

Re-Scaling Nationhood and the European Union in France and Germany

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Abstract

European integration is a regional integration process that has united formerly independent nation states into a federation-like polity. Accordingly, EU integration and its evolving supranational structures have challenged the conceptions of nationhood in most EU member states, as they have directly touched upon some of its classic markers, such as sovereignty and territory. In terms of the “scaling” approach, the integration processes have led to a re-scaling of the concept of nation in individual member states. From the beginning of integration, the changes brought about by EU integration have been argued for, defended or criticised by national politicians. Elite discourses and their ways of referring to the EU and nation state have led to the development of different national EU conceptions. This article examines how the ideas and markers of nationhood have been re-scaled in the national EU conceptions of two large founding states, i.e. Germany and France. A particular focus is placed on the constructions of “Us” and “Them” as classic markers of nationhood, and the ways in which these have been used and challenged in crucial phases of integration, namely the pre-ratification discourses of the Maastricht and the Constitutional Treaty.

Keywords

European integration, Germany, France, national EU conceptions, discourses

1. Introduction

European integration is a regional integration process that has united formerly independent nation states in Europe into a federation-like polity, which since 1992 has been named the “European Union” (EU). This integration has been taking place since the early 1950s, i.e. for more than sixty years, and it entails far more than just an internal market: EU member states have had to adapt their state structure, their governing processes, their

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labour markets and also their public services to EU standards. They have ceded national sovereignty to a considerable extent, not only because in many policy fields EU laws now take precedence over national laws, but also because they cooperate in matters of internal and external security. Last but not least, EU member states have integrated into new and developing supranational structures of representative democracy.

Accordingly, EU integration has challenged the conceptions of nationhood in most EU member states, as it directly touches upon some of nationhood's classic markers, such as sovereignty and territory. In terms of the "scaling" approach (Blommaert 2006: 2–6), it can be said that these processes have led to a re-scaling of the nation with regard to European integration in many member states. As a supranational integration process, European integration in terms of spatial scales involves not only relations within a nation state, but also those among the nation state, its sub-entities (namely federal states, cities or citizens) and the supranational level. This opens up a complex setting in which nation states and national identities are scaled in relation to a supranational polity, to other EU member states and to their respective citizens.

This scaling happens *expressis verbis* in the statements of national politicians. From the beginning of integration, the changes brought about by EU integration have been argued for, defended or criticised by national politicians – and they have mostly done so by relating European integration and its effects to the respective conceptions of nation state, nation and national identity, in order to underline why they were or are in favour, or critical, of integration. This means that there are key themes of national identity, and key meanings associated with nation state and nation, at stake when national elites talk about the EU. Over the decades of integration, these elite discourses and their ways of referring to the EU and to nation states have led to the development of different national EU conceptions (see below) of varying degrees of stability. This article examines how the ideas and markers of nationhood have been re-scaled in the national EU conceptions of two large founding members, Germany and France. A particular focus is placed on the constructions of "Us" and "Them" (or an "Other") as classic markers of nationhood, and the ways these have been used and challenged in crucial phases of integration, namely the pre-ratification discourses of the Maastricht and the Constitutional Treaty.

It is always a test case for a national EU conception when a new EU Treaty is ratified. Both the Maastricht and the Constitutional Treaty concerned major steps in European integration that were intensely discussed in both countries. The respective ratification discourses therefore represented challenges and were potential turning points for national EU conceptions. But in

France and Germany, the ratification discourses met with very different conditions and backgrounds. Even if in many respects the countries are similar (they are both founding members of the EU, and they are both large member states, located in the geographical centre of the EU), the patterns of re-scaling their nationhood with regard to European integration differ considerably.

In Germany, European integration was the occasion for a decisive re-scaling of nationhood after World War II and National Socialism. In relation to the developing new spatial, political and economic scale of the new European polity, a well-orchestrated deliberate re-construction of German national identity took place. The elite-driven German conception of national identity since that time has been a decidedly European one. The national conception of the EU and the conceptions of national identity, nation and state thus not only go well together – they are closely linked and, sometimes, identical. All define “Us” in a new, a European way.

In France, we find an opposite constellation. European integration also brought about a re-scaling of nationhood, but to a lesser extent, and while maintaining the fundamental themes of the original, pre-war conception of French national identity. As a result, in France we see conflicting scales, as the European integration process challenges several of these fundamental themes: the idea of France’s *grandeur*, its sovereignty, its special role and its place as a major and nuclear power in the international system contradict an ongoing Europeanisation of key policy fields, and therefore a loss of national executive competences. The development of France’s national EU conception has been marked by these conflicts.

The article will proceed as follows: the following section will briefly explain why and how national EU conceptions entail a re-scaling of established conceptions of nationhood with regard to European integration. Second, the foundations and development of the German national EU conception will be discussed, with a particular emphasis on its effects in two of the last major EU treaty ratifications, the Maastricht Treaty and the Constitutional Treaty. The third section will examine the foundations and development of the French national EU conception, similarly emphasising the ratification processes of the Maastricht Treaty and the Constitutional Treaty. A concluding discussion forms the final part.

2. Re-scaling nationhood and European integration: national EU conceptions

As noted above, European integration has led to a re-scaling of nationhood with regard to European integration in the EU's member states that is reflected in specific national EU conceptions. Space being limited here, I will now briefly expound upon what I understand by the term "national EU conception". The concept and its contents are based on my own research in this field (Wiesner 2011, 2014) and numerous other studies.

I define a national EU conception as such: national EU conceptions are (temporarily) stable patterns of meaning that are ascribed to both the EU and the respective nation state. A national EU conception can thus also be understood as a dominant national discourse on the EU. National EU conceptions are deeply rooted, overarching rationales behind national EU politics that decisively influence or shape the positioning of national governments and national institutions towards the EU (and formerly the EEC and EC) and its policies and politics. Understanding them also means to understand important contexts for national EU politics. As previous research has shown, national EU conceptions are marked by several characteristics, which are important for the discussion in parts two and three of this paper. Again, they can only be summarised in an overview as follows:

First, political elites at the level of both the EU and the nation state play a crucial role in constructing national EU conceptions, as both national and EU politicians are the key actors in discussing and explaining EU integration. But national politicians are frequently much more ambivalent than EU-level politicians in their argumentation: as national political elites usually want to make statements valid for both the EU and the respective national public, they sometimes use contradictory themes.¹ Second, national EU conceptions relate constructions of national and European politics, interests and identities. They have to be adapted both to the core themes of the conceptions of national identities and to the strategic interests of the governing political elites. Therefore, they differ as to their political, historical and conceptual foundations and their argumentative direction.² Depending on the background conflicts and interests, national elites construct either complementary, ambivalent or contradictory relationships between the nation state and the EU. Accordingly, national EU conceptions sometimes reflect

¹ Cf. Banchoff 1999, Checkel / Katzenstein 2009, Diez Medrano 2009, Kaelble 2009, Schmidt 2006, Weiss 2003.

² See for example Banchoff 1999, Diez Medrano 2009, Hörber 2006, Marcussen et al. 2001, Schmidt 2006, Waever 2005.

or are influenced by contradicting constructions of the EU. Third, the processes of constructing national EU conceptions show several similarities to processes of national identity construction. It has become important to refer to positive founding myths, and to distinguish an “Us” from an “Other” (Puntscher-Riekmann / Wodak 2003: 284–288). Fourth, national EU conceptions are decisively shaped, or challenged, in national arenas and in particular in national discourses on the EU. There are different settings and different arenas for national European discourses, which are often interrelated: a) governmental positioning; b) debates in national parliaments (see for example Hörber 2006); c) national media discourses; d) European Parliament election campaigns; and e) referendum discourses (Bärenreuter et al. 2006, Hug 2002, Wiesner 2014: 74–78).

3. Scaling nationhood and European integration in Germany

3.1 Historical background of the German national EU conception

The German EU conception must be understood against the background of the post-World War II period: Nazi Germany was beaten, it was governed by the allies, it was de facto an occupied country – and it was split, into an Eastern and a Western part that were soon to become two separate states. In that context Konrad Adenauer, West German chancellor from 1949 to 1963, had two strategic aims – he wanted to strengthen his country, and he wanted to integrate it into the West. The strategic context of European integration, as seen from the other founding members, coincided with these interests; the aim was to integrate West Germany so that it could not wage another war. The founding of the European Community of Coal and Steel in 1952 served to integrate key industries that were also war industries, thereby limiting West Germany’s possibilities for militarisation. Moreover, West Germany did not yet have the right to keep an army, obtaining this right only as a result of the demands of the Cold War and West Germany’s integration into another Western alliance, NATO, in 1955.

Overall, from the beginning European integration both aimed at integrating West Germany into the European balance of powers and represented the (only) chance for the country to achieve a quick normalisation of its status, as well as economic reconstruction and growth. European integration for West Germany never meant giving up its sovereignty – but rather the chance to obtain it, albeit at the price of accepting and even strengthening the German divide.

These strategic goals coincided with the need to reinvent (West) German nationhood. The German conception of nationhood had been discredited and lay in ruins after the war, as National Socialism had twisted several of its core themes into cruelty and genocide. It thus needed to be newly constructed, and this did happen in accordance with the new strategic goal of European and Western integration. German nationhood, in other words, was re-scaled after World War II in relation to the developing supranational polity. This is most apparent in the new conception of “Us” that developed: the German “Us” is no longer exclusively national, but extends to Europe. Accordingly, the German national EU conception closely links nationhood and European integration.

Nonetheless, the German EU conception did not develop without some tensions. The Christian Democrats, who governed Western Germany non-stop from World War II to the end of the 1960s, presented European integration in the immediate post-War period as an alternative to nationalism and national socialism, but also to communism. Christendom, democracy and a social market economy became the core components of their conception for European integration. On the other hand, up until the 1960s the opposition Social Democrats defended a concept of Europe as a “third way” between capitalism and communism. They were also very critical of Adenauer’s deliberate acceptance of the German divide and aimed at a reunification. But they paralleled the Christian Democrats in their opposition to national socialism (Marcussen et al. 2001).

However, beginning in the 1960s, the Social Democrats (whose famous “Godesberg” convention in 1959 had marked their transformation from a socialist to a social democratic party) changed their position with regard to European integration, and an overall consensus developed among the national political elites. This has not changed until the present day, surviving several changes of government and even German reunification: only European integration can root Germany durably and stably in the West and ensure peace and German development. Therefore Germany has to be a driving force behind European integration.

The German national EU conception remains crucially marked by this background – despite reunification having occurred some 40 years after the European integration process began. Its five core themes were developed by chancellor Adenauer in the 1950s and 1960s, and they have remained stable ever since, despite several changes in government and the reunification: Germany has the mission of driving European integration because 1) European integration is associated with guaranteeing peace in Europe; 2) it aims at the political unification of Europe; 3) Europe is a community of values and/or a cultural community; 4) Europe needs to be democratic and 5) European

integration is a condition for the economic well-being of both Europe and Germany (see in detail Karama 2001: 261–266). In sum, the German national EU conception reflects the fact that European integration was aimed at including Germany in the European balance of powers, with Adenauer adding some fundamental, value-oriented themes to this strategic necessity.

Dissenting voices from this elite consensus have been rare until now. Thus far, EU-critical parties have not had long-term successes (Teschner 2000), even if since 2005, challenges to the consensus held by German elites have become more frequent because of the sovereign debt crisis. The Free Democrats have held an internal referendum on financial support for other member states, and dissatisfaction has also grown in the ranks of the Christian Democrats. Furthermore, in 2013, a new Eurosceptic party was founded: “Alternative für Deutschland” (AfD, Alternative for Germany). It argued strongly against the common currency in the EU and narrowly missed gaining representation in the Bundestag (German Parliament), although it was successful in 2014 elections to the European Parliament. In summer 2015, market-liberal Alfa (Alliance for Progress and Awakening) split from the party and left the remaining AfD on track to a stronger right-wing populist orientation. AfD still has significant internal conflicts, and it is too early to predict whether it will be a temporary phenomenon or whether it will stabilise.

3.2 Challenging the elite consensus: Maastricht and the Constitutional Treaty

Thus far, the re-scaling of nationhood in the German national EU conception seems to have been quite successful and durable over decades. But what happens when the national EU conception is challenged?

As noted earlier, ratification of new EU Treaties is always an occasion for discussion and hence for public challenges even of predominant national EU conceptions. This was evident in Germany in 1992 and 2005 in the ratification votes on both the Maastricht Treaty and the Constitutional Treaty. Even if, in both cases, the majority in the Bundestag was clear – in Germany, unlike in France, EU Treaties are only ratified in Parliament – there was considerable public dissent.

In the Bundestag vote on the Maastricht ratification law in December 1992, 543 deputies voted “Yes”, 17 voted “No” and eight abstained from voting. But Maastricht was also an example of the challenge mounted against the elite consensus. Several national politicians led a complaint of unconstitutionality against the Maastricht ratification law before the Federal Constitutional Court. Manfred Brunner, a former chairman of the Bavarian

Free Democrats, who also worked in the EU commission and funded a short-lived Eurosceptic party, was joined by four Green members of the European Parliament, among them the subsequent chairwoman of the Greens, Claudia Roth. While Brunner claimed that the Maastricht Treaty transferred too much power to the EU level, the Greens, on the other hand were aiming for a more democratic EU (Der Spiegel 1993, Focus 1993). In its Maastricht judgement, the Constitutional Court judged the Maastricht Treaty to be in accordance with German Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), but it placed limits on the transfer of power from the national to EU level (just as it had done in the first “Solange” judgement in 1974 and again in the “Lisbon” judgement in 2009). The Maastricht judgement explicitly defined the EU as a confederation of states (*Staatenbund*) and not a federal state (Kirchhoff 1994). Thus, the Constitutional Court instead constructed limits to ongoing integration and an “ever closer union”, and it emphasised the importance of the national scale in legal and political terms. Interestingly enough, despite the high regard in which the Constitutional Court is held in German political culture, this line of argument did not affect the overall consensus of the political elites in the matter.

Parliamentary ratification of the Constitutional Treaty in 2005 went quite smoothly as well. When the German Bundestag voted on the ratification law in May 2005, 568 deputies voted “Yes” (95%), two abstained and 23 voted against. Many of the opponents came from the Bavarian members of the Christian Democratic party group (CDU/CSU), MPs who belonged to the Christian Social Union (Deutscher Bundestag 2010b: 16386). However, not even the parliamentary debate was conflictual, in part because the MPs who voted against the Constitutional Treaty were not accorded any speaking time by their parties.

But what does the picture look like when the wider public is taken into account? The findings of my broad comparative analysis of the 2005 discourses on the Constitutional Treaty in Germany and France are very informative here (cf. Wiesner 2014). First, I shall provide a brief summary of the research design of the study.³ Based on core methodological texts on discourses and their analysis, the term discourse was defined for the purpose of the research as:

A setting of practices or events that constitutes meaning and that can be distinguished as to a certain subject, or a special institutional setting or context. A discourse is also a central element for creating and circulating distinct world views and ideologies. The base for this assumption is the

³ For details of the research design, as well as the procedure of the analysis, see Wiesner 2014: 78-125.

idea that the choice of words and definitions in discourse always represents at the same time an interpretation or evaluation concerning the events and practices that are the subject of the discourse.

Discourse does not happen by accident, but is structured according to distinct rules which influence what can be said and which meanings are attributed; thus, the general aim of discourse analysis is to find out the rules of the discourse, to distinguish which factors enable statements to be made and which factors enable statements to constitute meaning.⁴

The aim of the study, then, was to do an analysis of part of the ratification discourses in Germany and France from January to June 2005, i.e. those contributions to the discourse which occurred in eight quality newspapers. I analysed 8,145 newspaper articles from four quality daily newspapers in each country – representing a political spectrum from centre-right to far left (*Le Figaro*, *Le Monde*, *libération* and *L'Humanité* for France; and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *die tageszeitung* and *Neues Deutschland* for Germany) – in an in-depth qualitative discourse analysis which was carried out in several steps. The articles were analysed and coded using MaxQDA, following strict principles of theoretical sampling. Altogether 2,247 articles were coded. This detailed analysis allowed the development of the discourse to be followed, as well as the core rules, themes, arguments, references and actors that were shaping it. To understand as well the context of the discourse, I examined a large body of secondary literature in addition.

The results of the discourse analysis show that the discourse in the press was not as unanimous as the votes and debates in parliament. Moreover, the discourse tellingly reveals the effects of the German EU conception, sometimes in unexpected ways. Table 1 presents an overview of the main rules, themes and references that marked the discourse.

The main rules, themes and references show a considerable success of the scales used in the national EU conception. First of all, the references used in the discourse show Europeanised constructions of “Us” and “Them”. In the press discourse, France, as well as the EU, was constructed as part of “Us”: what happened in the French referendum discourse was of immediate concern to the Germans. The way of addressing France was not exactly similar to how Germans would address events throughout Germany, but it was obvious that France was referred to as “Us”. Moreover, it is a crucial finding of the analysis that the French discourse, which preceded the French

⁴ See Foucault 2008, Jäger 2009: 158ff, Johnstone 2008, Keller 2007, Laclau / Mouffe 1991, Titscher 2000, van Dijk 1998, Wodak 2008, Wood / Kroger 2000.

TABLE 1: Main rules, themes and references in the German discourse

EU and member states	Domestic issues
1. Multi-level references: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · France · EU · imported criticism · discussion of Constitutional Treaty 2. Which Europe do we want? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · citizens / demos · European identity 	1. Main rule: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · silencing strategy 2. German themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · claims regarding the EU · EU enlargement / Turkish accession · EU criticism · classic themes of EU conception · new themes of EU support

Source: compiled by Claudia Wiesner

referendum, was debated more intensely in the German discourse than Germany's own ratification process. Germany discussed the Treaty because France was discussing it, not because there was a ratification vote in the Bundestag and Bundesrat (Upper House of Parliament). These core findings are reflected in a number of detailed results:

- 1) The peaks of the German discourse directly relate to the French discourse. The Bundestag ratification vote on 13 May 2005 resulted in altogether 36 German newspaper articles, whereas the French referendum, which took place on 29th May, resulted in 91 German newspaper articles on one day alone (31 May 2005).
- 2) Critical themes that were raised in the French discourse crucially influenced the contents of the German discourse in what I term "imported criticism". Whereas only a few critical themes were used that were specifically German (a criticism of the EU as a militarist power is one of these few German themes), core critical themes of the French discourse (see Chapter 4.2) were explained and taken up.
- 3) Before the vote, the referendum result was discussed as immediately relevant for both the EU and Germany, and in the aftermath of the French referendum, the "No" vote was discussed as an event that immediately concerned the Germans as well.

Second, it is a surprising finding that the core themes of the German EU conception were rarely actively addressed. The German politicians, remain-

ing altogether rather silent on the topic of the Treaty, also seldom argued in favour of it. However, in their sparse comments, they often implicitly referred to the German conception of the EU, for instance, by naming just one catchphrase (like “we all know European integration is good”) as a signal that there was no need for intense debate here. One particular result that highlights this finding is that the intensity of the German press discourse was considerably lower than the French. In Germany, from 1 January 2005 to 25 June 2005, only 1,787 articles that related to the ratification process were published in the four analysed newspapers, whereas in the French newspapers, 6,358 articles were retrieved.

Third, German politicians introduced certain new themes, and hence variations, to the Adenauer version of the EU conception: as in France, they reiterated that the Constitutional Treaty would make the EU more efficient, that it was necessary and that there was no alternative to it. They emphasised that the EU was a peaceful power and that the Treaty would make the EU more social, orient it more strongly toward core values and bring more democracy to the EU. Overall, however, there were few strong claims and themes in the German discourse. From a comparative perspective, this resonates with its low intensity, as explained above, but also with the high impact of the French discourse and its themes, which seem to have filled a void in the German public space.

A fourth main finding concerns how critics of the EU were actively silenced in the German ratification process in what I term the “silencing strategy” (see in detail Wiesner 2014: 361–368). This concerns a number of actors in a similar way, namely intra-party minorities within the CDU/CSU (Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union) and a small left-wing party (in 2005: PDS) – a party to the left of the Social Democrats (Deutscher Bundestag 2010a: 16386). The detailed findings show here that intra-party minorities in the CDU/CSU were actively marginalised both by their parties and in the discourse. An obvious example is that of a CSU MP, Peter Gauweiler, who even brought a case against the Constitutional Treaty ratification before the Federal Constitutional Court. The German Federal President then placed the ratification process on hold until the Constitutional Court reached a decision. This decisive turn in the German ratification process was very sparsely commented upon. Leading Christian Democrats would underline in one half-sentence that the MP in question was acting on his own and that neither the critique nor the delay in ratification was to be taken seriously. In a similar way, criticism coming from the oppositional PDS was also marginalised. It was only mentioned where the party was in a coalition government with the Social Democrats, and if it was mentioned, similar half-sentence comments were made. When critiques of the EU or the draft

Constitutional Treaty were published in the media, independently of the party affiliation of the respective politician, the newspapers rarely spent more than ten lines reporting the critique. In sum, criticism of the EU and the Constitutional Treaty was immediately and effectively marginalised in the discourse, by both the other actors and the media. Thus, EU and Treaty criticism was not given the chance to spread throughout the discourse.

All in all, the German 2005 discourse showed that the German EU conception, originally formed by Konrad Adenauer, had remained basically unchanged over a series of different governments. The harmonious relations between national identity and European integration in the German national EU conception predominated. In the 2005 press discourse the EU conception was successfully deployed, underlining that:

- 1) The German EU conception is Europeanised, open, and inclusive; in the 2005 discourse this showed in the construction of an EU-related “Us” that specifically included France.
- 2) The German EU conception is stable and dominant; it was seldom openly and directly thematised in the discourse, but implicitly addressed, and never successfully challenged or questioned.
- 3) The German national EU conception is so closely woven into the post-World War II national identity conception that the German national identity conception is a decidedly European one. The reasons behind this close relation are
 - a) Strategic: at first, it served German interests to be part of an integrated Europe, and it serves them today;
 - b) Traditional: part of the elite consensus must be explained by adherence to the Adenauer conception – his discourse has become self-evident;
 - c) Silencing: the silencing strategy with regard to critics is effective both in parliament and in the media discourse, meaning that critical arguments do not spread in public discourse.

The above underlines the fact that in the German EU conception classic markers of nationhood, such as sovereignty and the definition of “Us”, have – from an early point and with apparent success – been re-scaled towards including today’s European Union. But how are other classic markers such as religion, ethnicity and language affected, if indeed they are?

With regard to language, Germany has supported its minority languages (Sorbian, Danish, Frisian and Romanes) in the sense that they are protected, spoken and taught in schools. They are, however, still termed “minority languages”. When looked at from the EU scale, it becomes evident that the

reference frame for the label “minority” is the German nation state, as Danish is among the official EU languages.

Ethnicity in that domestic minority context is important, too: the Sorbian community in Germany’s East, as well as the Danish community in the North, also benefit from political and social minority rights. The EU supports these policies, as EU regulations strongly encourage the member states to protect their ethnic minorities. The EU scale thus involves a concrete legal framework for official minority and anti-discrimination policies. In the German national EU conception, however, ethnicity plays no role, neither in a positive, nor in a negative way. This conception seems to be based on relating Germany and the EU, rather than ethnicity and the EU.

Language and ethnicity thus seem to have been, at least partly, successfully re-scaled as markers of nationhood and fit in with European integration and the national EU conception. But religion has a much more equivocal role with regard to the national EU conception than language and ethnicity. Especially in the Christian Democratic EU conception, Europe is conceived of as being Christian. Unsurprisingly, German Christian Democrats are among the strongest opponents of a Turkish EU entry. This positioning, however, is not possible without internal contradictions in the EU conception: when the EU is conceived of as uniting different nation states and cultures, i.e. being open and inclusive, bringing about “unity in diversity”, it seems odd to tie it to the Christian religion and hence to an exclusive position with regard to religion alone. Similar contradictions can also be noticed within Germany. Despite several million Muslims’ living in Germany, it took the CDU until 2010 to admit that Islam “belongs to Germany”, as Christian Wulff, Federal President, then said.

4. Scaling nationhood and European integration in France

4.1 Historical background of the French national EU conception

In France, nationhood has not been re-scaled to such an extent as in Germany, if it has been at all. Europe and the EU have instead been added as additional levels of reference that regularly enter into conflict with the national scale. In particular, the French “Us” remains predominantly French and not European, and core themes of the French national identity conception conflict with the European integration process. These ambiguities have marked French integration politics from the beginning. This difference to Germany, once more, is explained to a large extent by the different historical background. France’s strategic interests in European integration were

much more ambivalent than the German ones: Was the aim to control Germany, or to integrate it? Did France want to keep its *exception française*, or should it become just one member state among many? Did it profit from economic integration or rather suffer from its constraints?

At the beginning of European integration, the majority of the French domestic political elites (not those constructors of the EEC such as Jean Monnet or Robert Schumann) defended a Gaullist EU conception: European integration was good, but it had to be a means to strengthen the role of France in the world, it should not bring about a loss of French sovereignty, and France must be the engine of the integration process. Consequently, de Gaulle, France's president from 1959 to 1969, opposed the entry of Great Britain into the EU as well as every move towards a more supranational EEC structure (Balme / Woll 2005: 97). De Gaulle always argued for an EU shaped according to France's interests, i.e. an intergovernmental model of the EU. The Gaullist themes thus did not construct an opposition between France and EU integration, but argued in favour of a clearly defined role for France in Europe: France must be the leading nation of Europe, integration must suit France's interests, and integration must not go too far.

In contrast, Jean Monnet, Frenchman and first president of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), argued in favour of a supranational conception of European integration with shared sovereignties. Monnet had domestic supporters like René Pleven, Prime Minister in 1950, who developed the concept of a European Defence Community (EDC). The EDC would have been equipped with a European Army and a European ministry of Defence, as well as with a full-fledged two-chamber parliament.

The Treaty on the EDC was close to realisation, as it has been signed by the Foreign Ministries of the six ECSC Member States in 1952. But the intra-French conflict between the Gaullist and the pro-integrationist strands was decisive in finally stopping it. When the EDC Treaty ratification was voted upon in the National Assembly in 1954, Communists and Gaullists were opposed. Whereas the EDC plans had been accepted in the National Assembly in 1950, in the end the National assembly in 1954 refused the Treaty's ratification. The crucial factors were, again, classic markers of French nationhood, i.e. sovereignty and military power. Communists and Gaullists argued in favour of France's sovereignty, which also required an independent army, and voted against the EDC. The EDC supporters – Christian Democrats, Liberals and Socialists – on the other hand stressed the idea of controlling Germany by integrating the Defence Policy (Moreau Defarges 1986: 204–210, Stanat 2006: 77–80). The EDC vote was thus proof

of specific French ambivalence with regard to integration and also of the difficulties of re-scaling nationhood in relation to it.

It was when first Georges Pompidou and then Valéry Giscard d'Estaing assumed the presidency that the government's orientation towards an intergovernmental integration subsequently opened up: Pompidou gave up France's veto against the entry of Great Britain into the EC, and Giscard even went so far as to create the European Monetary System together with German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt – a clear step towards an intensified supranational cooperation. François Mitterand, who became president in 1981, further intensified these moves and incited a change of themes in particular in the Socialist Party, of which he was a member: he helped coin the idea that European integration was France's future, and that France had to extend its *mission civilisatrice* to it (Marcussen et al. 2001). Europe was often described as a process or a project (Weiss 2003). The necessity of European integration for the greater good and for France's benefit was emphasised. These movements indicate a decisive change: the arguments are based on an opening-up of France's role, an extension or possible extension of the French "Us" to the rest of Europe – but still they construct France as a leading state.

4.2 The 1992 and 2005 referendum discourses

Thus, in France the scales of nationhood and European integration have been in conflict since the beginning of integration. These conflicts became particularly salient in the 1992 and 2005 referendum discourses.

As mentioned above, it is always a test case for a national EU conception when a new EU treaty is ratified. In France, while the treaties of Amsterdam, Nice and Lisbon were ratified in parliament, only two major ratification processes – those of the Maastricht Treaty and the Constitutional Treaty – were put to a referendum, meaning that not only parliament, but also the citizens, were asked to vote. Heated public discourses preceded the 1992 and 2005 referendums, and the 2005 one ultimately became famous for being the first time a major founding member state of the EU said "No" to a treaty ratification.

In the public discourses on these last French EU referendums, the arguments and themes used in reference to the EU and the integration process grouped into two camps respectively, one supporting a "Yes" vote and one supporting a "No" vote. In both camps, classic markers of nationhood were used and scaled with regard to the EU. But while the "No" camps used traditional conflicts between certain interpretations of France's national identity conception and European integration, the "Yes" camp attempted

instead to continue the pro-integrationist themes. Thus the “No” themes constructed an opposition between the national and the EU scale, while the “Yes” themes constructed harmony. In both camps, these constructions went along with specific constructions of “Us” and “Them”. The following section will sketch five of these constructions. Three of them were already used in the 1992 Maastricht discourse and then also in the 2005 discourse on the Constitutional Treaty, two others were only used in 2005. The settings of the 1992 and 2005 discourses, however, differed as to the opposing actors and camps.

In 1992, a socialist president (François Mitterand) initiated the referendum, and the socialists were also the governing party. Opposition to the Maastricht Treaty came from within the parliamentary opposition centre-right parties (UDF and RPR), as well as from extra-parliamentarian Communists, Trotskyists and right-wing extremists.

In Parliament, after a controversial debate, 398 MPs voted in favour of the constitutional changes necessary to ratify Maastricht, 77 against and 99 abstained (*Le Monde*, 14 May 1992). In the related debate, Treaty opponents attempted to construct an opposition between a French “Us” and an EU “Them”. This pattern also marked the press discourse.⁵ It was apparent that the discourse regarded the relations between the national and the European scale and expressed a conflict about their relations-to-be and the priorities to be set. First, a national-republican theme was used by most Maastricht opponents across all political camps: this claimed that the Maastricht Treaty would severely curtail France’s sovereignty and power and that, as de Gaulle had originally planned it, democracy had to be based on a sovereign people, and on nothing else. The national republican theme thus constructs an opposition between European integration and France with its republican values: it claims that EU treaties (that of Maastricht in 1992 and also later the Constitutional Treaty) contradict the French republican theme of *la nation une et indivisible* – the nation which is at the heart of the republic and is the foundation of democracy, and which must be indivisible. This conviction is so deeply rooted that the supporters of the treaties in both 1992 and 2005 had to explain in both cases how the treaties were *not* opposed to these values.

Second, most of the opponents in 1992 also used a populist theme which claimed an alleged opposition between “the people” and “those who govern” – again, a clear construction of “Us” and “Them”. This theme was very important in 2005 (see below). Third, Communists and Trotskyists

⁵ On the following see in detail Appleton 1992, Chagnollaud 1993, Criddle 1993, Martin 1993, Rémond 1993.

were against Maastricht because they claimed the European Common Market was a capitalist project – an argument which precedes some aspects of the 2005 anti-liberal theme sketched below.

The defenders of the Maastricht Treaty around Mitterrand, on the other hand, tried to underline that the EU was “Us”, or closely related to it: they said that there was no alternative to the European integration process if one wanted peace in Europe, as well as a more democratic and more social European Union. They thus stressed that Maastricht would bring the EU closer towards what France wanted it to be. The outcome of the 1992 referendum reflected this complicated setting. It was very narrow: 51 per cent of the ballots approved the treaty, nearly 49 per cent were against. Those close to the right-wing Gaullist party of the time (*Rassemblement pour la République*, RPR) mostly voted against (Duhamel / Grunberg 1993: 79–86; Martin 1993: 32–43).

The 2005 referendum discourse on the EU Constitutional Treaty partly saw an inversion of the roles of 1992. The referendum was initiated by Gaullist president Jacques Chirac, and the centre-right parties were in government. The oppositional Socialist party was severely split regarding the question, as were the Greens. However, in early 2005, the constitutional change necessary for Treaty ratification was approved by parliament; 450 deputies voted in favour (78 per cent of the deputies or 82 per cent of those present for the vote), 34 deputies voted against, and 64 deputies abstained (*Le Monde*, 3 February 2005: 9). As in 1992, the debate in parliament was marked by severe criticism of the Treaty, with the dissenters openly voicing their opposition. In the press discourse which preceded the referendum,⁶ three of the themes raised during the 1992 debate were recycled once more. The following table presents an overview. It shows a clear split between the “Yes” and the “No” themes.

The national-republican theme lost in importance, but still played a certain role. It was put forward by several members of the national-republican current close to the Socialist party, such as Jean Luc Mélenchon, a socialist deputy (and later the founder of the Left Party), and Jean-Pierre Chevènement, in 2005 head of the national-republican party MRC, as well as by some dissenters in the Gaullist and Centrist camp and the extreme right.

The populist theme in 2005 became more important than in 1992. In several variations, it distinguished the hard-working people and allegedly corrupt and arrogant political elites who “do not understand those whom they govern” and therefore push a European integration the governed do not

⁶ See explanation of the study in Chapter 3.2.

TABLE 2: Main rules, themes and references in the French discourse

“Yes” themes (<i>Oui</i>)	“No” themes (<i>Non</i>)
1. Themes related to discourse itself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · the opponents · yes, but · discussions in the <i>Oui</i>-camp 	1. Themes related to discourse itself <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · the opponents · populist criticism of “the elites” · new left movement
2. France’s interests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · responsibility · pragmatism · France’s role in the world · Europe’s <i>puissance</i> 	2. EU criticism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · criticism of CT · anti-liberal theme · national-republican/sovereignist theme
3. Normative Europe	

Source: compiled by Claudia Wiesner

want: it criticised a “divide between elites and the people”, underlining that the elites “were all jointly acting against people’s interests” and “cheating people”. The resultant call was to teach them a lesson by voting “No”.

Compared with 1992, the 2005 discourse also showed a partly new and decisive theme using an opposition between “Us” and “Them”: the anti-liberal theme. This was used by the proponents of the “Non de Gauche” who assembled a broad coalition, ranging from dissenters in the Socialist Party (PS) to Trotskyists, ATTAC⁷, and NGO and citizen activists. Laurent Fabius, former Prime Minister and a leading member of the Socialist party, was part of this coalition. While in 1992 communists and Trotskyists were against Maastricht because they claimed the European Common Market to be a capitalist project, the anti-liberal theme in 2005 went one step further. It created an opposition between France and the EU. The “Non de Gauche” activists insisted on the dangers of European integration as a project that would destroy everything that was social and not exposed to market forces.

The anti-liberal theme claimed that the Treaty, as well as the EU, were not social enough and threatened state welfare programmes and public services in France. Both are an essential part of the French republican conception, which is as another classic marker of French nationhood for the Socialists as well as for many Gaullists. Most opponents in the “Non de Gauche” movement insisted on the dangers of European integration as an

⁷ ATTAC = Association pour une Taxation des Transactions financières pour l’Aide aux Citoyens

“ultra-liberal” (“ultra-liberalism” being interpreted as merciless Manchester capitalism) project. They also warned against *délocalisations*, which meant the moving of entire industries away from France to countries where salaries are cheaper, and which would allegedly be facilitated by the Treaty. Finally, the current French government was constructed as an agent of an EU that was termed “ultra-liberal and destructive”. In summary, in this anti-liberal theme, a French “Us” – France and its republican and social values – was once more distinguished from an “Other”: the EU, the Constitutional Treaty, or the nameless and faceless “Ultra-liberalists” who could be found somewhere in Brussels and were aided and abetted by French politicians. This rhetorical move enabled links to the populist theme mentioned above.

It is interesting to note that the theme of the “Polish plumber” (*plom-bier polonais*) who would come to France and take away jobs which had previously belonged to the French (setting the French against migrant workers) did not play a significant role in the press discourse, despite a widespread reception outside France.

Opposition against Turkish EU entry – a theme which placed France (or perhaps traditionally Christian Europe, more generally) in opposition to Turkey – was somewhat more important but again not decisive in the press discourse. It was used by some right-wing-extremists and many centre politicians who stressed the dangers of Turkey entering the EU as a reason to vote “No”.

The supporters of the Treaty resorted once more to the strategy used in 1992: they constructed the EU as “Us” and explained that the Constitutional Treaty was going to bring about a better, more social and more democratic EU. They also emphasised the EU’s role as a guarantor of peace, freedom and human rights. This EU would be strengthened by the Treaty and play a more important role in the world – in short, the Treaty would adapt the EU better to French interests. The supporters thus negated any necessary or strict opposition between France and the EU along the distinction lines stressed by the opponents. They claimed the Treaty would either enlarge the French “Us” to the rest of Europe, or make the European “Us” more French. They tried to prove that European integration would not weaken the constitutive characteristics of what defines “Us”, but on the contrary would allow them to spread more widely.

The defenders also used a strategy of direct communication with the voters: they emphasised the responsibility of the voters to confirm the progression of Europe according to French interests, and they warned against the disastrous consequences of a “No” majority. They underlined that there was no alternative, that it was either this Treaty or worse. But the defenders’ arguments did not succeed, as indicated directly by the vote as

well as by the post-referendum polls. The outcome of the 2005 referendum was negative for the Treaty: 54.7 per cent of the participants voted against it, and this time 60 per cent of those close to the Socialist party voted “No” – their numbers being decisive in turning the decision. Those close to the post-Gaullist UMP and the UDF voted “Yes” (Brouard / Sauger 2005).⁸

So, why did the conflicting constructions succeed? The post-referendum polls not only hint at the reasons for the success of the “No” themes; they also show which “No” themes were particularly successful: regarding the reasons for a “No” vote, the most important were directed at the economic situation and the criticism of the EU as being too neoliberal. In a poll conducted by Eurobarometer (2005: 15) 31 per cent of respondents said that the Treaty would be negative for the employment situation in France, 26 per cent regarded the economic situation in France as too weak for the Constitutional Treaty and 19 per cent said that the Constitutional treaty was “too neoliberal”. These numbers can be interpreted as indicators of the success of the anti-liberal theme: the constructions of “Us” and “Them” which the opponents put forward therefore seem to have been more successful than those of the defenders. In particular the themes used by the left-wing opponents seem to have been decisive in the vote. This result can also be interpreted as a (French) criticism of European integration in its current – strongly market-oriented – character. Concerning the French discourse in 2005, it can be concluded that:

- 1) The scales of nationhood and Europe in France are not in accordance. Rather, there are several basic conflicts between the main themes of the French national identity conception and European integration. Many French domestic politicians from the beginning saw the EU as potential threat for the French model of *la nation une et indivisible*. There was (and is) a latent split of the political class and inherent contradictions in French EU politics. The French EU conception is thus more fragile than the German one. However, for many years between 1970 and 2005, these contradictions remained in the background, and the political elites and in particular the respective governments spread the message that France was a leading part of the European “Us”. Inherent conflicts in the French EU conception were thus always present but not always active. An active engagement around these conflicts erupted in the 1992 and 2005 referendum discourses. The “No” themes in the referendum dis-

⁸ One main reason for these switches is the fact that in 1992 the Gaullists were in the opposition, and in 2005 they governed, and vice-versa for the Socialists.

courses thus managed to challenge an elite conception that had been dominant since 1970.

- 2) In France, the concept of “Us” remains predominantly French. In both referendum discourses in 1992 and 2005, this worked in the favour of those constructing an opposition between a French “Us” and an EU-related “Other”.
- 3) Political elites were major actors in constructing the French EU conception, but they were neither the only actors nor the most decisive. The role of citizens in the referendum discourses was quite influential. In 2005, for instance, what caused the discourse to actively develop and position the anti-liberal theme as the dominant one was a) the activity of the “Non de Gauche” alliance, which consisted partly of political elites – but partly also of NGO and citizen activists, and b) the fact that the population took up these arguments and actively engaged in the debate.

With regard to the scaling and indexing of the core markers of language, ethnicity and religion, the French picture shows itself to be different from the German as well.

French language has a long tradition of being used as a symbol of national unity. For a long time this occurred in an oppressive manner: French minority languages such as Occitan (in southern France) and Breton (in Brittany) were actively and aggressively suppressed, and it was forbidden to speak them. EU minority regulations helped to change the legal context here, and nowadays the minority languages are experiencing a small revival. In other words, the EU scale, and the legal EU indices, helped to change the national scales here at least in an official sense.

In the French EU conception as well as in the French national identity conception, ethnicity does not have an official role. The French republican conception of national identity regards people either as official French citizens – in which case their ethnicity plays no role – or not. However, ethnicity – and also religion – play a crucial role in practice. People with a Maghrebi or African ethnic background are marginalised and disadvantaged in daily life. The *banlieues*, satellite towns in suburbs filled with cheap housing projects and populated to a large extent by these social groups, have thus become a symbol of strong social and ethnic segregation.

The French national identity conception is secular, i.e. religion has no official place in the state, and religious symbols may not be shown in public life. But this official picture is again misleading, as social and ethnic segregation is strongly linked to the Muslim religion of many of the *banlieue* inhabitants. *Laïcité*, as the republican conception of identity, in this case acts rather to obscure this segregation. With regard to the national EU conception,

laïcité, rather than religion, is the decisive reference point. In the referendum discourse in 2005, the defence of *laïcité* was one undercurrent to the debate on French republican values, and it was linked to the separation of a French “Us” (secular) and a European “Them” (obsessed with religion).

5. Conclusion

From a comparative perspective, the ways and backgrounds of how the ideas and markers of nationhood have been re-scaled in France and Germany reveal significant differences. In the German case, the markers of national identification since World War II are not so much the classic ones such as religion, or Christendom, and language. Even if these still play a role, albeit a difficult one in times of a multicultural and multi-religious Germany, they are dominated or at least well-accompanied by core themes of the national EU conception: European integration as Germany’s mission, economic prosperity, monetary stability and integration into the Western world. This re-scaling of German national identity after World War II must be seen as a successful top-down change, or shift, from former German nationalism. It may be judged as a restructuring of indices of orientation through the introduction of a new scale of reference: while European integration, which was closely linked to economic prosperity, was weighted more heavily, religion or language were indexed lower.

In France, on the other hand, such a reorientation of indices in relation to European integration was undertaken by political elites only to a limited extent, and it was apparently much less successful than in Germany. We can note instead, at least in the conflicting referendum discourses, a clash of scales and their related indices: the established markers of French national identity apparently conflicted with new ideas and the changes brought about by, or associated with, European integration.

After what has been said, a lot of these differences can be associated with the different geostrategic bases from which the countries began the process of European integration: for Germany it was the only way to gain (first limited) sovereignty; moreover, after World War II, nationalism was discredited. This was a model situation for building a new conception of a Europeanised national identity, and for shifting scales of orientation. In France, on the other hand, European integration harked back to the experience of German occupation and collaboration, with the narrow victory in the War, and with the deep blows to France’s self-image as a leading world power. For France, there was still a lot to lose with EU integration – and French politicians over the years continually emphasised these losses.

These first conclusions point to a vast field of possible further studies, with regard to such topics as the arenas, time periods and strategies of implementing the scaling and re-scaling of classic markers of national identity; the practices, patterns and rhetorical figures in arguing the changes, differences and interrelations between elites and citizens; interrelations among the actual processes of European integration; markers and signs of change: signs, flags, symbols; practices such as public holidays; interrelations that are constructed – or declined, or neglected, or silenced – among new markers of identity and religion, ethnicity or language; and the role of hard power.

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