

INTRODUCTION

Identity has always been an important collective and personal question, the importance and influence of which in our contemporary world has lost none of its theoretical or practical relevance. Questions of identity are no longer gaining in importance as they once did in the analysis and practice of international relations, but, as this thesis will attempt to show, they are achieving a wider recognition of its established potentialities while moving away from the *subjective* element in the analysis of international relations. The issue of identity has now become one of the most useful lines in questioning and providing more adequate answers to the contemporary concerns of the people.¹ The main reason that affirms this is based in its ability to provide a more secure and flexible way of structuring identities, and what makes them more compatible with people's concerns in a time of uncertainty.

Collective identities, an issue that I will later expand on chapter three is a very complex and extensive notion whose study requires a major amount of time, which in this thesis is limited. Hence I will briefly establish at this stage of the introduction the way in which collective identities must be understood in order to achieve better understanding of the arguments developed throughout this thesis. Following Stuart Hall's proposition on identities I define these as constructions "based on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation."² As it can be deduced from this definition, there is not a limited quantity of identities, these are as multiple as many categories of common origins or shared characteristics can be. Consequently collective identities are "social form"³ composed by the interaction of the individual self⁴ with other

¹ Kristen R. Monroe, *Political Psychology* (United States: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002), 9.

² Stuart Hall, "Introduction," in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, eds. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay (London: Sage, 1997), 2.

³ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity: Self and Society in the Late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 1991). 15.

individual selves.⁵ Therefore by the term ‘belonging links’ I refer to collective identities. By ‘old or traditional ways of belonging’ I refer to collective identities mainly related to western liberal democratic citizenship. When I mention ‘new or renewed ways of belonging’ this refers to those new or renewed collective identities whose construction mainly aims to achieve, or recover, a feeling of belonging and ontological security.

The search for what identity means and implies is an age-old dilemma, the personal and communal sense of which has been explored since the time of the ancient Greeks. Plato expressed this in his idea of the *being and becoming*, which is very much linked with the recognition that ideas are perfect, eternal and invariable.⁶ This universal way of thinking about identity was a constant in the predecessor philosophers as it is shown in St. Augustine’s interiority in the *Confessions*⁷; however the more social and collective sides of identity have found echoes since the Enlightenment at least, where questions of identity, *who am I and who are we?* and their political, social, psychological, philosophical and religious implications have captivated many thinkers. The most famous, arguably, begin with the Cartesian ‘*cogito ergo sum*’,⁸ David Hume’s “bundle theory of the self,”⁹ and John Locke,¹⁰ whose focus on identity attempted to show that it exists because its existence goes beyond time and space subsisting anywhere at any time. Other thinkers who cannot be omitted from this list include Jean-Jacques Rousseau,¹¹ who looked at civilization and how this can keep us away from our

⁴ Individual self is defined by John Kihlstrom, Jennifer S. Beer and Stanley B. Kelin in “Self and Identity as Memory” as “a mental representation of oneself, including all that one knows about oneself.” In *Handbook of Self and Identity*, eds. Mark R. Leary and June Price Tangney (New York: Guilford Press, 2003), 69.

⁵ Marilynn B. Brewer and Wendi Garner, “Who is this ‘We’?: Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations,” in *Organizational Identity: A Reader*, ed. Mary Jo Hatch and Majken Schultz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 66.

⁶ Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey (London: William Heinemann, 1978). See also C. Fred Alford, *The Self in Social Theory* (New Heaven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 48-52 .

⁷ See Charles Taylor’s chapter on St. Augustine’s view of identity in *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge and Oakley, Victoria: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁸ René Descartes, *Discourse on method and Meditations*, trans. F.E. Sutcliffe (Great Britain: Penguin Books, 1968).

⁹ David Hume, *Enquiries Concerning the Human Understanding and Concerning the Principles of Morals* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1902), 180, 259.

¹⁰ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: William Tegg and Co., 1879). See Alford, *The Self in Social Theory*, 112-39.

¹¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality among Men*, ed. Patrick Coleman. trans. Franklin Philip (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). See also Alford, *The Self in Social Theory*, 156-70.

natural, celestial self, imprinted on us by the Creator. We must not forget about the autonomous individual self developed by Kant,¹² and Hegel, whose “Master-Slave dialectic”¹³ established the beginnings of contemporary notions and theories on collective identity through his understanding of identity as socially constituted, or dependent on “the other.”¹⁴

More recently, the subject of individual- and/or collective-identity construction has formed a central and ongoing discussion in the so-called ‘liberal-communitarian debate’ in the Anglo-American political philosophy of the 1970s-90s. The most important proponents in the liberal-communitarian debate include the work of John Rawls,¹⁵ Alasdair MacIntyre,¹⁶ Michael Sandel,¹⁷ Will Kymlicka,¹⁸ and most centrally in Charles Taylor’s authoritative communitarian text of the early 1990s, *Sources of the Self*.¹⁹ Over the last 20 years, the emphasis in academic treatments of identity has shifted from questions concerning the nature and sources of individual identity (whether essentially independent or rooted in the community) toward collective identities, throwing the concept of the nation, and its links with the state that were hitherto taken for granted, into serious question. This should not be surprising, given the circumstances. Globalization and its partner fragmentation, coupled with the shake-up of the former “world order” caused by the fall of the Soviet bloc, the end of the Cold War, and the events of 9/11 have meant that today identity issues are just as important as they were in the 1980s, and perhaps more so, in both theory and practice.

¹² Mary Gregor, ed., *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary Gregor (United Kingdom & United States: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), 228-240. Hegel conceives that it is in the second moment of knowledge where identity is conceived, see pages 218-220.

¹⁴ Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 153.

¹⁵ John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York and Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1993).

¹⁶ Alasdair MacIntyre, “Is Science of Comparative Politics Possible?” in *Against the Self-Images of the Age: Essays on Ideology and Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press 1984).

¹⁷ Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

¹⁸ Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁹ Taylor, *Sources of the Self*.

According to Sheila Croucher, theories answering the question of *who are we?* fall into two broad categories. First, primordialist ideas conceive identity as a prefixed, unchangeable concept, and a variable in itself.²⁰ To many, this understanding is usually known as “essentialist,” which means ‘prior to the social universe’ or, to use the well-known phrase of Mulhall and Swift, “antecedently individuated.”²¹ This approach, found at the centre of arguments from Descartes and Kant, has faded from favour and use since the time the communitarians started criticising Rawls in the late 1970s, primarily because it rests on foundational, universal metaphysical claims that no longer hold in today’s pluralistic world.²² In both practical circumstances and in academic literature, the ideas of essentialism, universalism, and foundationalism have been discredited in favour of a set of socially constructivist claims—the second of Croucher’s categories.

In direct contrast to essentialism, social constructivist theory is currently thought to be more able to explain the actual situation of identity, verifying that this depends on interactions of diverse factors through space and time due to its better adequacy and adaptability in the analysis of the diverse elements constituting reality and not relying on what it is supposed to be. On this account, “[i]ndividuals have both an emotional and a material need to belong, and an array of sociocultural, political and administrative groups, including families, churches, schools, ethnic groups, nations and states, fulfil that need.”²³ It is this latter ‘socially constructed’ view of identity that I adopt and pursue in this thesis.

The pluralism of the contemporary world has led to a multiplication of spaces and places; a context that has been complicated by processes such as globalization and the increasing flow of migrants re-settling into societies quite diverse from their original ones.

²⁰ Sheila L. Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging: The Politics of Identity in a Changing World* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 36.

²¹ Stephen Mulhall and Adam Swift, *Liberals and Communitarians* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), 56.

²² For a further reading see Michael J. Sandel, “The Procedural Republic and the Unencumbered Self,” *Political Theory* 12, no. 1 (February 1984):81-96. Also Emma R. Norman, *El yo político: concepciones del yo, la política, y la autonomía en las teorías políticas contemporáneas* (México, D.F.: Ediciones Coyoacán, 2007), 31-42.

²³ Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 40.

The new, broader spaces have made it possible for diverse peoples and identities to interact, mix, or pull together (or apart) creating new sets of ideas, needs and values. Unfortunately formal or old ways of belonging (especially political ones related to western democratic state,²⁴ like liberal democratic citizenship) do not provide adequate identification to people. This is mainly due to the old ways of belonging inability and refuse to adapt to the current context and people's new needs – physical, social and that of identification.

Meanwhile, new ways of belonging appear to be springing up that are more able to solve the gap between how we are to understand identity as a concept and how we are to understand and use the many ways it can be practically expressed, providing more ample and inclusive categories and sources of belonging in which people feel better identified.²⁵ The importance of the transition from older ways of belonging to the new ones is relevant to many areas of international relations because they are empirically proving more efficient in creating secure belonging ties and keeping people comfortably identifiable within a group. If the end of the Cold War marked the beginning of an era of uncertainty related to belonging and identity, the terrorist attacks of September 11th exacerbated what has been termed “ontological insecurity”—a central concept which this thesis will explore and unpack. This happened when the identity of the perpetrators became known and the ethno-cultural element had been taken as a cause for the execution of the attacks. At the same time, the cultural element also helped to create a link for identification by confronting and appealing for the defence of a certain set of values, needs, morals and ideals. This served to engage people in a war; not a war against any particular state, but rather against an ethno-cultural group or set of them. In this way, the terrorist attacks of September 11th exposed the outdated, old, relatively secure identity

²⁴ For this reason this thesis mostly applies to the majority of democratic states in North America, South America and South East Asia where countries are mainly based on the western democratic model (at least in name).

²⁵ Catarina Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security”, *Political Psychology* 25, no.5 (Oct. 2004 [cited Aug 17th 2007] EBSCO): available from: <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=21&hid=118&sid=2ab8402f-97c0-4d7a-8986-c7767a35b09a%40sessionmgr101>

relationships.²⁶ The disruption of the old ways of belonging forced the search for new forms of constructing collective identity, which involves a new problematic.

One of the first issues when looking at this new problematic is that the creation of those new ways of belonging surpasses geopolitical boundaries since they are not solely based on a single and well-defined element, such as state lines or geographical situation. Thus there is also an expansion of the possible groups with which people could identify as well as the possible territories or spaces (including virtual) they associate that identity with. As a consequence, it will not be difficult to find multilayered affiliations and multiple allegiances in competition with the well-established ones, traditionally offered by states.

Second, we have to focus on the issue that having various options and ways of belonging complicates the processes of decision and interaction. Therefore, identity will almost certainly be a more complicated issue because not all the values and practices will be consistent. This might lead to a clash as Samuel Huntington predicted a decade ago,²⁷ yet I will show in this thesis that it is also important to take into account the existential angst related with the groups or identities to which people give their allegiance. A rise in questions related to the inability to decide to which group 'one' really belongs, and who or which criteria to follow if two different groups pull 'one' in totally different directions can lead to a condition of existential anxiety or even fear.

The fears related with the implications, consequences and new responsibilities of assuming the pluralism of identities were originally nonexistent in the minds of essentialists because their theory rests on monotheistic metaphysical views of the Earth and of God who made it. They worked primarily because there was only ONE foundational claim that could

²⁶ Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 1-4.

²⁷ Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

not be challenged and which led to all the others: (For Christians in the West) God made everything and He is benevolent, omnipotent and omniscient.

Clearly, having one irrefutable and foundational truth is comforting because nothing exists to show that it might be false. We can be certain of this. As a result, the Enlightenment period is characterised by the search for *certainty* in almost every way, even if it seems contradictory to defy and to try to prove what was taken for granted as certain. So the purpose of challenging certainty was to be completely sure of something, because what is certain is safe and will not change. In line with this, the Enlightenment tradition and its aftermath placed identities as central sources in providing what has been called “ontological security.” This is why Alexander Wendt recently concluded that security is a human need that “creates a generalised preference for order and predictability.”²⁸ By contrast, that which is uncertain is unsafe, because it can change easily, making the environment unpredictable and potentially dangerous.²⁹ The complex concept of ontological security—and its cognates, ontological insecurity and ontological fear³⁰—are central to this thesis and, as will become clear, these are not easy concepts to define, nor is it always straightforward to identify their implications. For now it is best to start to understand the concept as *the certainty of being part of, belonging to, and being accepted by, a certain group*. The following brief overview of some key parts of twentieth century history should help to flesh out the concept of ontological security used in this thesis as well as provide some contextualization that should demonstrate its importance in International Relations studies as much more than an abstract concept.

For the reasons mentioned above, it is obvious to affirm that UNI-versal provides an illusion of safety. Whereas more than one truth, religious belief, set of identity values, etc. means the possibility of being wrong, due to the variety of options to choose from. In

²⁸ Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 339.

²⁹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 39.

³⁰ Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism.” Also Greg Noble, “The Discomfort of Strangers: Racism, Incivility and Ontological Security in a Relaxed and Comfortable Nation,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26, no.1 (February-May 2005): 115. And Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* 35-69.

implying a different notion of responsibility, since it rests upon the one who makes the decision, there is not an external entity to blame for any wrong outcomes.

The end of the Cold War meant the start of a new era of uncertainty that once again brought the need to reaffirm identities into the picture. At that time, formal citizenship lost relevance since it proved less capable of offering ontological security than the construction of new ways of belonging to a collective. The end of the Cold War was intended as the triumph of the Western bloc and the preponderance of its ideology. But it involved the disruption of geopolitical imaginary and de-territorialisation,³¹ thus bringing the opportunity to search or re-discover the old roots of many human groups.³²

Soon, the disruption of the dual opposition was apparent, which is achieved by differentiating and establishing that which the subject it is not. As a result of this experience, the subject is able to recognize what it really is or what its identity is. In the past, the dual opposition kept stability referring to identity assured, but the end of the confrontation between United States and the USSR increased the possible sources of identity and the angst of belonging to them or not.³³

Of course, two stark opposites can be almost as easy to deal with as just one factor if one manages to convince oneself that the opposite is completely wrong. In this kind of dualism the 'opposite' would commonly be referred to as *the enemy*.³⁴ Dual opposition is a principle rooted in social development throughout history and it is present even in the larger monotheistic religions, which makes it an extended (and in some ways *natural*) reaction when trying to define identities. Collective identities were reinforced by this dualism, rather than

³¹ This term has been coined in Croucher's work *Globalization and Belonging*, 32 and it is used in this thesis to indicate the disappearing of political borders between states.

³² Mathew Horsman & Andrew Marshall, *After the Nation-State: Citizens, Tribalism and the New World Disorder* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), 44-7.

³³ Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 63-4. Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 9.

³⁴ Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism."

divided by it.³⁵ Then, during the period of the Cold War, it was easier to find one's identity by recognizing who the *enemy* was, thus for Americans identity was based on recognizing themselves as 'not communists' and thereby opposite to this ideology and its claims. It is in this way very clear who a person is, to which group(s) they belong and how they prioritise their belonging to more than one group.

However, identity dilemmas were not specific issues that cropped up in any particular country at that time; they were extended issues occurring in almost every corner of the world and it involved not only Americans and Communists but also any other belonging ties. The spread of the disruption to the older ways of belonging is then closely related to the vacuum left by the bipolar tension and dual opposition³⁶. Moreover, disruption became a cause of ethnic wars not only in Europe but also in Asia and Africa. In the process of affirming self-identity, old rivalries came to light, which led to serious conflict. On this, Horsman and Marshall conclude that "[t]he superpower balance helped to keep control in regions where ethnic hatreds might have erupted far earlier. But with the end of the Cold War, the wounds have been opened anew."³⁷ Of course, the effects affirmed by these authors were more evident in the case of the USSR, which split producing existential angst and identity crisis on a large scale, mostly for the former communist countries.

The disintegration of the USSR meant a major transformation not only for world politics, economics and geography but also for collective identity inside the ex-communist countries. This is due to the fact that, for almost half a century, communism dominated and helped to maintain nationalisms under control thanks to the soviet policy of the *homo Sovieticus*.³⁸ The Communist attempt to integrate regions by a centralised government and planning came to the

³⁵ Elizabeth Grosz, "Time of violence: Deconstruction and Value," in *Time and Value*, eds. Scott Lash, Andrew Quick and Richard Roberts (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 34.

³⁶ Ronald Steel, "The End and the Beginning," in *The End of the Cold War: Its Meaning and Implications* ed. Michael J. Hogan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 103-7.

³⁷ Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 79.

³⁸ Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 80.

imposition of nationalisation and integration policies. The purpose of those policies was to supplant the original identities with a 'common' Russian one, created and imagined³⁹ for that specific intention. Consequently the disbanding of the USSR and the soviet identity left the ex-communist republics without identity, even if it had been an imposed one. At the same time, the youngest generations had no idea of who they were or where they belonged prior to the communist period. These are the reasons for which I affirm that the end of the Cold War constitutes the beginning of the search and construction of new ways of belonging since it marked the initial stages of disruption to the older ways of belonging and the repercussions this would have⁴⁰; not only for international relations, but also for states whose importance at that time was central in international relations.

I hope this brief historical background has highlighted the modern historical periods in which collective identities have faced uncertainty the most. I also hope to have identified one or two historically contextual moments in which identities have confronted fear: of difference, of who the other really was, of how to face the other, and even fears related to how to identify the group(s) to which a person belongs, and the groups that one opposes.

The second defining moment in the contemporary trajectory of collective (which only sometimes means 'national') identity construction is the terrorist attacks of September 11th, which offered a clear view of the transition to new ways of belonging - a return to a belonging (based on culture, ethnicity, religion, and language, amongst other elements)⁴¹ that was considered a subjective type of belonging in the past, most particularly where concerned with a state's most formal belonging tie: citizenship, in a time when states proved practically not to be the central international actors anymore. Another determinant condition enhancing identity transition is de-territorialisation, which has played an important role in the search for and

³⁹ As Anderson asserted in *Imagined Communities*.

⁴⁰ Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 76.

⁴¹ Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 185-99.

construction of what I have termed ‘new and renewed ways of belonging.’ The main reason is that it allows the increase of more inclusive belonging categories and ties, surpassing political and geographical limits. Formerly, a state’s borders were a high deterrent in the construction of identities, making them less inclusive than they are now.⁴² This is explained because traditional collective identity was built around the concept of a (de)limited entity (the state) so they also had a limited scope.

September 11th not only offered a dark panorama full of negative consequences. In this thesis I wish to show that it also provided opportunities. Among these is an increasing capacity to forge allegiances to multiple and overlapping entities. Such entities are states, communities or other structures and/or value-systems that have at least appeared to be strong enough to combat rather high levels of contemporary ontological insecurity.⁴³ At the same time they have proven to be capable of providing an element of stability to the collective identities of the twenty-first century. It is important to note that these entities have different levels of sovereignty too.

Another benefit is that September 11th helped to stabilise and reconstruct a clearer view of collective identity.⁴⁴ After a period of at least 10 years since the end of the Cold War when, at the very least, the US had serious trouble understanding how collective identity was evolving, September 11th was also used to forge a clearer identity, not only in the United States but also in Canada, France, Spain, Great Britain and many other countries (notably, all the so-called “First World” countries). These two moments: the end of the Cold War and the terrorist attacks of September 11th have been major modern causes of uncertainty that people suffering from ontological fear have perceived as opportunities to construct new collective identities or

⁴² Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 44-5.

⁴³ Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism.”

⁴⁴ Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 6.

renew belonging links more able to provide ontological security than the traditional belonging links.

While I intend the main arguments of this thesis go significantly further, they are based on several claims that are, in themselves, fairly self-evident (though their implications are anything but this). First, it is clear that uncertainty about ‘one’s’ belonging causes a specific kind of existential angst that leads to the search for new identities and new forms of belonging.⁴⁵ Second, if one accepts the premises of arguments claiming that identity is socially constructed, then it is also clear that functional new ways of belonging are likely to respond to, and be influenced by, the contemporary context in which they appear: including values, ideas, beliefs, and material needs.

As Hobbes showed long ago, security needs are particularly important because they underpin ontological security and stability; in other words, having security of different kinds makes it easier to answer ontological questions such as ‘*who am I?*’ and ‘*where do I belong?*’ However, the part of this problematic I hope to focus on here concerns what happens when such ‘comfortable identification’ is not possible or forthcoming. Indeed, I show in this thesis that it has often and increasingly been far from comfortable and far from secure.

The search for new or renewed ways of belonging in today’s post-September 11th environment, in a ‘globalising’ context, possesses a special relation with the declining process of the state. Therefore I will argue that the relation between ontological uncertainty and new forms of group identity construction is crucial to understanding this relationship.

It has been generally accepted for some time⁴⁶ that the state’s old-fashioned, anachronistic structure is making it increasingly unable to satisfy popular needs: most of all

⁴⁵ Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism.” See also Noble, “The Discomfort of Strangers,” 115

⁴⁶ John Dunn, “Introduction: Crisis of Nation State?” in *Contemporary Crisis of the Nation State?*, ed. John Dunn (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 11. See also Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 52-3. Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1996), 11 53-5. And Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 186-7.

that of security.⁴⁷ This has consequently facilitated the disruption of the formal belonging tie between political entity (state) and its population, since this was based on the idea of state as supplier of what is necessary. Therefore I will argue in chapter 2 that the contravention of that implicit pact and the state's diminished capacities has been perceived by people as a sign of weakness. But it has also evidenced its inability to maintain people willingness to belong to state.⁴⁸

There is no doubt that states cannot keep their role as the main actors in the international system, nor do they possess enough resources for sustaining such a role or for maintaining their part in the pact with people as they had tried to do before globalization.⁴⁹ This situation has allowed an increase in importance of other international actors, such as International Non-Governmental Organisations, multilateral agencies, economic groupings, International Governmental Organisations, Multinational Corporations, flows of Foreign Investment, and so on. States have accepted these new actors due to the help they provide in maintaining the economical situation that links them with the population. On Ohmae's account, "nation states no longer possess the seemingly bottomless well of resources from which they used to draw with impunity to fund their ambitions. These days, even they have to look for assistance to the global economy and make the changes at home needed to invite it in."⁵⁰ The intervention of new international actors into a state's sovereignty has transformed the level of control a state has over its resources and population. It has also opened the old rigid boundaries of states and even social questions have 'gone global' to the point where many states practically do not have well-defined boundaries any more.

⁴⁷ Horsman & Marshall point out the importance of territoriality for states to protect its population, see Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 46.

⁴⁸ Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 52-5.

⁴⁹ Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, 2.

⁵⁰ Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, 2.

De-territorialisation and globalisation are two of the processes which have acted the most as catalysts in the decline of the state.⁵¹ As a result of the rift between the state and the ways individuals and groups express their belonging to it formally (citizenship) as a referent for collective identity, existential angst concerning how to define and perform that identity has increased. The search for, and construction of, new and renewed identities are a response to the uncertainty of people not knowing who they are, what makes them what they are as opposed to something else, to which group they belong (or don't belong) and the fear that goes with not being certain of these things. These are the questions with which ontology deals.

For a better understanding of the full meaning of 'ontological fear,' it is necessary to give a brief explanation of what *ontology* is right at the beginning. Etymologically, it means 'the study of being or that which exists' as opposed to that which appears to exist but in reality does not. However, that study is established according to the description of what the being is in order to find the subject, relation and object of that being. To reach an ontological conclusion of something it is necessary to conduct an analysis and an *a priori* reasoning of the premises; this is an analysis coming from the observation of the world.⁵²

The logic in which ontology is based and its arguments have varied over time, as have the criticisms made toward it. However, the precise sense of the word 'ontology' could not be applied to the term 'ontological fear' since it would just perform as a referent of existence. Therefore, ontological fear is a denomination used in contemporary literature (and in this thesis) to describe a fear concerning being or the nature of one's being; and in the identity field this would be the fear of not being part of a determined group, which is a result of an exacerbated existential angst. Ontological security is, in Giddens' argument, the "fundamental

⁵¹ For further reading see Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 46. And Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 32-3.

⁵² Graham Oppy, "Ontological Arguments," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (February 8th 1996 [cited October 11th, 2007]): available from: <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ontological-arguments/>

sense of safety in the world and includes a basic trust of other people, it is a fear in respect to what might happen in the future, about the uncertainty of this and the possible threats.”⁵³ A similar approach can be found in Kinnvall’s definition of ontological security, which is “a security of being, a sense of confidence and trust that the world is what it appears to be.”⁵⁴ Expanding this point of security, it is important to highlight that ontological security involves not only an external ambit, a trust in the world but also the security in one’s identity because this provides a level of certainty that later expands to society. This is the reason why the term ‘ontological fear’ will be used in this thesis to refer to the insecurity of not belonging to a determined collectivity.

Consequently, identity is a process that provides security of being, a major human need, and so the search for and/or construction of new identities are the result of the search for certainty in a world, which lacks it.⁵⁵ The persistence and increasing level of ontological fear provides evidence of a declining state whose role is no longer central and whose ability to connect with its people is declining rapidly. In other words, ontological fear seems to indicate the disruption of citizenship as the traditional belonging tie because a declining state is no longer able to provide stable identification links to its people.

States once used to be a sign of wealth, well-being, safety, and stability, but in recent history they have gone through periods of instability, especially after the end of the Cold War and since the September 11th terrorist attacks.⁵⁶ States have also experienced a shrinking in their capabilities, most notably in supplying security,⁵⁷ wealth and stability. When people realized states’ inabilities and weaknesses, a tense situation emerged with a great deal of

⁵³ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, 38-39.

⁵⁴ Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism.”

⁵⁵ Kinnvall, “Globalization and Religious Nationalism.”

⁵⁶ Dunn, “Introduction,” 11. See also Croucher, *Globalization and Belonging*, 52-3. Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State*, 11 and 53-5. And Horsman & Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 186-7.

⁵⁷ Marshall, *After the Nation-State*, 66.

existential angst because the loss of the state as a point of reference indirectly meant that there was no certainty of what tomorrow would hold.⁵⁸

Ontological fear and the construction of new and more inclusive ways of belonging is a very interesting but under-studied issue. It possesses a factual relevance that it is currently contesting the pre-existence theories unable to give an adequate explanation to the contemporary dilemmas. It's relation to ontological security, and security concepts, questions and issues in general, also make it a subject that has much to say to the discipline of international relations: a discipline that is fast becoming obsessed with the concept(s) of security and how difficult we are now finding it to stick with pre-globalized conceptions of it. In this way, I hope to contribute in a small way to the literature by exploring a conception of security that provides an alternative to, or at least does not rest fully upon, the military conception(s) of security that have been so problematic to continue using lately. This thesis should therefore, at least partially, demonstrate the adequacy of the theories dealing with ontological fear, ontological security and the social construction of identities to the present reality can be used to shed light on some IR theories and complement some missing or contested concepts it uses.

The scope of this thesis is to analyze the relationship and implications of the declining of the state in confrontation with the loss of certainty in the traditional belonging tie that largely stems from, and subsequently worsens, the decline of the state itself. To do this, I base the groundwork, at least initially, on Catarina Kinnvall's work on ontology and globalization, because it has a similar scope and approach to the one used here. I have also found the way in which she connects the modern issues of globalization, nationalism and religion to old identity issues inspiring and worth developing further for a number of reasons.

⁵⁸ Kinnvall, "Globalization and Religious Nationalism."

The approach that this thesis will apply is to import Kinnvall's idea of identities' necessity of a sure and certain context and referent into the existing set of arguments claiming and explaining state's declining. I claim, then, the existence of a relation between the disruption of traditional belonging links and the decline of the state based on state's former character as stable and certain referent for identities. Once I have used Kinnvall to show that the loss of a stable referent causes ontological fear and disruption of traditional belonging links, I will try to support my claim that the decline of the state has led to its inability to perform as a certain and stable referent for the collective identities that used to depend on it.

Nevertheless, as Giddens has asserted, a desperate search for ontological security and routines and "a blind commitment to established routines, come what may, is a sign of neurotic compulsion."⁵⁹ On this it is important to recognize that the proliferation of multiple sources of identification and the creation of new or renewed identities based on those multiple categories can be conflictive; even more, they can produce the contrary effect to the one they are trying to avoid, ontological fear.

This thesis shows that the old-fashioned, traditional ways in which collective identities became tied to, and demonstrated a primary allegiance to, the modern western state (based on liberal democratic citizenships) are not able to provide adequate and stable identification in the globalized era. The thesis also shows that a return to these traditional belonging forms and hierarchies (for many Europeans it was 'God, King and Country,' in that order, as the old saying goes) is not viable. However, the multiplication of non-hierarchical sources of identity has created non-hierarchical, multiple and overlapping identities which, because there is no defined hierarchy, increase the possibility of conflicts between the groups compounding one's identity. In case of rivalry between two or more than those groups of identification, individual will find difficulties to choose to which of group he owes more allegiance or to which he feels

⁵⁹ Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* 40.

more identified. At the end, all this uncertainty leads to existential angst and ontological fear and, in many cases, a proliferation of violence, real or threatened (which is itself a kind of violence), against others as a result.

The multiplication of sources of identification and the new possible identities based on them cannot be disregarded as a subjective (and therefore suspect) topic unworthy of International Relations study precisely because of the conflict that they can produce. At the end of the day as Carl Schmitt asserted 90 years ago, *the other, the enemy* surpasses the differences between the groups in conflict.⁶⁰ Conversely, Tracy Strong maintains that “[w]hat is important about this distinction is not so much the ‘who is on my side’ quality, but the claim that only by means of this distinction does the question of our willingness to take responsibility for *our own* lives arise.”⁶¹ The new or renewed ways of belonging that rise in status to replace collective political belonging to the state are still relevant because of their potentially conflictive and multiple natures and despite them. For examining them provides people with a better understanding on their own identity and living them provides a comfort (or at the very least an attenuation of ontological fear) that liberal democratic citizenship cannot provide anymore.

Finally, it is important to note that this thesis is much related to the acquisition of ontological security; however this is not intended in the much criticised⁶² military terms from which Jennifer Mitzen⁶³ makes her central argument. Neither will this thesis argue that ontological security is product of the acquisition of physical individual security which

⁶⁰ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1996)19-80.

⁶¹ Tracy Strong, “Foreword” in *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1996), xvi, citing Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 27. [emphasis in the original].

⁶² For authors contesting this claim see Robert McNamara, “Population and International Security,” *International Security* 12, no.2 (1997): 22-5. Thomas Homer-Dixon, “On the Threshold: Environmental Changes as Causes of Acute Conflict,” *International Security* 16, no. 2 (1991): 76-116. Robert Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy,” *Atlantic Monthly* 273, no.2 (1994): 44-76. Amy Below, “The Missing Link, Regionalism as a First Step Toward Globalizing U.S. Environmental Security Policy,” *Politics and Policy* vol. 35, no. 4 (December 2007): 702-15.

⁶³ Jennifer Mitzen, “Ontological Security in World Politics and Implications for the Study of European Security,” *European Journal of International Relations* 12, no.3 (2006 [cited Aug 17th 2007] Sage Journals Online): available from: <http://ejt.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/12/3/341>.

produces certainty and predictability as Bill Mc Sweeney⁶⁴ proposes. By omitting the military allusion added to the security concept, Kinnvall allows her arguments to focus on different ideas and explore different territory from those that focus more on the military connotations of security. In basing my work on some of her central ideas, I hope to take advantage of this strength.

I hope here to have provided the reasons that make Kinnvall's work the central and authoritative text for this thesis since she has made an extraordinary interlace of the processes originating uncertainty and thus ontological fear, with the way in which humans obtain and maintain assurances of their own identities. Those modes of assurance, according to Kinnvall, take place by looking for more inclusive and broader categories of belonging, which are able to provide ontological security. In addition, she makes an analysis of how these new ways of belonging affect the previously established ways and the consequences they have on international relations and identity processes.

However, despite Kinnvall's efforts, her work unfortunately misses the strong connection between ontological insecurity and the decline of the state. Therefore the main contribution of this thesis is to enrich accounts of ontological fear and ontological insecurity by focusing on how the decline of the state (once a very secure identity-forming location) has affected group identity construction. Therefore this thesis explore the extent to which the deterioration of the state and the disruption of formal belonging links related to it have aggravated ontological fear and accelerated the search for new or renewed belonging links in contemporary times.

Achieving the goals I have set for this thesis is not an easy task. In the first place, this thesis is, admittedly, rather ambitious in its attempt to deal with three rather complicated sets of concepts and problematics: identity, ontological security and the decline of the state. I am

⁶⁴ Bill Mc Sweeney, *Security, Identity and Interests: A Sociology in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

aware that this could produce certain problems of undercoverage and oversimplification of each of these problematics, and thus to minimize this objection I have made it a point to only discuss those parts of each concept that impact upon the other two. In the second instance, this thesis is challenging because identity questions are notoriously difficult and very often considered as subjective elements in the study of international relations. That may be so, but given that international relations is a *social science* where facts and values are not easy to disentangle,⁶⁵ some subjectivity should be expected in most studies within the discipline.

The central hypothesis of this thesis is that *a slackening of feelings of affiliation and allegiance to the state has led several groups to search for new, or renewed, more psychologically fulfilling modes of belonging elsewhere. This, I will show, has modified the allegiance and belonging links between certain social groups—which are neither small nor obscure—and the state itself.* To defend the framework of this thesis, I use a deductive approach that allows me to show that the decline of the state and the disruption of old ways of belonging are strongly involved with ontological questions. As a subhypothesis, I demonstrate that *the ontological question possesses a relation with the appearance and increasing importance of new international actors; since it allows a multiple and overlapping allegiances and belonging ties.*

Chapter one explores connections between ontological fear, the importance of certainty, and the current historical context that has led to the rupture of the traditional belonging tie and the search and/or construction of new ones. Knowing the psychological mechanism used by these new ways of belonging is relevant because it will allow knowing why state had not been able to provide the same comfortable and secure identification. This chapter establishes the conceptual groundwork of the thesis by ‘unpacking’ what is meant by ontological fear and introducing the theoretical framework via several of Kinnvall’s key

⁶⁵ Peter Winch, *The Idea of a Social Science and its Relations to Philosophy* (United Kingdom: Routledge, 1991).

arguments not only about ontological fear, but also about the available mechanisms to achieve certainty during times of instability and rapid transformations (in both the international context and in daily life).

Chapter two covers arguments concerning how the decline of state has set up the conditions for the state's inability as provider of ontological security to its population and thus a slackening of the feelings of affiliation and allegiance related to state. The importance of the state in identity issues is discussed and its relation with ontological fear is established alongside a review of some of the reasons that have led to the decline of the state and whether this is a global, regional or specific tendency. Based on this evidence presented in this chapter, I try to show in the final section of this chapter that the vacuum produced by the slackening of belonging links relating the people to the state is now being successfully fulfilled by the new and renewed ways of belonging.

Chapter three deals with two specific examples of collective identities that have tried to deal with ontological fear in practice, as well as the results of their efforts: the Basque case and what has been called 'queer nationalism.' These are included to exemplify and expand on the key theoretical points established earlier in the thesis and to explore how two new and renewed ways of belonging fulfil the vacuum left by the traditional ways of belonging based on a primary political allegiance to the state are producing a reconsideration of people's allegiances, feelings of affiliation and priorities. Finally, the two examples help to give a better understanding on how the search for security is able to transform the social reality of individuals and groups to provide them the information on which is their role and relation in the contemporary world necessary to alleviate ontological fear.

Above all, I wish to demonstrate that there is a profound link between the disruption of the traditional belonging link and the declining situation of the state, and that this declining is driven to the search and/or construction of new and renewed belonging ties more able to

provide identification than the state now appears to be. Given that ontological fear is central to the theorization of the disruption of traditional belonging links, I begin by focusing on this concept. Chapter one therefore will explore the reasons behind ontological fear and how the loss of a referent symbolizing certainty and stability – a role that the state used to perform – has enhanced the disruption of traditional belonging links.