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Constructing Europe? The Evolution of French, British, and German Nation-State Identities

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Abstract

This essay tackles the following puzzle. Why is it that we cannot observe much Europeanization of "Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism" during the past fifty years, while "Germanness" spells European since the end of the 1950s and "French exceptionalism", at least recently, also comes in European colors? We argue that a combination of three factors accounts for this variation in the extent to which nation-state identities have become European. The first condition is that any new idea about political order, in order to be considered legitimate, must resonate with core elements of older visions of the political order such as 'state-centered republicanism' in France, 'parliamentary democracy and external sovereignty' in Great Britain, and 'federalism, democracy and social market economy' in Germany. These older understandings of political order therefore delimit the degree to which "Europe" can be incorporated in given nation-state identities.

The second condition is that new visions about political order circulating in transnational discourses can most easily be promoted domestically during "critical junctures" when existing ideas about political order are collectively challenged and contested. Under these circumstances, perceived political interests and the power resources of political actors to a large extent explain which ideas among those available in a given context are being promoted and come to dominate.

Finally, nation-state identities which have become consensual in a given polity are likely to remain rather stable over time, since actors tend to get socialized into their new collective identity and gradually internalize its content. Over time, nation-state identities tend to become embedded in political institutions and political culture and the degree to which political elites are able to manipulate identity constructions narrows considerably.

Introduction¹

This essay investigates the impact of deep-rooted identity constructions relating to "Europe" and of ideas about European political order on the way in which political elites in France, Germany, and Great Britain have constructed nation-state identities since the 1950s. We seek to understand

- why two dramatic shifts in French nation-state identity occurred – one with the emergence of the Fifth Republic under President de Gaulle in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the other during the 1980s and 1990s when political elites increasingly incorporated "Europe" in the nation-state identity of the Fifth Republic;
- why (West) German political elites have shared a consensual and thoroughly Europeanized version of German nation-state identity since the end of the 1950s as a way of overcoming the country's own past;

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- why the English² nation-state identity which continues to dominate the British political discourse on Europe has remained virtually the same since the 1950s and why Europe still constitutes the, albeit friendly, 'other'.

We argue that a combination of three factors helps us to get a better understanding of this variation. First, new visions of political order need to *resonate* with pre-existing collective identities embedded in political institutions and cultures in order to constitute legitimate political discourse. Second, political elites select in an instrumental fashion from the ideas available to them according to their perceived *interests*, particularly during "critical junctures" when nation-state identities are contested and challenged in political discourses. Third, once nation-state identities have emerged as consensual among the political majority, they are likely to be *internalized* and institutionalized as a result of which they tend to become resistant to change.

²Until the end of the 1980s political elites in Britain used the terms 'British' and 'English' interchangeably when speaking about political order in a European context. In this essay we refer to a myth of Englishness as the basis of varying ideational expressions. We call this myth 'Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism'. Subsequently, we do not discuss Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish elite discourse, how and when various British political actors apply these terms strategically in a domestic political game, or the impact which these notions might have on Welsh, Scottish and Irish elites' - as opposed to English elites' - European attitudes (see Langlands, 1999). Instead, we focus on (i) the definition of the myth of Englishness, (ii) the way party-elites replicate the myth in their discourse about political order and thereby make claims about Great Britain, and (iii) the necessity for party-political elites to construct a 'fit' between Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism and ideas about political order with a view to gain reputation for being responsible speakers. Therefore, in terms of terminology, we refer to 'party elites', we analyze '*British* elite attitudes and views', '*British* political discourse', '*the British* debate', '*British* notions', and we conclude that the concept of 'Europe of nation-states still prevails in *Britain*'. This implies, firstly, that whenever we speak about 'Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism' we refer to the myth which is underlying party elites' claims about British nation-state identities. Secondly, when we describe British nation-state identity as essentially 'English', we refer to the observation that Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism characterizes British nation-state identity. Finally, it is important to emphasize that we do not suggest that myths - be they century old as in the case of Great Britain, or more recent, as in the German case - be necessarily exogenous elements for the analysis of nation-state identities. Instead, we assume that national myths as well as the ideas based on them are socially constructed. Since it is beyond the limited framework of this essay to elaborate on this question, we have chosen to focus on party-elites' attempts to base their discourse on a 'pre-defined' set of national myths with a view to gain popular support, understanding and legitimacy after WWII.

The essay proceeds in the following steps. We begin with some conceptual clarifications of the notion of "nation-state identity." Second, we present a brief overview of the empirical material. Third, we offer a theoretical approach to explaining change as well as continuity of nation-state identities in the three countries.

Nation-State Identity: Conceptual Clarifications

The concept of "collective identity" we apply in this essay draws on social psychology, particularly Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theories (Oakes, Haslam & Turner 1994; Abrams & Hogg 1990; Turner 1987). Social groups tend to define themselves on the basis of a set of *ideas* to which members can relate positively. These ideas can be expressed directly in the discourse of the members and in their ways of interacting and communicating, or indirectly through the application of common symbols, codes, or signs. The function of these ideas is to define the social group as an entity which is distinct from other social groups. The members thereby perceive that they have something in common on the basis of which they form an "imagined community" (Anderson 1983). In this essay, we look at discourses among *party elites* in France, Germany, and Great Britain in order to understand their identity constructions with regard to the nation-state and to Europe (see also Wæver 1996; Wæver and al. 1993; Wæver and Kelstrup 1993). Party elites are major actors in a country's political discourse and, contrary to other types of elites (academics and artists, for instance), they are constantly required to justify their actions in order to gain the support of their electorates and constituencies. In Europe at least, parties have always been major vehicles for the transmission of ideas between society and the state, rather than being confined to electoral organizations and, as mass integration parties, they instigate, shape, and reflect major political debates.

Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theories also argue that, apart from being defined by a set of shared ideas, the sense of community among members of a social group is accentuated by a sense of distinctiveness with regard to *other social groups*. In other words, a social identity defines not only an 'in-group', but also one or several 'out-groups'.³ When speaking

³On the Self-Other dichotomy in International Relations, including a discussion of social-psychological approaches, see Neumann (1996).

about the political order during the Cold War, the elites in the three countries collectively shared an "Other", communism and the Soviet Union. Moreover, British political elites have continuously considered 'Europe' as the friendly 'out-group', whereas German elites have seen the country's own catastrophic past as 'the other', and French political elites have traditionally added the U.S. to their list of 'others.'

Furthermore, individuals are members of several social groups, which may or may not overlap. In other words, they hold *multiple identities*. Depending on the immediate context and the various roles individuals play, they can be expected to invoke different elements of their social identity in different situations. In this essay, we deal specifically with one of these social groups - *party elites* - and their utterances in a specific context, i.e., political discourses. As a result, we have considerably narrowed down the number of social identities dealt with and, subsequently, also the number of possible "others."

Related to this previous point, individuals invoke different elements of their social identity depending on the *specific context*. Because we are interested in utterances about the state as well as political and social order, we have chosen to call this particular identity a *nation-state identity* to distinguish it from other components of the national and other social identities of party political elites. We do *not* claim that the nation as such is carrying this identity. What we do claim, though, is that party elites express visions about the state and Europe and consequently give discursive expression to nation-state identities.

Finally, social psychology theory tells us that social identities are *unlikely to change frequently*. Individuals cannot constantly adjust their cognitive schemes to the many complex and often contradictory signals from the social world around them, as a result of which these perceived signals are integrated into existing cognitive schemes and stereotypes or simply rejected outright if they seem to be incommensurable with existing world views.⁴ Nation-state identities therefore tend to be sticky rather than subject to frequent change (Fiske & Taylor

⁴At this point, a theoretical approach to political discourses which is informed by insights from social psychology, differs sharply from other – particularly post-modern – approaches to discourse. This is a major theoretical disagreement among various constructivist approaches.

1991, 150-151). However, this does not mean that they are completely stable. They do indeed vary over time according to the following logic:⁵

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

- There is always some leeway for the purposive attempt of political actors to alter existing ideational frameworks and boundary definitions, but it is particularly during *critical junctures* that the likelihood of success of such attempts is greatest. We define critical junctures as *perceived* crisis situations occurring from complete policy failures, but also triggered by external events. Nation-state identities are likely to be challenged under such circumstances (Olsen 1996, 252-253). Empirical examples are the catastrophe of World War II and the Nazi regime for German nation-state identity, or the end of the Cold War for the French nation-state identity. In such an open ideational space elites start promoting new ideas about political order and about nation-state identity when the old concepts are commonly perceived as irrelevant or as having failed.
- New ideas about political order do not fall from heaven, but need to *resonate with existing identity constructions* - historical myths - embedded in national institutions and political cultures (Checkel 1997; Soysal 1994; Ulbert 1997; Jetschke and Liese 1998). While existing identity constructions are broadly defined and can resonate with a whole series of new ideas, they nevertheless define the range of options considered legitimate for new nation-state identities. There is no reason to believe that these existing identity constructions are 'givens', which are elevated above identity politics and contestation.⁶ But we argue that elites cannot construct new identities at will. Rather, new ideas about social order and the nation-state need to resonate with

⁵Martin Marcussen has developed the concept of an "ideational life-cycle" in this context (Marcussen 1998a, b, 1999).

⁶See Cederman & Daase (1998) for an attempt to endogenize such deep-rooted identity elements - they call this aspect 'corporate identity' - in policy analysis. Their purpose is to theorize about the 'longue durée' whereas we aspire to theorize about medium term 'identity politics' in which one specific social identity is at stake - the nation-state identity.

previously embedded and institutionalized values, symbols, and myths. In our case, ideas about Europe and European identity usually appear in various "national colors" in order to appeal to elite groups and to the larger public opinion.

- When promoting new ideas about political order during critical junctures, we expect political elites to act on the basis of what they perceive to be in their interest. These can be concerns about political power, but also economic or security interests. An "*interest-based*" account essentially argues that nation-state identities are instrumental social constructions developed by elites in their struggle for political power insofar as they rationalize and legitimize the instrumental and material "taken-for-granted" preferences of actors (Haas 1997; Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Garrett and Weingast 1993; Jacobson 1995). We do not promote an "interest vs. identity" account, but try to figure out the precise way in which both interact. On the one hand, embedded identity constructions mentioned above define the boundaries of what elites consider to be legitimate ideas - thereby constituting their perceived interests. On the other hand, perceived interests define which ideas political elites select in their struggle for power among those available to actors. The precise relationship remains a matter of empirical study.
- A "*socialization*" argument claims that ideas and identity constructions become consensual when actors thoroughly internalize them, perceive them "as their own," and take them for granted (Schimmelfennig 1994; Finnemore and Sikkink 1998; Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 1999). Once a set of ideas about political order have become consensual, they are likely to be *embedded in institutions* and in a country's political culture. By 'institutions' we refer to both formal organizations, procedures and rules, as well as routines and collective understandings about 'ways of doing things' (March and Olsen 1989; March and Olsen 1998). As a result of the fact that the ideational space narrows down the number of legitimate ideas available in a political discourse decreases and the institutionalization of ideas in institutions and political culture makes them resistant to challenges. In other words, we would expect the developing institutional set-up of a state to reproduce and consolidate taken-for-granted visions about the 'state and Europe'.

A Europeanization of Nation-State Identities? Empirical Evidence from France, Great Britain, and Germany.⁷

In the following, we illustrate our argument with regard to the discourses of political elites in France, Great Britain, and Germany from the 1950s on. Concerning the 1950s, we distinguish among five ideal-typical identity constructions in the various discourses (Risse 1998; for a similar attempt to categorize visions of political order see Jachtenfuchs, Diez, and Jung 1998, see also Aggestam 1999). While their origins can be found in the inter-war period (and earlier), they were widely contested at the time, particularly in France and Germany. For these two countries then, the 1950s constitute a "critical juncture" where ideas about political order and nation-state identity were contested and challenged. We identified the following identity constructions (for details see Engelmann-Martin 1998; Knopf 1998; Roscher 1998):

- *Liberal nationalist* identity constructions (on liberal nationalism see Haas 1997) whereby the "we" is confined to one's own nation-state and where political sovereignty resides in the nation-state. This concept is compatible with a "Europe of nation-states" and, as we argue below, still prevails in Great Britain, while it dominated in the French political discourse during de Gaulle's presidency.
- A wider *Europe as a community of values* "from the Atlantic to the Urals" embedded in geography, history, and culture. This concept attracted some support during the early years of the Cold War and re-emerged to some extent after the end of the East-West conflict, particularly in France and Germany.
- *Europe as a "third force"*, as a democratic socialist alternative between capitalism and communism, thus overcoming the boundaries of the Cold War order. This concept prevailed among French socialists and German social democrats during the early 1950s, but then virtually disappeared when these parties reconstructed their collective identities.
- *A modern Europe as part of the Western community* based on liberal democracy and the social market economy. This concept became consensual in the Federal Republic of Germany towards the late 1950s and to some extent also underlies the more recent changes in French collective nation-state identity.

⁷The following part summarizes Risse (forthcoming, a).

- A *Christian Europe (Abendland)* based on Christian, particularly Catholic values including strong social obligations. This identity construction was rather common among the Christian Democratic parties in France and Germany during the 1950s, but then increasingly amalgamated with the modern Westernized idea of Europe.

While these five conceptions of the state and of Europe were heavily contested during the 1950s, only two competitors remained in the dominant discourses of the three countries during the 1990s: The *liberal nationalist* identity and the modern Western idea of *Europe as a liberal democracy*. However, both concepts come in distinct national colors.

The Europeanization of French Exceptionalism

Constructions of French nation-state identity by political elites have undergone considerable change over time. Policy-makers of the Third Republic such as Aristide Briand and Eduard Herriot were among the first to embrace a federalist vision of *Etats Unis d'Europe* during the inter-war period (Bjøøl 1966, 172-173). Their vision did not become consensual within their own parties until after World War II. During the 1950s and in conjunction with the first efforts toward European integration, a national debate took place, which concerned French nation-state identity and basic political orientations in the post-war era.

World War II and the German occupation served as traumatic experiences and as "critical junctures" so that French nation-state identity became deeply problematic. Many controversies centered around how to deal with Germany as the most significant "other" for the French at the time.

There was no consensus among the French political elites at the time about European integration as a solution to the German problem. All five identity constructions outlined above competed among each other during the 1950s. Each of them resonated with elements of the previous identity constructions embedded in political institutions and culture. The French Gaullists (RPF) embraced a strictly nationalist view of France based on the values of Republicanism, while de Gaulle himself occasionally supported a wider vision of Europe "from the Atlantic to the Urals." Christian Democrats (MRP) promoted the Christian vision of Europe together with the modern Westernized concept. Finally, the French Socialists (SFIO)

tried to push a concept of France as part of a European socialist "third force" beyond the two blocs of the Cold War (details in Roscher 1998).

The war in Algeria and the ongoing crisis of the Fourth Republic only added to the crisis of French nation-state identity. When the Fifth Republic came into being in 1958, its founding father, President Charles de Gaulle, re-constructed French nation-state identity and managed to reunite a deeply divided nation around a common vision of France's role in the world. His successful re-construction of French nation-state identity constitutes a prime example for the instrumental selection of a particular discourse as outlined above:

"When one is the Atlantic cape of the continent, when one has planted one's flag in all parts of the world, when one spreads ideas, and when one opens oneself to the surrounding world, in short, when one is France, one cannot escape the grand movements on the ground. One has to play one's role straightforwardly and comprehensively in order not to be crushed and, at the same time, to serve the cause of all mankind".⁸

De Gaulle's identity construction related to historical myths of Frenchness and combined them in a unique way. As the leader of the French *résistance* during World War II, he overcame the trauma of the Vichy regime and he related the French *état-nation* - comprising a specific meaning of sovereignty - with the values of enlightenment and democracy (Bédarida 1994, Kelly 1996). The notion of sovereignty - understood as national independence from outside interference together with a sense of uniqueness and "*grandeur*" - was used to build a bridge between post-Revolutionary Republican France and the pre-Revolutionary monarchy. The French *état-nation* connoted the identity of the nation and democracy as well as the identity of French society with the Republic. Finally, de Gaulle reintroduced the notion of a French "*mission civilisatrice*" for the world destined to spread the universal values of enlightenment and of the French revolution. "*L'Europe des nations*" became the battlecry during de Gaulle's presidency. None of these identity constructions were particularly new, but de Gaulle combined them in a particular way and managed to use them in order to legitimize the political institutions of the Fifth Republic. By the mid-1960s, the Gaullist understanding of French nation-state identity had carried the day in France and won out against the other four identity constructions.

But this nation-state identity construction only remained consensual among political elites for about another ten years after de Gaulle's resignation. Beginning in the late 1970s, a gradual

⁸President de Gaulle, speech in Lille, Dec. 11, 1950, D.M. II, 393.

Europeanization of French nation-state identity took place among elites which came about as a result of French experiences with European integration as well as two more "critical junctures" - the utmost failure of Mitterrand's economic policies in the early 1980s and the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s (Schmidt 1996; Schmidt 1997). De Gaulle's immediate successors incrementally changed French policies toward the EC adopting a more pro-active stance. It was only a question of time when the European integration process would become incompatible with the particular nation-state identity of the Fifth Republic. The inconsistency between the liberal nationalist identity and French attitudes toward European integration became apparent when François Mitterrand was elected as the first French Socialist president in 1981.

As the new leader of the Socialist Party, he initially pushed the pro-European SFIO of Guy Mollet towards a more reluctant stance, thereby accepting the Gaullist legacy (Cole, 1996: 72). When Mitterrand and the Socialist Party came into power in 1981, they initially embarked upon creating democratic socialism in France based on leftist Keynesianism. This project bitterly failed, so that in 1983 Mitterrand had no choice other than to dramatically change course if he wanted to remain in power (Uterwedde 1988). This political change led to a deep identity crisis within the Socialist Party which moved towards ideas once derisively labeled "Social Democratic". Mitterrand now reverted to a more pro-European discourse:

"We are at the moment where everybody unites, our fatherland, our Europe - Europe our fatherland - the ambition to support one with the other, the excitement of our land and of the people it produces, and the certainty of a new dimension is awaiting them" (Mitterrand 1986, 104).

The PS's move toward Europe was motivated by instrumental concerns of remaining in power. The change included an effort to reconstruct French nation-state identity. French Socialists started highlighting the common European historical and cultural heritage. They increasingly argued that the French future was to be found in Europe. As Mitterrand once put it, "France is our fatherland, Europe is our future."⁹ The French left also started embracing the notion of a "European France", extending the vision of the French "*mission civilisatrice*" toward Europe writ large. The peculiar historical and cultural legacies of France were transferred from the "first nation-state" in Europe to the continent as a whole, because all European nation-states were children of enlightenment, democracy and Republicanism. France imprints its marks on Europe. This identity construction used traditional

⁹Quoted from *Le Monde*, Sept. 4, 1992.

understandings of Frenchness and the French nation-state - sovereignty understood as enlightenment and republicanism, the French *mission civilisatrice* - and Europeanized them. By the end of the 1980s, the French Socialists had thoroughly embraced a particular French vision of Europe as part of modernity and the Western community of liberal democracies.

Similar changes in the prevailing visions of European order combined with reconstructions of French nation-state identity took place on the French right, albeit later. The heir of Charles de Gaulle's vision of '*Europe des patries*', the *Rassemblement pour la République* (RPR), provides another example of the French political elite changing course. In this case, the end of the Cold War was the decisive moment constituting a crisis experience for French nation-state identity. When the Berlin wall came down, Germany was united, and the post-Cold War European security order was constructed, France - *la grande nation* - remained largely on the sidelines (Zelikow and Rice 1995). As a result, large parts of the political elite realized the grand illusion of "*grandeur*" and "*indépendance*". The way out was Europe (Flynn 1995). The political debates surrounding the referendum on the Maastricht treaties in 1992 can be seen as an identity-related discourse about the new role of France in Europe and the world after the end of the Cold War. As in the 1950s, fear of German power dominated the debates. Supporters of Maastricht and EMU, particularly on the French right, argued in favor of a "binding" strategy, while opponents supported a return to traditional balance of power politics. This time, however, and in contrast to the 1950s, the binding argument carried the day, i.e., support for European integration.

Competing visions about European order held by RPR leaders corresponded to differing views of Frenchness and French nation-state identity. President Jacques Chirac, who in the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s echoed the Gaullist legacy (Shields 1996: 90-91), now expressed similar ideas about the Europeanization of French distinctiveness as his counterparts among the French left:

"The European Community is also a question of identity. If we want to preserve our values, our way of life, our standard of living, our capacity to count in the world, to defend our interests, to remain the carriers of a humanistic message, we are certainly bound to build a united and solid bloc.. If France says Yes [to the treaty of Maastricht], she can better reaffirm what I believe in: French exceptionalism".¹⁰

¹⁰Jacques Chirac, *Liberation*, Sept. 11, 1992.

In contrast, a minority of RPR "Euro-sceptics" such as Charles Pasqua and Philippe Séguin stuck to traditional Gaullist understandings of sovereignty and a nationalistic view of collective identity during the Maastricht debates (Joas 1996).

In sum, French nation-state identity was heavily contested both in the 1950s and during the 1980s and early 1990s. Each time, however, political elites selected different identity constructions in accordance with what they perceived in their instrumental power interests. In the early 1960s, the Gaullist vision of the French *état-nation* as the Fifth Republic's particular identity prevailed over rival visions. Thirty years and two more "critical junctures" later, however, a Europeanization of this particular nation-state identity won out; one which gradually embraced the modern Western vision of Europe, albeit in French colors.

Germany's Past as Europe's "Other"

The German case is one of thorough and profound reconstruction of nation-state identity following the catastrophe of World War II. Thomas Mann's dictum that "we do not want a German Europe, but a European Germany" became the mantra of the post-war (West) German elites. Since the 1950s, a fundamental consensus has emerged among political elites and has been generally shared by public opinion, that European integration is in Germany's vital interest. Simon Bulmer called it the "Europeanization" of German politics (Bulmer 1989; see also Hellman 1996; Katzenstein 1997).

Chancellor Konrad Adenauer who regarded the integration of the German nation-state and society in the West as the best means of overcoming Germany's past initiated the multilateralization of German foreign policy (for details of this and the following, see Engelmann-Martin 1998). Adenauer had been active in the pro-European wing of the *Zentrum*, the Catholic predecessor of the German Christian Democrats (CDU) during the Weimar Republic (Baring 1969; Schwartz 1966). Adenauer's thinking about Europe was heavily influenced by ideas and visions of the Rhinelandish *Zentrum* where Europeanism and Catholicism went hand in hand with a distinct anti-Prussian connotation (Bellers 1991), but also by the transnational European movement, in particular the *Pan-European Union* founded by Count Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi (Coudenhove-Kalergi 1982).

After 1945, the newly founded Christian Democratic Party (CDU) immediately embraced European unification as the alternative to the nationalism of the past (Paterson 1996). As Ernst Haas put it, "in leading circles of the CDU, the triptych of self-conscious anti-Nazism, Christian values, and dedication to European unity as a means of redemption for past German sins has played a crucial ideological role" (Haas 1958, 127). As the Bavarian *CSU* declared in 1946,

"Europe is a supranational community among the family of nations. We support the creation of a European confederation for the common preservation and continuation of the Christian Occidental culture" (Eichstätt Basic Program 1946).

Christianity, democracy, and social market economy became the three pillars on which to base a collective European identity which was sharply distinguished from both the German nationalist and militarist past and - increasingly so during the late 1940s and early 1950s - from Communism and Marxism. In other words, Germany's own past as well as communism constituted the "others" in this identity construction.

When Chancellor Adenauer came into power in 1949, he built upon and expanded these identity constructions. He amalgamated the Christian vision of Europe (see above) with the modern Western concept into one identity construction. He considered the firm anchoring of post-war Germany in Western Europe as the best way to overcome another German *Sonderweg* (Baring 1969, 57; Bellers 1991, 27-28).

But throughout the early 1950s, there was no elite consensus on German post-war identity. While political elites shared the belief that the German past of militarism and nationalism run havoc had to be overcome, they drew different lessons from this legacy. Within Adenauer's own party, Jacob Kaiser, CDU leader in Berlin, favored a German policy of "bridge-building" between East and West including neutrality between the two blocs. Similar concepts originally prevailed among Adenauer's coalition partner, the Free Democratic Party (FDP) (Glatzeder 1980). However, the FDP leader at the time, Thomas Dehler, promoted a German nationalist identity, albeit embracing democracy and liberalism, which closely resembled Gaullist visions.

The Social Democrats (SPD) were the main opposition party to Adenauer's policies. During the inter-war period, the SPD had been the first major German party to support the concept of a "United States of Europe" in its 1925 Heidelberg program. When the party was forced into exile during the Nazi period, the leadership embraced the notion of a democratic European

federation which would almost naturally become a Socialist order. As in the case of the CDU, "the 'European idea' was primarily invoked as a spiritual value in the first years of the emigration. In this period, Europe was seen as an antithesis to Nazi Germany" (Paterson 1974, 3; see also Bellers 1991; Hrbek 1972). Thus, the Europeanization of German nation-state identity originated from the experiences of exiled political leaders - both SPD and CDU - in their resistance to Hitler and the Nazis (Voigt 1986). For them, Europe's "other" was Nazi Germany. Consequently, the first SPD post-war program supported the

"United States of Europe, a democratic and socialist federation of European states. [The German Social Democracy] aspires to a Socialist Germany in a Socialist Europe".¹¹

SPD leaders saw Europe, Germany, democracy, and socialism as identical. The German Social Democrats under its first post-war leader, Kurt Schumacher, supported an identity construction which closely resembled the French Socialists view of a "third force" Europe - and always interlinked with the issue of German unification.¹² Schumacher, a survivor of the Dachau concentration camp, argued vigorously against the politics of Western integration, since the latter foreclosed the prospects of the rapid re-unification of the two Germanies (Moeller 1996; Paterson 1974; Rogosch 1996; Schmitz 1978). At the same time, he denounced the Council of Europe and the ECSC as "un-European", as a "mini-Europe" (*Kleinsteuropa*), as conservative-clericalist and as capitalist (Hrbek 1972). However, the SPD went at great pains to argue that it did not oppose European integration as such, just *this* particular vision.

Two major election defeats later (1953 and 1957), the SPD slowly changed course. In this case again, instrumental power interests led party elites to pick a different identity construction. There had always been an internal opposition to Schumacher's policies. Party officials such as Ernst Reuter (the legendary mayor of Berlin), Willy Brandt (who later became party chairman and, in 1966, Chancellor), Fritz Erler, Herbert Wehner, Helmut Schmidt (Brandt's successor as Chancellor in 1974), and others supported closer relations with the U.S. as well as German integration into the West. These Social Democrats were strongly

¹¹Political Guidelines adopted at the Hanover Party Congress, May 1946.

¹²In a speech in Berlin, 20.06.1946 Schumacher said that 'Die Einheit Deutschlands bedeutet die Einheit Europas. Ein Zerissenens Deutschland würde nur ein uneinheitliches Europa zur Folge haben' (cited in Hrbek 1972, 37).

influenced by the Socialist Movement for the United States of Europe founded in 1947 and by Jean Monnet's Action Committee. By the late 1950s, they took over the party leadership. The German Social Democrats thoroughly reformed their domestic and foreign policy program. In the domestic realm, they accepted the German model of welfare state capitalism, the social market economy. With regard to foreign policy, they became staunch supporters of European integration. The changes culminated in the 1959 Godesberg program. Two years earlier, the SPD had already reversed its course regarding European integration and had supported the Treaty of Rome in the German parliament (Bellers 1991; Hrbek 1972; Paterson 1974; Rogosch 1996).

From the 1960s on, a federalist consensus ("United States of Europe") prevailed among the German political elites comprising the main parties from the center-right to the center-left. In contrast to Gaullist France, German nation-state identity now embraced the modern Western vision of Europe, with Europe's "other" being both Germany's past and Communism. This consensus outlasted the changes in government from the CDU to the SPD in 1969 as well as the return of a CDU-led government in 1982. It also survived a major foreign policy change towards Eastern Europe, East Germany, and the Soviet Union. When Chancellor Willy Brandt introduced *Ostpolitik* in 1969, he made it very clear that European integration efforts were untouchable and had to be continued (Hanrieder 1995).

Even more significantly, German unification twenty years later did not result in a reconsideration of German European orientations. With the unexpected end of the East-West conflict and regained German sovereignty, a broad range of foreign policy opportunities emerged creating a situation in which the German elites could have redefined their national interests. But not much happened. Germany did not reconsider its fundamental foreign policy orientations, since Germany's commitment to European integration had long outlived the context in which it had originally emerged (see Helmann 1996; Katzenstein 1997; Müller 1992; Rittberger 1993). The majority of the German political elite continued to share Chancellor Kohl's belief that only deeper political and economic union can anchor Germany firmly in the West and strengthen European institutions to ensure peace in the years ahead (Banchoff 1997a). German support for a single currency and for a European political union was perfectly in line with long-standing attitudes toward integration and the country's Europeanized nation-state identity. The German political elite - in contrast to German public

opinion – shared a consensus that the *Deutsche Mark* should be given up in favor of the Euro. This stubborn support for the single currency by the vast majority of the political elites can only be understood with reference to their Europeanized nation-state identity (Risse et al. 1999). While the new "red-green" coalition under Chancellor Schröder has altered some details in German policies toward the European Union, it did not touch the elite consensus concerning Germany's European identity.

Europe as Britain's "Other"

In sharp contrast to both France and Germany, the fundamental British elite attitudes toward European integration have remained essentially the same since the end of World War II. More than twenty years after entry into the European Community, Britain is still regarded as "of rather than in" Europe; it remains the "awkward partner" and "semi-detached" from Europe (Bailey 1983; George 1992, 1994a). British views on European integration essentially range from those who objected to British entry into the EC in the first place and who now oppose further Europeanization (the right wing of the Conservatives, Labour's far left and far right) to a mainstream group within both main parties supporting a 'Europe of nation-states'. European federalists remain a distinct minority in the political discourse. The two leading parties share a consensual vision of European order:

Labour: "our vision of Europe is of an alliance of independent nations choosing to co-operate to achieve the goals they cannot achieve alone. We oppose a European federal superstate."

Conservative Party: "the government has a positive vision for the European Union as a partnership of nations. We want to be in Europe but not run by Europe. (...) Some others would like to build a federal Europe. A British Conservative Government will not allow Britain to be part of a Federal European State."¹³

Surprisingly, the general attitude apparently has not changed much since the 1950s and despite Britain's entry into the European Community in the 1970s. Take the following quote from Winston Churchill:

"Where do we stand? We are not members of the European Defense Community, nor do we intend to be merged in a Federal European system. We feel we have a special relation to both. This can be

¹³The first quote is from Labour manifesto 'Britain will be better with new Labour':

<http://www.labourwin97.org.uk/manifesto/index/html>. The second quote stems from Conservative manifesto 'Our Vision for Britain': <http://www.conservative-party.org.uk/manifesto/defe3.html>.

expressed by prepositions, by the preposition "with" but not "of" - we are with them, but not of them. We have our own Commonwealth and Empire".¹⁴

British attitudes toward the European project reflect collectively held beliefs about British, particularly, *Anglo-Saxon* identity, which, as William Wallace put it, "is as old as Shakespeare, matured through the experiences of the English Civil War and the struggles against the threat of Catholic absolutism, first from Spain and then from France: a free England defying an unfree continent" (Wallace 1991, 70). There is still a feeling of "them" vs. "us" between England and the continent. In the political discourse, "Europe" continues to be identified with the continent and perceived as the, albeit friendly, "other" in contrast to Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism, as the following two quotes illustrate:

Labour Minister of State, Younger, in 1950: "We **and**, even more, **our friends in Europe** are entitled to adequate guarantees against the revival of the German war potential, and until we can be satisfied that Germany is able and willing to take her place as a part of the Western community we do not intend to be stampeded into ill-considered action".

Labour Foreign Secretary, Cook, in 1997: "... because one of the things that those of us **who have gone to Europe** have learnt is that there is also a change of opinion in Europe. As it happens, when **I first went to Europe**, the first European politician I met was Lionel Jospin".¹⁵

Neither Younger nor Cook 47 years later consider themselves "Europeans," even though they both view Europe as part of the Western community.

The collective identification with *national* symbols, history, and institutions is far greater in the British political discourse than a potential identification with *European* symbols, history, and institutions. The social construction of "exceptionalism" as the core of British nation-state identity comprises meanings attached to institutions centering around a particular understanding of national sovereignty which is hard to reconcile with a vision of a European political order going beyond functional cooperation over borders (see Lynch 1997; Lyon 1991; Mitchell 1992; Schauer 1996; Schmitz and Geserick 1996). "Europe" simply does not resonate well with identity constructions deeply embedded in national political institutions and in political culture. For instance, the Crown symbolizes "external sovereignty" in the political discourse, in terms of independence from Rome and the Pope as well as from the

¹⁴Speech on 11 May 1953, House of Commons, vol. 513, col. 895.

¹⁵(emphasis added in both quotes) The first quote is from Mr. Younger (Labour; Minister of State), House of Commons debate on Foreign Affairs, 28 March 1950, col. 216. The second quote from Robin Cook, Speech in the House of Commons, June 9, 1997, column 801, <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199798/cmhansrd/cm970609/debtext/70609-08.htm>.

European continent since 1066. Elites continue to construct parliamentary or "internal sovereignty" as a constitutional principle relating to a 700 year old parliamentary tradition and hard-fought victories over the King (Wallace 1994). English sovereignty is, thus, directly linked to myths about a continuous history of liberal and democratic evolution and "free-born Englishmen" (Langlands, 1999). It is not surprising, therefore, that parts of English nation-state identity are often viewed as potentially threatened by European integration. Objections to transferring political sovereignty to European supranational institutions are usually justified on grounds of lacking democratic - meaning parliamentary - accountability. As a result, it is difficult to link this notion of Parliamentary sovereignty to notions about a European political order except from one comprising independent nation-states. The following quotes from 1950 and from the 1990s illustrate this point again:

Sir Cripps, Labour Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1950: "Thus the history of the advance in European co-operation since the war ... is largely the history of a series of practical steps which have gradually extended the mutual trust and confidence in political and economic co-operation ... It does not, however, seem to us ... either necessary or appropriate ... to invest a supra-national authority of independent persons with powers for overriding Governmental and Parliamentary decisions in the participating countries ...".

Prime Minister John Major, 1993: "Britain successfully used the Maastricht negotiations to reassert the authority of national governments. It is clear now that the Community will remain a union of sovereign national states. That is what its peoples want: to take decisions through their own Parliaments. (...) It is for nations to build Europe, not for Europe to attempt to supersede nations".¹⁶

These and other statements show a remarkable continuity of British attitudes toward the European Union and related identity constructions from the 1950s (and earlier) until the present time. This is particularly striking, since the political context of these speeches has changed dramatically. In 1950, there was no "supranational authority" in Europe, while John Major's assertion that Maastricht reaffirmed "the authority of national governments" mainly represents wishful thinking. Contrary to other advanced industrial societies, British elites have not attempted to discuss or redefine the century-old identity constructions and myths underlying post-War foreign policy (Wallace 1991, 1992). It seems as if these identity constructions are so embedded in the national political culture that not even dramatic geo-strategic developments trigger discursive contestation. It remains to be seen whether British

¹⁶The first quote is from Sir S. Cripps (Labour; Chancellor of the Exchequer), House of Commons debate on the Schuman Plan, 26 June 1950, cols. 1946-1950; second quote from John Major: "Raise your eyes, there is a land beyond," *The Economist*, 25th September - 1st October 1993, p. 27.

entry to the monetary union in the next century will change the identity discourse among political elites which so far has remained stable.

Explaining Continuity and Change in Nation-State Identities

The brief and extremely simplified description of almost fifty years of nation-state identity constructions in France, Germany, and Britain reveals continuity and change. To explain this "puzzle," we can probably dismiss two rival approaches out of hand. First, neo-functionalism expected that European integration would gradually lead to the transfer of loyalties to the European level, particularly among those elite members involved in the European policy-making process (Haas 1958, 1964; Lindberg and Scheingold 1970). Our evidence does not support such claims. On the one hand, more than twenty years after Britain joined the European Community, its collective nation-state identity remains firmly anchored in a peculiar notion of Anglo-Saxonism. On the other hand, German collective identities became European at a time when the European integration process was too weak to exert any independent effects on identity constructions. Only the French case might be consistent with a neofunctionalist path.

Second, one could deduce from intergovernmentalism – either its realist (Hoffmann 1966) or liberal versions (Moravcsik 1993, 1997) – that European integration should not affect nation-state identities, since the European polity consists of intergovernmental bodies which do not require much loyalty transfer to the European level. The French and the German cases appear to contradict this argument.

However, the three propositions which we developed above and which delineate conditions under which a change in collective nation-state identities is to be expected, can be taken together to explain the variation in our findings.

We take the *resonance* assumption as our point of departure. Elite groups promoting a specific nation-state identity or a concept of political order need to make these new ideas fit with pre-existing identity constructions embedded in political institutions and culture. New ideas about just political order have to resonate with these classical notions of political order and, if the fit is not commonly perceived to be evident, then national elites will attempt to construct a compatibility between new and old ideas (Bartram 1996).

As argued in the empirical section, classical *Anglo-Saxon* notions of political order emphasize parliamentary democracy and external sovereignty. It is not surprising, therefore, that only an intergovernmentalist vision of European political order - in which politically sovereign states cooperate pragmatically across borders - resonates fully with internal and external sovereignty. Thus, there is not much space for "Europe" or "Europeanness" in this particular British political discourse.

In the *French* case, state-centered republicanism - the duty to promote revolutionary values such as brotherhood, freedom, equality and human rights, in short, "civilization" - constituted a continuous element in the discourse about political order (Kelly 1996). Therefore, political elites can legitimately promote any European idea which resonates with French exceptionalism and which does not violate the particular concept of republicanism, including a Europeanization of French exceptionalism.

Finally, *German* concepts of a social market economy, democracy, and political federalism were central elements in the discourse of German exiled elites during the war and among the entire political class after World War II. Ideas about European political order resonated well with these concepts. In addition, a nationalist view of Germany was thoroughly discredited by militarism and Nazism. Europe provided an alternative identity construction and, thus, a way out.

In short, the "resonance assumption" seems to account for the variation between Great Britain, on the one hand, and France as well as Germany, on the other. European identity constructions have so far remained incompatible with Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism, while French and German elites could easily embrace these notions and incorporate them into their political discourses. But this argument does not explain why different identity constructions dominated in the two latter countries towards the end of the 1950s and why it took French elites thirty years longer than Germany to incorporate "Europe" into their nation-state identity and their exceptionalism. As we argued above, five different identity constructions were considered legitimate in the German and French political discourses of the 1950s. The "resonance assumption" does not tell us which carried the day.

Here, the concept of "critical junctures" becomes relevant indicating that party elites convince themselves that existing visions of political order are inapplicable or dysfunctional in a specific political context. They shop around for alternative ideas about political order and

nation-state identity provided that these are compatible with pre-existing beliefs and deeply embedded identity constructions. Above, we used the "interest-based" literature on the role of ideas and identities to argue that political elites are likely to select those among the legitimately available ideas and identity constructions which suit their perceived power interests.

Thus, we argue that the German SPD reached such a point in the mid- to late 1950s when more and more members of the party leadership recognized that the vision of "Europe as a third force" - unconditionally linked with German unity - was no longer a viable option given the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the Treaty of Rome, and two federal election defeats in a row. At the same time, the modern Western concept of European identity resonated well with the domestic program of the party reformers supporting liberal democracy, market economy, and the welfare state, while giving up more far-reaching Socialist visions. The German SPD thoroughly reformed its program and Europeanized its party identity, because its leaders reckoned that this was the only way to win elections.

A critical juncture of a different kind occurred in France during the late 1950s with the war in Algeria and the crisis of the Fourth Republic bringing Charles de Gaulle into power. His notions of French *grandeur* and *mission civilisatrice* complemented and legitimized the institutions of the Fifth Republic by supplying the French public with a consistent and comprehensive identity construction which resonated well with French traditions of republicanism and the *état-nation*. De Gaulle then used the identity constructions of the Fifth Republic to consolidate his power.

The French case reveals two more crisis situations leading to reconstructions of French nation-state identity. When President Mitterrand's economic policies had to confront the EMS in 1982-83, he was forced to choose between Europe and his Socialist goals. He readily opted for Europe and set in motion a process which the German Social Democrats had experienced 25 years earlier - the parallel turn to social democracy and to Europe. Mitterrand changed policy and reformed the ideology of the French socialists, because he wanted to remain in power. Incorporating Europe into French nation-state constructions later extended to the center-right when the RPR and its leader Jacques Chirac realized at the end of the cold war, that French exceptionalism was nothing but an utopia without Europe. In other words, it took another critical juncture *and* the initiatives of nation-state leaders who pursued what they

defined as being in their party's interest, to place Europe almost consensually within the French nation-state identity.

But perceived instrumental interests can only explain the variation in our cases *in conjunction* with the other factors. First, party leaders are not free to manipulate nation-state identities at their convenience. Rather, they can only try to promote those identity constructions which resonate with pre-existing views among the public and the political elites. To posit a European "civilizing mission" would be considered preposterous in the German political context (where missions of a different kind ruined the country and Europe earlier in the century), while it constitutes a perfectly legitimate idea in the French political discourse. To publicly worship European unity can be a dangerous proposition in the British debate, while it is regarded as perfectly normal in Germany. In short, the resonance assumption explains which identity constructions are available, considered appropriate, and legitimate in a particular political discourse, while perceived interests might elucidate *which* of these identity constructions are then selected and promoted by party elites.

Second, as argued above, "critical junctures" provide a window of opportunity for party elites to deconstruct, reconstruct, and manipulate given nation-state identities. Of course, such crisis situations again do not fall from heaven, but are only "real" insofar as they are perceived and constructed as such. The end of the Cold War and German unification, for example, represented a "critical juncture" for the French elites, while these events did not trigger a major debate among the German elites concerning their collective Europeanness and their foreign policy orientation. This does not mean, however, that political leaders can single-handedly manipulate such crisis phenomena. At the very least, they must be able to convince a wider audience that a particular moment in history indeed constitutes a crisis situation whereby nation-state identities are up for negotiation. In the German case, for example, one could argue that the end of the Cold War and German unification reinforced rather than challenged the (West) German nation-state identity, precisely because elites could celebrate the coming down of the Berlin wall as a major policy success (cf. Risse forthcoming, b). For the French elites, however, the end of the Cold War symbolized the ultimate failure of the Gaullist and nationalist nation-state identity.

Finally, we need to distinguish between "open" and "closed" political discourses. When nation-state identities are challenged or contested, and compete with each other, as was the

case in Germany and France during the 1950s as well as in France during the 1980s and 1990s, strategic interests might explain which parties chose which identity construction and promote it. Once the range of available nation-state identities narrows down and a particular construction becomes consensual and prevails over others, the discourse closes. Challenging the prevailing consensus becomes much more difficult.

Here, the *socialization hypothesis* mentioned above has to be considered focusing on internalization processes. This explains the stickiness of identity constructions which can no longer be manipulated by political elites. Rather, the collective identity itself can now be exploited for instrumental purposes. The latter was the case in Germany under Helmut Kohl. Given the thorough Europeanization of German nation-state identity, the German chancellor was able to silence critics of the single currency extremely effectively by arguing that "good Germans" had to support the Euro, as any "good European" would do. Against this powerful construction, critics had to make the far more complicated argument that "good Europeans" could disagree over the merits of the single currency (Risse et al. 1999).

The British case also illustrates the point. When old visions about political order remain unchallenged, they tend to become increasingly embedded in national institutions and political cultures as a result of which they become difficult to deconstruct and to replace.¹⁷ Studying the remarkable similarity of identity-related statements by British party elites from the 1950s to the present, it seems as if the longer old ideas about political order remain unchallenged the more the room for manoeuvre narrows. Traditional British notions of external and internal sovereignty still seem to be relevant today. A recent example of this is Prime Minister Tony Blair's difficult attempt to prepare the British public for membership in EMU. At least at the discursive level, it is still contentious to speak about transferring political authority to Brussels and replacing a national symbol of unity and sovereignty, such as the British Pound, with the Euro.

Conclusions

¹⁷We will not be able to expand on this point in this article, but we have a broad range of institutions in mind, such as the media, the educational system, the electoral system, the legal system, political decision-making procedures etc. What they have in common, is that they tend to consolidate and reify existing and consensually shared ideas about just political order.

In this essay, we tried to explain continuity and change in the extent to which "Europe" enters collective nation-state identities in the discourses among political elites. We suggested a four-step process. First, new ideas about European identity and European political order are usually transmitted through discourses in transnational organizations and movements. Second, these ideas are transferred to national discourses to the extent that they resonate with given and pre-existing consensual identity constructions and concepts of political order embedded in a country's institutions and political culture (*resonance* assumption). Only those ideas that resonate are considered legitimate in a political struggle. Third, perceived "critical junctures" define situations in political discourses when identity constructions are open to being challenged and contested. Under such circumstances, political elites select among the available and legitimate identity constructions according to their perceived power interests (*interest* assumption). Thus, perceived interests and ideas' resonance together determine which nation-state identity construction carries the day. Fourth, however, once identity constructions have become consensual and, thus, collective views, they tend to be internalized by actors as well as institutionalized (*socialization* assumption). As a result, the range of legitimate identity constructions in a political space narrows, until the next "critical juncture" occurs.

Our empirical findings run counter to two prevailing, but competing views in the literature. Conventional wisdom holds that there either is no European collective identity to speak of at all in the European polity (cf. Smith 1992; Kielmansegg 1996), or that there is some convergence among the various European nation-state identities towards a common identity. We disagree with both views. The British example shows that there is not much convergence toward a common European nation-state identity. But the German and French cases show that some collective nation-state identities have thoroughly integrated ideas about Europe and the European order. One could go even further to argue that the modern Western concept of European identity incorporating values of liberal democracy, market economy, and the welfare state provides common ground among the political elites in France and Germany, if not elsewhere. But these European nation-state identities come in distinct national colors. French Europeans remain French, and German Europeans remain Germans (and Bavarians and Rhinelanders, and so on), i.e., people hold multiple identities, as social psychology theory would lead us to expect. In a certain sense, multiple European and nation-state identities might actually be appropriate for a multi-level system of governance, such as the European Union.

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Figure 1: The Life-Cycle of Nation-State Identities

