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**English Identity and European Integration:
The Categorisation of Europe as Britain's 'Other'**

by

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Draft. Comments most welcome!

1. Introduction¹

What is puzzling about the English relationship with Europe is the predominantly negative attitude concerning further European integration which seems to be stable over time. Having in mind the changes within the international arena (for example the end of the Cold War or German unification) and within domestic politics (for example a Labour or a Conservative government with different ideologies and different domestic challenges), it is quite interesting that the fundamental English actions on Europe remain quite firm over decades. This phenomenon perhaps is best expressed by Volle as follows: 'Great Britain and Europe. From the hesitating outsider to the stubborn partner'.²

How can this stability of fundamental predispositions towards Europe be explained? First of all, one could argue that interests may be responsible for this phenomenon. Thus, one reason for Britain to join the European Community (EC) consisted in the economic advantages offered by the EC and the simultaneous economic decline of the Commonwealth. But interests are much more fluid because they have to be brought into line with a changing surrounding environment. Obviously, English interest-based entry did not change very much on the fundamental predispositions towards Europe. Although there was a clear policy change (Britain eventually joined the EC in 1973), English attitudes towards Europe have remained unenthusiastic, quite negative or hostile even after joining.

I argue in this paper that English identity constructions³ cause these stable fundamental predispositions towards Europe. In chapter 2, I try to answer how national identity can be

¹ A previous version of this paper was presented at the workshop on 'Social Constructivism in European Studies', Hotel Vægtergården, Femmøller Strand, Ebeltoft, Denmark, 25-28 June, 1998. I would like to thank the participants of this workshop. I am also grateful to Hans Peter Schmitz for his suggestions on this draft.

² (Own translation), see Volle, Angelika. 1989. Großbritannien in der Europäischen Gemeinschaft. Vom zögernden Außenseiter zum widerspenstigen Partner, in Schmidt, Gustav. Ed. *Großbritannien und Europa - Großbritannien in Europa. Sicherheitsbelange und Wirtschaftsfragen in der britischen Europapolitik nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*, Bochum: Brockmeyer, pp. 315-346.

³ The UK comprises different national identities (for example Scots, Welsh) within its unitary state. Therefore, to speak of a British identity would partially reify collective identities. In order to do justice to this fact I will only refer to English identity. When I speak of Britain (because this term is fairly common in the national debate) I will then mean mainland England. I use the term English identity to emphasise that for example Scotland has her own identity which is very important concerning Europe as the following statement of a Member of Parliament of the Scottish National Party (SNP) underlines: "I mean sovereignty is actually a problem for the English. It's not a problem for us. We pooled our sovereignty with the English in a common market 300 years ago and what we are now saying is we wish to regain that sovereignty to once again pool it in

operationalised with the help of social psychological theories (Social Identity Theory and Self-Categorisation Theory) which provide important insights in group formation assuming cognitive and motivational processes. In the third chapter, I present some empirical findings. I will confine myself to the party political discourse in the 1950s and compare it with first preliminary results of the discourse in the 1990s.

2. The Operationalisation of National Identity

Although many articles can be found concerning (national, collective) identity there is neither an accepted concept of identity nor one leading theory of identity in social sciences. What we learn from social psychology, especially Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-Categorisation Theory (SCT), is that the social group to which one belongs is perceived as more positive,⁴ and that one uses cognitive schemata to self-categorise oneself and to delimit oneself from the other.⁵ Thus, (social) identity is a question of the difference of ingroup and outgroup, of self and other: "Identity and difference are bound together. It is impossible to reconstitute the relation to the second without confounding the experience of the first."⁶

From these two social psychological theories we gain important insights in group formation, stereotyping and questions of identity. The Social Identity Theory⁷ consists of mainly four combined conceptions about psychological processes: social categorisation, social identity,

a wider 300 million European Community. A growing changing community in which Scotland must be there in her own right participating in those changes."

Quoted in Reicher, Stephen, Nick Hopkins and Susan Condor. 1997. Stereotype Construction as a Strategy of Influence, in Spears, Russell, Penelope J. Oakes, Naomi Ellemers and S. Alexander Haslam. Eds. *The Social Psychology of Stereotyping and Group Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 114.

⁴ Tajfel, Henri and John C. Turner. 1986. The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior, in Worchel, Stephen and William G. Austin. Eds. *Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, Chicago: Nelson-Hall, pp. 7-24.

⁵ Oakes, Penelope J., Alexander S. Haslam, and John C. Turner. 1994. *Stereotyping and Social Reality*, Oxford: Blackwell.

⁶ Connolly, William E. 1989. Identity and Difference in Global Politics, in Der Derian, James. Ed. *International / Intertextual Relations. Postmodern Readings of World Politics*, Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books, p. 329.

⁷ See for example Tajfel, H. 1978. *Differentiation between social groups*, London: Academic Press; Tajfel, H. 1979. Individuals and groups in social psychology, in *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 1979 (18): 183-190, and Tajfel, H. and J. Turner. 1979. An integrative theory of intergroup conflict, in: Austin, W.G. and S. Worchel. Eds. *The social psychology of intergroup relations*, Monterey, Calif.: Brooks/Cole, pp. 33-53.

social comparison and social distinction.⁸ The cognitive process of social categorisation is used by the individual in order to organise her/his social environment (objects, persons, situations and events).⁹ “Social categorisation allows the perceiver to ‘structure the causal understanding of the social environment’ as a guide to action. Importantly, it also provides a system of orientation for *self-reference*, creating and defining the individual’s place in the society.”¹⁰ Social categorisation also offers a process by which social interaction is structured and therefore discriminating behaviour can be evoked.¹¹ Individuals differentiate between two categories, the ingroup to which they themselves belong and the outgroup (‘the other’) for example concerning nationality. Individuals gain social identity by belonging to a social group. This is the strong motivational assumption within SIT that individuals do have a need for (positive) social identity. They compare themselves with the outgroup and receive positive social identity by positive self-evaluation of the ingroup. This process causes a collectively shared feeling of solidarity, ingroup-characteristics and ingroup-performances are evaluated more positively than outgroup-performances (process of ingroup favouritism).¹² The social identity towards the ingroup is responsible for intergroup behaviour. To be a member of the ingroup has psychological consequences for the individual. We can therefore assume that a collective group identity will be built. If the positive comparison is threatened, then misinterpretation will be actively constructed (ingroup bias). Thus, positive distinction of the ingroup vs. the outgroup will be maintained.¹³

Self-Categorisation Theory¹⁴ is based on SIT and has been developed to provide a broader analysis of the cognitive processes underlying group formation. The basic assumptions hold that the self-concept is the cognitive component of the self, that any individual possesses

⁸ Mummendey, Amélie. 1985. Verhalten zwischen sozialen Gruppen: Die Theorie der sozialen Identität, in Frey, Dieter and Martin Irlé. Eds. *Theorien der Sozialpsychologie, Band II: Gruppen- und Lerntheorien*, Bern-Stuttgart-Toronto: Huber, pp. 185-216.

⁹ Strack, Fritz. 1985. Urteilsheuristiken, in Frey, Dieter and Martin Irlé. Eds. *Theorien der Sozialpsychologie, Band III: Motivations- und Informationsverarbeitungstheorien*, Bern-Stuttgart-Toronto: Huber, pp. 239-267.

¹⁰ Oakes, Penelope J., S. Alexander Haslam and John C. Turner. 1994. *Stereotyping and Social Reality*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 81.

¹¹ See Six, Ulrike. 1987². Vorurteile, in Frey, Dieter and Siegfried Greif. Eds. *Sozialpsychologie*, München-Weinheim: Psychologie Verlags Union, pp. 365-371.

¹² See Stahlberg, D., Gabriele Osnabrügge und Dieter Frey. 1985. Die Theorie des Selbstwertschutzes und der Selbstwerterhöhung, in Frey, Dieter and Martin Irlé. Eds. *Theorien der Sozialpsychologie, Band III: Motivations- und Informationsverarbeitungstheorien*, Bern-Stuttgart-Toronto: Huber, pp. 79-124.

¹³ Mummendey, Amélie. 1987². Soziales Verhalten zwischen Gruppen, in Frey, Dieter and Siegfried Greif. Eds. *Sozialpsychologie*, München-Weinheim: Psychologie Verlags Union, pp. 337-341.

¹⁴ Turner, J.C., M.A. Hogg, P.J. Oakes, S.D. Reicher and M.S. Wetherell. 1987. *Rediscovering the Social Group: A self-categorization theory*. Oxford-New York: Blackwell.

multiple concepts of self and that the social self-concept is situation-specific. However, more important is the category formation (categorisation) which depends “upon the comparison of stimuli and follows the *principle of meta-contrast*: that is, within any given frame or reference (in any situation comprising some definite pool of psychologically significant stimuli), any collection of stimuli is more likely to be categorised as an entity (i.e. grouped as identical) to the degree that the differences between those stimuli on relevant dimensions of comparison (intra-class differences) are perceived as less than the differences between that collection and other stimuli (inter-class differences).”¹⁵ Insofar as SCT proposes that the process of depersonalisation makes group behaviour possible (by emphasising ingroup similarities and intergroup differences) collective identity will be formed by belonging to the ingroup and perceiving oneself primarily as an (in-)group member and not as an individual.¹⁶ This means that although within groups individuals express their attitudes or show a specific behaviour, they still behave not as single individuals but as members or representatives of a social group.

By SIT we gain important insights in group formation. Group formation is mediated by a cognitive process (social categorisation in two groups, influenced by norms and values) and a motivational process (need for a positive social identity) which finally leads to ingroup favouritism and outgroup devaluation. Applied to the English case I assume that the cognitive process is responsible for the strong ‘us’ vs. ‘them’ feeling which can be also found in the political discourse by the striking differentiation between Britain and Europe or the Continent. The motivation for a positive social identity then causes that characteristics of the ingroup are positively strengthened and intensified (‘*differentia specifica*, for example the English Parliament as the ‘Mother of Parliament’). By social comparison and social distinction ingroup favouritism occurs. While the outgroup is devaluated the ingroup is re-evaluated (English is best! We have the most stable democracy and institutions).

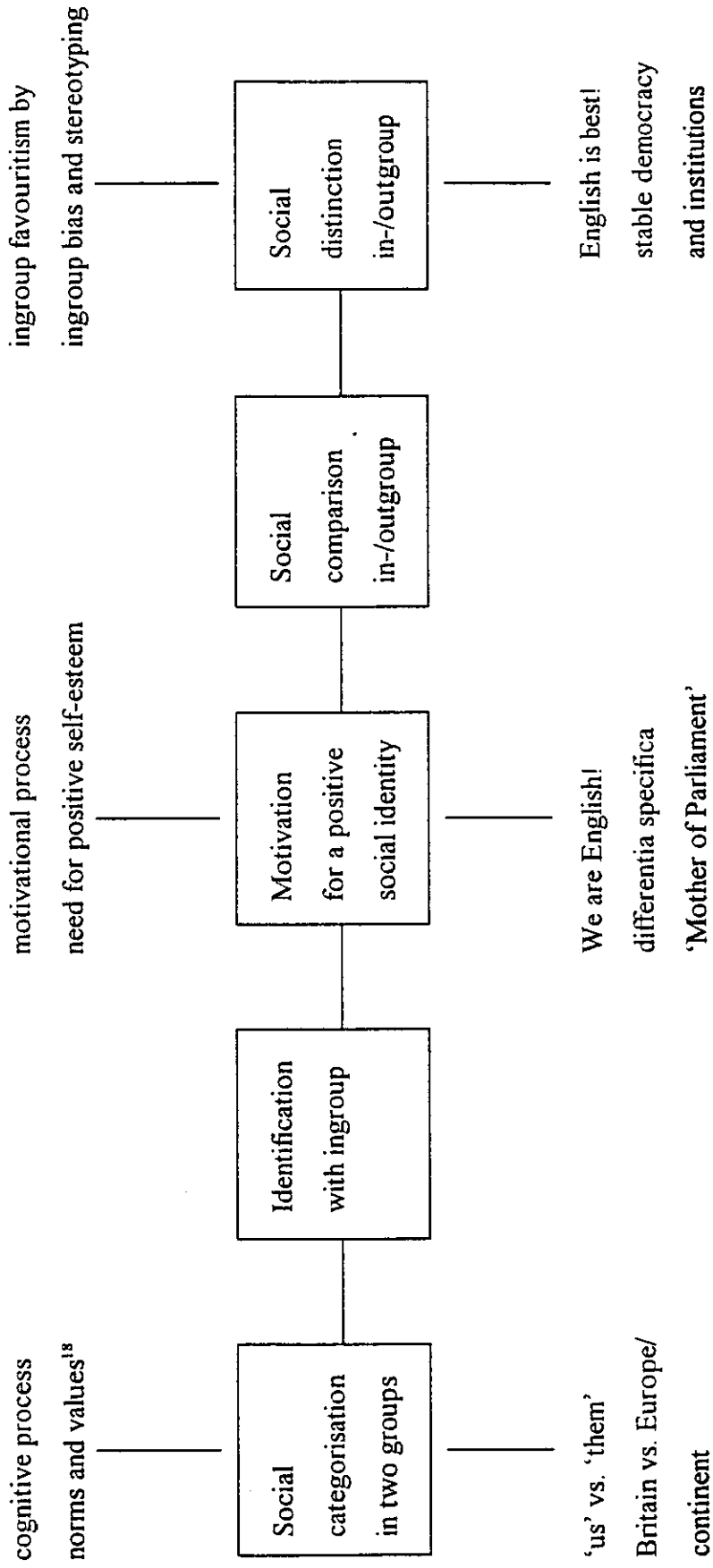
¹⁵ Ibid. p. 46-7.

¹⁶ See Oakes, Penelope J., S. Alexander Haslam and John C. Turner. 1994. *Stereotyping and Social Reality*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 100 and Weller, Christoph. 1997. *Kollektive Identitäten in der Weltgesellschaft. Zur Entwicklung eines liberalen Konstruktivismus in den Internationalen Beziehungen*, Darmstadt, unpublished manuscript.

The findings of the social psychological Social Identity Theory can be summarised in the following model:¹⁷

¹⁷ See Bourhis, Richard Y., John C. Turner and André Gagnon. 1997. Interdependence, Social Identity and Discrimination, in Spears, R., Penelope J. Oakes, Naomi Ellemers and S. Alexander Haslam. Eds. *The Social Psychology of Stereotyping and Group Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 273-295.

Social Identity Theory (as a two-step process: cognitive and motivational)



¹⁸ See for example Tajfel, H. and J.P. Forgas. 1981. Social categorization: cognitions, values and groups, in Forgas, J.P. Ed. *Social cognition*, London: Academic Press, pp. 113-140.

So far I have concentrated on social and collective identities. In the next section I will argue that the findings of SIT are compatible and transferable on national identity when the nation is interpreted as a psychological group. Within such a group cognitive, evaluative and emotional components do play an important role. According to SIT a group is a conglomerate of people who feel and perceive themselves as a group and who are categorised by others as a group, too.¹⁹ This seems compatible with Emerson's definition of 'nation': "The nation is a community of people who feel that they belong together (...)." ²⁰

We know from social psychology that people need to categorise their environment in order to make sense to it. We are cognitive misers and once we have something or somebody categorised, it is extremely difficult to change these cognitive categories and to de- and re-categorise our cognitive conceptions.²¹ We are even defending them - in the sense of dissonance theory - by ingroup favouritism and outgroup devaluation. Thus, categories and cognitive conceptions are very stable as have proven intergroup attitudes and stereotypes to be highly resistant to change.

Following these social psychological assumptions, Risse-Kappen²² offers a conceptualisation of identity: Social (or collective) identities are

- cognitive constructions, 'ideas' about oneself and the belonging to a social group;
- cognitive constructions, which are quite stable (possibly changing only in crises);
- social constructions, which 'construct' a group by shared self-perception, and
- social constructions, which create 'imagined communities' ²³ (dependent on context and situation).

¹⁹ Mummendey, Amélie. 1985. Verhalten zwischen sozialen Gruppen: Die Theorie der sozialen Identität, in: Frey, Dieter and Martin Irlé. Eds. *Theorien der Sozialpsychologie. Band II: Gruppen- und Lerntheorien*, Bern-Stuttgart-Toronto: Huber, p. 192.

²⁰ Emerson, Rupert. 1962. *From Empire to Nation. The Rise to Self-Assertion of Asian and African Peoples*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, p. 95.

²¹ See Anastasio, Phyllis, Betty Bachman, Samuel Gaertner and John Dovidio. 1997. Categorization, Recategorization and Common Ingroup Identity, in Spears, Russell, Penelope J. Oakes, Naomi Ellemers and S. Alexander Haslam. Eds. *The Social Psychology of Stereotyping and Group Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, pp. 236-256.

²² Risse-Kappen, Thomas. 1996. *Ideen, Institutionen und politische Kultur: Die Europäisierung nationaler Identitäten im Ländervergleich*, Forschungsantrag, Konstanz, unpublished manuscript.

²³ Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso.

We can also assume that in modern nation-states national identities are closely associated with ideas of sovereignty and state.

Based on social psychological theories mentioned above the concept of 'national identity' should be operationalised as

- constructions of the own belonging
- expressions of the 'differentia specifica': which peculiarities do we possess? Which do we want to keep, which do we want to share?;
- perceptions about common historical experiences / memories;
- perceptions about the future role ;
- suggestions of national symbols: how important are these as expressions of national identity,
- ideas of political order.²⁴

While investigating the national political discourse, one has to analyse to what extent ideas about a collective European identity are incorporated in the discourses related to national identity and to what extent 'Europe' is considered part of the 'ingroup' ('us') in contrast to the 'outgroup' ('them'). If Europe would be considered as part of the ingroup, then re-categorisation of cognitive and motivational processes could lead to the production of greater perceptions of shared beliefs. This new process would alter the older 'us' vs. 'them' membership and cause a more inclusive 'we' which would be expressed by a new collective identity.

²⁴ For more details on these categorisations and the evolution of the British Nation-State Identity in the 1950s see Knopf, Hans-Joachim. 1998. *Ideas of European Political Order and the Construction of British Identity in the 1950s*, Arbeitsbericht Great Britain, Florence: European University Institute.

3. The Categorisation of Europe as Britain's 'Other'

One of the most remarkable features of British politics towards European integration is the stability of arguments found in the political discourse. While the British *Conservative Party* tried to win the general elections in 1997 by blaming the *Labour Party* for being too pro-European, Labour, on the other hand, experienced in being labelled to be the 'poodle of Brussels', reacted with an unenthusiastic and cautious stance towards the European Union and further integration, sometimes even attempting to outflank the Government by sounding more sceptical on European issues. Britain, therefore, is still regarded as 'of rather than in' Europe and remains the 'awkward partner' and 'semi-detached' from Europe.²⁵

Long before World War II British interest in European affairs was very limited. The British have never had much love for Europe which was not a place for politics.²⁶ Although during WW II there were some allusions aiming to unite Europe (Britain inclusive) economically and politically (for example Clement Attlee's 'Europe must federate or perish',²⁷ or Winston Churchill's suggestion for a union between France and Britain in June 1940 as germ cell of a united Europe²⁸), after the war, however, neither the Conservative nor the Labour Party aimed to integrate Britain with the Continent of Europe. By rejecting to join the Schuman Plan and the European Defence Community (E.D.C.), Britain isolated herself from Europe although playing an active role in developing intergovernmental organisations like the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, the Council of Europe or the West European Union.

3.1. Prevailing visions on European political order

British views on European integration essentially range from those opposing further Europeanisation (right wing of the Conservatives, Labour's far left and far right), to a mainstream group within both parties supporting a 'Europe of the nations'. But the concept of the 'Europe of the nations' is quite diffuse because the question of how much 'pooling of

²⁵ Bailey, R. 1983. *The European Connection. Implications of EEC Membership*, Oxford: Pergamon; George, Stephen. Ed. 1992. *Britain in the European Community. The Politics of Semi-Detachment*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; George, Stephen. 1994². *An Awkward Partner. Britain in the European Community*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁶ See Bailey, R. 1983. *The European Connection. Implications of EEC Membership*, Oxford: Pergamon, p. ix.

²⁷ Attlee, Clement R. 1940. The Peace we are striving for, in Attlee, Clement R. et al. *Labour's Aims in War and Peace*, London: Lincolns-Prager, p. 106.

²⁸ See Lipgens, Walter. 1986. *45 Jahr Ringen um die Europäische Verfassung*, Bonn: Europa Union, pp. 58-9.

sovereignty'²⁹ is not resolved. European federalists within the Tories are only a very tiny group and within Labour remain a minority in the political discourse. In contrast to the two main parties, many of the Liberal Democrats are federalists.³⁰ Therefore, it is not surprising that the Liberal Democratic Party favours European Monetary Union (EMU) which requires far more pooling of sovereignty. I have argued recently that British attitudes towards EMU cannot be understood in economic and monetary terms alone, but that EMU has to be linked to the larger political project of European integration. These attitudes are partially the result of the ideas about political order on European integration which dominate in the national discourse and which are discussed within the political parties. The concepts about political order on Europe, on the other hand, are influenced by factors of national identity.³¹

The Euro-sceptics in the Conservative and the Labour Party are also divided. Some want to leave the EU or re-negotiate the relationship, others favour a mere free trade area, and still another group supports the concept of a 'Europe of the Nations'.³² The mainstream group of the two leading parties in Britain, however, promotes the vision of a Europe of independent nations. In the manifesto of the Labour Party for the general elections in 1997 it is clearly 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."³³ Similarly, in the Conservative manifesto one can read: "(...) 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."³⁴

²⁹ Keohane, Robert, and Stanley Hoffmann. 1991. Institutional Change in Europe in the 1980s, in Keohane, Robert, and Stanley Hoffmann. Eds. *The 'New' European Community. Decision-making and Institutional Change*, Boulder: Westview Press, pp. 1-39.

³⁰ For the different historical discourses on Europe see Larsen, Henrik. 1997. *Foreign policy and discourse analysis. France, Britain and Europe*, London: Routledge, pp. 34-86; and Larsen, Henrik. 1997. British Discourses on Europe: Sovereignty of Parliament, Instrumentality and the Non-Mythical Europe, in Jørgensen, Knud Erik. Ed. 1997. *Reflective Approaches to European Governance*, London: Macmillan, pp. 109-127.

³¹ See Engelmann, Daniela, Knopf, Hans-Joachim, Roscher, Klaus, and Thomas Risse. 1997. Identity Politics in the European Union: The Case of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), in Minkkinen, Petri, and Heikki Patomäki. Eds. *The Politics of Economic and Monetary Union*, Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, pp. 104-130.

³² See Spicer, Michael. 1992. *A Treaty too far*, London: Fourth Estate.

³³ Labour manifesto 'Britain will be better with new Labour'.

[Http://www.labourwin97.org.uk/manifesto/index.html](http://www.labourwin97.org.uk/manifesto/index.html).

³⁴ Conservative manifesto 'Our vision for Britain'. [Http://www.conservative-party.org.uk/manifesto/defe3.html](http://www.conservative-party.org.uk/manifesto/defe3.html).

This general attitude on European political order has not changed since the 1950s and even before. In 1930, Churchill wrote in an essay about the United States of Europe for the *Saturday Evening Post*:

“But we have our own dreams. And our own task. We are linked, but not comprised. We are with Europe, but not of it. We are interested and associated but not absorbed.”³⁵

Nearly literally, Winston Churchill as Prime Minister repeated these words in a debate on Foreign Affairs in the House of Commons 23 years later (1953):

“Where do we stand? We are not members of the European Defence Community, nor do we intend to be merged in a Federal European system. We feel we have a special relation to both. This can be expressed by prepositions, by the preposition ‘with’ but not ‘of’ - we are with them, but not of them. We have our own Commonwealth and Empire.”³⁶

From these statements it is very clear that there is not only a strong dislike of any federal European order but also a significant identity argument with an engraved ‘them’ (Europe) versus ‘us’ (Britain) feeling which is the first element in social psychological Social Identity Theory. While Europe is part of the (even though ‘friendly’) outgroup (Britain will not oppose the aim of this outgroup, but will look on them with benevolent neutrality³⁷), the Commonwealth and Empire belongs to the ingroup around Britain.

There is hardly any difference between the two major British parties concerning the visions of the future European order. The same picture I draw above by comparing the election manifestos of the Conservative and the Labour Party in 1997 was still true in the 1950s as the following quotations of the political discourse on suggestions of political order will show. Although Britain is aiming to a united Europe, this Europe is based on an intergovernmental model and co-operation in contrast to a federal union and supranationalism:

Conservatives

“There are those who believe that some sort of federal union or constitutional union should be the first step. I have always disagreed with this. On the other hand there are those, to whom I

³⁵ Quoted in Zurcher, Arnold J. 1975. *The Struggle to Unite Europe 1940-1958*, Westport (CT): Greenwood, p. 6.

³⁶ Speech on 11 May 1953, House of Commons, vol. 513, col. 895.

³⁷ Mr. Edelman, MP (Labour), House of Commons, 13 November 1950, col. 1478.

have given my unqualified support, who believe that the way to greater union is the common attack on varied problems and the function of co-operation inherent in their solution.”³⁸

“I agree with the Prime Minister’s criticisms of the idea of a supra national parliamentary assembly to run the European army. That is something that is not acceptable anywhere in this country, (...).”³⁹

“We always made it clear that there could be no question of Britain coming into a European federation. What we did want was a United Europe, developing on what we might call Commonwealth lines in which this country would join as a full member.”⁴⁰

The same arguments can be found within the political discourse of the Labour Party:

“Thus the history of the advance in European co-operation since the war, in which this Government has taken a leading part, is largely the history of a series of practical steps which have gradually extended the mutual trust and confidence in political and economic co-operation (...).”⁴¹

“That kind of conception of a supra-national authority is far, far ahead of anything which will happen in my time or will probably ever happen at all. I hope it will never happen.”⁴²

“As originally put forward, there were a number of features of that plan (European Defence Community, H.-J. K.) which we could not accept. There was the linking of it with a political superstructure; a Minister of Defence for Europe, and even an Assembly.”⁴³

These statements clearly underline that identity-related understandings of (for example) parliamentary sovereignty are directly linked to these prevailing ideas about European political order comprising independent nation-states. In the next part I try to demonstrate the stability of English identity conceptions and show which elements of national identity play an important role.

3.2. Social categorisation in two groups: Britain versus Europe

British attitudes towards European integration reflect collectively shared beliefs about English identity. As argued above, there is still a strong ‘them’-versus-‘us’-feeling between Britain and Europe (the Continent). In the British political discourses of the 1950s and the 1990s, Europe continues to be identified and perceived as ‘the other’ in contrast to Englishness. According to Social Identity Theory, there is an important two-step process. In the first step, (cognitive)

³⁸ Major Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, House of Commons, 13 November 1950, col. 1488-9.

³⁹ Duncan Sandys, House of Commons, 12 February 1951, col. 88.

⁴⁰ Julian Amery, House of Commons, 14 May 1952, col. 1531.

⁴¹ Sir Stafford Cripps, Chancellor of the Exchequer, House of Commons, 26 June 1950, col. 1946.

⁴² Mr. Greenwood, MP, House of Commons, 26 June 1950, col. 1960.

⁴³ Clement Attlee, Prime Minister, House of Commons, 12 February 1951, col. 64.

norms and values are influencing the process of social categorisation.⁴⁴ The second step consists of a motivational process: the psychological need for positive self-esteem / social identity eventually leads to ingroup favouritism by ingroup bias and stereotyping.

From Churchill's speeches mentioned earlier one can derive that Britain has her own dreams, namely the British Commonwealth and Empire, and that in the sense of identity Britain is clearly set apart from Europe and the European Continent. This attitude was reinforced by the weak moral and military performance of the continental countries against Hitler-Germany while Britain was a victor of WW II later. Some days before the French armistice Churchill claimed in his speech on June 18, 1940:

"Let us therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say: 'This was their finest hour'." ⁴⁵

Combined with Low's famous 1940 cartoon titled 'Very well alone' in *The Evening Standard* this speech not only was characteristic for the strong (sentimental) ties towards the Commonwealth, but also symbolised the defiant patriotism which kept out Hitler (in contrast to other continental countries).⁴⁶ Apart from the importance of the British Commonwealth and Empire Churchill often emphasised the community of 'English-speaking' peoples and the special relationship to the United States of America:

"(...) Aristide Briand took great pains to organise the 'United States of Europe.' Joint action should be taken by the United States and Great Britain to oppose any dangers which might result from a union of the nations of Europe. Neither the United States nor England can alone afford to adopt an antagonistic attitude toward any continent; the two nations together could protect their own interests against any other combination of nations and maintain peace in the world. Let us have no fear of the United States of Europe as long as the United States and England grow together. Any sinister results could then be properly dealt with." ⁴⁷

Concerning international monetary policy he expressed for example on May 8, 1932:

"And what two nations of all others should take the first steps, if it be not the two great world creditor nations, the two great English-speaking nations, Britain and the United States?"

⁴⁴ See Tajfel, H., and J. P. Forgas. 1981. Social categorization: cognitions, values and groups, in Forgas, J. P. Ed. *Social Cognition*, London: Academic Press, pp. 113-140.

⁴⁵ See James, Robert Rhodes. Ed. 1974. *Winston S. Churchill. His Complete Speeches 1897-1963*, Vol. VI (1935-1942), New York: Chelsea House Publishers, p. 6238.

⁴⁶ See Radice, Giles. 1992. *Offshore. Britain & the European Idea*, London: Tauris.

⁴⁷ See Rhodes James, Robert. Ed. 1974. *Winston S. Churchill. His Complete Speeches 1897-1963*, Vol. V (1928-1935), New York: Chelsea House Publishers, p. 5133.

Divided all our efforts would be in vain. United in sentiment and policy we can lead the whole world back out of these gloomy cavern into the broad sunlight of activity and progress.”⁴⁸

Again, it is quite clear that the friendly sentiments towards the USA contrast with any closer European ‘connection’. Although Churchill developed the idea of a ‘United States of Europe’ shortly after WW II in his famous speech at Zurich University (‘The Tragedy of Europe’) on September 19, 1946, it was often misinterpreted because he did not imagine Britain being part of these ‘United States of Europe’:

“(…) we must re-create the European family in a regional structure called, it may be, the United States of Europe. The first step is to form a Council of Europe. (...) In all this urgent work, France and Germany must take the lead together. **Great Britain**, the British Commonwealth of Nations, mighty America, and I trust Soviet Russia - for then indeed all would be well - **must be the friends and sponsors of the new Europe** and must champion its right to live and shine.”⁴⁹

The relationship of Britain towards Europe could only be one of a friend and sponsor, but Britain could not be a member of the United States of Europe, Britain was constructed to be part of the ingroup with her Empire and Commonwealth:

“United Europe will form one major Regional entity. There is the United States with all its dependencies; there is the Soviet Union; there is the British Empire and Commonwealth; and there is Europe.”⁵⁰

In the same speech on May 14, 1947, Churchill claimed:

“We here in Great Britain have always to think of the British self-governing Dominions - Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa. We are joined together by ties of free will and affection which have stood unyielding against all the ups and downs of fortune. We are the centre and summit of a world-wide commonwealth of nations. It is necessary that any policy this island may adopt towards Europe and in Europe should enjoy the full sympathy and approval of the peoples of the Dominions.”⁵¹

One year later, speaking on the European Congress in The Hague (May 7, 1948), Churchill slowed down the far-reaching plans of the European federalists:

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 5161.

⁴⁹ (emphasis added). See James, Robert Rhodes. Ed. 1974. *Winston S. Churchill. His Complete Speeches 1897-1963*, Vol. VII (1943-1949), New York: Chelsea House Publishers, p. 7381-2.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Churchill, Randolph S. Ed. 1950. *Europe Unite. Speeches 1947 and 1948 by Winston S. Churchill*, Cambridge: The Riverside Press, p. 79.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 83.

„On the other hand it would not be wise in this critical time to be drawn into laboured attempts to draw rigid structures of constitutions. That is a later stage, and it is one in which the leadership must be taken by the ruling governments in response no doubt to our impulse, and in many cases to their own conceptions.“⁵²

The same story was true for the British Labour Party. Although there was Attlee's conviction of 1940 that Europe must federate or perish, the statement by the National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party (NEC) on 'European Unity' in 1950 expressed:

“Finally the Labour Party cannot see European unity as an overriding end in itself. Britain is not just a small crowded island off the Western coast of Continental Europe. She is the nerve centre of a world-wide Commonwealth which extends into every continent. In every respect except distance we in Britain are closer to our kinsmen in Australia and New Zealand on the far side of the world, than we are to Europe. We are closer in language and in origins, in social habits and institutions, in political outlook and in economic interest. The economies of the Commonwealth countries are complementary to that of Britain to a degree which those of Western Europe could never equal. Furthermore Britain is also banker of the sterling area.”⁵³

So far as identity constructions are concerned. In regard to suggestions of European political order the NEC statement claimed:

„Some people believe that the required unity of action cannot be obtained by co-operation between sovereign states; it must be imposed by a supra-national body with executive powers. They consider that the European countries should form a Union in both the political and economic spheres by surrendering whole fields of government to a supra-national authority. The Labour Party considers that it is neither possible nor desirable under existing circumstances to form a complete Union, political or economic, in this way. Instead national policies must be progressively harmonised or co-ordinated by consent through co-operation between governments.“⁵⁴

The only exception within the political discourse on European political order and matters of identity was represented by the British Liberal Party. Although the Liberals were also emphasising the importance of family-traditions with the Commonwealth, already in 1950 they did not have any political problems with a close relationship between Britain and the other European countries:

⁵² Ibid. p. 317.

⁵³ National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party. 1950. *European Unity*, 1950, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 6.

“There need to be no choice for Britain between Europe and the Commonwealth. Any suggestion of incompatibility between our loyalties was repudiated by the Commonwealth Conference at Colombo and by M. Spaak speaking on behalf of the Council of Europe. Europe does not want partnership with a Britain which has weakened the links with its own family-nations.

Our party will press for quicker action in developing the Council of Europe. We must push on this year to make European currencies convertible with one another and remove restrictions of trade among ourselves. The democratic countries have a joint responsibility to preserve democracy in Western Europe; (...).”⁵⁵

The Liberals wholehearted support for even the European Coal and Steel Community (E.C.S.C.) and E.D.C. indicated that their vision of a united Europe clearly went beyond the conceptions of both Labour and Conservatives:

“The Liberal Party has been and will continue to be critical of the timidity and hesitation which both Labour and Conservative Governments have shown about associating this country intimately with the movement to secure some measure of European unification. It advocated wholehearted support for the European Defence Community and for the Coal and Steel Community and it rejects the insincere plea that our Commonwealth responsibilities are any bar to that closer association with Western Europe (...). Liberals will continue to goad the Government when they feel that it is reluctant to play its proper role in the evolutions of organs such as the Council of Europe and the Coal and Steel Community.”⁵⁶

Turning to the political discourse on identity in the 1990s the story has not changed very much. While the Labour Minister of State, Kenneth Younger, in 1950 claimed:

“**We and, even more, our friends in Europe** are entitled to adequate guarantees against the revival of the German war potential, and until we can be satisfied that Germany is able and willing to take her place as a part of the Western Community we do not intend to be stampeded into ill-considered action.”⁵⁷

47 years later the newly elected Labour Foreign Secretary Robin Cook stated 1997:

“(...) because one of the things that **those of us who have gone to Europe** have learnt is that there is also a change of opinion in Europe. As it happens, when **I first went to Europe**, the first European politician I met was Lionel Jospin.”⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Election manifesto of the Liberal Party 1950. Quoted in Craig, Frederick W. S. Ed. 1975. *British General Election Manifestos 1900-1974*, London: Macmillan, p. 166.

⁵⁶ Election manifesto of the Liberal Party 1955. Ibid. p. 209.

⁵⁷ (Emphasis added), Mr. Kenneth Younger (Labour, Minister of State), House of Commons, 28 March 1950, col. 216.

⁵⁸ (Emphasis added), Mr. Robin Cook (Labour, Foreign Secretary), House of Commons, 9 June 1997, col. 801. (<http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199798/cmhansrd/cm970609/debtext/70609-08.htm>).

Obviously, there is still a strong 'them-versus-us-feeling' although for both politicians Europe is considered to be the friendly 'other'. In the British debate, Europe is identified with the Continent in contrast to Englishness. The identification with national symbols, national history, and national institutions is far greater in the British political discourse than an identification with European symbols, history, and institutions. The characteristic categorisation in 'them' and 'us' is (like in the 1950s) shared by both major parties. Again, the Liberal Democrats are the only exception. The social construction of Englishness as the core British nation-state identity comprises meanings attached to national symbols, history, and institutions. These meanings seem hard to be reconciled with any idea of European political order going beyond the intergovernmental model of a 'Europe des patries'. It is therefore not surprising that parts of English national identity are often regarded as threatened by European integration.

The political debate on Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) clearly fits in this picture. The pound Sterling, the former leading and reserve currency, is an important symbol of national identity. To abolish the pound for something called 'Euro' would mean an enormous loss of national identity. When copies were passed round the 15 EU leaders, PM John Major questioned whether it was appropriate that there was little space for a national symbol, such as the Queen's head⁵⁹ while Kenneth Clarke found the excitement of the press ridiculous, because the 'Euro'-notes had to be a bit European and non-national.⁶⁰ There were hostile reactions because the 'Euro'-banknotes would replace national heroes such as Dickens, Faraday and Wellington with bridges, gates and windows, and because the heads of Monnet, Schuman and Spaak would grace the 'Euro' coins.⁶¹

Without doubt, institutions such as the British Parliament or the Crown are fundamental elements of national identity.⁶² The concept of parliamentary sovereignty (internal sovereignty) is one of the two most important constitutional principles in Britain.⁶³ The principle of parliamentary sovereignty is directly responsible for Britain's vision of a Europe of

⁵⁹ Electronic Telegraph, 14 December 1996.

⁶⁰ Electronic Telegraph, 16 December 1996.

⁶¹ Electronic Telegraph, 27 January 1997.

⁶² Mitchell, Austin. 1992. Nationhood: The End of the Affair?, in *The Political Quarterly* 63 (2): 122-142.

⁶³ See Schauer, Hans. 1996. *Europäische Identität und demokratische Tradition*, München: Olzog; and Schauer, Hans. 1997. Nationale und europäische Identität. Die unterschiedlichen Auffassungen in Deutschland, Frankreich und Großbritannien, in *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, Beilage zur Wochenzeitschrift Das Parlament, B10/97, 28 February 1997, pp. 3-13.

independent nation states.⁶⁴ For England, a loss of sovereignty means a loss of identity.⁶⁵ Therefore, a further deepening of European integration and supranationalism are considered as a threat to national identity.

The British Crown is the symbol of national sovereignty (external sovereignty).⁶⁶ It represents the independence from Rome and the Pope as well as from the Continent since 1066. Together with the long tradition of parliamentary sovereignty English sovereignty is linked to myths about a continuous history of liberal and democratic evolution and about a history as 'free-born Englishman'. This is even expressed by the refusal to carry identity cards.⁶⁷ English objections against transferring sovereignty to supranational institutions in Europe are justified on grounds of lacking parliamentary accountability.⁶⁸ The following quotations of the 1950s and the 1990s demonstrate how understandings of English parliamentary sovereignty are linked to prevailing ideas of European political order:

"It does not, however, seem to us - as at present advised - either necessary or appropriate, in order to achieve these purposes, to invest a supra-national authority of independent persons with powers for overriding Governmental and Parliamentary decisions in the participating countries. (...) Certainly this Parliament has always exercised the greatest caution as to agreeing to any removal from its own democratic control of any important element of our economic power or policy."⁶⁹

"But - and it is a crucial but - we shall never accept the approach of those who want to see the EC as a means of removing our ability to govern ourselves as an independent nation. The British Parliament had endured for 700 years and had been a beacon of hope to the peoples of Europe in their darkest days."⁷⁰

"Britain successfully used the Maastricht negotiations to reassert the authority of national governments. It is clear now that the Community will remain a union of sovereign national states. That is what its peoples want: to take decisions through their own Parliaments. That protects the way of life, the cultural differences, the national traditions which the French and

⁶⁴ Lynch, Philip. 1997. Großbritannien in der Europäischen Union - konstitutionelle Fragen, in *Integration* 1997 (1): 13-23.

⁶⁵ Schmitz, Petra L., and Rolf Geserick. 1996. *Die Anderen in Europa. Nationale Selbst- und Fremdbilder im europäischen Integrationsprozeß*, Bonn: Europa-Union.

⁶⁶ For the detailed differentiation of internal and external sovereignty see Armstrong, Kenneth and Simon Bulmer. 1996. United Kingdom, in Rometsch, Dietrich, and Wolfgang Wessels. Eds. *The European Union and Member States. Towards Institutional Fusion?*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp. 253-290.

⁶⁷ Lyon, David. 1991. British Identity Cards: The Unpalatable Logic of European Membership?, in *The Political Quarterly* 62 (3): 377-385.

⁶⁸ Risse, Thomas. Forthcoming. A Europeanization of Nation-State Identities?, in Green Cowles, Maria, Caporaso, James, and Thomas Risse. Eds. *Europeanization and Domestic Change*.

⁶⁹ Sir Stafford Cripps (Labour, Chancellor of the Exchequer), House of Commons debate on the Schuman Plan, 26 June 1950, col. 1950.

⁷⁰ PM Margaret Thatcher, Conservative Party Conference 1990, in *Financial Times*, 13/14 October 1990, p.7.

Germans, the Greeks and the Danes, hold as clear as the British. (...) It is for nations to build Europe, not for Europe to attempt to supersede nations.”⁷¹

As far as history is concerned it can be stressed that Britain's experiences as a world, naval and trading nation has a lot to do with her national identity. Britain's colonial past, the (special) relationship with the USA and the Commonwealth are strong components of English identity. Both, the Labour and the Conservative election manifestos of 1997 contain references to the importance of the Commonwealth. The special relationship with the USA is still in the heads of many Britons as expressed by a shared identity with the USA, an Anglo-Saxon version of Britain's myth of nationhood⁷² which led to the feeling of Anglo-Saxon exceptionalism. Therefore, it was not surprising that the Thatcherite John Redwood, who challenged Major in 1995, emphasised the transatlantic community in order to avoid a deeper European integration.⁷³

4. Conclusions

It was argued before that - following Social Identity Theory - identities are extremely stable and difficult to modify (possibly only in times of crisis). As could be demonstrated for the English case conceptions of national identity and ideas on European political order in the political discourse remained firm over decades. Therefore, the fundamental predispositions towards Europe (which can be traced back to elements of national identity) have not changed very much. English collective identification with national symbols, historical memories and national institutions are still far greater than the identification with the European counterparts ('the other'). Europe or the Continent is very often considered as 'them' rather than 'us' and this view is shared by both major parties. Obviously, English identity even supersede ideological orientations among the Labour and the Conservative Party.

Although there were a lot of challenges to English identity (for example World War II, decline of the Commonwealth, German unification), these crises did not provoke a change towards a 'Europeanisation' of English national identity. For Britain, the end of WW II did not represent an important challenge to her identity (simply by being a victor of WW II) because Britain was

⁷¹ Major, John. 1993. 'Raise your eyes, there is a land beyond', in *The Economist*, 25 September – 1st October 1993, p. 27.

⁷² Wallace, William. 1991. Foreign Policy and national identity in the United Kingdom, in *International Affairs* 67 (1): 65-80.

still considered to be a world power. Even after the loss of the Empire and the decline of Commonwealth trade it was not possible for Britain to accept the political project of European integration. Britain, on the other hand, worked hard to deepen the 'special relationship' with the United States of America (which was present within the conception of English identity). This was the reason why Britain remained on the sidelines of the process of European integration. The Anglo-Saxon community ('English-speaking peoples' / Atlantic Community) was available as an alternative in contrast to any Europeanisation.

As far as the fundamental English predispositions towards Europe are concerned I expect that elements of English national identity do have an impact upon interests and preferences. I do not argue, however, that English national identity directly influence foreign policy decisions. In the 1950s, Britain could not join the European Economic Community but instead created the European Free Trade Association. When Britain eventually applied for membership it was for purely pragmatic reasons. Harold Macmillan's first application was commented by *The Guardian*:

"The plunge is to be taken but, on yesterday's evidence, by a shivering Government...All that Mr Macmillan said is correct. But his approach is so half-hearted that it must diminish the chances of success in the negotiations. He has made a depressing start...We must show that we believe in the ambition of a politically united Europe. This is just what Mr Macmillan has not done." ⁷⁴

This pragmatism is still true after Britain joined the European Community and until the 1990s. Britain does not sell European integration in other than pragmatic terms. The belief in a politically united Europe is missing. As long as Britain is confronted with (non-political) economic integration there are hardly any problems (see for example the Single European Act). But the political project of European integration is rejected because of the fear of a further loss of national identity.

⁷³ Electronic Telegraph, 30 July 1996.

⁷⁴ Quoted in George, Stephen. 1994². *An Awkward Partner. Britain in the European Community*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, p. 33.