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To Euro or Not to Euro?
The EMU and Identity Politics
in the European Union

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Abstract

This paper attempts to explain the variation in post-Maastricht elite attitudes toward EMU in Western Europe. It concentrates on the British reluctance to ioin the single currency early on as well as the French and German stubborn support for it. We argue that explanations based on solely material conceptions of actors' interests - whether economic or geopolitical - are indeterminate with regard to explaining the variation in attitudes. The Euro is about European union rather than just lowering transaction costs. Institutionalist accounts about path dependent processes, however, offer significant insights if they are linked to the more constructivist reasoning as developed in this article. The main argument in this paper then holds that the visions about European order which give political meaning to EMU, need to be understood in the framework of identity politics. The controversies among the political elites in the three countries as well as the variation in attitudes can be explained by differences in the construction of national collective identities and their relationship to European order. Money has historically been closely linked to state- and nationbuilding. The Euro is no exception. While the French and German political elites - from the center-right to the center-left - have incorporated "Europe" into their nationally defined collective identities, British policy-makers including New Labour remain hesitant. As a result, the continental European debates about the Euro have largely concentrated on the question when to join the single currency, while the British debate continues to discuss if joining was at all in the national interest.

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1. Introduction

The closer the European Union (EU) gets to the decision date in early 1998 which countries will join the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) on January 1, 1999, the more heated the debates about the political and economic merits of the "Euro" become all over Europe. Given the cuts in social welfare expenditures which governments imposed to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria together with feeble economic growth and high rates of unemployment, it is not surprising that public opinion in many member states is not particularly supportive of a common European currency. The net percentage in favor of the Euro is only 18% EU-wide, while the French public appears to be the only one among the "big three" (Britain, Germany, France) backing the single currency by a large majority. German public opinion is almost equally split, while a large majority of the British opposes the Euro.² It is all the more remarkable that EMU is still on track and very likely to remain so. The political elites in most EU member states including the center-left continue to endorse the Euro despite grumblings here and there.

This paper attempts to explain the variation in post-Maastricht elite attitudes toward EMU in Western Europe. It concentrates on the British reluctance to join the single currency early on as well as the French and German stubborn support for it. While we do not focus on specific policy decisions, we try to account for the underlying preferences and general elite attitudes toward a single European currency.³/

We argue, first, that explanations based on solely material conceptions of actors' interests - whether economic or geopolitical - are indeterminate with regard to explaining the variation in attitudes. These arguments need to be linked to

¹ This is a thoroughly revised and updated version of an article first published as (Engelmann et al., 1997). We thank the participants in the Finnish project, in particular Heikki Patomäki, for their insightful comments. We also thank Tanja Börzel, Martin Marcussen, Hans-Peter Schmitz, Cornelia Ulbert, Christoph Weller, two anonymous EUI reviewers, as well as audiences at Columbia, Cornell, Georgetown, Oslo Universities, and the European University Institute for their critical remarks. The article is part of a larger research project on "Ideas, Institutions, and Political Culture: The Europeanization of National Identities" funded by the German Research Association (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*) and the European University Institute.

² Eurobarometer survey, Oct.-Nov. 1996, quoted from *The Economist*, June 7, 1997, 25.

³This is not to suggest that elite and mass public opinion do not interact with each other and that there is no public influence on elite attitudes. However, this paper concentrates on the dynamics of elite opinion in the three countries. For an argument on the influence of mass public opinion on elite attitudes see (Risse-Kappen, 1991).

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broader visions about European political order to explain the differences in attitudes and interests. The Euro is about European union rather than just lowering transaction costs. Second, institutionalist arguments about path dependent processes offer significant insights if they are linked to the more constructivist reasoning as developed in this article. Third, the main argument in this paper then holds that the visions about European order which give political meaning to EMU, need to be understood in the framework of identity politics. The controversies among the political elites in the three countries as well as the variation in attitudes can be explained by differences in the construction of national collective identities and their relationship to European order. Money has historically been closely linked to state- and nation-building (Helleiner, 1997). The Euro is no exception. While the French and German political elites - from the center-right to the center-left - have incorporated "Europe" into their nationally defined collective identities, British policymakers including New Labour remain hesitant. As a result, the continental European debates about the Euro have largely concentrated on the question when to join the single currency, while the British debate continues to discuss if joining was at all in the national interest.

The paper proceeds in the following steps. First, we discuss alternative explanations focusing on material conceptions of elite interests and on institutional path dependency. Second, we try to clarify some conceptual issues relating to the concept of collective national identities. Third, the empirical part of the paper analyzes collective identity construction among the political elites in the three countries investigated.

2. The Puzzle: Why is the Euro "locked in?" 4

How is it to be explained that the Euro has survived all challenges since the Maastricht treaties were signed in 1991, including

- a near rejection by the French public in the 1992 referendum which would have certainly killed the treaties;
- the near collapse of the European Monetary System (EMS) in 1992/93;

⁴ This paper does not try to explain the origins of EMU. For competing accounts see (Cameron, 1995; Campanella, 1995; Crawford, 1993; Dyson, 1994; Ludlow, 1982; McNamara, Forthcoming).

- the difficulties which most EU member states face in implementing the Maastricht convergence criteria requiring stiff austerity policies at times of sluggish economic growth and unprecedented levels of unemployment;
- high levels of opposition to the Euro in mass public opinion of the most important member states;
- the continuing grumbling among the German and French political elites?

The Indeterminacy of Economic Interests

A first-cut answer to the puzzle points to economic interests which traditional theories of European integration such as neofunctionalism or liberal intergovernmentalism see as the driving forces behind European integration (Cameron, 1997; Haas, 1958; Moravcsik, 1993). The single currency is, thus, seen as the logical follow-up to the European single market allowing for the free movement of goods, capital, labor, and services. The Euro would stop excessive currency fluctuations and protectionist pressures which could jeopardize the single market. The single currency would eliminate transaction costs (some estimate the savings at 0,5% of Europe's combined GDP) and might lead to increased investment. In sum, the Euro is supposed to be the answer to the increased economic interdependence among the EU member states and to the challenges of globalization.

A second look reveals that the economic arguments in favor of EMU are not that clear. Leading advocates of neoliberal economics disagree among themselves on the merits of a currency union in the absence of a political union or a common economic policy (Breuss, 1997; Eichengreen and Frieden, 1994; Eichengreen, von Hagen, and Harden, 1996; Hagen and Lutz, 1995; Sutter, 1997). "Some argue that the European Central Bank will not be truly independent from political influence, while others maintain that inflationary pressures cannot be effectively resisted if there is no integrated economic policy and a political union. There is considerable disagreement among economists on what constitutes an "optimal currency area" and how much economic homogeneity has to be achieved for it.

If we look at the economic preferences of individual countries, these interests alone do not appear to explain the variation in attitudes toward the Euro, either.

⁵ The European Commission forecast suggests that all EU member states except Greece will meet the Maastricht convergence criteria in 1997, thus qualifying in principle for EMU. See "European Union Survey," *The Economist*, May 31st, 1997, 9.

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In the *British* case, for example, one could argue that the decision not to join EMU in 1999 which was re-affirmed by the newly elected Labor government, reflects sound economic policies, since Great Britain's economic cycle is out of sync with continental Europe. But Britain is one of the few countries which would have no trouble meeting the Maastricht convergence criteria, particularly the budget deficit goal of no more than 3% of GDP. EMU also fits well in the neoliberal economic orientation of the British government which did not change much under Tony Blair, at least as compared to the continental European states. For years now, Britain has tried to attract foreign direct investment and to become a main production center for non-European multinationals in their efforts to enter the single market. The Euro would be attractive for these companies, since it lowers transaction costs and eliminates exchange rate instabilities. For similar reasons, British business elites including the city of London's financial have recently lobbied the Labour government to enter the Euro zone early.⁶

A similar indeterminacy holds for *France*. On the one hand, the French decision to join EMU can be explained by the fact that a common currency is preferable to the domination of the European Monetary System (EMS) by the Deutsche Mark. Control of French monetary policy by a supranational European Central Bank (ECB) rather than by the German Bundesbank can be regarded as the lesser of two evils. The EMU's convergence criteria helped the French government to legitimize its austerity policies and the reform of the French welfare state. On the other hand, though, this last point also shows the pitfalls of EMU for France (Schmidt, 1997). First, meeting the EMU convergence criteria constrains French economic policies even more than EMS ever did. Second, the stubborn support of the French Socialists for the single currency since Mitterrand's presidency is stunning. Lionel Jospin, the new prime minister, immediately forgot his campaign pledge to seek re-negotiation of EMU when he came into power. His reluctance to sign the "stability pact" at the 1997 Amsterdam summit forcing the EMU members to continuously comply with the convergence criteria lasted less than a week.

If economic reasons for the British reluctance and the French support to joining a single currency are indeterminate, this is all the more true for the linchpin of the whole project, *Germany*. First, the German economy does not need a common currency, since the EMS already constitutes a *Deutsche Mark* zone. German industry conducts its European business predominantly in *Deutsche Mark*; the effects of a common currency on lowering German transaction costs are, thus, not very significant. Second, why should the Germans give up the

⁶ See "Britain and Euro: Not 'If' but 'When'," International Herald Tribune, Sept. 18, 1997.

EMS as a *Deutsche Mark* zone controlled by the *Bundesbank* in favor of the EMU and a supranational ECB, particularly after unification has increased German power? Third, the economic benefits of EMU for German business are unclear. One could argue that the Euro might increase German competitiveness on the global markets more than the *Deutsche Mark* ever could - provided, of course, that the Euro becomes a strong currency. But who knows? Fourth, even with the convergence criteria firmly enforced and the "stability pact" in place, it is still uncertain whether Germany's cherished economic policies of tight money and low inflation will survive EMU. Finally, the German SPD is in a similar position as the French PSF. Since German labor appears to be the loser of a strict application of the convergence criteria, the continuing Social Democratic support for EMU is counter-intuitive, particularly since the SPD is still in opposition.

In sum, we do not mean to argue that there are no economic reasons supporting a single currency for the European Union. The arguments with regard to lowering transaction costs and to stabilizing expectations concerning currency fluctuations for business, on the one hand, and with regard to globalization pressures, on the other hand, seem to be particularly strong. However, these economic reasons as well as specific expressions of economic interests by political and business elites cannot account for the *variation* in national attitudes toward the Euro among the elites in the three countries. While we do not want to get into the details of neoliberal economics, suffice it to say that the economic costs and benefits of a common currency are still uncertain and depend on scope conditions which cannot be adequately predicted at this point. EMU is far from representing an obvious solution to Europe's economic problems and the economic pros and cons of a single European currency are indeterminate.

Do Geopolitical Reasons Provide an Answer?

One could argue from a realist perspective that European integration has always been as much about security concerns as about solving economic problems. Could this reasoning apply to EMU, too? Geopolitically speaking, the end of the Cold War brought the German problem back on the European agenda. The Maastricht treaties and EMU can, thus, be regarded as an effort to contain German power in Europe in the aftermath of unification by firmly binding the Federal Republic to Western institutions and by preventing a German Sonderweg (Grieco, 1995). Moreover, the single currency and the European Central Bank (ECB) effectively end the quasi-hegemony of the German Bundesbank over monetary policies in Europe. Indeed, such arguments have been made in favor of EMU all over Europe, particularly in France. For good

historical reasons, the French elites - even more so than mass public opinion - have been obsessed with the German problem since the end of World War II and this obsession explains French attitudes toward European integration to some degree.

Three puzzles remain, however. First, if French support for EMU is to be explained by geopolitical considerations in terms of the "German problem," what about *British* reluctance to join in? Why should London be less concerned than Paris about German power after unification? Second, it is not obvious that "binding" represents the only solution to the German question. *French* opponents to EMU have argued during the referendum campaign in 1992 that supranational institutions and a single currency cannot really contain German power and the country's potential hegemony over the continent. They claimed and continue to insist that Bonn and Berlin will continue to dominate Europe this time via the convergence criteria, the "stability pact" and the independent European Central Bank (ECB) modeled after the *Bundesbank*. In other words, containing German power could be achieved by traditional balance of power politics, while EMU as an instrument of "binding" only holds if one also believes in the effectiveness of international institutions.

Third and most important, if EMU represents a binding strategy of the lesser European states to contain German power, why has *Germany* agreed to it and why is it that the German government under Chancellor Kohl remains an enthusiastic supporter of a single currency? Some have argued that EMU was the price the Bonn government had to pay for acquiescence in German unification by his European partners, above all France (Grieco, 1995, 36; Sandholtz, 1993, 131-132). This argument is factually wrong. (West) Germany had been in favor of a single currency long before unification, provided that economic convergence would take place prior to its introduction and that a European Central Bank would be as independent as the *Bundesbank*. The only two German concessions to France and the EU as a quid-pro-quo for EU support for unification concerned the treaty on political union and an accelerated timetable for the ratification of EMU (Cameron, 1995, 60).

This is not to argue that the German political elites do not agree to "self-binding." The "taming of German power" (Katzenstein, 1997) through European integration has had the enthusiastic support of German elites from the centerright to the center-left - long before unification. As we will argue below, German acceptance of "self-binding" results from a collective construction of historical memory, a shared perception of Germany's place in Europe, and, last not least, visions of European order. Geopolitical arguments must be placed in the context of identity-related discourses. The same holds true for France.

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Institutional Path Dependence and the Fear of Capital Markets

There remains a powerful explanation for the puzzle that EMU appears to be firmly locked in. One could apply the arguments by historical institutionalists on "path dependence" in order to account for the puzzle (Hall and Taylor, 1996; North, 1990; Pierson, 1996; Pierson, 1997; Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth, 1992). A path-dependent process is one in which positive feedback loops lead to increasing returns. An institutional decision in a certain direction made at a "critical juncture" offering several possible choices subsequently changes the parameters in such a way that the next decision is likely to move in the same direction etc. Path dependent processes continue irrespective of the rationality of the initial decision and explain why actors often "stick to their guns" even though their instrumental interests might have changed. Institutional decisions over time greatly increase the costs of adopting alternative policies which were initially possible and reduce exit options from a once-chosen path.

It could then be argued that the Maastricht treaties set in motion a process which makes the implementation of EMU more likely over time, since the costs of changing course are increasingly prohibitive. The political costs would involve re-negotiation of the Maastricht treaties, while the economic costs of changing course relate both to the enormous investments of public institutions in implementing the treaty provisions and of the private sector (banks and industry) in setting up new infra-structures. Note the "pull" factor of EMU among the EU's Southern member states who were once considered unlikely to be able to meet the criteria. In this particular case, the path dependence argument is reinforced by the fact that policy-makers fear the reaction of the global financial markets, if they change course. The 1992-93 EMS crisis might then have had the ironic effect of reinforcing the decision for EMU by convincing policy-makers that they have to avoid tampering with the Euro in order to stabilize volatile capital markets. The more they reassure the markets that the Euro will come in a timely fashion, however, the more they create a self-fulfilling prophecy.

The institutionalist account offers indeed a more convincing explanation for the puzzle than focussing on economic or geopolitical interests. But it complements rather than substitutes the explanation presented below. First, the argument about path dependence only makes sense in the context of our discussion, if it focusses on the level of *national* decisions. France and Germany have been on the EMU path all along, while Great Britain - at the critical juncture of the treaty negotiations - opted for an alternative path and continues to do so.

Second, regarding the reaction of financial markets, this is a case of adaptive expectations with economics following politics, not the other way round. The issue is certainty and stability, not the nature of a particular decision. National and supranational decision-makers decided that they should stick to EMU and the timetable outlined in the Maastricht treaties come what may and conveyed this decision to the financial markets. The credibility of commitments was at stake, not the substantive content of these commitments. In other words, we are back to politics.

Third, historical institutionalist arguments about path dependence emphasize learning effects. Learning in this case involves the gradual adaptation and internalization of new norms and rules, i.e. a socialization process. Implementation of EMU then reinforces these norms, insures that they become part of collective beliefs of actors, and modifies the standard operating procedures of existing public and private institutions. As a result, these norms are being taken for granted. Norms, however, are closely related to collective identities, since they can be regarded as standards of appropriate behavior enacting given identities (Jepperson, Wendt, and Katzenstein, 1996; Kowert and Legro, 1996). This should be all the more the case with regard to the Euro, since - as argued above - a common currency has been linked historically to processes of state- and nation-building.

Fourth, if the internalization and institutionalization of norms and processes of identity formation are closely interlinked, the question still remains where new norms and rules such as implied by the introduction of a single European currency come from and how they relate to given collective identities. In this regard, the 1992/93 EMS crisis is instructive and challenges arguments focusing solely on path dependence. One could argue that the EMS crisis represented another "critical juncture" at which decision-makers should have reevaluated their previous choices. How is it to be explained that the crisis reinforced rather than challenged existing elite attitudes about the viability of a single currency? While the British Prime Minister John Major took the EMS crisis as the ultimate proof that EMU was a risky proposition, both Chancellor Kohl and President Mitterrand concluded that it made a single currency even more imperative in order to avoid future crises (Cameron, 1993).

These considerations suggest that we need to take a closer look at the process of preference formation among political elites in the three countries. Endogenizing the preferences and interests of political actors inevitably leads to an analysis of the visions about political and economic order attached to EMU and to the construction of national and/or European identities in the collective discourses of

the three countries. However, we need to clarify the concept of "national identity" before we can present the empirical evidence.

3. What Is "National Identity" and What Can It Explain?

Social psychology - in particular Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theories (Abrams and Hogg, 1990; Mercer, 1995; Oakes, Haslam, and Turner, 1994; Turner, 1987; Weller, 1997; Wendt, forthcoming) - provides a good starting point for clarifying the concept of "collective identity." Social identities contain, first, ideas describing and categorizing an individual's membership in a social group including emotional and evaluative components. Identities provide "a system of orientation for self-reference, creating and defining the individual's place in society" (Oakes, Haslam, and Turner, 1994, 81). In other words, groups of individuals perceive that they have something in common on the basis of which they form an "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983). Collective identity constructions concerning Europe, for example, typically refer to a common historical heritage dating back to ancient Greece, to Christianity as a shared religious experience, or to a community of liberal democracies and social market economies in the sense of a Kantian "pacific federation."

Second, this commonness is accentuated by a sense of difference with regard to other communities. Individuals frequently tend to view the group with which they identify in a more positive way than the "out-group." Self-categorization theory adds the principle of meta-contrast: The greater the perceived differences between groups in contrast to the differences within one's own group, the greater a group's collective identity. This does not mean, however, that the perceived differences between the "in-group" and the "out-group" are necessarily based on value judgments and that the "other" is usually looked down at (Eisenstadt and Giesen, 1995). The process of self- and other-categorization leads to depersonalization in the sense that social properties are no longer ascribed to individuals, but to collectivities. Depersonalization is, therefore, a crucial step in the process of social identity creation. Europe's "others", for example, are frequently constructed as territorially defined entities (America; Russia; Turkey; Asia), but also as the continent's own past of wars and nationalist rivalries.

While some collective identities, f.e., ethnic identities are based on primordial characteristics, they are nevertheless social constructions which came about through the social practices of actors identifying "in-groups" and "out-groups." One should refrain from "objectifying" the concept of national identity. Our approach is, therefore, different from (Smith, 1991). For a critique of such primordial concepts of national identity see (Lepsius, 1990b). On the self/other distinction in general see (Connolly, 1991; Neumann, 1996).

Third, national identities are social identities defining social groups on the basis of mostly territorial criteria. In modern times, they construct the "imagined communities" of nation states and are, therefore, closely linked to ideas about sovereignty and statehood (Bloom, 1990). As a result, national identities often contain visions of just political and social orders. In the case of identity constructions related to Europe, federalist visions of a "United States of Europe," of an intergovernmental confederation of nation-states, or ideas about functional market integration are examples for such concepts of political order.

Having clarified the concept of national identity, we need to deal with two further theoretical issues:

- 1. How stable are national identities? When do they change?
- 2. What is the relationship between identities, interests, and behavior?

As to the first question, there is general agreement in the literature that individuals hold multiple social identities and that these social identities are context-bound (Cederman, 1997; Oakes, Haslam, and Turner, 1994, 100). A group of Europeans might perceive themselves as fellow Europeans when dealing with Americans, while emphasizing national differences when interacting mainly with each other. Moreover, only some national identity constructions are consensual, while others are frequently contested. The multiplicity, context-boundedness, and contestedness of collective identities has led many authors to conclude that social identities are fluid and subject to frequent changes (Neumann, 1996). But the latter does not follow from the former. Rather, we know from cognitive psychology that cognitive schemas only change rarely and rather slowly. Self-categorization theory also argues that ✓ self/other categorizations change the more gradually, the more they are incorporated in institutions, myths and symbols, as well as cultural o understandings (Fiske and Taylor, 1984; Jervis, 1976; Lebow and Stein, 1993; Oakes, Haslam, and Turner, 1994; Stein, 1995). This should be particularly relevant for national collective identities which usually take quite some time and effort to construct and are then embedded in institutions and a country's political culture. We assume, therefore, that national collective identities are usually rather sticky and only gradually subject to change.

As to the incremental Europeanization of collective national identities, this paper explores the following proposition which draws on cultural sociology and sociological institutionalism (Haferkamp, 1990; Hall and Taylor, 1996; Immergut, 1996; Jepperson and Swidler, 1994; Lepsius, 1990a; March and

Olsen, 1989; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991; Steinmo, Thelen, and Longstreth, 1992; Swidler, 1986):

Political visions and identity constructions about "Europe" and European order impact upon and are incorporated in collective national identities, the more they resonate

- with national political cultures and the repertoires of action embedded in them:
- with national political institutions and the ideas about political order embedded in them.

We expect different interpretations with regard to what is understood as "European" in the various national contexts and how Europe's "others" are defined. We also assume finding variation among the nation-states as a result of different political institutions and political cultures. Political institutions and cultures as intervening variables between ideas about Europe and national collective identities perform two tasks:

- 1. They embed and incorporate specific understandings of national identities which makes them resistant against change.
- 2. The rules of the political institutions also empower or constrain actors in their efforts to contest or change identity constructions by distributing both ideational and material resources. Not every political actor has an equal chance to challenge the prevailing national identities.⁸

But there are also instances of acute identity crises leading to rapid and thorough reconstructions of collective identities. In accordance with cognitive psychology, such instances should occur at "critical junctures" when the amount of perceived information which severely contradicts given identity constructions becomes unbearable. It then depends on the learning capacities of individuals, groups, and organizations whether they are able to reconstruct and change their collective identities (Levy, 1994; Stein, 1995, 236-238; Tetlock, 1991). In the following, we discuss such a severe identity crisis in the French case. But even in this case did the new identity constructions and the Europeanization of French identity built upon and resonate with previous nationally defined identities and visions of political order.

⁸ We owe this point to Johan Olsen. We discuss it further below.

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The second issue to be tackled concerns the relationship between identity, interests, and behavior. First, we do not assume that such broad constructs as national identities directly determine political behavior and political decisions. Individuals including political decision-makers have a range of choices how to enact given collective identities. This paper does not attempt to explain particular EU decisions regarding EMU as a direct result of collective identities. Rather, our dependent variables are the different general attitudes and preferences toward the Euro. We want to explore whether a focus on social identities increases our explanatory mileage with regard to these preferences.

Second, ours is not an "identity versus interest" account which would only serve to reify both. Political elites legitimately pursue instrumentally defined interests; they want to remain and gain political power, for example. The more significant question is how identities and instrumental interests interact with each other. We argue in this paper that causality may run both ways. A change in instrumentally defined and/or materially based interests might well lead over time to identity changes. Three cases need to be distinguished:

- 1. A change in materially defined or instrumental interests might incrementally alter elite identities, the more the new interests stabilize over time.
- 2. Elites might consciously relate their new interests to *given* social identities in order to justify and legitimize the former.
- 3. Elites might consciously try to create *new* social identities for the same purpose of legitimizing the change in their material and instrumental interests.

In each case, the causal arrows run from interests to identities, albeit through different mechanisms. We argue in this paper, for example, that the Europeanization of French identity was interest-driven to begin with, that it used the third causal pathway, but that it ultimately affected the elite identities themselves.

At the same time, however, collective social identities define in the first place how actors view their instrumental interests and which preferences are regarded as legitimate and appropriate for enacting given identities. We claim this to be the case with regard to the German and British elite discourses on EMU. Moreover, we assume that instrumentally defined interests might change more frequently than collective identities which are expected to be rather sticky for reasons outlined above. In the French case, for example, the newly defined and Europeanized national identity remained rather stable over time and outlasted

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changes in government and, thus, in the instrumental interests of various political parties.

In the following, we present empirical evidence from the party debates on EMU in Britain, France, and Germany in order to show that these controversies must be understood as debates about political order in Europe and as contestations of national and/or European identities.

4. The Euro versus National Currencies: Identity Constructions in Britain, France, and Germany

Great Britain: The Euro versus Englishness

The British attitude toward the single currency has essentially remained the same over the last decade or so. At the Maastricht summit, the British government reserved the right to decide for itself whether or not the United Kingdom would join EMU in 1999 ("opt-out"). The new Labour government confirmed this position and made it clear that Britain would probably not participate in the first round of EMU, but would adopt a "wait and see" attitude.9 The British reluctance toward the single currency reflects long-standing divisions within the political elites of both major parties as to the long-term goals of European integration. These divisions in general and the British Euroskepticism in particular are grounded in particular collective understandings of Englishness and English identity. 10

British views on European integration essentially range from those opposing further Europeanization (right wing of the Conservatives, Labour's far left and far right) to a mainstream group within both main parties supporting a 'Europe of the nations'. European federalists remain a minority in the political discourse, both among the Tories and within Labour." Even the "Euro-skeptics" who have recently taken over the Conservative leadership after John Major's devastating

⁹ See "Cook rules out early EMU entry for Britain," *Electronic Telegraph*, 9 June 1997; "Amsterdam summit: Britain helps keep EMU on track," *Financial Times*, 17 June 1997.

¹⁰ The national discourse in Great Britain still identifies "Britishness" with "Englishness." There are, of course, sub-national identity-related discourses in Scotland and Wales with strong anti-English sentiments. It would be interesting to see whether these discourses have incorporated references to a collective European identity in order to distance themselves from "London." This is, however, beyond the scope of this paper.

¹¹ In contrast, the majority of the Liberal Democratic Party favors further European integration and, thus, supports EMU.

defeat in the general elections, remain divided among themselves in both major parties (Spicer, 1992): Some want to leave the EU altogether, while others favour a mere free trade area. But the mainstream of the two leading parties share a consensual vision of European order. Labour's manifesto for the 1997 elections argued that "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." The Conservative manifesto claimed in very similar terms that "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."

This consensus regarding an intergovernmental Europe of nation-states is reflected in the attitudes toward EMU in both parties. The official positions of both Labour and the Conservatives advocate a British "wait and see" policy concerning the single currency, and both parties committed themselves to a popular referendum before Britain would join EMU. If such a referendum were held today, the British public would reject the single currency by wide margins (56% against and only 26% in favor according to a May 1997 poll).¹³ As a result, it is not surprising that Tony Blair, the new Prime Minister, has continued on the British "opt-out" path as his predecessor did.

British policies toward the EU reflect collectively held beliefs about English identity. More than twenty years after entry into the European Community, the majority of the British political elite still regards Britain as 'of rather than in' Europe; it remains the 'awkward partner' and 'semi-detached' from Europe (Bailey, 1983; George, 1990; George, 1992). There is still a feeling of 'them' vs. 'us' between Britain and the continent. For Jenkins, the semi-detachment from Europe is a result of the weakness of British politics wishing to play in another world league after the world wars, an 'illusion of grandeur' in the words of Stephen George (George, 1990, 14; Jenkins, 1994). In the British political discourse then, 'Europe' is still identified with the continent and perceived as 'the other' in contrast to Englishness. In the following quote from Robin Cook, the new British Foreign Secretary, Britain is located outside 'Europe:' "... 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

¹² See Labour manifesto 'Britain will be better with new Labour'. Http://www. labour-win97.org.uk/manifesto/index/html; Conservative manifesto 'Our vision for Britain'. Http://www.conservative-party.org.uk/manifesto/defe3.html.

¹³ See http://www.telegraph.co.uk:80/graphics/97/1/10/neur110.gif.

went to Europe, the first European politician I met was Lionel Jospin."¹⁴ It is therefore not surprising, that parts of the English national identity are often viewed as potentially threatened by European integration. Using the principle of meta-contrast (see above), one could then argue that the collective identification with national symbols, national history, and national institutions is far greater in the British political discourse than a potential identification with European symbols, history, and institutions. Europe is more often than not considered as part of "them" rather than "us," and this view is shared by both major parties.

The social construction of "Englishness" as the core of British national identity comprises the meanings attached to institutions, historical memory, and symbols. Each of these components are hard to reconcile with a vision of European political order which goes beyond intergovernmentalism (Lynch, 1997; Lyon, 1991; Mitchell, 1992; Schauer, 1996; Schauer, 1997; Schmitz and Geserick, 1996). British institutions like the Parliament and the Crown form important elements of national identity. The identity-related meanings attached to these institutions center around a peculiar understanding of national sovereignty. The Crown symbolizes "external sovereignty" in terms of independence from Rome and the Pope as well as from the European continent since 1066. Parliamentary or "internal" sovereignty represents a most important constitutional principle relating to a 700 year old parliamentary tradition and hard-fought victories over the King. English sovereignty is, thus, directly linked to myths about a continuous history of liberal and democratic evolution and "free-born Englishmen." It is not surprising, therefore, that British objections against transferring sovereignty to European supranational institutions are usually justified on grounds of lacking democratic - meaning parliamentary accountability. That this argument has more to do with collective national identity than with concerns about democracy in Europe becomes obvious when the same British leaders routinely object to strengthening the powers of the European Parliament.

Another identity construction which is relevant in our context relates to the British history as a world and naval power (Wallace, 1991). The glorious days of the British empire are long gone, but are being preserved in national myths about colonial history and the special relationship with the U.S. based on a shared perception of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism. As a result, references to the importance of the Commonwealth and to the Anglo-American special

¹⁴ 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. The rest of this speech congratulates new Labour of having won new friends in 'Europe.' But the wording clearly indicates that Mr. Cook does not see himself as a 'European.'

relationship are often used to justify objections against further European integration. Moreover, the British past as a global world power also serves to substantiate a global view of international relations and an "outward looking" attitude - as opposed to the "inward looking" continental Europeans, of course.

One of the most powerful symbols of Britain's great past as a world power is the pound Sterling, the former world reserve currency. While the German *Deutsche Mark* stands for German post-World War II prosperity (see below), the British pound serves as a strong reminder of a glorious past. This symbolism is directly related to notions of sovereignty and English exceptionalism distinguishing Britain from the European continent. It is hard to see how the pound Sterling as a symbol of collective national identity might be given up in favor of a single currency with the strange name of "Euro." During the EMS crisis of 1993, the British government would rather leave the Exchange Rate Mechanism altogether than accepting the humiliation of devaluating the pound against the other currencies through a re-adjustment of the currency parities (Cameron, 1993). The ensuing market-driven devaluation of the pound was seen as a humiliation by many Conservatives which then became even more Euro-skeptic (Young, 1997).

These Euro-skeptics routinely use references to identity-related terms such as sovereignty to justify their rejection of EMU (Baker, Gamble, and Ludlam, 1993; Baker, Gamble, and Ludlam, 1994; Young, 1997). They (correctly) identify the single currency as a huge step toward political integration. As they object to a European union based on strong supranational institutions, this is precisely why they reject the Euro. As John Redwood, one of the leading Conservative Euro-skeptics, once put it, "abolish the pound and you abolish Britain. You make a decisive move towards a country called Europe governed from Brussels and Frankfurt.... reading the treaties and looking at the wide range of institutions already established in the name of the European Union shows that the intention is the establishment of a new country" (Redwood, 1997, 19).

Faced with such identity-based opposition, former Prime Minister John Major tried to preserve party unity by insisting on the British "opt-outs" during the Maastricht treaty negotiations and adopting a "wait and see" attitude afterwards. He frequently used interest-related rather than identity-based arguments to justify his course of action:

¹⁵ See Electronic Telegraph, 6 Sept. 1996, 25 Oct. 1996, 28 Oct. 1996, 2 Jan. 1997, 26 Jan. 1997.

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Britain will not join a single currency in 1996 or 1997 and, frankly, I increasingly doubt whether anybody will be ready to do so. ... Quite apart from the other arguments, the economic conditions are absolutely crucial to the success of a single currency. ¹⁶

The divisions among the Tories - not the least about Europe - cost John Major his job. But new Labour has its own problems with national identity constructions. To begin with, it was not before 1987 that the British Labour Party changed its anti-European course, after it had suffered a catastrophic defeat in the 1983 elections (Haahr, 1992; Haahr, 1993; Tindale, 1992). Labour's U-turn over Europe in 1987 was partly conducted in the hope of outflanking Thatcherism on the national level utilizing the EC social policy. In the elections to the European Parliament 1989, Labour then presented itself as the European party in Britain. While Labour was edging toward a more positive approach to European integration, there remained quite a few Euro-skeptics in the party. The divisions within Labour on the EMU remained rather stable and became apparent again in the 1997 election campaign. While now Foreign Secretary Robin Cook ruled out British participation in the single currency in 1999, Gordon Brown, the new Chancellor of the Exchequers, sounded more positive. The interest-based language of those who want to keep the British options open, did not change with the shift in government:

At present, we do not know whether there will be a single currency to join in 1999.(...) What is valuable about that debate, and what Britain can usefully help to further, is the gathering consensus that the prime objectives of economic policy should be growth, employment and competitiveness, and that the single currency must be judged on whether it will help or hinder those objectives.¹⁷

In sum, the British debate on EMU and the continuing reluctance toward joining the single currency cannot be adequately understood without reference to constructions of national identity. British supporters of a 'wait and see' policy use economic interest-based arguments to justify their attitudes toward a single currency, while the opponents of EMU use identity arguments to make their point. They fear that Britain will lose the ability to govern herself and argue against any further loss of national sovereignty. While the British business

¹⁶ Speech in the House of Commons, March 1, 1995, http://www.fco.gov.uk/europe/debate_010395.txt. Major used similar lines throughout the years and is now advocating delaying the decision. See his interview with the Daily Telegraph, June 3, 1997; Speech in House of Commons, June 9, 1997, column 817/818, http://www.parliament.the-stationary-office.co.uk/pa/cm199798/cmhansrd/cm970609/debtext/ 70609-08.htm.

¹⁷ Robin Cook, speech in the House of Commons, June 9, 1997, column 803, http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199798/cmhansrd/cm970609/debtext/ 70609-08.htm.

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community appears far more open-minded about joining EMU early on.15 supporters of the Euro among the political elites need to frame their attitude in terms of keeping the British options open. The political discourse centers around whether to join later or never. This is in sharp contrast to the debates in France and Germany which focus on joining now or later. While a "wait and see" attitude is the trademark of British Euro supporters, Euro opponents need to use such arguments on the continent.

The institutional setting of the British parliamentary system together with the election results also tend to weaken rather than strengthen Euro supporters who do not constitute a majority in either of the two big parties. This was particularly significant when John Major held a very slim majority in the House of Commons. He was held hostage by an equally small, but very outspoken minority of Euro-skeptics who used identity-related arguments to make their case. This situation changed, of course, with Tony Blair's landslide victory at the polls. But the institutional setting of British "adversarial politics" still prevents a coalition among Euro-supporters across party lines. This situation is different on the continent.

France: The Euro and the Reconstruction of National Identity

Twenty years ago, a single European currency based on a convergence of economic (austerity) policies would have been hard to swallow for the French political elite. First, it would not have resonated with the general orientation of French monetary and economic policies. Monetary policy in the Fifth Republic until the early 1980s was to serve broader economic goals defined by the government which also controlled the decisions of the French central bank. French economic policy used to be based on a specific version of Keynesianism with a heavy dose of state interventionism in the economy dating back to the "trente glorieuses" (Fourastié, 1985). As a result, France favored the "monetarist approach" to monetary union over Germany's "economist approach" since the days of the Werner plan.

Second, the French political elite also used to share a specific vision of European political order, "l'Europe des nations" (the Europe of nation-states), as the founding father of the Fifth Republic, President Charles de Gaulle, used to call it. Again, a single currency and the ensuing transfer of monetary authority to supranational institutions is incompatible with such an intergovernmentalist vision of the future European order.

¹⁸ See, for example, "Britain and Euro: Not 'If' but 'When'," International Herald Tribune, Sept. 18, 1997.

Why is it then that EMU which largely followed the German model-in terms of the independence of the ECB and the convergence criteria, was by and large accepted by the main parties in France, by Socialists, Liberals, and Gaullists and irrespective of whether either of them was in government or opposition?/We argue in the following that the French approach toward EMU went hand in hand with a re-orientation of French economic and monetary policies as well as a change in French approaches to European order. Most significant, these changes led to a re-construction and Europeanization of French national identity which were exacerbated and accelerated by the end of the Cold War (see also Flynn, 1996; Schmidt, 1996; Schmidt, 1997). The re-construction of French identity started in the 1980s and was originally motivated largely by economic and political interests. However, it assumed its own dynamics over time and now explains to a large degree why the Paris governments continue to support the single currency based on the German model - despite enormous unemployment and despite grumblings on either side of the political spectrum.

The most important change in French attitudes toward both economic policies and European political order with important repercussions for the EMU project occurred on the French left in the aftermath of Mitterrand's economic turnaround in the early 1980s. When President François Mitterrand and the Socialist Party (PS) came into power in 1981, they initially embarked upon a project of creating democratic socialism in France based on some sort of leftist Keynesianism. This project bitterly failed when the adverse reactions of the capital markets hit the French economy which in turn led to a severe loss of support for Mitterrand's policies by the electorate. In 1983, Mitterrand had practically no choice other than changing course dramatically, if he wanted to remain in power (Bauchard, 1986; Uterwedde, 1988). This political change led to a deep crisis within the Socialist Party which gradually abandoned its Socialist project and moved toward ideas once derisively labeled "Social Democratic." In changing course, the party followed its leader and President, François Mitterrand, who had defined the construction of the European Community as a central issue of his time in office.

The re-orientation of the French Socialists toward neoliberal economics - in "French colors", of course - went hand in hand with a change in attitudes toward European integration as a whole which had hitherto often been denounced as a "Capitalist" project. The Socialists now saw the European future in a more or less federal model (called "federation of nation-states"). They were willing to share larger amounts of sovereignty in various domains, for example security, economic and social policies, because national sovereignty in its traditional understanding was regarded as an illusion in an interdependent world. As a

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result, the commitment to European integration had reached consensual status in the PS by the mid-1980s.

The PS's move toward Europe went hand in hand with a deliberate effort to reconstruct French national identity in European colors. The 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!"19 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 can be transferred from the "first Nation-state" in Europe to the continent as a whole, because all European states are children of enlightenment, democracy and republicanism. France imprints its marks on Europe. This identity construction uses traditional understandings of Frenchness and the French nation-state - sovereignty understood as enlightenment and republicanism, the French mission civilisatrice - and "Europeanize" them. In contrast to English identity constructions where "Europe" is still the "other," this understanding incorporates Europe into one's own nationally defined identity and the understandings about sovereignty and political order embedded in it. As a result, French identity is transformed and Europeanized, but only to the degree that ideas about Europe can be incorporated into and resonate with previous visions of the state.

Europe, in turn, has to defend its identity in a globalized world and, at the same time, has to play a specific role in the world. In the view of the French Europeanized Socialists then, the "other" of European identity is constituted by the U.S. and Japan. The Euro, for example, should create a European answer against the Dollar and the Yen, defending the European economy against the outside world. This argument was put forward especially by the Socialists as early as 1988 (Mitterrand, 1988, 14; PS, 1988, 78).

The change in the French Socialists' visions about European political order and their attempts to Europeanize the French national identity is reflected in their attitudes toward EMU. Again, President Mitterrand set the trend and was followed by his party. However, while support for a single currency as a political project in conjunction with the larger issue of European integration was locked in early on and has remained so ever since, the French Socialists' understanding of its economic foundations included remnants of French state interventionism. The original French proposal for EMU, for example, was a far cry from the version adopted in the Maastricht treaty following the German

¹⁹ Quoted in Le Monde, Sept. 4, 1992.

model. The PS nevertheless interpreted the Maastricht treaty and EMU in such a way that monetary policy was to be co-decided by the ECB and the Council of Ministers and that the ECB had to realize the community goals of economic growth and employment. It is noteworthy that this position has essentially remained stable since the mid-1980s; it survived the change in government from Mitterrand to Chirac and back to the Chirac-Jospin cohabitation. It also explains the French insistence for greater coordination of the economic policies by the member states.

However, whenever the PS had to choose between its support for European integration and its preferences on economic policies, Europe carried the day. This explains the party's stubborn support for EMU during the referendum's campaign, during opposition from 1995 to 1997, and when it came back into government in 1997 as well. While EMU looked rather different from the Socialists' ideas about European economic order, they continuously supported it as part and parcel of their *political* vision of Europe. We argue that this political vision of Europe was in turn incorporated in their reconstructed collective identity as a European Social Democratic party.

Similar changes in the prevailing visions of European order combined with reconstructions of French national identity took place on the French right. ²¹ The heir of Charles de Gaulle's vision of 'l'Europe des patries', the Rassemblement pour la République (RPR), provides another example of the French political elite changing course. As regards economic and monetary policies, the RPR had traditionally supported state-interventionism (planification) combined with Keynesian aspirations. Under the influence of both Thatcherism and Reagonomics, it turned around to monetarism (Baudouin, 1990). The Gaullists in general still subscribe to a model of "Europe of the Nations". National sovereignty is regarded as the core and inalienable constitutive of the Nationstate, which itself is the only legitimized model of social order. The party elite is divided about whether to interpret this in a narrow and "orthodox" way, excluding any transfer of sovereignty, or to adopt a "modern" and more open interpretation, allowing transfers to a certain extent.

²⁰ See *Le poing et la rose*, No. 119, April 1987, p. 10; *Nouvelles Internationales*, No. 56, 19 December 1991; Elisabeth Guigou, *Vendredi*, No. 131, 7 February 1992; (PS, 1991, 57; PS, 1992a, Sheet No. 5; PS, 1992b, 11).

²¹ We ignore the French center parties, the Liberal Democrats (*Union pour la Démocratie Française*), here since they have continuously been the most pro-European French parties embracing the Euro early on. See (Saint-Ouen, 1990).

Understandings of what constitutes sovereignty and how much supranationalism is compatible with it, however, concern key features of national identity, Frenchness in this case. It is not surprising, therefore, that competing visions about European order held by RPR policy-makers correspond to differing views of Frenchness and French identity. President Jacques Chirac and former Prime Minister Alain Juppé tend to express similar ideas about the Europeanization of French distinctiveness as their 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 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/TR), she can better reaffirm in what I believe: French exceptionalism.²²

They also highlight the European heritage including economic achievements, such as a "European social model" in contrast to U.S. *laissez-faire* capitalism. ²³

In contrast, French "Euro-skeptics" such as Charles Pasqua and Philippe Séguin stick to traditional understandings of sovereignty and a purely national view of collective identity. They still share "a certain idea of France" resulting from of its history, drawing their sources from Gaullism and/or the Great Revolution. They stick to the notion of a "Europe des patries" rejecting supranationalism as the demise of the French model of culture and civilization. They fear that national peculiarities perish and become homogenized in a European (as well as global) melting-pot. In this understanding, the definition of "us" remains national, while the "other" is still everybody non-French.

These competing visions of French identity are expressed in attitudes toward the Euro. While the RPR gradually adopted the neoliberal discourse, the party remains divided over EMU. Again, these divisions had nothing to do with differences over economics, but with the split about what European integration meant. The cleavage became first apparent during the controversy over the Gaullist "Manifeste pour l'Union des Etats de l'Europe" in 1990. A draft by then party leader Jacques Chirac and Alain Juppé accepted the transfer of sovereignty to supranational institutions, but reserved the right of invoking overwhelming national interests and demanded to strengthen the European Council. EMU should result from a progressive unification of economic conditions leading to a common currency. The concurrent draft by Charles Pasqua and Philippe Séguin ("Changer de cap") argued that European

²² Jacques Chirac, in *Liberation*, Sept. 11, 1992.

²³ See, for example, Jacques Chirac, Libération, 25 March 1996.

integration had lost a good part of its raison d'être with the end of the Cold War and that it was time to reflect anew on de Gaulle's vision for Europe. Pasqua and Séguin were motivated by the fear of Germany and a resentment against the bureaucracy in Brussels. Pasqua and Séguin then expressed their opposition to a single currency, based primarily on political rather than economic grounds (Joas, 1996, 227-229). While the RPR as a whole adopted a position closer to the Chirac/Juppé line, the divisions remained and became apparent again during the referendum's debate in 1992. Pasqua and Séguin led the battle against EMU. while Chirac and Juppé remained largely silent. When Jacques Chirac became President in 1995, however, he committed himself to the single currency. The internal divisions were papered over. They, once again, became apparent when the French right lost its majority in the Assemblée Nationale in 1997.

In sum then, support for and opposition against EMU in the French debate center around competing understandings of national sovereignty and of "Frenchness." While the majority of the French political elite in both the PSF and the RPR has gradually come to embrace a Europeanization of French distinctiveness and to identify the future of France as a nation-state with European order, a distinct minority sticks to the old Gaullist concepts of French "grandeur" and "indépendance". Attitudes toward EMU reflect these identity constructions.

Of the three countries considered in this paper, France is the only one in which a major reshaping and reshuffling of the elite discourse on national identity took place in recent years. Two "critical junctures" leading to a widespread perception of crisis triggered these reconstructions of national identity. First, the failure of the Socialist program in the early 1980s and the turnaround of Mitterrand's economic policies served as a catalyst for an identity crisis among the French left as a result of which the Parti Socialiste became a modern European Social Democratic Party and embraced European integration as well as the Euro. There is no doubt that this identity change was initially caused by the desire to remain in power. Thus, political interests led to a thorough alteration of preferences about European order and, subsequently, to identity changes. We do not dispute that interests changed identities in this case. But the reconstruction of French identity by the Socialists was profound. It largely explains why the PS stuck to its support for EMU and European integration even after they lost power in 1995 - in other words, even after their instrumental interests changed once again.

Second, one should not overlook that the end of the Cold War constituted another "critical juncture" and crisis experience for French 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 of the action. President Mitterrand even embarrassed himself initially by attempting to strike his own private deals with leaders in East Berlin and Moscow (Zelikow and Rice, 1995). French diplomatic efforts failed miserably. As a result, large parts of the political elite finally realized the grand illusion of the myths of "grandeur" and "indépendance." The way out was Europe, including the Euro (Flynn, 1995). It should be noted, however, that the end of the Cold War to some extent reinforced rather than modified pre-existing beliefs about Europe and European order. Those who had already embraced the notion of a Europeanized France, used the reshaping of the European security environment to confirm their conviction that European integration should move ahead quickly. The minority among both the French right and the left, however, argued in favor of a return to traditional balance of power politics including a strictly nationalist vision of French identity (Chevènement, 1992).

In the French case and in contrast to Britain, the institutional setting of the Fifth Republic with its strong presidency and national executive and its rather weak parliament favors the Europeanized majority who sees the French future in Europe. Both presidents Mitterrand and Chirac deeply identified with a European France and particularly Mitterrand was eager to push European integration further. They both picked pro-European cabinets; the recent cohabitation with Prime Minister Jospin only brought Mitterrand's old foreign policy elite back into power. Thus, the institutional settings of the Fifth Republic allow French political leaders to shield the executive from "Euroskeptics." At the same time, opponents of the Euro are too fragmented and spread over both major parties to constitute a serious threat to the elite majority. The same holds true for Germany, albeit for slightly different reasons.

Germany: Between the Euro and the Deutsche Mark

German agreement to EMU and the stubbornness with which the majority of the political elite supports the Euro seem strange at first, since Germany has more to lose from monetary union than any other country (see above). Even more surprising is the lack of public controversy about the Euro, until recently, and despite the fact that a majority of the German mass public opinion rejects giving up the cherished *Deutsche Mark*. German elite support for the Euro has been challenged so far by only few prominent politicians, mostly prime ministers of German *Länder* facing election campaigns. They were joined by the more implicit opposition to the Euro voiced by the powerful German *Bundesbank*.²⁴

²⁴ On the *Bundesbank* position in general see (Cameron, 1995; Goodman, 1992)." See also "Tietmeyer Taking the Long View," *International Herald Tribune*, June 30, 1997; "Der War-

But the critics framed their opposition in terms of insisting on a strict adherence to the convergence criteria and a quest for delaying the third stage of EMU. All let it be known that they were in favor of European integration.

We argue in the following that the peculiar German debate about the Euro must be understood in the framework of identity politics. On the one hand, general support for the single currency is based on a powerful part of German post-World War II identity - Euro-patriotism - which is supposed to overcome the German nationalist and militarist past once and for all. On the other hand, opponents of the Euro link their skepticism on another part of German collective identity - Deutsche Mark patriotism. The latter explains the rigid insistence of German government officials on the strict fulfillment of the Maastricht convergence criteria (to make the Euro "as strong as the Deutsche Mark"). It also explains why opponents of EMU hammer away at this point, the more it appeared as if Germany itself had trouble meeting the criteria.

To understand the German debate (or lack thereof) on EMU, one has to note the federalist consensus ("United States of Europe") among the German parties ranging from the center-right to the center-left. This consensus has remained largely untouched since the late 1950s when the German Social Democrats changed their position on European integration. A minority view, particularly in the Bavarian CSU favors a more intergovernmental model of Europe. The CSU now strives for a confederation of states, in which the nation states keep their sovereignty.²⁵

Attitudes toward EMU are based on these larger visions of European political integration. The majority of the German political elite in all major parties views the Euro as a cornerstone of European political integration, despite a legitimacy crisis in German public opinion. Since the Euro is regarded as part and parcel of this *political project*, supporters strongly insist that a delay with regard to entering the third stage in 1999 would "endanger the successes of the European

ner," *Die Zeit*, Sept. 12, 1997. Of course, the Bundesbank's opposition to the Euro is easily explained by the fact that it is the single most important loser of power by EMU. As a result, we will not deal much further with the Bundesbank's position, since it is hardly surprising. One could argue, however, that the Bundesbank's strong position in the German political debate is itself a function not only of its institutional power and independence, but also of its position in German identity politics as a most significant symbol of *Deutsche Mark*-patriotism (see below).

²⁵ See "Es gab einmal eine europäische Bewegung in Deutschland ... das ist vorbei," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Nov. 2, 1993.

integration process up to now," as Chancellor Kohl put it. Former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, a Social Democrat, argued even more bluntly that "any delay means in all likelihood the ultimate abandonment of the currency union project; (...) As a result, Europe would face the worst crisis of European integration since the 1950 Schuman plan." Thus, the German political elite identifies the Euro with European integration as a whole.

Support for the Euro among the German political elites is not only linked to their broader visions about European order, but has directly to do with German post-World War II national identity. The identity component in the German discourse on the Euro is probably the strongest among the three countries investigated here. Two aspects of the concept of "national identity" are particularly relevant in the German context - historical memories and the way one's own past is understood, on the one hand, and performances and achievements which are claimed to serve as a model for others, on the other. We deal first with German collective understandings of the country's past and its consequences for the debate surrounding the Euro.

In contrast to Britain and France, the German notion of what constitutes the "other", the non-European, has much more to do with European and German national history. Thus, Germany's nationalist and militarist past constitutes the "Other" in the process of "post-national" identity formation whereby Europeanness replaces traditional notions of national identity. The new Germany should be firmly anchored in "the West" and in Europe, or, as the $\vec{\square}$ famous writer Thomas Mann put it, "we do not want a German Europe, but a European Germany." For decades, European integration was regarded by German political elites as a sort of substitute for their own defeated, divided, and occupied country. Due to their problematic national identity following the Holocaust and World War II, and in contrast to the British or the French, most Germans thought the aim of European unity so self-evident that they never really debated the pros and cons but only the means. The German political elite considered the establishment of a lasting European peace order as the ultimate goal of integration, "Europe" thus being tantamount to superseding nationalism. The federal government under Chancellor Kohl as well as the SPD opposition are firmly determined to render the European unification process irreversible because they are convinced that the concept of a unified Europe is the most

²⁶ Quoted from "Huber hält Euro-Start ohne Paris für möglich," Süddeutsche Zeitung, July 7, 1997.

²⁷ "Helmut Schmidt über die sechs Gründe, aus denen der Euro nicht scheitern darf - schon gar nicht an den Deutschen," *Die Zeit*, June 13, 1997.

effective assurance against the renaissance of nationalism, a relapse into power-political rivalries, and disastrous conflicts.

Since the 1950s, a fundamental consensus has emerged among the political elites and is generally shared by public opinion that European integration is in Germany's vital interest what Simon Bulmer called the "Europeanization" of German politics (Bulmer, 1989). See also (Hellmann, 1996; Katzenstein, 1997). The multilateralization of German foreign policy was initiated by Chancellor Konrad Adenauer who regarded the integration of the German state and society in the West as the best means of overcoming the German past. West Germany viewed itself mainly as a trading state which rarely insisted on its *national interest* due to the shaming memories of extreme nationalism rendering "the language of national interest unusable" (Paterson, 1996, 65).

The time period since end of the Cold War, the collapse of East Germany, and German unification in 1990 is particularly significant for our argument. With the unexpected end of the East-West conflict and regained German sovereignty, a broad range of foreign policy opportunities suddenly emerged creating a situation in which the Germans could have redefined their national interests. Instead, not much happened. Germany did not re-consider its fundamental foreign policy orientations, since Germany's commitment to European integration had long outlived the context in which it had originally emerged (Hellmann, 1996; Katzenstein, 1997; Müller, 1992; Rittberger, 1993).

Even after unification and with more sovereignty to sacrifice for the European cause, the majority of the German political elite shares Chancellor Kohl's belief that only deeper political and economic union - symbolized by a single currency - can anchor Germany firmly in the West and strengthen European institutions to ensure peace in the years ahead. As former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt argued,

If the Euro-currency is not realized by January 1, 1999, it will most likely never again be realized; ... This would result in the worst crisis of the European integration process - possibly its end! And Germany would be isolated - exactly the opposite of the binding which all chancellors from Adenauer to Kohl have pursued as the overarching strategic goal, in the vital German interest!²⁸

Chancellor Kohl in particular wants to be remembered as the one who pushed through EMU and hence made a closer European Union inevitable, thus preventing a return to nationalism in Europe (Banchoff, 1997a; Banchoff,

²⁸ Helmut Schmidt, "Die Bundesbank - kein Staat im Staate," Die Zeit, Nov. 8, 1996.

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1997b, 61-63). Kohl framed the the single currency as *the* symbol of European integration and he has deeply identified his political fate with the realization of the Euro.²⁹ His pledge to stand for a renewed candidacy in 1998 is motivated primarily by his commitment to European integration and the Euro. He also labeled 1997 - the year of reference for the fulfillment of the convergence criteria - as the "key year of Europe", as *existential* for further integration. Kohl appears to believe that if "the house of Europe" is not built now, it won't be possible either ten years later. He even argued that the success of EMU was a "question of war and peace."³⁰

It is particularly interesting that the German center-left has largely remained silent over EMU and that the majority of the SPD elite still supports it. The German left does blame the current record level unemployment on the government's austerity measures but few draw the obvious connection between those policies and Bonn's determination to meet the convergence criteria. The German trade unions in particular refrain from criticizing the Euro, even though their constituents appear to be the biggest losers of the austerity policy to reach the 3% deficit goal. Despite continuing popular reluctance to give up the Deutsche Mark, a fractious debate on the Euro is still not imminent and there have been few hints that the front of supporters will collapse.

In essence then, advocates of a single European currency, Chancellor Kohl in particular, have managed to frame the issue in the German political discourse by constructing an extremely powerful equation linking the Euro to German identity:

Support for the Euro = Support for European integration

= "good Europeanness" = "good Germanness"

= Rejection of the German militarist and nationalist past.

This equation forces opponents of a single currency to make sure that they cannot be regarded as "bad Germans", i.e., proponents of German nationalism. As a result, German opponents of the Euro almost never declare their opposition openly, but rather demand a postponement of the Euro. They usually go at great length to show that one can be a "good German European" and still remain skeptical vis-à-vis a single currency.

²⁹ See *The Economist*, Oct. 26, 1996, pp. 23-29.

³⁰ In a speech to the German Bundestag, see "Kohl: Bei der europäischen Währung ist Stabilität wichtiger als der Kalender," Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, May 28, 1994.

At the same time, however, supporters of the Euro need to cope with another aspect of German post-World War II identity, "Deutsche Mark patriotism." This is the ultimate reason why the Euro is supposed to look very much like the Deutsche Mark and why the political discourse in Germany mainly focusses on the issue of how strong a currency the Euro will become. It is significant in this context that the German government was only willing to give up the previously hegemonic role of the Deutsche Mark within the EMS if the future single currency was institutionally designed according to German monetary institutions. The European Central Bank (ECB) was modeled after Germany's Bundesbank (Goodman, 1992; Notermans, 1991; Sturm, 1995). Germany even managed to commit its partners to a "stability pact" imposing rigid central guidelines and potential fines for offenders to prevent EMU members from undermining the Euro by backsliding on economic commitments once they have joined up. Finally, the German government succeeded in bringing the European Monetary Institute and later the ECB to Frankfurt, in a further attempt to symbolically frame the ECB as the successor of the much cherished Bundesbank.

The exaggerated emphasis placed on meeting the convergence criteria up to the decimal point has little to do with economic policy as such, but reflects instead a particular reading of German pre-World War II history and the collective memories of rising inflation and the World economic crisis with its consequences for the Nazis coming into power. Again, the "other" in this part of the German collective identity is the country's own past. Overcoming the German past also meant instituting sound economic policies of low inflation and controlled budget deficits so as to never again being tempted to solve economic problems by "printing money." The Deutsche Mark became the symbolic embodiment of this economic policy. Over the years, the Deutsche Mark has acquired a highly identity-inducing value as a powerful national symbol which embodies Germany's prosperity and its economic miracle after the second World War. The 1948 monetary reform with the introduction of the Deutsche Mark and the immediately following change from shortage of goods to consumer paradise has become a national myth linked to the particular German understandings of a "social market economy" (soziale Marktwirtschaft) which contributed much to West Germany's self-confidence (Haselbach, 1994, 256). The Deutsche Mark now stands for the "rise from the ruins" of World War II (Helleiner, 1997).

Deutsche Mark patriotism and German Europeanness then constitute two significant aspects of German post-World War II national identity. Giving up the Deutsche Mark in favor of the Euro is, thus, in accordance with the latter, but violates the former aspect of collective identities. It is no wonder, therefore,

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that German elite supporters of EMU worked hard to insure that the institutional setup of the single currency looked extremely similar to the German monetary institutions.

To the extent that there *is* a German debate on the single currency, it is largely framed in terms of Euro-patriotism versus *Deutsche Mark* patriotism. As a result, supporters of the Euro emphasize that the single currency will be "as strong and stable" as the *Deutsche Mark* and that there will be virtually no difference between the two - except for the name. Critics of EMU, however, try to capitalize on *Deutsche Mark* patriotism suggesting that the Euro will never reach the stability of the German currency.

The proxy for this identity-related debate is the controversy surrounding the strictness with which the convergence criteria should be applied. Rigid adherence to the convergence criteria before and after EMU became the symbolic causal mechanism by which the "strong *Deutsche Mark*" is going to be converted into an equally "strong Euro." Of course, this has not much to do with the Maastricht treaty allowing for much more flexibility than the German debate appears to assume.³¹

The insistence on the convergence criteria was originally meant to reassure a nervous public opinion that the Euro would equal the strength and stability of the *Deutsche Mark* and that, therefore, the savings of ordinary Germans remained safe. The more it became clear in 1997, however, that Germany would have a hard time meeting the convergence criteria itself due to its sluggish economic growth and an extremely high unemployment rate, the more opponents of the single currency started using the convergence criteria as a proxy to hide their criticism of EMU. ³² They tried to hammer away at popular fears that the Euro will not become as strong a currency as the *Deutsche Mark*. The 3 % criterion of the Maastricht treaty stipulating that the budget deficit

³¹ See particularly article 104c of the European Community Treaty. It stipulates that the overall economic and budgetary situation has to be taken into account when judging about a member state which does not fulfill the convergence criteria concerning budget deficits in 1997. In other words, whether states are ultimately invited to join or not remains a political decision rather than one dictated by economic automatism.

³² See the largely symbolic German debate in the Summer of 1997 on whether 3,0 means "three, zero" or "three, something." See "Stoiber beharrt auf Kritik an EWU," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 23, 1997; "Germans Resolve Feud Over Euro," *International Herald Tribune*, July 2, 1997; "Huber hält Euro-Start ohne Paris für möglich," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, July 7, 1997; "Pressure mounts in Bonn to delay Emu," *Financial Times*, July 7, 1997; "Edmund Stoiber: Defender of a decimal point," *Financial Times*, July 7, 1997.

should not exceed 3% of the GDP was constructed as the benchmark by which the future quality of the Euro is being judged.

The irony is that the Federal government, particularly Chancellor Kohl and Finance Minister Theo Waigel, was now caught in its own rhetoric. Bonn had insisted on a rigid interpretation of the convergence criteria vis-à-vis its European partners in order to reassure a nervous German public and to guarantee that EU members institute the necessary austerity policies to meet the criteria. As a result, they reduced their own flexibility with regard to Germany meeting the criteria itself. Critics of the Euro such as Edmund Stoiber, the Prime Minister of Bavaria (CSU), and Gerhard Schröder, Prime Minister of Lower Saxony and a leading contender for the SPD's candidate for the Chancellerie, routinely use references to *Deutsche Mark* patriotism in order do make their case. ³³ Both called for delaying entry into the third stage of EMU, but based their arguments on economic considerations regarding financial stability. However, Gerhard Schröder in particular tried to make it very clear that he remains a "good European" by arguing that "a controlled delay would not damage Europe." ³⁴

In sum, the German debate over the Euro can be analyzed as a contest of competing identities, Euro-patriotism versus *Deutsche Mark* patriotism. The former construction is much stronger among the political elites than the latter. First, as argued above, even those opposed to EMU do not dare touching the German consensus on European integration, but frame their criticism in terms of asking for a delay and/or demanding a strict application of the convergence criteria. In other words, they have to make sure that *Deutsche Mark* patriotism cannot be constructed as an alternative to German Europeanness. That German Euro-patriotism is the dominant identity construction becomes abundantly clear when one compares the German discourse with the British one. Note that "wait and see" is the trademark of Euro *supporters* in the UK, while it is the rallying cry of the *opponents* of a single currency in Germany.

Second, the strength of Euro-patriotism also explains largely why the German Social Democrats have rarely challenged the consensus on the single currency

³³ On Stoiber's position see "Es gab einmal eine europäische Bewegung in Deutschland ... das ist vorbei," Süddeutsche Zeitung, Nov. 2, 1993; "Stoiber beharrt auf Kritik an EWU," Süddeutsche Zeitung, June 23, 1997; "Edmund Stoiber: Defender of a decimal point," Financial Times, July 7, 1997. On Gerhard Schröder's position see, e.g., "Den besten Zeitpunkt suchen," Die Zeit, June 6, 1997.

³⁴ Gerhard Schröder in "Den besten Zeitpunkt suchen!, Die Zeit, June 6, 1997.

in election campaigns inspite of ample opportunities,³⁵ particularly during the 1994 election year when both federal and state elections were conducted in Germany. Even though a majority of German public opinion was opposed to the single currency at the time, the SPD refrained from exploiting this sentiment for their own purposes. Gerhard Schröder who positions himself as the SPD candidate for Chancellorship in the 1998 federal elections, has remained a rather lonely voice in the party leadership with his Euro-skepticism.

Third and similar to the French case, the institutional setting of the German political system makes it hard for Euro-opponents to gather strength. Since they remain a minority in each of the major parties, coalition-building among them becomes rather difficult. Given the importance of party discipline in the German political context, it is very unlikely that opponents of a single currency might be able to form a coalition across party lines.

5. Conclusions

This paper argued that EMU and the Euro can only be understood as a political rather than a mostly economic project. While the economic advantages and disadvantages of a single currency are indeterminate, to say the least, and while its social consequences regarding cuts in the European welfare state are rather significant, at least in the short run, the project has become the cornerstone of European political integration. Support and opposition to EMU in the three countries investigated vary with regard to visions of European integration rather than economic considerations. If economic ideologies were all that mattered, we would expect strong support for EMU among British, French, and German neoliberals, i.e. among the British Conservatives, the French RPR, and parts of the German Christian Democrats. We would also expect stronger opposition against the Euro and the Maastricht convergence criteria among the European Social Democrats. The opposite is the case. The German SPD, to a lesser degree the French PSF, and even parts of British Labour are among the strongest supporters of EMU, while the neoliberal British Conservatives and - to a lesser extent - the French RPR remain deeply divided.

This paper argued that the Euro is about identity politics and political visions of Europe. Strong supporters of the project in all three countries join a common vision of European integration as overcoming the historical divisions of the

³⁵ There have been two notable exceptions to this, the state elections in Baden-Württemberg in 1996 and in Hamburg in 1997. But opposition to the Euro didn't help much. The SPD lost votes in both elections.

continent. While they might differ in details, they share the belief that the times of national solutions to economic, political, and social problems in Europe are definitely over. They use EMU and the single currency as a tool to get closer to that political vision. The Euro then symbolizes a collective European identity, while the *Deutsche Mark*, the franc and the Pound Sterling are constructed as the symbolic remnants of a nationalist past. At the same time, opponents of EMU use the *Deutsche Mark*, the *Franc Francais*, and the Pound Sterling as symbols of national identities which are not to be sacrificed under some vague "Europeanness."

But collective identification with Europe comes in national colors. We are far from claiming in this paper that "Europe" means the same for everybody. The strongest identification with Europeanness can probably be found among the German political elites where "Euro-patriotism" forms part and parcel of the country's post-World War II national identity. Moreover, Europe's "other" in the German political discourse is constructed as the continent's and - more important - Germany's own past of wars and nationalist excesses. Since Europe is, thus, at the core of modern Germany's "post-nationalist identity," opponents of the Euro have a hard time to justify their cause. *Deutsche Mark* patriotism, while resonating well with German mass public opinion, does not represent a strong enough identity construction in the German elite discourse to effectively compete with "Europe."

The opposite is the case in Britain. English identity still constructs "Europe" as the "other" signifying the continent and, at the same time, entails notions of national sovereignty which are hard to reconcile with the institutional setup of EMU. As a result, supporters of the Euro in Britain face a similar uphill battle in the British elite discourse as its opponents do in Germany. "Wait and see" is then understood as potential support for a single currency in the British context, while it has become the battlecry of Euro-skeptics in Germany.

France occupies a middleground between these two extremes. On the one hand and similar to Britain, French identity politics has long been grounded in distinct nationalist constructions. While German nationalism has come to be identified with authoritarianism and militarism, French nationalism was long regarded as signifying republicanism, enlightenment, and the ensuing mission civilisatrice. We argued in this paper, however, that French distinctiveness Europeanized over the last 20 years in the elite discourse, since a purely nationalist identity construction was no longer tenable. But French Europeanness still looks very different from German Europeanness, since it essentially Europeanizes one's own understandings of the état-nation. Europe to some extent is constructed as France writ large.

In sum then, our theoretical argument about collective identities which is grounded in Self-Categorization Theories, cultural sociology, and sociological institutionalism, holds up pretty well with the empirical data. Four problems remain to be addressed. First, how does the identity-based account presented here relate to more traditional explanations focusing on material and instrumental interests? As argued above, we do not intend to replace a monocausal interest-based account with an equally unidimensional identity explanation. Rather, the relationship between identities, interests, and preferences are at stake. With regard to both the British and the German cases, we claim that collective identities - Englishness as non-European, in one case, German Europeanness, in the other - largely influenced how political elites came to see their economic interests with regard to European integration in general and EMU in particular. In these two cases, the causal arrow seems to run from identities \rightarrow interests, with the latter reinforcing the former. Here, collective identities appear to define the range of (economic and political) choices which actors regard as in their interest.

In the French case, however, we claim that a profound change in elite identities occured. It was triggered by "critical junctures" - the failure of Mitterrand's economic policies in 1983 and the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s - whice profoundly challenged the political and economic interests of political elites. In this case then, a change in material and instrumental interests ultimately led to change in collective identities, i.e., the causal arrow appears to go from interests identities, again with the latter reinforcing and stabilizing the former over time.

Second, how does our argument relate to the explanation concentrating on institutional path dependence discussed above? We claim that identity politics constitutes one causal mechanism by which institutional "lock-in" effects occur. The initial choice in favor of EMU was a deliberate decision by policy-makers heavily influenced by their visions of European political order which were in turn affected by their collective identities. These identities then insured that the national attitudes toward the Euro - British reluctance, French and German support - were locked in and that it became harder and harder for opponents of these national positions to make their case.

Third, our use of "critical junctures" remains problematic. It is hard to tell in advance what kind of external or internal events constitute "critical junctures" leading to changes in collective identities. In the French case, for example, we feel confident that both Mitterrand's policy failure in the early 1980s and the end of the Cold War represent such critical junctures which challenged nationally constructed identities. But then, how was it that the EMS crisis of

1992/3 did not lead to renewed arguments about French Europeanness, but rather re-inforced previously constructed identities and the ensuing attitudes toward the Euro? We do not have good theoretical tools to predict under what circumstances "critical junctures" are perceived challenging and changing collective identities.

Fourth, this paper's central weakness is probably its exclusive focus on elite discourses. But how can one talk about "national identity" and ignore the people who are the subject of such elite discourses? After all, identity constructions put forward by political elites are powerful tools by which policy-makers communicate with their electorate which is supposed to form the "imagined community" of a nation. While policy-makers cannot simply make up national identities, their use of collective identity constructions, of symbols and myths with which people identify, is a means to increase the legitimacy of their policies. This point is particularly salient in the German case where public and elite attitudes toward the Euro diverge. When Chancellor Kohl declares the Euro a question "of war and peace," he certainly attempts to communicate with mass public opinion. However, German mass public opinion remains deeply skeptical of the Euro. Does that mean that the German public does not share Chancellor Kohl's identity construction? This question which cannot be answered in this paper, is certainly worth further inquiry.

³⁶ We owe this point to Stefano Bartolini.

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