATO–EU relationship has only increased in importance, but a number of obstacles and impediments remain to forging a truly effective ‘strategic partnership’. These themes and issues are explored by Sven Biscop in Chapter 11, which traces the evolution of this interinstitutional relationship over the previous decade and offers some judgements as to its prolonged existence in the future.

Luca Ratti’s chapter examines NATO–Russia relations, which have become an important issue for NATO, not least because of the end of the Cold War and the creation of the NATO–Russia Council as an institutional answer to address mutual insecurities. However, the relationship between the two actors became particularly difficult and tenuous with the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the Kremlin continues to perceive NATO’s actions on the fringes of the EU and the larger world as an act of imperialism. Equally, the frozen conflicts in Georgia and Russia’s claims on the Arctic region have prompted NATO to re-evaluate its policy towards Moscow. Even though President Obama has undertaken significant political actions to ‘reset’ relations with Russia, tensions remain present and strong. The persistence of conflicting interests with the Kremlin has reinforced division within the alliance, aggravating the intra-European schism within NATO, with a split between Central and Eastern European members on one side and Western members on the other. The former continue to regard Russia as a threat, the latter do not, thus fuelling doubts about NATO’s commitment to implement Article 5.

Trine Flockhart’s chapter on global partnerships discusses NATO’s evolving visions of increasing its salience and investments in those partnerships. More precisely, its aim is to create a global consultative network of like-minded actors and partners and to become a ‘hub’ of other security actors operating at the global level. This network has expanded over the past decade and is viewed by some as crucial to the ‘new’ alliance NATO is becoming. Yet the challenge of this global and network-centric approach lies precisely in
alienating its newest members from Central and Eastern Europe, who have joined the alliance on the promise of being defended against Russian expansionist forces rather than seeking a global security role for the alliance. In a sense, these tensions relate to the issue currently at the heart of the alliance, namely, the question of whether NATO wants to be a global or a regional security institution in the years to come.

The concluding chapter in Part III by Bastian Giegerich examines the relationship that NATO maintains with other security organizations, particularly the UN and the African Union (AU). With the publication of the Brahimi Report it has become accepted practice of the UN Security Council to call upon regional organizations like NATO or the AU to deploy peacekeeping forces to crisis areas. The two most recent examples of the UN delegating operational authorities to those organizations include Libya, Afghanistan, Darfur and the Balkans, where NATO replaced the weak and incapable UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) with robust and capable NATO forces. Against these historical experiences over the last decade, this chapter investigates if indeed the UN has created a ‘special relationship’ with NATO.

Finally, the conclusion reviews the many different perspectives and views contributors to this volume have offered, and suggests that while 9/11 was indeed a major catalyst behind the process of NATO transformation, it did not by itself constitute a paradigm shift for the alliance, especially as the term was conceived by Kuhn. Instead, our reflections suggest that the events of 9/11 are better understood as having accelerated, tensions and processes within the alliance, that were either set in motion by deeper systemic transformations generated by the end of the Cold War or by pre-existing dynamics. To be sure, 9/11 was a defining moment for the alliance; it triggered a decade of war and ‘out of area engagement’ that itself has had far-reaching consequences for the alliance, exposing new fault lines and fissures that have perpetuated the notion of an alliance in ‘crisis’. As NATO strives to move on from the events of the past decade the alliance continues to find itself grappling with deep-rooted systemic and structural changes to world order, which might require additional rethinking of the way in which the alliance operates. While contributors to this volume concur that such changes are unlikely to bring about NATO’s demise in the near future, they are likely to pose fundamental challenges for the allies, while continuing to shape alliance policy, its role in the world and future direction.

Notes

2. NATO’s evolution after the Cold War has attracted significant IR scholarship. For a selection see, for example, John Mearsheimer, ‘The False Promise of International


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The concept of cognitive authority, which developed from social epistemology, was defined by Wilson as the authority to influence thoughts that human beings would consider proper. Patrick Wilson, Second-Hand Knowledge: An Inquiry into Cognitive Authority (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 15.

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Introduction

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