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Constructing institutional interests: EU and NATO enlargement

K.M. Fierke and Antje Wiener

ABSTRACT This article examines the parallel process of NATO and EU enlargement. The analysis is motivated by both an empirical and a theoretical concern. It asks why both organizations are enlarging, despite questions about the materially based interest in doing so. It then raises a related theoretical question about how organizations know their interests and how these interests are transformed. The relationship between three concepts – speech acts, contextual change, and institutional interests – is explored by following the behaviour of three actors: NATO, EU and the CEECs. The analysis demonstrates how, given the dramatic change of context with the end of the Cold War, the meaning of the Cold War ‘promise’ of the Helsinki final act was transformed into a threat. The article argues that the rationality of both enlargement decisions has to be situated in a context of a priori and changing meanings regarding the identity and norms of the ‘West’.

KEY WORDS CEECs; enlargement; EU; Helsinki; identity; interests; NATO; speech acts.

INTRODUCTION

The eastward enlargement or expansion of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), respectively, are likely to transform the political and economic landscape of Europe. Yet there has been little analysis of the relationship between the two parallel processes. Instead, two separate literatures approach eastward enlargement from different angles. The literature on accession to the EU focuses primarily on more institutional, formal agreements and procedures, and less on the politics of the accession process.¹ Indeed, there has been little attention to the politics of European enlargement, that is, how it came about.² The question is important because neither EU enlargement nor NATO expansion was clearly envisioned in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. The EU had taken steps, with the Single European Act, the common market project of ‘Europe 92’ and the Maastricht Treaty, to deepen European integration; many saw the potential of widening to a group of ‘fragile democracies’ in the East as undesirable if not destabilizing.

The somewhat more lively political and academic debate over NATO expansion has tended to revolve around the question of whether this move eastward will

recreate the division of Europe or bring greater peace and stability to a fragmented region.³ In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, western publics were questioning why NATO, as a defensive alliance set up to contain the Soviet Union, was even necessary or relevant in the absence of its Cold War enemy. Many, at the time, assumed that the more comprehensive Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) would provide the framework for future security co-operation in a larger Europe, including Russia (Havel 1991: 35).

As a result, one can question how and why the expansion of both institutions is proceeding despite questions about the material interest in doing so and in the face of increasingly negative public opinion.⁴ In other words, why does it appear to have become 'inevitable' to the actors involved in enlargement politics? The empirical question relates to a larger theoretical issue about how organizations know their interests and how these interests are transformed.

Based on the observation that the existence of the Union's *acquis communautaire* provides a normative basis for expansion eastward,⁵ constructivists have argued that enlargement of one of the institutions, the EU, can more readily be explained by normative considerations than in terms of objective interests (Schimmelfennig 1998). In this respect, a difference between the two institutions is apparent. Enlargement has been at the heart of the European Community's (EC's) identity from the start. There have been a range of accessions to the EC, and now the EU, since it began with the original six in 1957. In the process, the EU has defined itself as a 'widening' organization in so far as any 'democratic nation' of Europe was a potential member. The *acquis communautaire* provides an important normative basis for enlargement, although the current potential is qualitatively different in scope than past accessions, which have only involved a few countries at a time. Enlargement could incorporate up to fourteen new countries, which is double the current membership, and is likely to transform dramatically the institutions of the community.

NATO, by contrast, lacks any formal equivalent of the *acquis*. While the idea of adding new members is not by definition in conflict with alliance formation, the expansion of NATO, as a Cold War alliance, had been largely unthinkable. In contrast to the classical European balance of power, characterized by states continuously joining or leaving alliances, the nuclear stand-off between the two superpowers froze a particular pattern of allegiance in place; in that context, a request by Poland to join NATO could have provided the impetus for nuclear war. Since the end of the Cold War, and the disappearance of the Soviet Union, this concern has faded. The key issue for the alliance is less one of adding new members than whether it is possible to do so without drawing clear boundaries between those 'inside' and 'outside' the alliance. As an alliance defined in defensive terms, NATO's central task – and that of alliances historically – has been one of protecting the sovereignty of individual states. Subsequently, security practice has involved the drawing of clear boundaries, specifying who was protected by the American security guarantee and who was outside. The current challenge is to expand without reviving Cold War tensions or recreating a divided Europe. The purpose of the organization is now being defined less in terms of defence than of providing an anchor of stability. This

raises fundamental questions about the meaning of security and NATO's identity as a security organization.

The difference between the two organizations only highlights the question of how the parallel processes of expansion became possible. Our argument relates both processes of expansion to the social construction of European *identity* during the Cold War. We seek to demonstrate that, in that context, both organizations developed a specific western identity that was embedded in the construction of shared democratic norms. Crucially, these norms were the result of both social practices and the definition of the democratic western political order, as different from the communist eastern political order. The East was therefore an important reference point for the social construction of western Europe. As this article will demonstrate, the post-Cold War context poses a dramatic challenge to this identity which is most clearly demonstrated by the respective enlargement processes. Now, the eastern Europeans, previously the West's Other, seek membership in western organizations. In this respect, the empirical question relates to a larger theoretical issue about how institutional identities and interests are transformed.

The article is divided into three sections. Section 1 explores the theoretical question at the core of the rationalist–constructivist debate as it relates to NATO and EU expansion. Section 2 builds a theoretical argument about the relationship between speech acts, norm construction and institutional interests. Section 3 develops a research agenda for comparing the expansion of the EU and NATO within this framework.

1. THE THEORETICAL QUESTION

A rationalist approach to interests or preferences might proceed as follows. If we assume that the preferences or interests of actor A are X, that is, if we take these preferences as given, we can expect a particular outcome. For instance, if the EU, in the late 1980s, had an interest in deepening, as opposed to widening, we could expect an outcome that would contribute to the realization of this interest. Rationalists make an argument that, given a set of preferences or interests, we can anticipate certain rational outcomes. The problem, in this case, is not to explain outcomes given a set of stable preferences; rather, it is to gain some insight into the changing identity and interests of NATO and the EU. We therefore approach the problem from a slightly different angle than the rationalists. Rationalists take the context as given; we want to problematize the context. Rather than taking the rules of any particular game for granted, and focusing on the rationality of decisions within an assumed context, we want to elaborate on the context itself within which the changing identities and interests of both organizations were invested with social and political meaning. To do so, we suggest elaborating on a Wittgensteinian constructivist approach.

Constructivists have challenged the rationalist assumption of exogenously given interests, arguing that interests are constructed in historically specific circumstances, that is, a context of social and cultural norms shapes actor identity and behaviour.⁶ Consistent with this assumption we explore interest formation and

change in the process of eastern enlargement. We ask how and why eastern expansion became part of the policy agenda despite serious doubts, in the early aftermath of the Cold War, that expansion was in the interest of either organization. Sociological constructivists such as, for example, Emmanuel Adler (1997) and Alexander Wendt (1992) have explored the nature of changing games, and of the reconstitution of identities and interests; however, in these constructivist accounts, meanings are instrumentally deployed by rational actors or rationality appears to be prior to the development of any shared context of meaning.⁷ For instance, Wendt's analysis of the first encounter between alter and ego emphasizes the rational cost-benefit calculations of the two players. Alter and ego begin without a common language or history but possess a desire to survive and certain material capabilities. Through a process of signalling and interpreting, alter infers the costs and probabilities that ego's intent is malign or friendly. Wendt focuses on an originary situation, before the development of any kind of relationship, and is therefore not easily adapted to a situation where alter and ego have a past and are, therefore, already embedded in a context of social interactions. Doty (1997: 387), by contrast, points out that encounters '[a]lways take place in a context wherein traces of prior meanings and representations are already in place and become interwoven in new experiences'. She argues that a priori meanings constrain reasoning about the other not an a priori rationality.

We argue that a sociological constructivist approach provides only limited understanding of the current enlargement process. For instance, EU enlargement can in part be explained by the commitment to widen to other democratic states in Europe. This commitment is embodied in the *acquis communautaire*, that is, the legal provisions, procedures and rules of the Treaty of European Union. Enlargement fits within the shared norms of the Union, and these norms have a stronger pull than 'objective' interests. There are two problems with this argument, however. First, the institutionalist argument begs the question of why the rules and norms of the *acquis communautaire* would override other interests. Second, if NATO, as an institution that lacks the formal equivalent of the *acquis communautaire*, is also expanding, the explanation must in part lie elsewhere. Given the parallel processes of expansion we raise a question about the role of another level of norms *shared by the two organizations*, which may be propelling the expansion process.

To provide an explanation of both processes of enlargement, our argument draws on a Wittgensteinian constructivism where meaning and language are central to the constitution of identity and interest (Fierke 1998; Kratochwil 1989; Onuf 1989; Zehfuss 1998). Wittgensteinian constructivism provides an important point of departure for the analysis that follows. In contrast to sociological constructivists, who often treat norms as causes (for a critique, see also Checkel 1999), scholars in this tradition have argued that once one enters the realm of social action and language, norms cannot be reduced to causes. Thus, Kratochwil argues, for example:

that our conventional understanding of social action and of the norms governing them is defective because of a fundamental misunderstanding of the function of language in social interaction, and because of a positivist epistemology that treats

norms as 'causes'. Communication is therefore reduced to issues of describing 'facts' properly, i.e. to the 'match' of concepts and objects, and to the ascertainment of nomological regularities. Important aspects of *social* action such as advising, demanding, apologizing, promising etc., cannot be adequately understood thereby. Although the philosophy of ordinary language has abandoned the 'mirror' image of language since the later Wittgenstein, the research programmes developed within the confines of logical positivism are, nevertheless, still indebted to the old conception.

(Kratochwil 1989: 5–6; emphasis in original)

Building on this opening towards language, our theoretical argument seeks to push the constructivist argument further, by examining the process of norm construction in the dialectical relationship between context, speech acts and institutional transformation. While the rationalist asks what outcome, given a set of preferences, can be expected, we instead ask in what kind of context the expansion of NATO and EU would be meaningful and rational.

In other words, we are not looking for a unidirectional relationship between preferences and outcomes, but rather at a changing context within which identities and interests are mutually constituted through a process of interaction. If the meaning of a speech act is dependent on a context, it follows logically that, if the context changes, so will the meaning of an act. The purpose of this analysis is to reflect on how, given the dramatic change of context resulting with the end of the Cold War, the meaning of the Cold War 'promise' of Helsinki was transformed into a threat. We have chosen to focus on Helsinki because it is a promise that transcended both organizations, yet, given its three baskets, was related to the mandates of each.

2. SPEECH ACTS, CONTEXTUAL CHANGE AND INSTITUTIONAL INTERESTS

This section outlines the contours of a more extensive empirical research programme. Three concepts – speech acts, contextual change and institutional interests – are developed against the background of the Cold War and post-Cold War transformations. We use these alternative categories to reconstitute the relationship between identity, norms and practices, reinforcing the constructivist point regarding the inseparability of identity and interests, and how their mutual transformation was constituted out of the dialectical relationship between the three concepts. The empirical examples illustrate that the rationality of both decisions has to be situated in a context of a priori and changing meanings in regard to the identity and norms of the West.

While the EU and NATO are usually studied as separate phenomena, there is a historical relationship between the development of their respective roles and practices. The creation of western institutions such as the EC and NATO in the late 1940s and early 1950s was inspired by a notion of security that was both economic and military. The European Coal and Steel Community, the first institution of the EC, was set up in the hope of binding the economic fate of Germany and France

such that they would have a common interest in avoiding war. NATO was established for the purpose of protecting western Europe from the Soviet Union. The security provided by the one organization faced inward; the security provided by the other faced outward. Both notions of security formation stress the importance of a *border of order* provided by the two, which ran through the centre of Europe. Referring to the discourse of citizenship as constructing the 'border of order', Kratochwil (1994) argues that within a political community the discourse of citizenship creates a border of order by defining who is inside and who is outside. This perspective on political community formation includes the observation that a community is more than the sum of its parts. That is, the discourse of citizenship reaches beyond the definition of rights. It also creates a notion of belonging which is constructed through practice.⁸

The 'iron curtain' represented a border of order for the EU and NATO, in so far as it played a crucial role in the process of identity formation for both organizations. States became members of each and, akin to the political rights of citizenship, acquired – *qua* membership – the right to vote within the order of each respective organization. Through political practice, NATO and EU member states have created a notion of belonging to a community within a particular order. This order was built on liberal democratic principles that were, to a large extent, established and sustained by negative definition with the other side of the Iron Curtain, the communist East. The specific institutional identities were profoundly challenged by the post-Cold War situation. Enlargement is not simply a means to extend membership to a new member state; it also involves incorporating what was previously the Other, i.e. including members from another type of order. Enlargement in the post-Cold War context hence not only poses the challenge of a missing Other; both organizations also face a second challenge of having to incorporate members whose notion of belonging developed in a different context. Transgressing the Cold War borders of order, therefore, raises the question of belonging anew.

In the context of the Cold War, aside from early talk about the 'rollback' of Communism, eastern Europe became the largely forgotten half of Europe, invisible against the background of the Soviet Union's dominating presence. The containment policy of NATO, which necessarily involved the US, was defined primarily in relation to the Soviet Union. Until the period of *détente*, EC policy was largely inward looking, preoccupied with the re-emergence of western European economies. The self-definitions and normative ideals of both NATO and the EU were defined in opposition to the East. The openness, democracy and freedom of western societies were contrasted with their closed totalitarian neighbour. The articulation of the West's normative ideals served primarily to reinforce its own identity *vis-à-vis* the Other.

Prior to *détente*, there was some hope that the two Germanies would be reunified and this was reflected in the failure to recognize the new German Democratic Republic (GDR). This hope of obliterating the division of Europe subsided with *détente*. Eastern and western European states created a framework of peaceful coexistence. The common principles which would guide their relationship were embodied in the three baskets of the Helsinki Final Act, which was signed by states

in both the East and the West in 1975. Expansion was a non-issue; *détente* cemented the division of Europe, granting communist regimes in the East a legitimacy they had not previously enjoyed. None the less, the Helsinki process was highly politicized from the start, as states in each bloc selectively interpreted the document (Bloed 1990: 283). Western states emphasized western values, and in particular the primacy of human rights, while eastern states emphasized disarmament provisions, non-interference in their affairs and the hope of economic aid. For the West, Helsinki represented the embodiment of western ideals of the free flow of information, people and goods across the division of Europe as well as the possibility of greater respect for human rights. The ‘promise’ articulated in the human rights basket of the Final Act first came back to haunt the eastern European communist regimes during the last part of the Cold War and later, after its end, western institutions. In what follows, we articulate the theoretical relationship between speech acts, contextual change and the challenge to institutional identity by reflecting on the ‘promise’ of Helsinki.

Speech acts: the promise of Helsinki

An article in *NATO Review*, entitled ‘The implementation of the final act of the CSCE’ (1976), referred to the significance of the document as follows (see also Luns 1976: 6):

The ultimate significance of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, signed in Helsinki on 1 August 1975, depends on the degree to which all its provisions are implemented by all the participants. Although the Final Act does not, in Western eyes, have the force of law and its implementation is voluntary, there is nevertheless a strong *moral obligation* on signatories to translate its *promises* into reality [emphasis added].

The significance of the Final Act lay less in the force of law than in constructing a moral obligation. The goal was to translate the promise of Helsinki into reality.

This promise is an example of a speech act. There is a long tradition of speech act theory, which has recently begun to seep into the IR literature.⁹ Several ideas at the core of this theory are relevant to our analysis. First, certain categories of speech do not simply describe or convey information, but are acts in and of themselves. Acts of this kind are referred to as ‘performatives’. Saying something is doing something (Kratochwil 1989: 8). For instance, when someone says ‘I do’ in the context of marriage, they undertake an act which has a range of moral and legal consequences; the act constitutes the marriage, or brings it into being. The second point, which flows from this, is that speech acts are dependent on a context for their meaning. The meaning of a promise in the context of a marriage is quite different from a promise to pick up clothes at the dry cleaner’s or the promise of Helsinki. It is by virtue of the context that acts, such as promises or threats, have illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects. The two can be distinguished by the *force* of variously promising, ordering, threatening, and the meaning attached to these actions, as opposed to the

effect of promising, forcing or frightening on the addressee, or the bringing about of effects on an audience (Levinson 1983: 236). Both the illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects are dependent on context. The third point, which is somewhat less obvious, is that speech acts do not necessarily presuppose any face-to-face communication between communicants. All that matters is that the content of the speech act is conveyed from one party to another. If state X targets its missiles on state Y, for instance, a threat may be communicated, even if the threat was not spoken.¹⁰ The propositional content of a promise or threat may also be conveyed through public discourse toward an other, rather than in a direct face-to-face exchange. In this light, it is perfectly reasonable to understand the commitment of states, in the context of the Helsinki Final Act, as the expression of a speech act of 'promising' to undertake a range of activities. This promise was communicated both to other states involved in the process and to their respective publics.

The human rights example is particularly interesting when examining the relationship between speech act and context. The illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect of the eastern promise to respect human rights manifested itself on two levels, that is, toward eastern European citizens' initiatives, which pointed out the discrepancy between the promise and corresponding acts by eastern governments, and western countries, who, given the priority attached to human rights, encouraged the dissident eastern Europeans. By 1976 and 1977 the Workers' Defence Committee (KOR) in Poland and the Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia were pointing out the discrepancy between the promise of eastern governments to respect human rights and the abusive treatment they were receiving for exposing violations. In this respect, eastern citizens' initiatives magnified the moral obligation which the promise entailed.

Western countries reinforced this breach of promise by referring back to Helsinki. For instance, in response to the Declaration of Martial Law in Poland in December 1981, the Special Ministerial Session of the North Atlantic Council stated that: 'The process of renewal and reform which began in Poland in August 1980 was watched with sympathy and hope by all who believe in freedom and self-determination; it resulted from a genuine effort by the overwhelming majority of the Polish people to achieve a more open society in accordance with the principles of the Final Act of Helsinki.'¹¹ The West not only recognized the role of the Helsinki principles in encouraging this dissidence, but also the commitment to accept the right of individuals to help in ensuring full implementation,¹² and the responsibility of the West toward those attempting to uphold 'western' ideals. As Lord Carrington stated:

We must face squarely the complex moral and political dilemmas which developments in Eastern Europe pose for the West. Whatever we do, the Soviet Union will accuse us of subverting these countries. They are bound to say this because they cannot contemplate the enormity of their own failure in the area. Free societies have a power of attraction of which it would be perverse to be ashamed, and we should not be afraid to subvert by example. Our prime concern must be for the peoples of these countries themselves. *We have a historical duty, and a*

political and moral responsibility to uphold their right to freedom and self-determination.

(Lord Carrington 1983: 2; emphasis added)

In making this statement, Carrington emphasized that the West should not encourage revolution in the East, but rather reform. Consistent with *détente*, the goal was not to overturn the eastern order (and therefore the western border of order) but to open it up so that the people there might live under freer conditions. The recognition of a moral obligation toward the eastern dissidents, who were exposing the eastern failure to abide by its promise of human rights, manifests a further illocutionary force in this context. The praise of eastern human rights dissidents was situated again and again within a larger argument about the need for western activists, who were questioning their own governments' policies in the area of disarmament, to recognize what precisely NATO, in particular, was defending, i.e. western ideals of democracy and human rights (Levi 1982; de Carmoy 1982; Carrington 1983; Defois 1984). In both these respects, the promise of Helsinki, articulated in the context of the Cold War, served primarily to reinforce the border of order separating East and West.

Changing contexts, changing meaning

From 1989 to 1991, the political landscape of Europe was transformed with the dismantling of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union. Both the EU and NATO were forced to redefine their identities as a result. For the EU, the dramatic changes accompanying the end of the Cold War created pressures to expand the Community at a time when it had been preparing to 'deepen' further the integration of existing members. For NATO, as a military alliance, designed for the defence of the West within the Cold War, the key issue in the immediate aftermath was less whether NATO would expand than whether the Alliance was necessary in the absence of its former antagonist (Lubkemeier 1991; Ando 1993). Against the background of a series of unanticipated changes that raised questions about the future identity of both organizations, past promises became one of the stable features in an otherwise uncertain situation. These promises were reinforced by the conceptualization of the end of the Cold War as a 'victory' for liberal democracy, capitalism and western values. Dissidents had acted in the name of liberal democratic principles. Western leaders had recognized their responsibility to those upholding their ideals. With the collapse of Communism, the West declared a victory. Each of these factors contributed to a transformation – once the context had changed – of promises from the past into threats. At this point we emphasize the eastern European context; in the next section, we return to an analysis of the two western organizations.

With the end of the Cold War, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEECs) referred to their liberation from Communism as a return to an original state, for instance, a return to the natural geographical and historical boundaries of Europe (Melescanu 1993), or a return to democracy, after a historical detour, or a

return to capitalism and to history (Jeszszky 1992). This ideal healthy state was not, however, primarily a geographical or physical category; it was normative. As Romanian Foreign Minister Melescanu stated: 'today's Europe is to be found where its democratic, liberal and humanist values and practices succeed in shutting the door on the nightmare of authoritarian regimes, command economies, and a disregard for human rights and fundamental freedoms' (Melescanu 1993: 13). The model for this ideal healthy state was a set of shared western values going back to the Enlightenment and the democratic revolutions of the eighteenth century. The problem in the years following the collapse was that western Europe was not doing enough to contribute to this outcome and in fact appeared to be isolating itself behind a new cordon sanitaire from the problems of post-Cold War Europe (Suchocka 1993: 6). The Cold War victor, who had challenged eastern bloc leaders to tear down the walls that kept eastern Europeans in, appeared, in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, to be constructing barriers to keep them out.

The western effort to reconstruct a new border of order flew in the face of everything that the central and eastern Europeans had expected from the West. Vaclav Havel, speaking before NATO in the early 1990s, presented this expectation and, like Lord Carrington earlier, the responsibility that flowed from it:

The democratic West . . . was for years *offering sympathies* to the democratic forces in the countries of the Soviet bloc . . . The protection of democracy and human liberty to which it has been committed *has given encouragement and inspiration* to citizens of our countries, too . . . The determination to resist evil has been a source of hope for millions of people who had to live under a yoke. Because of that, the West *bears a tremendous responsibility* . . . To the West, whose civilisation *is based on universal values*, the fate of the East *cannot be a matter of indifference* for reasons of principle, and for practical reasons either. Instability, poverty, misfortune and disorder in the countries that have rid themselves of despotic rule *could threaten* the West just as the arms arsenals of the former despotic governments did.

(Havel 1991: 35; emphasis added)

The West, and its institutions, represented a normative ideal. The CEECs were encouraged to act in accordance with these ideals in resisting totalitarianism. Now that 'containment' of the Soviet Union was no longer necessary, the West had a responsibility to assist the CEECs in the recovery, to help them in upholding these values. Havel's appeal to western responsibility mirrored Carrington's recognition of this responsibility a decade earlier. In the aftermath of the Cold War, democracy was presented as a cure for eastern ailments, but, given the painful nature of the reforms, and the unhealed wounds reopened by the spirit of freedom, democracy would potentially give rise to – and by 1993 had given rise to – social unrest and national conflict, most notably in the former Yugoslavia where war had broken out (Gazdag 1992). The West had encouraged the adoption of ideals, had celebrated the hope and possibility of prosperity and democracy, but the prescribed cure, rather than contributing to recovery, was exacerbating tensions. The EU was accused of

only a lukewarm response to eastern problems, and NATO of isolating itself behind a new cordon sanitaire from the problems confronted by the CEECs since the fall of Communism (Suchocka 1993).

The existence of norms supporting eastward enlargement was dramatized by central and eastern Europeans who pointed to the discrepancy between western promises and actions. The Cold War promise to eastern Europe became, in a new context, a threat of instability should the West fail to act. But the threat went even deeper. As we will argue in the next section, a failure to act on the promise became a threat to the identity of both institutions.

Redefining interests: the challenge to institutional identity

The point of the last section was to illustrate how actors used the past promises of states to hold a mirror up to current practices. The mirror was first held up to the eastern European regimes, who in signing the Helsinki Final Act promised to respect human rights and then proceeded to abuse the rights of dissidents who – morally supported by western governments – pointed out the discrepancy. In the immediate aftermath of the Cold War, these same dissidents, many of whom had become state leaders, held a mirror up to western governments, arguing that they, as the embodiment of the victory of liberal ideals in the Cold War, had a responsibility to those whom they had encouraged to adopt those ideals. These processes of mirroring provide a point of departure for rethinking the role of norms in processes of interest transformation.

These acts of exposing a discrepancy cannot be accounted for by rationalist theories. Given the emphasis on individuals or states as purely self-regarding egoists, it is assumed that promises will not be respected if they are in conflict with one's self-interest, regardless of others. However, if one's identity and ability to act are understood to be fundamentally social and, therefore, dependent on the recognition of others, promise-keeping becomes extremely important. It is at the point that others recognize the violation of normative expectations, or the failure to live up to previously stated ideals, that shame or disrespect are experienced. As Honneth (1995: 259) points out, it is not in the positive affirmation of norms that one's constitutive dependence on recognition from others is evident, but in the inability to continue with action once confronted with the discrepancy. The ability of states or alliances to act is as dependent on the positive recognition of identity as it is for individuals. Both rely on some measure of acceptance of an alignment between ideals or moral argument and practice.

In the aftermath of the Cold War the CEECs were seeking recognition from the West. But western identity was also dependent on recognition. Too great an inconsistency between the normative ideals which the West represented and its practices toward the CEECs would be damaging to the identity of the EU and NATO, not to mention those élites in the CEECs who were attempting to provide a democratic carrot rather than a nationalist stick (Allin 1995). The institutional challenge, however, took a somewhat different form for the two organizations.

In the case of the EU, the prospect of inclusion by way of enlargement was

offered to all European states which shared the goals of the EC (Preamble to Single European Act, 1987). The responsibility of Europe as a whole to speak increasingly in one voice and the necessity for all democratic European states to be represented by and through the European Parliament became constitutionally entrenched with the Maastricht Treaty on European Union (TEU) in 1991 which states that '[A]ny European State may apply to become a member of the Union' (Article O, TEU). The promise was enhanced in the 'Conclusions of the Presidency' at the Copenhagen Summit in June 1993, which stipulated that 'membership requires that the candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for protection of minorities.'¹³ The Amsterdam Treaty restates the intention of enlargement and explicitly the democratic condition, stipulating that '[A]ny European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1) may apply to become a member of the Union' (Article 49, TEU).¹⁴ The promise of enlargement is hence firmly expressed in the Treaty, on the condition that the candidates are European states, governed democratically, and based on the principle of law.

The key issue in the current context of EU enlargement is less the uniqueness of adding new members than the changing context in which it takes place. While the sheer number of accession candidates certainly plays a role in the complexity of this process, we argue that the absence of the Cold War border of order has influenced how this process proceeds.¹⁵ Candidate states have historically been required to accept the *acquis communautaire* in joining. The same is true in the current membership negotiations. However, an accession of this size and scope poses a challenge to the institutional capacities of the EU. It hence requires a reshuffling of the EU's institutional balance before accession can proceed. The 1996–7 inter-governmental conference (IGC) at Amsterdam postponed a decision in this respect, however, no later than the point when EU membership would exceed twenty.¹⁶ As one observer remarked, it was not obvious why twenty members should come to an agreement that fifteen could not reach.¹⁷ At any rate, the unresolved question of institutional balance at Amsterdam does present a hurdle in the enlargement process. To postpone the decision reflects a creeping insecurity in handling the process among EU member states. Effectively, this insecurity means a gradual move away from previous promises of enlargement that were uttered in the Cold War context. This new stress on the conditions for enlargement, rather than the promise to do so, suggests that the EU is now less ready to take on the responsibility which it had assigned for itself earlier when eastern enlargement was not yet in sight.

Indeed, more recent documents point to the development of a policy of conditionality which involves adding conditions for enlargement. One such condition, for example, regards a respect of minorities; candidates have to comply with this condition before joining the club. While the condition as such fits well into the shared norms of liberal democracy, it is striking that, while respect for minority rights is a condition to be accepted by the eastern candidates of the EU, it is not explicitly mentioned in the *acquis communautaire* to which the western members have adhered. We can, therefore, speak of hurdles being constructed for eastern candidate countries. There is a clear tension between the promises of the past and

the slow emergence of present concerns. This shift was expressed during the Austrian Council Presidency of the EU at the beginning of actual accession negotiations with individual candidate countries on 10 November 1998. With the actual accession in view, worries about EU security, human rights, minority politics, and threats to EU employment security have led to an increasing number of key political actors cautioning against enlarging too rapidly.

For example, on 1 July 1998, the Austrian Council President, Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schüssel, stressed that ‘concern is now mounting that the date for the enlargement of the EU to take in countries from eastern Europe and Cyprus will be put back as the countries concerned struggle to meet EU standards.’¹⁸ While negotiations were formally opened under the British presidency over a whole series of policy areas, Mr Schüssel warned that not only would the new countries have to make strenuous efforts but the EU would have to undertake major reforms before enlargement could go ahead. He said that ‘*Even the Union itself is currently not yet in any fit state to take in new members.*’¹⁹ And, later in the process, supporting Chancellor Victor Klima, Austrian MEP Hannes Swoboda stressed that ‘not only Austrians but also people in the candidate countries were anticipating this project of the century [EU enlargement] with concern. It would be irresponsible to forcefully push both EU and the candidate countries towards hastened enlargement.’ At the same time, the beginning of the accession negotiations were praised as a ‘historical day’, as an achievement that had been ‘a particular concern of the Austrian presidency’ according to Council President Wolfgang Schüssel. As Schüssel stressed, the accession conferences beginning in Vienna signified the ‘return to Europe of Hungary and other eastern European partners after more than eighty years of the breakdown of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy’.²⁰

Since the beginning of the German EU Presidency in January 1999 the main hurdle to compliance with previous promises has become the financial burden of enlargement. Next to the issue of ‘institutions’, ‘minority rights’ and ‘security’, ‘money’ now appears to be the major constraint in the process of enlargement. Instead of speaking with one voice, seeking to include the newly democratized central and eastern European states in the project of European integration, the EU member states appear to be quarrelling among themselves over who has to bear the financial brunt of eastern enlargement. The German ministry of state expressed the suspicion that other member states have high hopes that the Germans will ‘pay it all’ (*Die Woche*, 5 February 1999, p. 21). But quite to the contrary, the ‘favourite toy of the Germans is now the calculator’ (*Die Woche*, 5 February 1999, p. 21), and it is clear that, without successful budgetary reforms, enlargement is not likely to happen soon. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder of Germany, for example, painted a dire picture of European integration, lest the financial burden was reshuffled, pointing out that ‘[T]he century of European integration will see little success if burden-sharing is not distributed on a more equal basis’ (*Die Woche*, 8 January 1999, p. 4). Despite these financial constraints, the German Presidency of the EU continued to reassure the CEECs with statements about the duty to enlarge. As German Council President, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer stated:

After the Cold War the EU must not be limited to Western Europe; instead, at its core the idea of European integration is an all-European project. Geopolitical realities do not allow for a serious alternative anyhow. If this is true, then history has already decided about the 'if' of eastern enlargement, even though the 'how' and 'when' remain to be designed and decided.

(*Die Zeit*, 21 January 1999, p. 3)

The at times contradictory comments on enlargement as a historical opportunity to reintegrate the eastern European countries, on the one hand, and a concern of the West regarding issues of security, institutions and finance, on the other, point to the conflicting interests in the context of the enlargement discussion. An EU identity based on western democratic principles, and the related promise of enlargement, are at odds with emerging practical policy problems. A discursive analysis reveals that continuity in the enlargement process, despite frequently raised concerns, can be explained in terms of an EU identity rooted in shared norms and values. The strong emphasis on the norms structuring EU policy strategy was expressed in the European Parliament's Oostlander Report, in which the author cautioned against 'manœuvring' aimed at postponing the opening of negotiations until there are precise details about the cost of enlargement. With too much manœuvre, the author maintains that 'enlargement will never take place.'²¹

The issues raised by the dramatic end of the Cold War were somewhat different for NATO. As a military alliance, designed for the defence of the West within the Cold War, the key issue in the immediate aftermath was less whether NATO would expand than whether the Alliance was necessary in the absence of its former antagonist. Lacking the institutional equivalent of the EU *acquis* in regard to new members, the idea that NATO should expand was far from apparent. While the end of the Cold War brought the relationship between widening and deepening back on the EU's political agenda, the military security question was initially less one about expansion than about the relationship between NATO and the larger Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which already included the CEECs. NATO had 'won' the Cold War but, despite this apparent success, its continuing relevance was being called into question. The central problem was the reluctance of publics and parliaments on both sides of the Atlantic to direct resources to the organization in the absence of any apparent threat (Lubkemeier 1991; Ando 1993). Neither NATO nor the countries of central and eastern Europe assumed from the beginning that NATO would militarily expand to the East. Through a series of moves over several years the expansion became inevitable.²² The motor of this transformation was the conflict between two promises.

In the last section, we explored how the CEECs gave meaning to their struggle for recognition by the West during this period. The CEECs argued that failure to expand would give rise to disorder. By contrast, one of NATO's arguments against military expansion was that it would arouse fears in Russia that the West sought domination over its former enemy, and exacerbate xenophobic sentiments and a reluctance to proceed with cuts in defence spending on the part of the Russian population (Taylor 1991; Holst 1992). Russia had articulated its opposition to the

expansion of NATO but then made a surprise move in August 1993 in signing the Russian–Polish declaration which granted Poland leave to join the Alliance. Yeltsin’s act was viewed hopefully by the CEECs, but not by Russia. Instead, ‘non-democratic’ forces interpreted the possibility of NATO expansion as a move to re-establish the Cold War and isolate Russia (Ignatenko 1994; Sturua 1994).

The strong Russian reaction created some nervousness in the West, which was reflected in NATO’s Brussels Summit in January 1994. Faced with pressure from the CEECs to join the Alliance, and with the prospect that a decision to expand would mobilize nationalist forces in Russia, NATO mapped a middle course by creating the Partnership for Peace (PfP). The PfP would make it possible to delay the decision about expansion but, at the same time, would allow the CEECs to prepare for such an eventuality. While the West initially sought to mollify nationalist and communist forces in Russia through the PfP, the CEECs, concerned about the same development, emphasized the promise of the Partnership to prepare candidates for future membership. The Polish Minister of Defence, Piotr Kolodziejczyk, referred to the January Summit and the proclamation of the PfP by the Alliance: ‘We expect and would welcome NATO expansion that would reach to democratic states to our East.’ He further stated that Poland undertook the Partnership as ‘the best route towards its goal of full integration in the Alliance’ (Kolodziejczyk 1994). Poland drew on the promise of the PfP to press Polish interests.

At the beginning of 1994, NATO said that there would be no immediate enlargement. By mid-1994, after Clinton’s speech in Warsaw, momentum had shifted towards enlargement.²³ At the December 1994 Brussels meeting of NATO foreign ministers, a decision was made to proceed with expansion. The enlargement of NATO was placed in the context of building a European security architecture which would extend to the whole of Europe. While enlargement was initially avoided out of fear that it would re-create the division of Europe, by 1996 it was said to have rendered the idea of dividing lines in Europe ‘obsolete’ (Moltke 1996). Any distinctions between countries as a result of expansion would be ‘contours’ indicating ‘degrees of difference’ rather than dividing lines. By developing a ‘true partnership’ with Russia and making a conceptual linkage between the enlargement of the EU and NATO, the expansion was to communicate the parallelism of integration and co-operation: the integration of new members and the deepening of co-operation with those nations who are not, or not yet, ready or willing to join (Voigt 1996).

Like past applicants to the EU, the CEECs viewed membership of the two organizations as part of the same package. Even though the initial concern of the CEECs was an economic one, the challenge was raised to both organizations. Through a series of incremental decisions, not least of which was the creation of the PfP, the Visegrad countries emphasized those parts of the promise which would contribute to their eventual membership. Once a decision had been made to include the Visegrad countries, the threat began to focus on a more traditional security concern and the promise to avoid new ‘spheres of influence’ in Europe, as leaders of the Baltic states pointed to promises by American leaders that ‘No nation in Europe should ever again be consigned to a buffer zone between great powers or related to

another nation's "sphere of influence".²⁴ The problem that NATO currently faces is the conflict between its promise to expand to the Baltic states and its promise of genuine partnership with Russia, which opposes a further wave of expansion.

While NATO's interests may have originally been driven by a survival concern, the contradictions of the present situation open up two alternatives which are contrary to this interest, in so far as survival, in this case, is primarily a question of *institutional* relevance rather than military. One is to transform the survival problem into one of military survival by respecting the promise to the Baltic states at the expense of its promise to Russia of genuine partnership. The other is to deepen the partnership with Russia at which point NATO's identity, and therefore survival as *NATO*, may become doubtful; the deeper the co-operation with Russia, the less need there is for an organization focusing on the North Atlantic area as opposed to a pan-European security organization, such as the OSCE.²⁵

In conclusion, it is interesting to look at the relationship between contextual changes, normative ideals and institutional expansion for each of the three players: the EU, NATO and the CEECs respectively. This approach provides insight into the rationale for the expansion of both western organizations by placing them in a changing intersubjective context, which has been transformed through the interaction of the different players. The changing context, while more dramatic for the CEECs than the West, constructed the possibility for the former to articulate two *compatible* interests, i.e. inclusion in both NATO and the EU, while it created *conflicting* interests for both western organizations. The changing context disrupted the future plans of the EU and NATO, presenting an entirely new situation to which they had to respond. In order to maintain their identity as victors in the Cold War, western institutions had to act with some semblance of consistency with the normative ideals which they represented. The promise of prosperity and democracy was a stable and constant feature against a backdrop of material disarray. The CEECs drew on these normative ideals to pressure the West to keep their promises. While failing to provide the massive assistance reminiscent of the Marshall Plan, both the EU and NATO did reinforce the promise of eventual inclusion. By making the CEECs responsible for their own readiness to join, the West also provided a carrot that would, it was hoped, dampen the conflicting tendencies toward disintegration in the East. The promise constituted the possibility of expansion. Against the background of a dramatically changed context, the CEECs transformed the promise into a threat, making maximum use of their compatible interests in expansion with both institutions. By contrast, NATO and the EU were pulled toward expansion against the background of conflicting interests.

3. THE CHALLENGE OF EASTERN ENLARGEMENT AND THE CONSTRUCTIVIST RESEARCH PROGRAMME

The comparison of EU and NATO expansion provides an insight into the expansion process in a way that an analysis of either organization, in and of itself, cannot. Based on this brief comparison of the two cases of enlargement politics, we have argued that an explanation of both processes, against the odds, requires

embedding these policy decisions in a *normative order* which does not exclude the EU's *acquis* but is larger and encompasses NATO as well. When embedded in this larger normative order, moves by NATO and the EU to redefine their interests regarding expansion can be understood as emerging out of the tension between past promises and on-going practice in a context of dramatic change, which, in the absence of the old border of order, constituted a challenge to the Cold War identities of the two institutions. To this end, we examined a process of norm construction which preceded the critical juncture of the end of the Cold War. In doing so, our analysis fits squarely within the constructivist debate but pushes further. We elaborate the relationship between norms, practices and identity, and how interests were transformed in the dialectical relationship between the three.

The constructivist emphasis on identities, norms and practices provides an important point of departure for understanding the expansion process; at the same time, we note that this literature has not sufficiently addressed issues raised by a context of dramatic change where the 'other' disappears or undergoes significant transformation. Building on the strengths and expanding on the weaknesses of this tradition, our argument includes the following components. First, the enlargement decisions have to be embedded in a longer process going back to the construction of norms during the Cold War. The key issue is how the meaning of speech acts embodying these norms changed with the end of the Cold War, and how this constructed the conditions for eastern enlargement. The argument rests on a dialectical relationship between *context*, *speech acts* and *institutional change*. The rationality of moves by either organization has to be situated in a context of past meanings.

Second, we emphasize that context and speech acts are explicitly intersubjective. As a result, we assume the importance of the meanings that actors bring to their own actions and the material world around them. This points to one other crucial element that has not been adequately addressed in some of the constructivist literature, that is, the role of language. The reluctance to take language seriously undoubtedly relates to a widespread acceptance of the realist assumption that the primary speech act of diplomats is the lie and that states will break promises if it is in their interest to do so. The following turns the realist argument about language on its head, analysing 'promises' as a specific form of action, and looking at processes by which the two institutions were held to account for their promises and normative ideals.

Third, if meaning is dependent on context, it follows logically that, as a context changes, so will the meaning of acts. We argue that the promise of western institutions, held out to the former eastern bloc during the Cold War, was transformed into a threat, by both East and West, with the dismantling of the European division and the Soviet Union. This new threat gave rise to a conclusion that the CEECs could not be excluded, over the long term, from western organizations. If western acts were not consistent with past promises, the consequence would be a loss of popular support for democratic institutions and a free market economy, which would exacerbate nationalist tensions and ethnic rivalries in the region, creating a security threat for the West. The threat not only took the form of potential instability in the East, however; the failure to fulfil the promise, and the exposure of this failure, presented a threat to the identity of the two organizations.

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NOTES

- 1 See Avery and Cameron 1998; Grabbe and Hughes 1998; Mayhew 1998; Preston 1997; for conceptual work, see Schimmelfennig 1998; Sedelmeier 1998.
- 2 For an exception, see Sedelmeier 1998.
- 3 See Brown 1995; McCgwire 1998; Mandelbaum 1996; Asmus *et al.* 1995; Glaser 1993; Sloan 1995, respectively.
- 4 See, for example, public opinion changes which show an increased scepticism towards NATO enlargement. Surveys of the UKS Information Agency show that, while in 1996 majorities of 56 per cent in France, 61 per cent in Germany, and 66 per cent in Britain welcomed enlargement, these percentages changed significantly to 39 per cent in France, 38 per cent in Germany and 42 per cent in Britain in favour of NATO enlargement in 1997. (See European Opinion Alert, USIA Office of Research and Media Reaction, 7 February 1997, cf. Statewatch, DB2WEB 2 October 1998.)
- 5 The *acquis communautaire*, or the shared properties of Community law and legislation, has come to be the guiding framework for enlargement procedures in particular (Michalski and Wallace 1992). Indeed, the accession *acquis* has been identified as the oldest form of *acquis*, entailing 'the whole body of rules, political principles and judicial decisions which new Member States must adhere to, in their entirety and from the beginning, when they become members of the Communities' (Gialdino 1995: 1090).
- 6 For a more in-depth elaboration on the distinction between various strands of constructivist approaches in international relations (IR), see Christiansen *et al.* 1999.
- 7 Doty (1997) and Campbell (1998) discuss this critique in greater detail.
- 8 These practices include two conceptions of practice: one is the republican notion of identity formation by way of political debates among citizens (see, for example, Preuss 1995; Habermas 1992); the other has been defined as 'the conflictive process of establishing the institutional terms of citizenship, i.e. citizenship practice' (Wiener 1998a: ch. 2, 1998b: 305).
- 9 See Austin 1962; Searle 1969; Levinson 1983; Duffy *et al.* 1998; Kratochwil 1989; Buzan *et al.* 1998.

- 10 We would like to express our thanks to Gavan Duffy both for this particular example and for clarifying this point.
- 11 Special Ministerial Session of the North Atlantic Council, 11 January 1982, 'Declaration of Events in Poland,' *NATO Review*, vol. 30 no. 2 (1982), p. 28.
- 12 See Solesby 1978; Luns 1979; Nimetz 1980; de Carmoy 1982.
- 13 *Bulletin of the European Communities* 6, 1993, point I.13.
- 14 See also Article 6, paras 1, 2, the TEU stipulates '1. The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States. 2. The Union shall respect fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms signed in Rome on 4 November 1950 and as they result from the constitutional traditions common to the Member States, as general principles of Community law.'
- 15 Past accessions have not involved more than a few countries at a time. By contrast, now, with the Cold War over, expansion will potentially incorporate up to fourteen new countries which is almost double the current membership. Ten candidate countries are from Central and Eastern Europe including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.
- 16 On the IGC's failure to prepare the EU's institutional balance for enlargement, see Sedelmeier 1999, forthcoming; Falkner and Nentwich 1999, forthcoming; Moravcsik and Nicolaidis 1998.
- 17 See European Policy Center, September 1997, <http://europa.eu.int/en/agenda/igc-home/instdoc/universe/europe.htm>, pp. 1 and 2 respectively.
- 18 See *EP News*, July 1998, p. 1.
- 19 See *EP News*, July 1998, p. 1; emphasis added.
- 20 All citations from *Der Standard*, 10 November 1998; this and the following translations from German into English by A.W.
- 21 See *Together in Europe. European Union Newsletter for Central Europe*, No. 88, 1 May 1996, p. 5. Rapporteur Arie Oostlander, report approved by EP on 17 April 1996.
- 22 For a more in-depth analysis of the processes underlying NATO expansion, see Fierke 1999.
- 23 The American Congress and public opinion were once again asking why they should continue to invest in the Alliance, given the failure to take effective action in Bosnia (Sloan 1994; Aspin 1994). At the same time, Alliance countries were faced with major cuts in defence spending and renewed questions about the relevance and need for NATO in the absence of a Soviet threat (Bruce 1994; Sloan 1994; Rose 1994). Expansion was the answer to these problems. The desire of the CEECs to join the Alliance became proof of its continuing relevance and mission (Aspin 1994).
- 24 See Warren Christopher, as quoted in Stankevicius 1996; see also Golob 1996.
- 25 For a more in-depth analysis of this conflict, see Fierke 1998: chs 10 and 11.

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