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Germany's European Policy: A Constructivist Perspective*

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Abstract

This paper sets out a constructivist analytical framework and applies it to post-reunification German policy towards the European Union. Although the structural constraints facing Germany shifted dramatically with the end of the Cold War and reunification, the direction of its European policy did not. The more powerful Federal Republic continued to press for deeper economic and political integration, eschewing a more independent or assertive foreign policy course. Neorealism, neoliberalism, and liberalism cannot adequately explain this continuity in the face of structural change; a constructivist account centered around state identity can. During and after reunification, German leaders across the political spectrum identified the Federal Republic as part of an emergent supranational community. This European identity, with roots in the postwar decades, drove Germany's unflagging support for deeper integration across the 1989-90 divide.

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The end of the cold war marked a decisive shift in the external context of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). Reunification left the FRG the most powerful country in Europe and confronted it with new policy challenges to the East. While the context of German foreign policy shifted, however, its thrust did not. The new Federal Republic, like its predecessor, continued to press for deeper European integration. The government of Helmut Kohl led the drive to formulate, ratify and implement the 1992 Maastricht Treaty, with its provisions for Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and European Monetary Union (EMU). Why did the more powerful Germany not embrace a more assertive and independent foreign policy? And why did it not make an active Ostpolitik a priority over deeper European integration? The leading rationalist approaches to international politics - neorealism, neoliberalism, and liberalism - cannot provide satisfactory answers to these questions. Their respective emphases on constellations of power, institutions, and politics specify important constraints on FRG foreign policy. But they cannot adequately explain its course. I put forward an alternative, constructivist account centered around the effects of state identity.

Over the past decade, the constructivist claim that state identities and practices drive world politics has generated considerable theoretical controversy.[1] Only recently, however, have constructivists begun to buttress their theoretical claims with empirical research.[2] In an effort to advance the constructivist research program, this paper addresses three related sets of questions.

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[1] On constructivism, see Wendt 1992, 1994 and forthcoming; Adler 1997; Kratochwil 1989; Onuf 1989; and Kratochwil and Ruggie 1986. For critiques, see Keohane 1988, 389-93 and Mearsheimer 1995, 37-47.

[2] See, for example, the contributions to Katzenstein 1996; Weldes 1996; Finnemore 1996; Klotz 1995; Kier 1995; Johnston 1995; and Koslowski and Kratochwil 1994. On Germany in particular, see Katzenstein 1997a; Risse 1997; Katzenstein 1996a, 153-90; and Berger 1996.

The first concerns the scope of constructivist explanatory claims. When should one expect constructivist analysis to be superior to the rationalist alternatives? How can the latter be fairly evaluated in a particular case? The second set of questions concerns constructivism's central explanatory concept, identity. What is identity - and state identity in particular? And how can it be pinpointed in a given empirical context? A third set of questions revolves around the causal mechanisms linking identity and outcomes. How does state identity shape the formulation and pursuit of interests in world politics? How can its effects be determined in any particular case?

After an introductory section that discusses constructivism as an approach to the study of foreign policy, I set out a three-step analytical framework addressing these questions and apply it to the German case. Section one argues that constructivist analysis should begin with a critical analysis of the best available rationalist alternatives. It then contends that neorealism, neoliberalism, and liberalism cannot explain the continuity of German foreign policy in the face of international and domestic structural change. Section two sets out a crucial next step in any constructivist analysis, the specification of state identity, and argues that its contours are best discernible through the analysis of national political discourse. It then pinpoints the existence of Germany's European German identity, evident in a determination to break with a catastrophic nationalist prewar past and build on the postwar success of the integration process. Section three elaborates the final step in the framework, the specification of links between identity, interests, and action through the analysis of both discourse and behavior. It then makes the case that German state identity shaped the Federal Republic's drive for deeper European integration during the 1990s.

Constructivism and Foreign Policy

What is distinctive about constructivism as an approach to world politics? Constructivism shares two broad assumptions with neorealism, neoliberalism and liberalism - commitments to both explanation and rationality.[3] First, constructivism seeks primarily to explain, and not simply to interpret, critique or transform the dynamics of international politics. Like rationalism, it makes causal claims, draws out their observable implications, and tests them against the empirical record. This interest in explanation does not rule out critique. But to equate constructivism with idealism or utopianism distorts its scientific thrust. Second, constructivism endorses rationality assumptions. Like neorealism, neoliberalism, and liberalism, it conceives of international and domestic actors in rational pursuit of interests within constraints. Its attention to identity does not imply a focus on irrational forces in world politics. Most constructivists view human rationality - broadly conceived - as a causal mechanism linking interests, constraints, and action. These twin commitments, to explanation and rationality, distinguish constructivism from postmodern approaches. They make it a thoroughly modern, scientific project.[4]

What sets constructivism apart from rationalist approaches is its emphasis on the social, or intersubjective dimension of world politics.[5] Constructivism insists that international relations cannot be reduced to rational action and interaction within material constraints (pace neorealism)

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[3] For definitions of constructivism and its relationship with rationalism, see Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein 1996, 52-65. On neorealism, neoliberalism, and liberalism, respectively, see Waltz 1979, Keohane 1984, and Moravcsik 1997.

[4] On postmodern approaches, see Der Derian 1995 and George and Campbell 1990.

[5] On intersubjectivity, see Yee 1996, 94-101.

or within material and institutional constraints at the international and national levels (pace neoliberalism and liberalism). For constructivists, the way international actors situate themselves with respect to one another (identities), and act toward one another (practices) drives world politics. The constructivist focus on identities subsumes, but does not displace, rationalist attention to interests. It makes those interests endogenous. It does not posit them a priori, but examines their constitution through the self-placement of actors with respect to one another. Similarly, the constructivist focus on practice extends, but does not negate rationalist insights about interaction. It conceptualizes such interaction not as the interplay of fixed interests, but as a pattern of action that shapes and is shaped by identities over time.

In an effort to advance the constructivist research agenda, I focus on foreign policy - the nexus between state identity, state interests, and state action.[6] This empirical focus has two advantages. First, foreign policy analysis allows for a direct engagement of rationalist approaches. Neoliberals and liberals have long acknowledged the importance of non-state actors and transnational political forces in international relations. Like neorealists, however, they remain primarily statist in outlook.[7] The juxtaposition of a constructivist approach to foreign policy with the rationalist alternatives places its relative strengths and weaknesses in sharp relief. Second, a focus on foreign policy complements constructivist theoretical work centered at the level of the international system. Alexander Wendt's work, for example, has focused on the impact of international social structure on state identity, not on the reciprocal effects of that

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[6] On this nexus, see also Ruggie 1997 and Ringmar 1996.

[7] A recent exception is Risse-Kappen 1995.

identity on state action.[8] At the core of constructivism is a concern with the mutual constitution of agents and structure, states and the international system. An analytical framework that captures the effects of state identity will shed light on an important, understudied side of that dynamic.[9]

When Rational Explanations Fail: The Case of German EU Policy

A first step in constructivist foreign policy analysis should be a critique of the best available rationalist alternatives. Like the rationalist focus on interest, the constructivist concern with identity can generate inflated explanatory claims.[10] Almost any action can be construed both as the pursuit of state interests or as the expression of state identity. The crucial issue is the *persuasiveness* of such explanations in any particular case. Where foreign policy makes sense as the rational pursuit of material interests under constraints - institutional and material, international and domestic - state identity is not central to its explanation. A constructivist might still insist that interests derive from identity - for example, that a state's drive to maximize its wealth or power derives from a sovereign identity. But such a move does not challenge the substance of the rationalist account: it only confirms the rationalist assumption that the pursuit of material interests is the animating force in world politics. One should address rationalist alternatives first, then, not out of any meta-theoretical presumption of their superiority, but for pragmatic reasons. Where they are effective, rationalist arguments are more parsimonious than

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[8] Wendt 1992, 1994, and forthcoming.

[9] On the agent structure-debate, see Wendt 1987; Dessler 1989; and Carlsnaes 1992.

[10] For a discussion, see Kowert and Legro 1996.

constructivist alternatives. Only where a interest-based account fails should one put forward a more complex ideational alternative.[11]

The case of German EU policy presents a core puzzle for rationalism: policy continuity amid far-reaching structural change.[12] In the context of foreign policy, neorealism, neoliberalism and liberalism share one central observable implication: that major changes in constraints should generate changes in action. In the German case, however, remarkable changes in external and internal constraints after 1989-90 did not produce a new foreign policy departure. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the gradual withdrawal of US forces left the Federal Republic the leading economic and political power in Europe. The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and extensive changes in both NATO and the CSCE confronted German leaders with a new institutional constellation. And the burden of integrating East Germany into the FRG transformed the domestic context of German foreign policy. Despite these significant structural changes, the thrust of German foreign policy persisted. As it had during the 1980s, the Federal Republic continued to lead efforts to deepen European integration. During both the negotiation and implementation phases of the Maastricht, the Kohl government was one of the most ardent European supporters of the twin goals of EMU and CFSP. The new Germany did also support the eventual expansion of the EU to include the Visegrad countries - Poland, Hungary, and the Czech and Slovak Republics. And it adjusted its security policy to new circumstances, cautiously adopting a less restrictive stance toward multilateral military operations. Nevertheless, no shift

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[11] For a related argument, see Garrett and Weingast 1993, 203-06.

[12] For discussions of German EU policy after reunification, see Katzenstein 1997; Risse 1997; Hellmann 1997; McAdams 1997; Bulmer and Paterson 1996; Deubner 1995; and Anderson and Goodman 1993.

towards a more active Ostpolitik or more independent security policy took place. How explain continued German support for deeper European integration amid structural change?

This question poses the most direct challenge to neorealism. The end of the cold war and reunification clearly led to an increase in German power in both absolute and relative terms. The addition of the population and potential of the GDR widened the economic distance between the Federal Republic and its two main West European partners, France and Britain. The decline in US power on the continent increased German clout within the allied camp. And the Soviet retreat from Eastern Europe created an opportunity for Germany to establish itself as a regional hegemon. Neorealism would predict dramatic shifts in the international context of German foreign policy to spur a change in a more national, less supranational direction. In this view, the dissolution of the strictures of bipolarity enabled Germany to assume a predominant position in Europe through the unfettered pursuit of its national interests, East and West. John Mearsheimer, for example, suggested in 1990 that a more powerful Germany might embrace a more nationalist posture and come to threaten its neighbors.[13] The fact that the new Federal Republic, like the old, continued its efforts to merge its monetary and foreign policies with that of its allies foils neorealist expectations.

Confronted with this puzzle, neorealists have disputed the description of structural change on which it rests. Kenneth Waltz, for example, has argued that the collapse of the Soviet Union marked not the end of bipolarity, but only the beginning of the end. From this perspective, the new Germany remains subordinate to the superpowers, still dependent on the US nuclear deterrent to balance Russian power. This construal of the pace and depth of structural change

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[13] Mearsheimer 1990, 32-37.

allows more time for the validation of neorealist expectations. Waltz, for example, argues that the new Germany will *eventually* seek military power and political independence commensurate with its economic resources, and perhaps even access to nuclear weapons.[14] Such a redescription of structure in ways compatible with neorealist theory is not persuasive. Neorealism predicts that shifts in the balance of power will lead to shifts in the direction of policy. For Germany, the end of the cold war and reunification marked such a shift. Divided between opposing blocs for decades, its capital Berlin occupied by foreign powers, Germany again emerged as Europe's most influential country. Waltz's argument that bipolarity persisted after 1990 does not capture the sharp break in the constraints facing German leaders. And his claim that the renationalization of German foreign policy is only a matter of time is also unpersuasive. Were a new departure in the offing, some evidence should have begun to surface by the mid-1990s.

The course of post-reunification German EU policy also confronts neoliberalism with a puzzle, though one considerably less acute. From a neoliberal perspective, institutions serve to further material interests by reducing the uncertainty and transaction costs that can hinder mutually beneficial cooperation.[15] A neoliberal might have expected the post-1990 flux in institutions - and the new balance of power that underpinned them - to alter the direction of German foreign policy. The collapse of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon and the transformation of NATO and the CSCE, altered the institutional context of the Federal Republic. As the premier power in Europe, the FRG had a paramount interest in constructing new institutions, and altering existing ones, to cope with the challenge of economic and security stability on the continent. The

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[14] Waltz 1993 and Pond and Waltz 1994. See also Mearsheimer 1995, 45.

[15] For a neoliberal discussion of institutions and their effects, see Keohane and Martin 1995.

importance of a robust institutional architecture was highlighted by the enlarged Federal Republic's vulnerable position at Europe's center. As the western state with the greatest economic and security stake in Central and Eastern Europe, Germany had a strong interest in the stability of the region. From a neoliberal perspective, with its instrumental view of institutions, one might have expected German leaders to make the widening of integration a priority over its deepening. The continued push for deeper integration within the EU demands an explanation.

Like neorealism, neoliberalism can address this puzzle by challenging the description of structural change that underlies it. A neoliberal might insist that the institutional context of German EU policy was marked by remarkable continuity after 1990. While international structure changed in important ways, EU norms of shared sovereignty and multilateralism survived the end of the cold war intact. During the mid-1980s, the FRG had endorsed the Single European Act (SEA), the plan to create a unified market by 1992. And in 1988, more than a year before the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Kohl government had embraced monetary union as the next major goal of the integration process. From this perspective, German enthusiasm for deeper integration in the 1990s reflected institutional norms in place before reunification and still salient in its wake.[16] This neoliberal focus on institutional continuity is problematic. The collapse of bipolarity transformed the character of the EU as an institutional constraint on German foreign policy. A *West* European institution throughout the cold war, the EU became an all-European institution in the wake of its collapse. With the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, the institutional imperative of widening emerged alongside that of deepening. It is true, of course, that the SEA remained intact and Maastricht had its roots in the pre-1990 period. But in view of the greater

[16] Anderson and Goodman 1993.

German stake in the former Soviet bloc - with more to gain from stability and more to lose from instability than its allies - the Federal Republic was not institutionally bound to remain an enthusiastic supporter of deeper integration.

The continuity of German EU policy across the 1990 divide also poses a puzzle for liberalism. Reunification saw a major transformation of the domestic context of German foreign policy.[17] It brought with it both new political actors and new policy problems. The addition of sixteen million new citizens, five new federal states, and the former East German communist party, altered the domestic political context of EU policy. Even more important was the emergence of difficult, if not intractable, policy problems: the economic reconstruction of the new federal states and their full integration into the enlarged Federal Republic. The tremendous fiscal burden of reunification reshaped the domestic political agenda, undermining societal support for an activist foreign policy. Within this new climate, public support for deeper European integration declined from the high levels of the late 1980s. Through the mid-1990s, around two-thirds of Germans consistently opposed the introduction of a European currency to replace the Deutschmark.[18] Why, given these domestic structural changes - the costs of reconstruction in the East and a less Europe-friendly public - did German leaders continue to make deeper European integration a top foreign policy priority?

As with neorealism and neoliberalism, liberalism's best efforts to grapple with this puzzle rest on a different assessment of structural change . The political context of German foreign policy, a liberal might first argue, did not change significantly as a result of reunification. The

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[17] McAdams 1993.

[18] Rattinger 1994.

addition of new citizens and one new party, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), did not break the grip of the three major parties on national governance - the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU), Social Democrats (SPD) and Free Democrats (FDP). And while Germany faced new economic and social problems at home, the broad coalition of pro-European interest groups, encompassing both sides of industry, remained fairly robust through the mid-1990s.[19] However, this focus on continuity underestimates important changes in the domestic context of German foreign policy. Unprecedented economic and social problems demanded more attention, and greater public skepticism of the integration project transformed the permissive consensus that had underpinned German EU policy for decades.[20] Liberal analysis cannot adequately explain policy continuity amid these sharply different political circumstances.

The most persuasive account of post-reunification EU policy, drawn on by neorealists, neoliberals, and liberals alike, implicitly brings German state identity into the analysis. At the core of the argument, set out by Gunther Hellmann, is the concept of "self-binding".[21] Germany, in this view, continued to bind the exercise of its power within European institutions in order to reassure its neighbors in the wake of reunification. Joseph Grieco posits that German leaders accepted EMU in 1990-91 "in order to assure their EC partners that a unified Germany would remain loyal to the Community."[22] Jeffrey Anderson and John Goodman argue that "a disastrous

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[19] Moravcsik, forthcoming.

[20] On the traditional strong public support for integration from the 1950s onward, see Bulmer and Paterson 1987.

[21] Hellmann 1997.

[22] Grieco 1996, 302-03; Grieco 1995.

prewar history coupled with forty successful years in an interlocking network of international institutions led German leaders away from traditional 19th century conceptions of state sovereignty.[23] And Robert Keohane and Stanley Hoffmann conclude that "for the Federal Republic international institutions have become intrinsically valuable."[24] The most persuasive rationalist explanations of the puzzle of post-reunification EU policy, then, invoke concepts at odds with rationalist assumptions - identification with institutions, loyalty to a community, and the lessons of history. A constructivist account that incorporates those ideas is more compelling.

Specifying State Identity: A European Germany

The effort to specify state identity as part of an explanatory strategy must start with a basic definition.[25] For states, like other social groups, identity has both an internal and an external dimension: it is what binds the group together and what situates it with respect to others. In the state context, the internal dimension is often labeled "national identity," the set of shared norms and narratives that sustain "we-ness" through time.[26] The term "state identity" refers here to the external dimension of national identity, the self-placement of the national political community relative to other states and international institutions. So defined, state identity represents a starting point for the pursuit of interests. This reflexive dimension sets it apart from a related

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[23] Anderson and Goodman 1993, 62.

[24] Keohane and Hoffmann 1993, 403.

[25] On identity and international relations more broadly, see Lapid and Kratochwil 1996.

[26] Smith 1991.

concept in comparative foreign policy analysis, "national role conception"[27] The concept of role, with roots in both symbolic-interactionism and structural-functionalism, leaves little room for agency. It essentially conceives of identity not as self-placement, but as placement, with respect to a broader structure. Some constructivist work has put forward a related conceptualization, arguing that structure "constructs" state identity.[28] This structural perspective can illuminate broad patterns in identity across states. It cannot, however, pinpoint the specific identities of particular states - a necessary first step in the constructivist analysis of foreign policy.

The specification of state identity in any particular case involves a series of interrelated analytical tasks. First, one must delineate the policy area in question. Because states interact with many other states and participate in more than one international institution, they can have multiple, overlapping identities at any point in time.[29] Over the course of the cold war, for example, the United States, the Federal Republic and other western states were embedded in multilateral economic institutions and within an anti-Soviet alliance. Multilateral and anti-Soviet identities existed side by side; the involved states considered both kinds of western institutions key starting points for the formulation of economic and security interests. In order to define state identity with any accuracy, then, one therefore first has to delineate a particular policy context - the background against which identity is defined. This first analytical step does not eliminate the problem of multiple identities. In the case just cited, for example, multilateral and anti-Soviet identities were interrelated in complex ways. Nor does it determine the content of a particular

[27] Holsti 1970.

[28] For a discussion, see Jepperson, Katzenstein, and Wendt 1996.

[29] Barnett 1993.

identity in question. A particular set of set of institutions and actors in a given policy context often will allow for different kinds of state identity. However, delineating a particular policy context does make some state identities more salient than others, and highlight the actors and institutions that figure in their construction

The second task is the selection of the kind of evidence that illuminates the content of state identity in a given policy context. State identity has an irreducible reflexive dimension; it reflects not just external constraints, but also a particular stance toward them. Its specification necessarily entails a double hermeneutic - the interpretation of the interpretations of the actors themselves. This, in turn, requires attention to discourse, the public communication through which such stances are articulated and justified.[30] In the context of contemporary democracies, public opinion data constitute one such form of discourse: answers to questions asked of groups of individuals. However, the questions and answers exchanged in surveys constitute a very simple form of discourse, one which illuminates the existence and intensity of identity better than its specific content.[31] That content usually emerges more clearly in elite discourse, the communication of government and opposition leaders, actual and potential representatives of the state at home and abroad. Such public discourse does not necessarily represent private conviction. But public communication, not private reflection, constitutes *collective* identity.

The third task is to focus on the kinds of political discourse that best illuminate the content of state identity in a given case. An accurate specification of state identity depends on a judicious selection and interpretation of texts. National leaders address foreign policy issues in

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[30] On discourse and the study of foreign policy, see Waever 1994 and Hellmann 1996, 30-31.

[31] Reif 1991.

very different settings, and in very different ways - from speeches and press conferences to television commercials. The kinds of texts best suited for analysis may vary from one kind of regime to the next. Within democracies, parliamentary debates at critical junctures tend to best illuminate the contours of state identity. Controversy within and across leading parties sharply juxtaposes contending conceptions of state identity, while at the same time drawing out salient shared themes. Moreover, discourse within an authoritative state institution - the national legislature - best exemplifies the public construction of state identity within both the domestic and international audiences. A focus on critical junctures, such as treaty ramifications or international controversies, magnifies both these advantages. Debates around issues with a central bearing on foreign policy or international standing provide a forum for the public contestation of different conceptions of state identity.

The fourth task is the analysis of the content of state identity in particular instances of discourse. In setting out a particular conception of state identity, national leaders both describe and narrate. Through description, they situate the state with respect to other states and international institutions in the present. Their discourse reduces the complexity of the international arena by making some states and institutions more salient than others. It delineates allies and enemies and defines crucial institutional relationships. Through narration, national leaders situate the state with respect to a particular past.[32] The articulation of collective memory, of shared historical experience, is particularly important in the constitution of collective

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[32] There is a well developed literature on the role of historical analogies in foreign policy decision-making. Little work, however, has been done on links between historical narratives and the constitution of state identity. On analogies, see Khong 1992. On narrative and the study of international relations in general, see Alker 1996.

identity.[33] "Where we have been" serves to define "who we are" in greater detail. Narratives of continuity and discontinuity are particularly important. Some narratives describe particular identities as an extension of previous key junctures in national history. They relate positive events, such as victory in war or cooperation in peace, as crucial shared experiences that situate the state within a present policy context. Other narratives describe identities as a break with previous, negative junctures. They relate instances of collective suffering, such as military defeat or economic depression, as shared experiences that unite the national community in the face of new challenges.

In order to further constructivist analysis, these four analytical steps must pinpoint the existence of a state identity that is broadly shared and persists through time. By its very nature, collective identity is continually contested. Within a polity, different instances of discourse evoke different descriptions of the present and narrations of the past. In order to establish the existence of state identity, however, one must be able to point to a broadly shared core of state identity across the political spectrum. For constructivist analysis to convince, collective identity must not only be articulated broadly. It must also persist through time. By definition, identity is enduring - it situates an actor not only in time, but through time. The particular components of state identity are, of course, continually evolving. And sometimes the complex interaction of existing identities with new circumstances produces new identities. In order to demonstrate the effects of state identity, however, one must be able to point to core, persistent elements of the collective identity in question.

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[33] On links between narratives and identity in general, see Polkinghorne 1988. The classic work sociological work on collective memory is Halbwachs 1980. On the German case in particular, see Markovits and Reich 1997.

Germany's European Identity

The new Germany emerged from reunification bound within a number of different institutional frameworks and bilateral and multilateral relationships. The enlarged Federal Republic remained a member of NATO, the crucial framework for its ongoing security cooperation with the United States. Its transatlantic relationship, in turn, was embedded within a set of international political and economic institutions, including the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, which formed the backdrop for its global diplomacy and economic reach. At a regional level, the new Germany remained part of the EU, which bound its economic and security policies closely with those of its West European neighbors. And it continued to participate in the CSCE, a forum for all-European economic, political and security cooperation. At the height of bipolarity, each set of institutions and relationships underpinned one of multiple state identities - Atlantic, Global, West European, and All-European. With the collapse of bipolarity, the EU emerged as the most important institutional framework for German policy in Europe, for relations with western neighbors and with new candidate members to the East. Controversy surrounding German EU policy best illuminates the contours of post-cold war German state identity in Europe - the stance of FRG leaders in the face of extensive structural changes on the continent. Here, four parliamentary clashes proved particularly critical: the December 1991 debate after the Maastricht Summit; the two subsequent ratification debates of October and December 1992; and the May 1994 debate, which preceded the 1994 EU elections and the German assumption of the EU presidency.

The four debates revealed a remarkable consensus around a European identity, ie. the

view that the EU constituted the starting point for the pursuit of German interests in Europe. Leaders of the governing CDU/CSU-FDP coalition and the SPD in opposition did not describe the EU simply as an arena for the pursuit of national interests, as an intergovernmental organization of sovereign states. They portrayed it instead as an emergent supranational institution, a political union in-the-making, of which Germany was an essential part. For Kohl, for example, the "path to European Union" was "irreversible." Along with other major party leaders, he invoked the preamble of the Basic Law, or constitution, of 1949, which bound Germans to pursue "world peace as an equal member of a united Europe." Against this backdrop, Günther Verheugen of the SPD underscored the existence of a "shared European orientation" across the major parties. German leaders rarely invoked the term "European identity" to refer to this consensus.[34] Their description of Germany's place in Europe constituted a European identity in the sense of a *Europeanized national identity* - a view of the state as firmly bound within a broader supranational context. In this discourse, the EU was not merely a framework for the pursuit of national economic or security interests, but a starting point for their political formulation. "For us Germans," FDP Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher underlined in this connection, "the European Community was and is first and foremost a political community."[35]

Two interlocking narratives buttressed this description of Germany as embedded within an ongoing integration process. The negative narrative drew a link between the German catastrophe of dictatorship, war and genocide, and the irreversibility of Germany's integration into a larger Europe. Kohl, for example, evoked the example of the founders of European

[34] Verhandlungen 12.2.92, 10824: 12.13.91, 5797; 12.2.92, 10831.

[35] Verhandlungen 12.13.91, 5822. See also Verheugen, Verhandlungen 12.2.92, 10832.

integration, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and other "men and women who drew the consequences" from Europe's history of suffering. Klaus Kinkel, who replaced Genscher as foreign minister in 1992, depicted the origins of the integration process not as a response to the onset of the cold war, but mainly a "reaction to centuries-long fratricidal wars." In a similar vein, Rudolf Scharping, chairman of the SPD from 1993-95, termed the EU an outgrowth of the "devastating experience of two terrible fratricidal wars."[36] Through the invocation of this negative nationalist legacy, German leaders underscored their insistence on the irreversibility of Germany's embeddedness within the EU - a themes particularly salient in context of national and ethnic conflict in the Balkans and the former Soviet Union after 1990.[37] Collective memory of the German catastrophe underpinned Germany's European identity after 1990.

FRG leaders also articulated Germany's commitment to Europe through a positive post-war narrative. If a history of conflict and disaster had given rise to the EU, its own record of achievement continued to make it a starting point for German foreign policy. On the one hand, German leaders stressed the contribution of the EU to successful economic and security cooperation. Integration, Kohl argued, had "helped to overcome centuries-old rivalries and conflicts among the participating nations." Ingrid Matthaus-Maier, an SPD spokesperson, called "most important result of European unification" that war between British, French and Germans had become "unimaginable"[38] On the other hand, German leaders recounted how the process or cooperation had transformed an earlier, nationalist outlook into a European one, in Germany in

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[36] Verhandlungen 12.2.92, 10824; 12.2.92, 10837; 12.27.94, 20126.

[37] Verhandlungen 12.13.91, 5822.

[38] Verhandlungen 12.2.92, 10824; 12.13.91: 5803.

particular. For Kohl, participation in European institutions had compelled Germans to rethink their received notions of foreign policy, "to empathize with the ideas of our partners" and "to reflect on what one can demand of a neighbor." Together with Kinkel and others, Kohl argued that this shift toward a more European way of thinking had generated the trust and goodwill which made rapid reunification possible in 1989-90.[39]

Analysis of post-1990 political discourse points to a widely-shared European identity evident in both the description of the Federal Republic's place in Europe and narrative construal of the German past. If this state identity had only emerged after reunification, it might be dismissed as a product of international structural change. In fact, it had deeper postwar roots. A comparison of ratification controversies at three previous crucial junctures - the foundation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951-52, the creation of the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957-58, and the adoption of the SEA in 1985-86 - provides evidence of the emergence and persistence of a European identity over time. The ECSC, or "Schuman Plan", created a supranational authority to oversee coal and steel production in Germany, France, Italy and the Benelux countries. In the first ratification debate, then German Chancellor Adenauer, termed its political significance "infinitely greater" than its economic. In his view, the Schuman Plan aimed to "eliminate age-old conflicts between France and Germany" through supranational control of their war industries, and was "absolutely necessary" if European countries were to survive. Readiness to cede sovereignty signified, he argued, "the end of nationalism" in the member countries.[40] While FDP leaders, Adenauer's most important partners

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[39] Verhandlungen 12.2.92, 10823-24; 10.8.92, 9319.

[40] Verhandlungen 7.12.51, 6501.

in government, were broadly supportive of the project, the SPD opposed it in the name of the German national interest. One of its leaders, Carlo Schmid, referred to the "Schuman Plan myth" as a cover for French designs on German industry, even comparing the ECSC to the 1919 Treaty of Versailles. And in the climactic ratification debate, another leading Social Democrat, Herbert Wehner, argued that integration was incompatible with the FRG's national commitment to reunification. He warned that "inclusion in the so-called 'space of the community'" might make unification with the those Germans "who must remain outside this space" difficult.[41]

From the late 1950s through the late 1980s, a strong European orientation emerged and persisted across the German political spectrum. In the first ratification debate on the EEC in 1957, Adenauer's foreign minister, Heinrich von Brentano, underscored the importance of extending economic integration to other sectors and strengthening European institutions as part of a continual process of building a politically unified Europe - a process within which Germany was tightly embedded. In the final ratification debate, the SPD's Karl Mommer signalled the opposition's break with a more national orientation, stressing the importance of "thinking beyond national borders and striving to overcome costly political and economic nationalism."[42] Of the three major parties, only the smaller FDP opposed the EEC, fearing for its negative effects the prospects for reunification and trade with European states outside the Six. By the early 1960s, however, the FDP, too, had joined the strong pro-European consensus. The enduring strength of that consensus was evident at the next crucial constitutional juncture in the integration process, the mid-1980s In the major December 1985 debate following the SEA accord, Kohl underscored

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[41] Verhandlungen 7.12.51, 6512; 1.9.52, 7762.

[42] Verhandlungen 5.9.57, 12000; 7.5.57, 13319.

both the importance of World War II as a backdrop for integration, and the extent of accomplishments in the interim. He referred to "German interests - self-evidently within the framework of our European responsibility" The SPD's Helmut Schmidt, whom Kohl had replaced as Chancellor three years earlier, underlined the broad partisan consensus in favor of deeper integration, based in part on "a will to prevent the horrors of the past from ever being repeated." And in articulating FDP support, foreign minister Genscher called the realization that national goals can only be pursued "in accord with our neighbors" perhaps "the greatest accomplishment of postwar German politics."[43]

The juxtaposition of major EU debates, before and after 1990, reveals the emergence and persistence of a European identity widely shared across the political spectrum. Against the backdrop of a catastrophic nationalist past, German leaders came to view supranational integration as an indispensable starting point for policy in Europe. Their embrace of Europe did not involve exchanging a national identity for a European one. Germans leaders still considered themselves German before anything else. And they pursued what they considered to be German interests. Both before and after reunification, however, they conceived of the Federal Republic as part of a political experiment without precedent, as a national community that was not an independent actor, but was embedded within an emergent European Union. A rationalist critic might, of course, acknowledge the existence of a such a European identity, broadly articulated and enduring, but still question its foreign policy effects. From a strict rationalist perspective, foreign policy discourse is just empty talk, a transparent effort to justify foreign policy, and not part of its explanation. After pinpointing the content of state identity in the German case or any

[43] Verhandlungen 12.5.85, 13767, 13763; 12.5.85, 13778; 12.5.85, 13786.

other, constructivist analysis must establish that it actually shaped the course of policy.

From Identity to Action: Effects on German EU Policy

How does state identity shape state action? A constructivist approach to this causal nexus involves two distinct analytical steps: the demonstration of the constitution of interests through identity; and the demonstration of the effects of both identity and interests on state action. From a constructivist perspective, the articulation of identity serves to specify state interests: the collective view of a state's place in the world informs particular conceptions of the proper ends and means of its foreign policy. Where state identity does not constitute state interests, constructivist analysis fails. Once links between identity and interest have been demonstrated at the level of discourse, one can go on to explore their effects on action. For constructivists, the articulation of state identity and state interests shape policies by making some actions justifiable and others unjustifiable in the domestic and international political realms. Where action is broadly congruent with identity and interests - and exceptions evoke sharp criticism couched in those same terms - constructivist claims are substantiated.

Discourse analysis can illuminate the constitution of interests through identity. The articulation of state identity is almost never only descriptive and narrative; it is also evaluative and prescriptive. In situating states with respect to other states and international institutions, state identity grants some interstate relationships and institutional norms more salience then others. Through identification with a particular multilateral alliance, for example, a state underscores the importance of consultation and cooperation with a specific set of other states. Implicitly or

explicitly, such an identity places less value on relations with states outside that alliance.[44] The description of the international constellation and the state's place within it, then, has an intrinsic evaluative dimension. As Charles Taylor puts it in more general terms, "to have an identity is to know 'where you're coming from' when it comes to questions of value, or issues of importance."[45] Such evaluation is often linked with prescription. To identity with institutions, to acknowledge the salience of particular norms, is to construe them as appropriate standards for action. In identifying closely with a multilateral alliance, for example, a state defines norms such as consultation and cooperation as crucial ends and means of foreign policy.

The analysis of historical narratives can also establish a link between identity and interest at the level of discourse. Public narratives do not simply relate facts from the past; they arrange and assess them in the light of present problems. In relating key historical episodes, leaders tend to evaluate them and posit their prescriptive implications. For example, a positive narrative about an alliance - for example, an account of how it prevailed in war and secured the peace - can serve to underscore its importance in present and future foreign policy calculations. And a negative narrative about another state - an account of how it overran and subjugated its neighbors - can serve to highlight the importance of strength and vigilance in the present and the future. Such narratives, then, do not only constitute state identity by situating a state with respect to the present. They also constitute state interests, the proper ends and means of foreign policy, by drawing links between past experience, present problems, and intended future actions. Narratives are a central means through which national leaders articulate the content of state interests.

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[44] In the NATO context, see Risse-Kappen 1996.

[45] Taylor 1991, 305.

Like state identities, state interests are the object of political contestation. For a constructivist approach to foreign policy to be persuasive, it must demonstrate the existence, not only of a broadly shared collective identity, but also of a broadly shared conception of state interests derived from it. The latter does not always coincide with the former. For example, identification with an alliance can go hand in hand with support for either confrontational or constructive relations with an external enemy. In such cases, state identity is indeterminate; the case for its causal effects is weak. However, where the contestation of particulars coexists with broad agreement on the general definition of state interests - and that definition, in turn, rests on a broadly shared and enduring state identity - a constructivist argument becomes plausible. In such cases, the constructivist claim is not that interest is reducible to identity. State interests reflect a variety of external and internal constraints, material and institutional. The claim is only that identity matters - that the way that national leaders situate themselves with respect to those constraints has an impact on the content of interests that can be pinpointed in political discourse.

Once the link between state identity and state interests is established through discourse analysis, one can demonstrate their joint effects on state action two different ways. The first involves a congruence test.[46] A constructivist specification of identity and interests, like the rationalist definition of interests in terms of power and wealth, has observable implications. If identity shapes the content of state interests, one should expect state action to be compatible with both interests and identity. Where there is congruence, the claim that identity was a cause of action has plausibility. Both constructivism and rationalism invoke reasons as causes; they consider rationality a crucial mechanism linking constraints and action. But while rationalists

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[46] For a discussion of congruence tests, see Bennett and George, forthcoming.

consider material interests and constraints as initial conditions, constructivists bring in identity as well. From a constructivist perspective, state identity is never a sufficient cause of state action. It interacts with material considerations and external constraints to constitute the interests that shape its course. However, where there is no congruence between identity, interests and action, state identity can more easily be dismissed as an epiphenomenon that pervades discourse but does not affect behavior.

While the congruence test can make a constructivist argument plausible, it can rarely make it persuasive. A correlation between political talk and the course of policy could, for example, be used to buttress a cognitive approach as well. Cognitive approaches underscore the importance of cognitive consistency, the tendency of individual subjects to act in accordance with their scripts or cognitive maps.[47] Constructivism, by contrast, points to the problem of intersubjective justification. Collective identity has an impact because it is articulated publicly, not because it is perceived by individuals. The political imperative of justifying state action in terms of shared identity - and not any psychological mechanism - underpins the causal force of the latter. Interestingly, the constraints posed by collective identity are often most evident where the congruence test fails. Where domestic and international actors attack state actions for not conforming to broadly shared conceptions of identity and interests - and those actions are not subsequently repeated - the case for the causal effects of shared beliefs is strongest. While the congruence test can establish the plausibility of causal links between identity and action, the *incongruence* test can, in some cases, make those links more persuasive.

A rationalist might object that neither test outlined above - designed to pinpoint how

[47] Jervis 1976.

identity informs interests, and how both identity and interests shape action - can ever achieve its purpose. From a rationalist perspective, particularly a strict materialist neorealist variant, the espousal of identity rooted in the description of the present and the construction of the past serves to justify but not to orient state action. Identity provides ex post facto legitimation for policies rooted in rational calculations of material gain. The articulation of state identity is empty rhetoric. However, where rationalist approaches are confronted with empirical puzzles, such objections lose their force. If state action does not make sense as the pursuit of material interests within constraints, the rationalist starting point - exogenous, material interests - is insufficient. A persuasive explanation must bring in identity, the way that actors situate themselves with respect to a particular set of problems and constraints. To dismiss identity discourse as empty talk is to rule out careful efforts to test for its effects in specific cases.

The Effects of a European Identity

In the four major parliamentary debates on European policy during the early 1990s, the articulation of a European identity informed a shared conception of German interests in terms of support for deeper integration. Kohl and other government and opposition leaders underlined the importance of prosperity and security for Germany. In describing Germany's position in Europe, however, they pointed to the extent of its dependence on and integration within supranational structures, and argued that material goals could only be pursued with - and not against - Germany's European partners. For Kohl, no European country could any longer "secure peace and freedom, economic prosperity and social stability alone." He added: "We all in Europe and

especially we Germans need the unification of Europe from our deepest vital interest."[48] Genscher and others invoked a shared constitutional norm to justify the drive for deeper integration - the Basic Law's injunction to "serve peace in a united Europe." The major government and opposition parties even cooperated to make that injunction more explicit. As part of the Maastricht ratification process, they revised Article 23 of the Basic Law, binding Germany "to cooperate in the realization of a United Europe through the development of the European Union."[49]

The narrative dimension of state identity also supported deeper integration as an overriding German interest. Here, both the negative prewar and positive postwar narratives played a central role. Kohl repeatedly insisted that European integration remained the best antidote to the nationalist rivalry that plagued Europe before 1945. The drive for political union, he intoned on many occasions, was a "question of war and peace." The crucial question was whether the Germans would "commit ourselves irremovably to economic and political union" or make possible "a reversion to earlier times." A shift toward a more unilateral policy, particularly in the East, risked isolating Germany from its partners and sparking a return to the unstable balance of power politics of the past.[50] Verheugen and other SPD leaders echoed this same point, arguing that the alternative to European unification was "dissolution and collapse, a return to the egotism of nation states" and that a German "no" to Maastricht would generate "mistrust and

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[48] Verhandlungen 12.2.92, 10824-25.

[49] Verhandlungen 12.13.91, 5822. Seiffert and Hömig 1995, 241.

[50] Verhandlungen 12.13.91, 5707; 12.2.92, 10824; 5.27.94

isolation."[51] For all the major parties, the same negative narrative that constituted German European identity also informed a broadly shared interest in deeper economic, political and security cooperation.

The shared postwar narrative also constituted Germany's European interests in the years after 1990. Kohl and other German leaders argued that the positive course of postwar integration bound German leaders to support further integration steps amid post-cold war circumstances. On the one hand, they insisted, integration marked a break with the German abuse of power, and should continue to do so. For Kinkel, the "time of national policy" had passed. And for the SPD's Heide Wieczorek-Zeul, Maastricht constituted a necessary "self-binding" (*Einbindung*), the continued embedding of German power within durable European institutions.[52] On the other hand, German leaders argued, the success of European integration in making German unity possible bound Germans to continue to make European unity a priority. As Wieczorek-Zeul put it, "Europe said yes to German unity; we say yes to European unity." And Kohl underscored that support for Maastricht was necessary to prove that Germans remained "committed to what we have always said, namely that German unity and European unification are two sides of the same coin".[53]

An analysis of political discourse reveals a close connection between the articulation of a European identity for the FRG and consensus around an interest in deeper integration. But what indication is there that both identity and interests shaped German action? There is considerable

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[51] Verhandlungen, 12.2.92: 10832-34

[52] Verhandlungen 12.2.92, 10837; 12.2.92, 10814.

[53] Verhandlungen 12.2.92, 10813; 12.13.91

evidence of congruence between identity and interests, on the one hand, and German behavior on the other. During the 1989-90 reunification process, the Federal Republic embraced the goals of EMU, CFSP and more robust EU institutions. The German government did not change course amid the monetary turmoil and ratification controversies that almost derailed Maastricht in 1992-93. Problems persisted over the years that followed. The ineffectiveness of EU mediation efforts in the former Yugoslavia undermined efforts to create an effective CFSP. And in 1995-96, a weaker than expected economic recovery cast doubt on whether strict economic convergence criteria for EMU could be met by the end of the century. Through all this turbulence, the German government, with the support of the parliamentary opposition, remained strongly supportive of Maastricht's implementation. At the 1996-97 Intergovernmental Conference, for example, German leaders pressed - with limited success - for further institutional reforms. And they remained committed to the start of monetary union on schedule in 1999.

There was one major instance when German state identity proved incompatible with German actions: the Federal Republic's decision to recognize Croatia and Slovenia in December 1991.[54] Throughout 1990 and 1991, EU members sought to arrive at a common approach to the escalating Balkan civil war. And in the run-up to the Maastricht summit, Kohl made the CFSP a major German goal. Nevertheless, only days after the summit, his government broke ranks with Britain and France, announcing its intention to recognize the breakaway republics. Reluctantly, Paris and London agreed to follow the German lead in January 1992, maintaining a facade of multilateralism. Nevertheless, this was a case of a unilateral German initiative incompatible with articulated identity and interests. When placed in the overall context of German EU policy in the

[54] See Crawford 1996.

1990s, however, it proved exceptional. In the years after 1991, the German government was careful not to venture from the western fold. Kohl followed the French and British leads in the Balkans, refraining, for example, to press for an end to the Bosnian arms embargo in 1993-94. In this and other areas, there was no comparable case of Germany exerting its power unilaterally. The congruence between its avowed European identity and the course of its policies was striking.

The single most important case of incongruence - Balkan policy in 1991- points to the salience of German state identity as a source of German foreign policy. The German initiative provoked a chorus of international and domestic criticism. Diplomats, politicians and journalists pointed to the existence of a gap between German rhetoric and German actions, and questioned the sincerity of the government's commitment to deeper integration and cooperation with its European allies.[55] Both the tortured efforts of government leaders to justify the action, and the subsequent abstention from unilateral initiatives underscored the resilience of a European identity as a backdrop for German EU policy. Another case of incongruence, SPD leader Gerhard Schröder's skepticism of EMU in the 1990s, also revealed that resilience. In October 1995, Schröder came out in favor of postponing EMU, claiming that the SPD could now capitalize on a "national issue."[56] A chorus of criticism, from both the government parties and from fellow Social Democrats accusing him of fanning nationalist passions, led him to alter his position. In a change of tone, Schröder underscored his commitment to deeper economic and political integration - while insisting that Germany not suffer economically through any hasty introduction of EMU. Here, too, a stance incongruent with a broadly shared European identity unleashed a

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[55] See, for example, The New York Times, December 29, 1991.

[56] See Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, October 31, 1995. See also Baun 1997.

controversy that underscored both the salience and effects of the latter.

Overall, then, a close fit between the articulation of a European identity and the course of German EU policy was evident through the mid-1990s. Such congruence between identity and action cannot fully establish the effects of the former on the latter. And cases of incongruence which provoke public criticism articulated in terms of that identity - and remain exceptional - can provide only corroborating evidence, not proof of identity's effects. The central issue is the relative persuasiveness of the constructivist account with respect to the rationalist alternatives. A broadly articulated, and deeply embedded European conception of identity explains what a rationalist focus on external constraints cannot - the strong continuity of German EU policy in the face of extensive structural change. An adequate explanation of post-reunification German policy in Europe must bring in state identity, the way that German leaders situated themselves with respect to a radically new context. The most persuasive rationalist analyses of German EU policy do ultimately bring in aspects of that identity - German identification with institutions and a desire to reassure others against a terrible historical backdrop. But they cannot systematically integrate the effects of identity into their explanations. A constructivist analytical framework can.

Conclusion

Rationalist approaches to international relations and foreign policy cannot adequately explain the continuity in German EU policy across the 1990 divide. The collapse of bipolarity and German reunification confronted FRG leaders with new structural constraints. Abroad, Germany emerged a leading power, confronted with new policy challenges in Central and

Eastern Europe. At home, German leaders faced new economic and social problems in their efforts to integrate East Germany into an enlarged Federal Republic. Why, under these circumstances, did the Kohl government continue to make deeper European integration its top foreign policy priority? A persuasive answer to these questions, I have argued, requires attention to German state identity. The postwar decades saw the emergence and persistence of a European German identity; the major government and opposition parties came to view the FRG as inextricably bound within an emergent supranational community. This identity, which persisted after reunification, informed a particular conception of German interests: support for deeper economic and political integration. While structure shifted after 1989-90, German identity did not. A constructivist approach which brings in identity and its effects can account for this post-reunification continuity.

This constructivist analysis does not rule out the possibility of future changes in the direction of German foreign policy. But it does suggest that any future major changes will emerge not only in response to further structural shifts, but also as a result of new conceptions of German state identity. More nationally-oriented conceptions of German identity do exist on the margins of German politics, underpinned by contrasting narratives. Some conservative intellectuals describe the new Germany as sovereign and independent, not as part of an emergent supranational community. They are less critical of pre-1945 German foreign policy and more critical of its post-1945 development. From their perspective, Germans could have pursued their national interests more judiciously in the earlier period, and the imposition of bipolarity and division prevented them from doing so in the latter. This view of Germany as finally sovereign and independent informs different conception of state interests. Freed from the strictures of

bipolarity, some have argued, the new Germany should normalize its foreign policy, ie. pursue its national economic and security interests beyond the shadow of the German Catastrophe of 1933-45.[57] These views of German identity and its implications do not resonate at all within Germany's major parties. Should they come to dominate German political discourse, they might contribute to a new foreign policy departure.

The analytical framework and its application to the German case also raise important broader theoretical and methodological issues. The most important issue concerns the relationship between rationalist and constructivist approaches. In any particular case, I have argued, the relationship is an adversarial one. Where a rationalist account of foreign policy is persuasive, a constructivist account is likely to be less so, and vice-versa. Both rationalists and constructivists can, of course, generate explanations for almost any example of state action, construing either as the pursuit of material interests or as an effect of state identity. Zealous practitioners of both approaches sometimes go to great lengths to do so. The argument here is that the relative persuasiveness of each approach only be adjudicated case by case. This conclusion confronts constructivist scholars of foreign policy with the challenge of formulating their methods more explicitly. Constructivist approaches to international structure and its effects are relatively well developed. But constructivist scholars have not yet developed frameworks for foreign policy analysis applicable across cases. This paper is an effort to move in that direction.

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[57] For variations on this argument, see Zitelmann et al. 1992; and Schwarz 1994.

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