

Defining Europe Against its Past? – Memory Politics and the Sanctions Against Austria in France and Germany

By Stefan Seidendorf*

A. Introduction**

It seems by now an established fact that “social identity” implies a construction against an “Other”.¹ This includes the fact that it is much easier to say who “we are

* Stefan Seidendorf is a Ph.D. researcher at the *Centre of European Social Science (MZES)* and lecturer at the *University of Mannheim (MZES)*. He holds an M.A. in European Political and Administrative Studies of the College of Europe, Bruges (2001). Before that, he gained a Franco-German *Maîtrise / Magister* in History and literature from the *Universities of Tübingen* and *Aix-en-Provence*. His Ph.D. project is a comparative study on “Europeanization” of French and German identity-discourses 1950- 2000. Stefan.Seidendorf@mzes.uni-mannheim.de.

** This paper emanates from a contribution to the 2nd Pan-European conference of the ECPR standing group on the European Union, “Implications of a wider Europe”, that took place from 24 - 26 June 2004 in Bologna. I am grateful for discussions of the original paper to the panel: Frank Schimmelfennig, Gerald Schneider, Mariano Barbato. Furthermore, for helpful comments on the first version, to Christine Reh, Volker Balli, Dirk Leuffen and the participants of the workshop “Constitutionalization through ‘Recrafting the Past’”, Florence, 2 - 3 July 2004. Travel subsidies by the ECPR, the Mannheim Centre for European social science (MZES) and the European University Institute (EUI) are gratefully acknowledged.

¹ On “social identity” from a social psychological viewpoint: Social Psychology of Identity and the Self Concept (Glynis M. Breakwell, ed., 1992), and Changing European Identities. Social Psychological Analyses of Social Change (Glynis M. Breakwell / Evanthia Lyons, eds., 1996). For a critical account of the use of (collective) identity, see Lutz Niethammer, *Kollektive Identität - Heimliche Quellen einer unheimlichen Konjunktur* (1999). An original and encompassing view on the question and implications of a European identity: Angelucci von Bogdandy, *Europäische und nationale Identität: Integration durch Verfassungsrecht?*, in: 62 Veröffentlichungen der Vereinigung der Deutschen Staatsrechtslehrer (Leistungsgrenzen des Verfassungsrechts) 156 (2003), to be read together with Angelucci von Bogdandy, *Europäische Identitätsbildung aus sozialpsychologischer Sicht*, in: *Europäische Identität: Paradigmen und Methodenfragen* (Schriften des Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung, Vol. 43) 111 (Ralf Elm, ed., 2002). A constructivist approach from political science: Thomas Risse, *A European Identity? Europeanization and the Evolution of Nation-State Identities*, in: *Transforming Europe - Europeanization and Domestic Change* 198 (James Caporaso / Maria Green Cowles / Thomas Risse, eds., 2001), Thomas Risse, *Nationalism and Collective Identities: Europe versus the Nation-State?*, in: *Developments in West European Politics* 2 77 (Paul Heywood / Erik Jones / Martin Rhodes, eds., 2002).

not" than "who we are" (and what this means). The fact that "we Europeans" cannot say "who we are" is commonly accepted and blamed as one of the major deficits of the European Union.² One possible approach to overcome this deficit might, therefore, be to say "who we are not."

And, indeed, there are various contributions that have lasted from 19th century-like definitions of, at times, dubious quality – from Europe as a closed entity on heterogeneous cultural grounds,³ established, for example, against "Islam" or against "the United States,"⁴ to definitions in the Habermasian tradition that plead for a light version of *Verfassungspatriotismus* (constitutional patriotism).⁵ Even the latter, when they establish their concept of "Europe", build it against something specific, otherwise their scale would be a universal one, "the world."

One original idea that tries to integrate the specificity of the European pre-war experience as well as the unique enterprise of supranational integration, while avoiding the pitfalls of exclusive nation-state identities, proposes the following: Europe's "Other" is its "Past," meaning the experience of devastating wars, and, more precisely, the Fascist and National-Socialist period, with the occupation of most European countries by Germany and its allies, with hitherto unseen horrors and cruelty, culminating in the extermination of the European Jews.⁶

Whereas this narrative of the Past is compatible with all the national narratives that exist in the European Union nowadays, it has another advantage: an identity-construction based on this *rationale* would not be as exclusive as the homogenous,

² Peter Graf Kielmansegg, *Integration und Demokratie*, in: EUROPÄISCHE INTEGRATION 47 (MARKUS JACHTENFUCHS / BEATE KOHLER-KOCH, EDS., 1996), is claiming the lack, even impossibility, of a European identity in the foreseeable future and the consequences of this finding for the legitimacy of the European construction. Going even further, Anthony Smith, *A Europe of Nations - or the Nation of Europe?*, in: 30:2 JOURNAL OF PEACE RESEARCH 129 (1993) neglects the possibility of a European identity for *ethnic* reasons.

³ Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Plädoyer gegen den EU-Beitritt eines islamischen Landes: Gespräch mit dem Bielefelder Historiker Hans-Ulrich Wehler / Wir sind nicht die Samariter der Türken*, in: F.A.Z., 5 November 2002, Heinrich August Winkler, *Europa am Scheideweg*, in: F.A.Z., 12 November 2003.

⁴ Thomas Diez, *Europe's Others and the Return of Geopolitics*, in: 17:2 CAMBRIDGE REVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS 319 (forthcoming).

⁵ Jacques Derrida, Jürgen Habermas, *Nach dem Krieg: Die Wiedergeburt Europas*, in: F.A.Z. 21 March 2003.

⁶ Ole Waever, *European Security Identities*, in: 34:1 JOURNAL OF COMMON MARKET STUDIES 103 (1996), Ole Waever, *Insecurity, Security and Asecurity in the West European Non-war Community*, in: SECURITY COMMUNITIES 90 (EMANUEL ADLER AND MICHAEL BARNETT, EDS., 1998). I am grateful to Thomas Diez who send me his insightful contribution to this point before release, Diez (note 4), 324, 332 critically reflecting the proposal of Waever.

“classical” nation-state identities of the 19th and early 20th centuries were.⁷ The past is the past, and it is always a matter of interpretation if a current situation resembles past experience, and thus falls into the category of the “Other”.⁸ On the other hand, it is a common strategy of political argumentation to invoke past experiences in present debates. Phrases like “The past shows us” and “This should never happen again” allow for much more “room for maneuver” in a political discussion than “othering”⁹ the neighbor and supporting the consequences.

But this strategy brings up questions that have not been addressed so far. How does the appeal to the Past in the creation of a self-understanding work? To what extent are strategic and “ideational” reasons enmeshed when this argument is used? And finally, is it really so “free of charge” to bring the Past into the present political discussions?

The European Union knows one example in which “memory politics” caused an undeniable effect. On 3 October 1999, the parliamentary elections in Austria ended 13 years of “great coalition” between the conservative Austrian People’s Party (ÖVP) and the Austrian Social Democrats (SPÖ).¹⁰ The election was won by the SPÖ with 33.15% of the votes, followed by the ÖVP and the extreme-right¹¹ Freedom

⁷ BERNHARD GIESEN, *DIE INTELLEKTUELLEN UND DIE NATION* Vol. 1 (1993), BERNHARD GIESEN, *KOLLEKTIVE IDENTITÄT - DIE INTELLEKTUELLEN UND DIE NATION* Vol. 2 (1999), on the construction of national identity in the 19th century, analyzing processes that can be observed in transformed, but still similar ways on the European level.

⁸ Diez (note 4), 332.

⁹ Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory (John C. Turner et al., eds., 1987); Henri Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (1982), on social psychological constants in inter-group relations. Leonie Huddy, *From Social to Political Identity: A Critical Examination of Social Identity Theory*, in: 22:1 *Political Psychology* 127 (2001), on the political implications of social psychological group theories.

¹⁰ After a first period of “great coalition” from 1945 to 1966. An account of all Austrian governments since 1945: <http://www.austria.gv.at/>.

¹¹ The political definition of Jörg Haider and his party changes between “national-liberalism”, “extreme right”, “populism” and “corporatist movement”. This results not least in the different *national* perceptions of the Haider-party throughout Europe, as this article will show. For the rest of the article, I am not so much interested in labelling the FPÖ or Haider, but in comparing the different national labels given to them. Literature on the “Haider phenomenon”: BRIGITTE BAILER-GALANDA / WOLFGANG NEUGEBAUER, *HAIDER UND DIE FREIHEITLICHEN IN ÖSTERREICH* (1997); *WOFÜR ICH MICH MEINETWEGEN ENTSCHULDIGE. HAIDER BEIM WORT GENOMMEN* (HUBERTUS CZERNIN, ED., 2000); CAS MUDDE, *THE IDEOLOGY OF THE EXTREME RIGHT* (2000); Kurt Luther, *Austria: A Democracy Under Threat From the FPÖ?*, 53:3 *PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS*, 426 (2000); Duncan Morrow, *Jörg Haider and the New FPÖ: Beyond the Democratic Pale?*, in: *THE POLITICS OF THE EXTREME RIGHT. FROM MARGINS TO MAINSTREAM* 33 (PAUL HAINSWORTH, ED., 2000); ANTON PELINKA / RUTH WODAK, *THE HAIDER PHENOMENON IN AUSTRIA* (2002); ANTON PELINKA / RUTH WODAK, *DRECK AM STECKEN: POLITIK DER AUSGRENZUNG* (2003).

Party (FPÖ) of Jörg Haider, both with 26.91%. Due to the difficult negotiations, it was not until 4 February 2000 that a “black-blue” coalition between the ÖVP and the FPÖ was sworn in.¹²

In an unprecedented act, the other 14 EU Member States decided to react with bilateral sanctions, as they felt they had to “continue to defend the essential values that underpin the European construction and which are also the reference framework for the way the European Union behaves in its external relations.”¹³

To account for the strange situation that was created by the sanctions, various and, at times, controversial explanations are given. One sees them as a “strategic” move of France and Belgium, the two most fervent supporters of the sanctions. For these countries, support for the sanctions could be explained by domestic political interest which lay behind them (extreme right parties exerted considerable electoral pressure on the French and Belgian governments at the time).¹⁴ Yet, the case is more difficult for the other 12 members of the sanction supporters.

A second strategic explanation advances the “left-wing conspiracy” thesis of a common action by the majority of European socialist governments.¹⁵ This could explain the case of Germany’s red-green government, even if it may seem hard to imagine why a pragmatic politician such as Germany’s chancellor Gerhard Schröder should neglect public opinion for purely ideological reasons: 80% of the Germans were against the sanctions, a majority that was voluntarily exploited by the conservative opposition. This account has an even harder time to explain the Spanish case of José Maria Aznar’s conservative PP-government which was, nevertheless, a staunch supporter of the sanctions.¹⁶

¹² Jörg Haider, though being head of the party, decided to stay at the head of his province of Carinthia. Later in spring 2000, he resigned from the head of the party. For an exact chronology and a comprehensive account of the events, see ÖSTERREICH UNTER ‘EU-QUARANTÄNE’: DIE ‘MAßNAHMEN DER 14’ GEGEN DIE ÖSTERREICHISCHE BUNDESREGIERUNG AUS POLITIKWISSENSCHAFTLICHER UND JURISTISCHER SICHT; CHRONOLOGIE, KOMMENTAR, DOKUMENTATION 114 (WALDEMAR HUMMER / ANTON PELINKA, EDS., 2002).

¹³ Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs, Francisco Seixas de Costa, speaking for the Council Presidency, quoted in Agence Europe, 3 February 2000.

¹⁴ See Michael Merlingen / Cas Mudde / Ulrich Sedelmeier, *The Right and the Righteous? European Norms, Domestic Politics and the Sanctions Against Austria*, in: 39:1 JOURNAL OF COMMON MARKET STUDIES 59, 62 (2001).

¹⁵ *Id.*, 61.

¹⁶ Pelinka, 27, in: PELINKA / HUMMER (note 12) denies that the sanctions “can be brought in any left-right scheme at all” (my translation).

On the other hand, is a purely ideational approach, which takes the existence of common European norms into account, including even identity, stark enough to explain why such astute politicians as Chirac, Schröder, Jospin, Aznar, Blair or Rasmussen gave up their close symbiotic relationship with their domestic opinion polls and followed their normative conscience, thus creating a troubled situation which – to the impression of many – turned the EU into a “fool’s garden”?¹⁷

The remainder of this article is divided into six sections in order to illustrate how the seemingly “cheap memory talk” developed its own life, limiting the space for political action for fourteen of the Member States almost against their will. Sections B and C show the strategic use of a normative argument and its effects on the political debate. Sections D and E use discourse analysis to show why the “memory talk” of single/individual politicians needs to be part of a discursive environment in order to deploy its effects. If there is a “strong discursive alliance” between normative politicians and the discursive environment, competing accounts are disqualified, as section E shows. Finally, sections F and G question the way in which this discursive environment works.¹⁸ By appealing to the collectively embedded narratives of the past, universal psychological, often traumatic, experiences re-emerge in the discourse. They are so broad, and yet so powerful, that even an alternative discourse has to accept their existence and effects, not only in a national discursive sphere, but also at the European level – thus “Defining Europe Against its Past.”

B. Politics by “Rhetorical Action” - The French President

After the announcement of the sanctions, *Le Monde*¹⁹ reacted with a dossier of six articles on 2 February. In all the quotations by the French politicians mentioned in the newspaper, we can study the appeal to a normative background and to a

¹⁷ Remember the diplomatic struggle that brought Mexican president Zedillo on the official “EU family-photo” at the Lisbon summit in March 2000, thus changing it into a “group photograph” were the ostracised Austrian chancellor Schüssel could take part without being re-integrated into the “family” (F.A.Z. 23March 2000)?

¹⁸ This work is based on a qualitative discourse analysis of Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (F.A.Z.), Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ), Le Monde (LM) and Le Figaro (LF), taking into account articles written between 15 January 2000 and 15 October 2000. The many citations of politicians, intellectuals, *etc.*, in the papers make sure that I do not only analyze the position of the four newspapers, but the interplay between the actors’ (politicians *etc.*) rhetorical action and the discursive structure, as provided by the newspapers. For a comparable enterprise of the French case, see Ulla Holm, *The French Garden Is No Longer What It Used to Be*, in: REFLECTIVE APPROACHES TO EUROPEAN GOVERNANCE 122 (KNUD E. JØRGENSEN, ED., 1997).

¹⁹ As *Le Monde* is an evening-newspaper, the edition of 2 February is available as from 1 February, 1 pm.

European “community of values”: Jacques Chirac, via his speaker, Catherine Colonna, states: “*Parce qu'il est des principes sur lesquels on ne peut transiger, le président de la République avait proposé samedi matin plusieurs mesures concrètes...*”²⁰ The Deputy Minister for European Affairs, Pierre Moscovici (PS), supports the President when speaking of “*l'importance de bien marquer que l'Europe ne pouvait tolérer que ses valeurs soient transgressées*” (*id.*).²¹

This discourse is further affirmed by a quotation from French Minister of Defense Alain Richard in *Le Figaro*, the second major French newspaper: “*...l'Union a un devoir de fidélité vis-à-vis des premiers pères de l'Europe pour faire prévaloir les valeurs face aux tentations politiques momentanées.*”²²

This “rhetorical action”²³ shows how French politicians appeal to normative arguments in order to justify a political decision. So far, it is hard to say something about the effects of these normative arguments. One could reasonably assume that these statements deploy some effect in the domestic environment, as they are furthering the cleavage between the “democratic” French parties and the “extreme right” Front National. But, as the sanctions against Austria were decided at the European level, this rhetorical action also works at the European level.

C. Entrapped by Rhetorical Action - The German Chancellor and the Franco-German Past

At first sight, the skepticism of German public opinion against the sanctions would have allowed German politicians a more nuanced approach. Even “Euro-bashing,” gaining domestic profile by blaming Europe, would have seemed possible. The “cheap normative talk” of French politicians should not have constrained the domestic discursive space for possible argumentation on the German side. On the other hand, the “socialist conspiracy” hypothesis would have foreseen strong

²⁰ LE MONDE, 2 February 2004. “Because there are principles that cannot be negotiated, the President of the Republic proposed, on Saturday morning, several concrete measures” (my translations in all of the remaining article).

²¹ “...the importance to clearly mark out that Europe could not tolerate that its values were transgressed”.

²² LE FIGARO, 2 February 2004. “The Union has a duty of fidelity towards the first fathers of Europe, making sure that values prevail in the face of present political temptations”.

²³ Frank Schimmelfennig, *Rhetorisches Handeln in der internationalen Politik*, in: 4:2 Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen 219, 227-235 (1997); Frank Schimmelfennig, *Rules and Rhetoric. The Eastern Enlargement of NATO and the European 194* (2003), establishes the concept of “rhetorical action”, the appeal to normatively loaded arguments for strategic use in a political discussion.

support for the sanctions by the red-green German government for normative reasons. Eventually, the “pragmatic” chancellor opted for a middle ground position. He is quoted in a “pragmatic” way: “*Schröder ne veut ‘rien avoir à faire’ avec Haider, malgré son ‘amitié pour un pays par ailleurs sympathique.’*”²⁴

This strategic, not normative, approach is taken up by the German Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer (Greens). When the Bavarian CSU (*Christlich Soziale Union*) of Stoiber and large parts of the CDU (*Christdemokratische Union*) decided to attack the sanctions and to support the Austrian government, he was asked in an interview with *Le Monde* how long he would be able to oppose the majority of the public opinion. His answer was that, “The constitution obliges us to defend German interests.”²⁵ German interest, to his understanding, is not to leave or split the coalition of the fourteen Europeans. He continues, “We will not commit the mistake of turning Haider into a German problem.” This position is identical to that of Chancellor Schröder. He justifies his European position, which is contrary to the German public opinion, in *Le Figaro*: “*Nous n’allons pas risquer de couper l’Allemagne des valeurs communes à l’Europe et à la communauté occidentale.*”²⁶

Whereas the Bavarian Minister President, Stoiber, turned to both his regional and to the domestic German audience, the Chancellor and his Foreign Minister had to bear the domestic *and* European dimension of their rhetoric in mind. As a result, they only give lukewarm support to the normative “community of values”. Instead, their main reasoning was strategic, to keep Germany “in Europe”, even “in the West”. Even if they were not taking up the normative side of the arguments of French politicians, their rhetorical action – evoking European values and past experiences – also had an effect on the German debate. It was no longer contained in national borders, but to a certain point, there was a “Europeanization” of the debate.

The question remains of how the rhetorical action of the French side (after all, only used by a small number of – albeit important – actors) can become so powerful. To understand this, we have to turn to the structure of the discursive environment. Section D looks at the mutual re-enforcement of structure and action in the French case. Section E makes the point that this French alliance becomes so powerful that even the *German Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (F.A.Z.) – forging a sanction-critical

²⁴ LE FIGARO, 2 February 2004. “Schröder doesn't want 'to have to do anything' with Haider, despite his 'friendship for a country after all sympathetic'.”

²⁵ LE MONDE, 18 April 2004.

²⁶ LE FIGARO, 12 April 2004. “We will not risk cutting Germany from the common values of Europe and of the Western community.”

discourse of undeniable inner logic and coherence – has to adapt and to take the existence and effects of the normative argument into account.

D. The Discursive Shaping of a European Community of Values – The Case of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Le Monde*

The normative argument of French politicians can, at first sight, be believed or not (as always with normative arguments). To become salient, it has to be taken up and integrated into the dominant discourse, so that it, too, becomes part of the dominating “power structure” underlying a collective self. Consequently, the politicians need the “public sphere”²⁷ that frames and, thus, perceives of the observed phenomenon (Haider and the sanctions) in a way that supports the normative argument.

In fact, the two newspapers that supported the sanctions wholeheartedly (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Le Monde*) used exactly this strategy. They framed Haider, the FPÖ and the Austrian government as “extreme right,” “extreme right populists” or even “fascists.”

If the “fascist past” is Europe’s “Other,” then anyone labeled a “fascist” is automatically disqualified. Thus, it is important for the supporters of the sanctions to embed and anchor the “fascist frame” (a discursive amalgam of extreme rightism, populism, fascism, national-socialism) in the discourse. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* does this in quite an explicit way and wants to use the Austrian case for a whole political agenda, as the leading article on 8 February shows:

*“Eine Anklageschrift gegen die Regierung in Wien reicht nicht aus. Jetzt muss das Verfahren eröffnet werden. Die Geisteshaltung der FPÖ kann nur mit beharrlicher Argumentation enttarnt werden. Die Mitglieder, die Finanzierung, die Amtsträger der FPÖ – all das verdient intensive Beobachtung. Europa hat in den vergangenen Monaten beachtliche Schritte zu mehr Integration getan. Nachvollzogen hat die Öffentlichkeit die neue Qualität der EU noch nicht. Die Politik gegenüber Österreich bietet nun die Chance, den alten Dämon Rechtsextremismus im Herzen Europas zu besiegen und den Bürgern gleichzeitig Stärke und Qualität des neuen Europas zu erklären.”*²⁸

²⁷ More precisely, “public sphere” means the mass media that represent to a broad extent the power structures of a society in their way of granting access, “voice,” to their discourse or not.

²⁸ “A charge against the government in Vienna is not enough. The trial has to be opened now. The spirit of the FPÖ can only be exposed through patient argumentation. The members, the financing, the office bearers of the FPÖ – all that merits intensive observation. In the last months, Europe has made important steps towards more integration. The public has not yet realized the new quality of the EU. The

This sounds like a partisan program. In fact, in the following weeks, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* fulfils this program, showing the “members, financial structures, office bearers” of the FPÖ. On the 6 April, a long article shows the case of a medical “expert” close to the FPÖ who gives advice to Austrian courts on the “exact” age of refugees and asylum seekers. The article makes the case that he and his institute have “concrete links to the racial pseudo-science of the Nazis.” On 22 August and 26 September, further important articles take up the framing of the FPÖ as xenophobic and authoritarian, each time with examples that show cases, names, and traditions.

As the concrete actions of the new Austrian government do not match²⁹ the “foreseeable” action that should follow from the stories told by the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, there is a second meta-discourse that argues on an emotional level and uses literary feature-articles to show the “spirit” of Haider, the FPÖ, the government and – at times – “Austria.” On 4 March, an article analyses the Austrian past and the Austrian way of:

“Vergangenheitsbewältigung” (“coming to terms with the past”): not only single actors are the problem of Austria, but also the existence of a “Melange aus reaktionärem Katholizismus und unaufgearbeiteten nationalsozialistischen Mentalitätsbeständen.”³⁰

The article goes on:

“Die Faschisten sind grundsätzlich die anderen, so lautet ein österreichischer Selbstentschuldungsmechanismus beim Thema Haider, der bis in die Kreise der Sozialdemokratie reicht: ‘Wir sind kein Naziland.’ Der Linkspopulist und ehemalige sozialdemokratische Bürgermeister Wiens, Helmut Zilk, sagt es den Österreichboykotteuren als tapferer Patriot ins Gesicht: ‘Diese totale Verurteilung, Ausgrenzung, Überheblichkeit – das ist faschistoid.’ Da ist der Weg

politics against Austria contain a chance to overcome the old demon of the extreme right in the heart of Europe and to explain at the same time power and quality of the new Europe to its citizens.”

²⁹ Clearly, the SZ and sanction-supporters would argue: because of international awareness, the Austrian government didn't dare to show its “real face”.

³⁰ “A melange of reactionary Catholicism and not re-crafted parts of national-socialist mentality.”

*nicht mehr weit zum Sprachmaterial und zu den Denkfiguren von Haider selbst, zur paranoiden Verkehrung von Tätern und Opfern.”*³¹

The extension of the frame of the “fascist past” on the whole country and the whole “mentality” makes it difficult for opponents of the sanctions to find a legitimate standpoint. Instead, they would have to counter the debate at another level.

On the French side, *Le Monde* qualifies Haider and his movement as “extreme right” in nearly all the articles dealing with the sanctions. Furthermore, to give salience to its position, *Le Monde* uses strategies comparable to the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. The paper wants to disqualify the Austrian politician and his movement not just by presenting him as extreme right. By framing Haider as the reincarnation of the fascist past, possible alternatives to the sanctions become automatically impossible.

To this end, the newspaper uses literary features and brings in the voices of “intellectuals” that are supposed to have special weight. On 28 February, Georges-Arthur Goldschmidt writes “*De la pureté à la barbarie.*” The author has a special “authority” within the discourse, as he himself had to flee the Nazis as a young boy, finding refuge in France. He states that “forgetting” about the past – Haider’s main strategy-- has one result: “*Blanc comme la neige on repart*”³² – after being “cleaned” from the lessons of the past, the pre-war experience can re-start. Ultimately, the “cleansing” of the past brings along the “cleansing” of those remembering the past. They will be “eliminated.” Elimination is the very nature of national socialism and also the final end of the “sportive neo-Nazism” of Haider, leading into “barbarism.” The remembering of the “lessons of the Past” undeniably gains a special role of highest importance, in order to prevent a new fascist experience in Europe.

Such a characterization of the spirit and thoughts of the FPÖ and its leader cannot be changed easily. When *Le Monde* states – with reference to Haider – “*L’extermination est le contenu ultime et fondamental de l’inconscient néonazi,*”³³ this

³¹ “Fascists are always the others, that is an Austrian mechanism of self-excuse in the Haider-debate. It can even be found in social-democratic circles: ‘We are not a Nazi-country.’ The left populist and former social-democrat mayor of Vienna, Helmut Zilk, shouts it in the faces of the boycotters of Austria, as a courageous patriot that he is: ‘This total condemnation, ostracism, arrogance – that is fascist.’ This is not far away from the language and the metaphors of Haider himself, from the paranoid reversal of perpetrators and victims.”

³² “From purity to barbarism”: “White like snow, we re-start.”

³³ “Extermination is the ultimate and fundamental content of the neo-Nazi unconscious.”

frame can hardly be attenuated, but even fosters action to prevent a “néonazi” state. And rightly, we find articles that appeal in a barely veiled way to “resist” in *Le Monde*. Alexandre Adler³⁴ writes on 24 February of, “*Le projet européen de Jörg Haider*”.³⁵ He fears: “*La bagarre reprend la où on l’avait laissée à la fin des années 30...*” but is confident:

*“Et puis, n’ayons pas peur de la boxe: rappelons-nous qu’à la troisième manche le grand Ray Sugar Robinson a quand même expédié au tapis, pour la plus grande fureur de Hitler, ce bel aryen parfait qu’était Max Schmeling. Allons, il se trouvera bien un nouveau héros républicain et européen, peut-être bien un de ces Français que le Führer qualifiait à juste titre de négriifiés ([...]), pour rectifier le portrait de Jörg Haider...”*³⁶

The ambiance that is created in these articles makes allusions to the Revolution in 1789 and to the atmosphere of civil war that prevailed in many European countries in the late 1930s. If the sanctions against Austria are linked in such a way to a Europe that is presented as a (especially French) project of “political enlightenment,” against the *Ancien Régime* and European fascism (naturally, “clericalism” is also mentioned in *Le Monde*), then it is difficult to oppose the sanctions. If Haider, his movement, the Austrian government, and even Austria as a whole, are perceived in a (proto-) fascist frame, and if Europe’s sanctions act against these “specters from the past,” then questioning these sanctions becomes a difficult enterprise. It means being exposed to accusations of philo-fascism, or, at least, being suspected of “appeasement.”

E. Countering a Dominant Discourse – The F.A.Z.

When the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* tries to break up the dominant framing, it is precisely this challenge that it faces. It cannot argue in an independent way, but always has to relate to the allegations of the “pro-sanction” discourse.

³⁴ Historian, studied at the École Normale Supérieure of Rue d’Ulm, publisher of *Courrier Internationale*, one of the most esteemed French press publications: Its weekly format consists of a press review with French reprints of articles of the world’s most renowned press organs.

³⁵ “Jörg Haider’s European project.”

³⁶ “The battle re-starts were we left it at the end of the thirties...” - “And then, let’s not be frightened of boxing: let’s remember that, after all, the great Ray Sugar Robinson, in the third round, sent this beautiful perfect Aryan that was Max Schmeling, to the floor, to the greatest furiousness of Hitler. Come on, we may surely find a new Republican and European hero, perhaps one of these Frenchmen that the Führer rightly qualified as negronized ([...]), to reify the portray of Jörg Haider...”

The newspaper, which clearly rejects allegations of ideological closeness to Haider and cannot accept “proto-fascism” as an acceptable label, tries to show the “ideological” character of the sanctions by “deconstructing” the discourse of the pro-sanctionists. On the 8 February, an article comments on Jörg Haider’s appearance in a TV talk-show (“*Talk in Berlin*”) and claims:

“Man könnte auch von dem Versuch einer ideologischen Gründung Europas sprechen, das nicht mehr christlich und auch nicht mehr antikommunistisch verstanden werden kann und jetzt – in einem sehr weiten, nicht klassisch linken Sinne – ‘antifaschistisch’ definiert werden soll. Haider erscheint als Verkörperung desjenigen, was Europa nach dem Willen seiner politischen Klasse nicht sein soll.”³⁷

Only three days later, the “founding myth” is again “deconstructed”:

“Der interessantere Aspekt ist der ideologische. Er hat zu tun mit dem Versuch einer Neudefinition der europäischen Linken und mit ihrem erst vage erkennbaren Projekt der Schaffung einer europäischen Identität jenseits von christlichem Abendland und Antikommunismus. Die Linke, [...] eignet sich jetzt Europa an. Der Holocaust und das ‘Nie wieder’ werden dabei zur Chiffre des Gründungsmythos einer europäischen Nation, in der es nur noch ‘Innenpolitik’ gibt. [...] Wenn die Linke in diesem Sinne versucht, Europa zur moralischen Großmacht zu erheben, dann füllt sie damit auch ein ideologisches Vakuum bei sich selbst. [...] Die Linke ist in der Wirklichkeit angekommen” (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung 11.02.).³⁸

Besides naming explicitly – thus “deconstructing” – the “ideological” reasoning of the European left, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* uses two more strategies to delegitimize the leading discourse: It continues to show the “inconsistency” of the EU-reaction. On the 1 February, it raises the objection that the participation of communists in European governments did not lead to the same reaction as a

³⁷ “One could also speak of the attempt to establish an ideological foundation of Europe, that can no longer be understood in a Christian way, nor in an anti-communist sense and that now – in a very broad, not classical left sense – is to be defined in an ‘antifascist’ way. Haider seems to represent all that Europe, in the will of its political class, shall not stand for.”

³⁸ “The more interesting aspect is an ideological one. It has to do with the attempt of a re-definition of the European left and with the only vaguely discernable project of creating a European identity beyond Christian Abendland [Western Europe] and anti-communism. The left [...] is integrating Europe. The Holocaust and the “never again” become ciphers of the founding myths of a European nation, where only ‘domestic politics’ exist. [...] If the Left in this sense tries to establish Europe as a moral great power, than this fills also an ideological vacuum of the Left itself. [...] The Left has arrived in reality.”

participation of the extreme right.³⁹ On 2 February, the Italian experience with Gianfranco Fini, “who was called a neo-fascist,” is mentioned.

In a third strategy, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* goes even further and gives the “European left” a voice in the lines of its newspaper. It is here that a truly European dimension can be observed. Whereas the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* hopes that this strategy (the “left ideologues” speaking for themselves) will lead to a de-legitimization of the “pro-sanction” discourse (if framed in the “right” way), this proceeding brings the (not only left) European discourses to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* readers, and also to the German public sphere.

Already on 2 February, the leftwing Italian *La Repubblica* is cited establishing the sanctions:

“war für uns die glückliche Entdeckung jenes verborgenen Gewissens, das vielen verloren schien. Es sieht so aus, als entstehe gerade das politische Europa. [...] Erstmals definiert Europa mit einem konkreten Akt seine eigene politische Identität – und verleiht dieser Identität einen klaren übernationalen Wert.”⁴⁰

On 12 February (after shaming the “ideological” strategy on 8 and 11 February, see above), Italian publisher Paolo Flores d’Arcais⁴¹ writes in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*: “Worte sind schon Taten” and continues:

“...die Grundnorm [...] auf der die Rechtmäßigkeit aller juristischen Ordnungen, also der Staaten Europa beruht, der Sieg über den Nazifaschismus ist. Das heißt, die Niederlage des Nazifaschismus, den ihm die alliierten Heere und der Widerstand bereitet haben. Das ist die fundamentale DNA der europäischen Demokratien vom Kriegsende bis heute.”

Even if he condemns the Stalinist Gulag, he finds:

“Hingegen ist auf der Ebene historischer Legitimierung der gegenwärtigen europäischen Demokratien nur der Antifaschismus

³⁹ See Anton Pelinka in HUMMER / PELINKA (note 12) on the different strategies of “relativisation” of NS: On the left, NS = fascism, on the right: NS = totalitarianism.

⁴⁰ Establishing the sanctions “were for us the fortunate discovering of this hidden conscience that many thought lost. It looks as if political Europe is currently coming into being. [...] For the first time, Europe defines its own political identity in a concrete act – and thus gives to this identity a clearly supranational value.”

⁴¹ Publisher of “*MicroMega*”, is considered a “theoretical leader” of the Italian left.

Erbgut und Grundnorm, weil die Kommunisten fester Bestandteil der militärischen Allianz (und der Resistenza) waren, die die Demokratien aufgebaut hat, in welchen wir leben."⁴²

This observation seems to prevail at least in the French, Belgian and Italian discourse. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* now continues to act at European level and brings, on 6 March, a translation of French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy's report that was published in *Le Monde* on 2 March. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* justifies this translation:

*"...Levys Text [wird] selbst zum Dokument einer Wahrnehmung, von der sich die französische Politik in Europa – und gegenüber Österreich – offenbar leiten lässt."*⁴³

The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* has undoubtedly become aware of the specific French perception of the Haider affair and understands at the very least that it is not only an "ideological" left that supports the sanctions.

The last two sections have shown how the strategic invocation of a normative argument – by French officials – becomes a dominant frame when taken up and integrated into the discursive structure. Evidence was found that this dominant discourse has effects not only in the domestic – French – area, but that there is also, to some extent, a "Europeanization" of the effect.

As the "dominant frame" is an exclusive one that creates an "Other," it is hard to take the side of the "Other." This is the experience of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* which was shown in section E. Even the newspaper's sophisticated approach of countering the dominant discourse by three strategies – deconstruction, blaming inconsistency, naming explicitly – was not able to challenge the dominant structures of the European discursive environment.

⁴² "Words are deeds" – "...the fundamental norm [...], on which the legitimacy of all juridical orders, that is of the states of Europe, is founded, is the victory over Nazi fascism. This means the defeat of Nazi fascism, that was brought to him by the allied armies and the resistance. That is the fundamental DNA of the European democracies, from the end of war up to nowadays." ... "On the other side, on the level of historical legitimisation of the current European democracies, only anti-fascism constitutes their DNA and fundamental norm, because the communists were a solid part of the military alliance (and of the *resistenza*), that build up the democracies in which we are living."

⁴³ "...Levy's text itself becomes the document of a perception that obviously seems to guide French politics in Europe and against Austria."

F. Giving Salience to a Partisan Argument - France, Pan-Germany and the Traumatic Past

The last two sections are concerned with analyzing the “missing link” in order to understand the salience of a normatively loaded discourse (*Le Monde*) over an argumentation concerned with the standards of international law and sovereignty of states (*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*). It is precisely the appeal to emotional and affective layers of past traumatic experience that explains the success of the “normative” discourse. When “emotions” are called into the discursive sphere, this gives a hard time to the rational discourse on international law fostered by the *F.A.Z.*

The amalgam between Haider, Austria, Germany and Pan-Germanism appears for the first time in *Le Figaro* and *Le Monde* under the form of historical analyses of the FPÖ and Austria.⁴⁴ They insist upon two points. The first is the close link between Austrian and German history, which persisted even after World War II. The second is the spiritual and *de facto* links between the NSDAP (the Nazi party) and the post-war FPÖ that continue up to the present.

On 8 February, André Fontaine writes “*L’identité brouillée de l’Autriche.*”⁴⁵ This article starts as a large and well-informed portrait of Austrian and European history, leading from Charles V’s (1519-1556) empire to the Austrian double monarchy, the first World War and the Hitler period. The article mentions that Austria asked, from the end of World War I, for re-unification with Germany. The refusal of this claim by the allies led to the *großdeutsche* (“greater-German”) tradition in Austria. Finally, the missed *Entnazifizierung* (“de-Nazification”) after 1945 and the myth of Austria as Hitler’s “first victim” are mentioned.

Although this article clearly enhances the “fascist-past” frame from Haider to the intertwined history of both Austria and Germany (thus turning Haider into a “German problem”), the last paragraph of the article goes even further. After having concluded that the German-Austrian history, the specific problems of Austrian politics (*Proporz*, encrusted power-relations...) and the general western *ennui* as represented in Francis Fukuyama’s *End of History*⁴⁶ result in a general feeling of a high need for (system) change, the article finishes:

⁴⁴ This shows again: Fear of Germany is not a partisan argument, but has its place in the conservative and the liberal-left newspaper.

⁴⁵ “Austria’s confuse identity”.

⁴⁶ FRANCIS FUKUYAMA, *THE END OF HISTORY AND THE LAST MAN* (1992).

“Si tel était le cas [general support for radical change], ne faudrait-il pas redouter l’effet d’entraînement que ce phénomène pourrait avoir ailleurs, et pour commencer en Allemagne, où l’affreuse affaire Kohl laisse l’électorat de droite désespéré?”⁴⁷

Again, and in a more dangerous way as in the first part of the article, it is insinuated that Haider, in “reality”, is a German problem. This view of the problem is further enhanced in four long, fundamental articles published between 7 February and 15 May.

Le Figaro makes this point even before *Le Monde*. It has an interview with Arthur Pächt on 4 February. Mr. Pächt is head of the Franco-Austrian parliamentary group. More importantly, his rhetorical action has special “weight”: He was born in Austria, from where he had to flee one year after *Anschluss*. His parents, not able to leave Austria, were killed by the Nazis.⁴⁸ The deputy of the French *département* of Var fears that:

“Aujourd’hui, le danger vient aussi de la Bavière, où l’Anschluss a laissé de mauvais souvenirs. La faillite de la CDU en Allemagne pourrait avoir de sérieuses répercussions en Bavière, où les thèses nationalistes trouvent toujours un certain écho.”⁴⁹

Again, there is no clear evidence of what makes Arthur Pächt afraid, if it is not his traumatic past experience, but the insinuation works. It is taken up and further enhanced in articles on 17 and 24 February, when the climax of the debate is reached. In his article on 24 February (see above), Adler sees Haider already in Berlin:

“...cette longue marche de Haider vers Berlin est à présent entamée.”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ “If this was the case [general support for radical change], shouldn't one fear the kick-off effect that this phenomenon could have elsewhere, and to start with in Germany, where the terrible Kohl scandal has left the voters of the right stunned?”

⁴⁸ To underpin the actor's “rhetorical weight”, LF presents these sad facts abundantly when introducing Pächt.

⁴⁹ “Today, the danger is also coming from Bavaria, where the *Anschluss* has left some bad souvenirs. The failing of the CDU in Germany could have serious reverberations in Bavaria, where nationalist hypotheses always find a certain echo.”

⁵⁰ “The long march of Haider towards Berlin is currently on the way.”

He sees a large coalition, encompassing the “holy alpine trinity of Haider-Blocher-Stoiber”, the *Vlaams Blok* and some remaining Vichy intellectuals, forming a coalition “qui ne demande qu’à s’élargir progressivement vers Anvers, Dresde et Berlin.”⁵¹

This is, of course, the old “Germanic” block of the time when French and Germans were hereditary enemies. It goes back (at least) to the Second Empire and the Franco-German war in 1870/71.⁵² In this view, it is not that important if Haider is “really” a fascist or even a Nazi. Suffice to say that he represents the “bad” Germany. Accordingly, Adler sees a “third force” in Germany on the other side, “représentée par le catholicisme municipal rhénan, tourné vers la France...” He goes on:

*“Cette Allemagne des cités libérale, catholique, protestante et, à l’époque, juive, eut brièvement le moyen de se faire entendre en mars 1848 à Francfort, mais il fallut attendre 1945 pour que, dans un espace rétréci, sans Prusse ni Autriche, elle triomphe vraiment avec les catholiques rhénans Adenauer et Kohl, les protestants hanséates Brandt et Schmidt.”*⁵³

Thus, it is somewhat akin to the “holy alliance” and the Restoration that are the spiritual fathers of Haider, but which are also – in a way – at the origin of the German catastrophe of 1933-1945. It is in a discursive amalgam that all these diverse forces are brought together, and it is also this approximation that enables discourses to shift from Haider to Stoiber, to be translated from Austria to Germany, from the traumatic experience of the past to the political decisions of the present. The corresponding European project that defines itself *against* these “forces of evil” is one of enlightened liberalism, tamed (*Rhenish*) capitalism and anti-totalitarianism:

“...la force qui est sommée de remonter sur le ring pour se battre enfin sans esquive, mais, cette fois-ci à l’échelle de toute l’Europe continentale, c’est tout simplement la coalition vaincue de Weimar, ce rassemblement

⁵¹ “...asking for nothing else than to enlarge itself progressively towards Antwerp, Dresden and Berlin.”

⁵² See, on this subject, Michael Jeismann, *Das Vaterland der Feinde. Studien zum nationalen Feindbegriff und Selbstverständnis in Deutschland und Frankreich 1792 - 1918* (1992).

⁵³ “The third point of the Germanic triangle, that also constitutes its third force, [...] is represented by the urban Catholicism of the Rhineland, turned towards France...” “...This Germany of the liberal cities, catholic, protestant, and, at the time, Jewish, very shortly had the occasion to raise its voice in March 1848 in Frankfurt, but we had to wait for 1945 to see, in a more limited space, without Prussia, nor Austria, its triumph with the Rhenish Catholics Adenauer and Kohl, with the hanseatic Protestants Brandt and Schmidt.”

de sociaux-démocrates, de catholiques rhénans, d'industriels libéraux et d'intellectuels bourgeois alliés à la France républicaine, précurseurs de Keynes..."⁵⁴

This is clearly not an orthodox left coalition that would include communists:

*"Il n'y a pas d'autre solution cette fois-ci que de se montrer les plus forts – et d'abord sur le plan intellectuel et moral, ce qui exclut de sous-traiter ce combat [...] à une extrême gauche inepte, qui n'a jamais dans son histoire compris ce qu'était vraiment le fascisme européen..."*⁵⁵

Following these lines, it becomes understandable why Jacques Chirac and José Maria Aznar are supporting the sanctions against Austria, even if they are not part of the European left. The narratives evoked in the discourse of the sanction supporters are so all-encompassing and so commonly understood that they can cover a broad field of different interests: they can bring together ideological or partisan interests (*Le Monde*), as well as strategic reasoning (Jacques Chirac). This broadness leaves no room for alternative discourses that argue on the same level – and it is this that accounts for the compliance of Mr. Aznar or Schröder.

When the sanctions finally came to an end, *Le Monde* evolved its discourse to a point from which it could start its "auto-critique". On 14 September, it wrote:

*"Sans doute les Quatorze ont-ils pêché par méconnaissance des réalités autrichiennes. Sans doute la France notamment a-t-elle eu tort de se laisser entraîner par Jörg Haider dans l'outrance et la surenchère passionnelles. Sans doute était-il erroné de considérer qu'un parti d'extrême droite germanophone était forcément une réincarnation de la menace nazie, même si Jörg Haider fait tout pour nourrir ce soupçon."*⁵⁶

⁵⁴ "...the force that is asked to re-enter the ring to fight at least without sidestepping, but, this time, at the level of the whole continental Europe, this force is quite simply the defeated coalition of Weimar, this accumulation of social-democrats, Rhenish Catholics, liberal industrialists and *bourgeois* intellectuals, allied to republican France, precursors of Keynes..." .

⁵⁵ "This time, there is no other solution than proving that we are stronger – and first of all on an intellectual and moral level, what excludes the solution to leave this combat [...] to an extreme left inapt, that in its whole history has never understood what the European fascism really was..."

⁵⁶ "Without doubt, the Fourteen have sinned out of misunderstanding of the Austrian realities. Without doubt, especially France was wrong when it was torn by Jörg Haider into the exaggeration of passionate oversupply. Without doubt, it was wrong to consider a German speaking party of the extreme right necessarily as the re-incarnation of the Nazi menace, even if Jörg Haider did everything to arouse this suspicion."

Clearly, it was much more the articles of *Le Monde* than any official proclamation that turned Haider into “the Nazi menace.” But this framing of the Austrian politician became salient because it was not only *Le Monde*’s partisans who saw him this way.

In appealing to distinct, nationally shaped, collective representations of the past, the confusion between present and past became possible. The paper admitted this link, and, in a another article, excused the French attitude to the sanctions by means of different perceptions of the past:

“...chez nous le PCF est le ‘parti de fusillés’ qui ont payé le prix du sang pour la libération de la France”, whereas in Austria, “...le soldat soviétique n’a jamais été un libérateur, mais un *moujik* en uniforme qui violait impunément les femmes et trafiquait des montres volées. Et l’oncle mort dans l’enfer de Stalingrad vaut bien, dans l’incalculable addition des douleurs humaines, l’ex-voisine gazée à Auschwitz.”⁵⁷

But even if the author admits these different perceptions of the past and – for the first time in *Le Monde* – sees an Austrian post-war identity constructed *against* Germany, he keeps the emergency exit open:

“Il faut espérer que l’installation au pouvoir de la droite populiste, qui aura du mal a juguler ses pulsions anti-européennes, ne contrariera pas cette évolution.”⁵⁸ (meaning the evolution towards a democratic Austrian – *e.g.*, not German – identity).

There is no causal or formal logic in this reasoning – it is the logic of the discourses that we can observe. Once they are published, they continue to live their own lives, can re-appear and become salient at precise moments. This is especially so if they contain a traumatic experience – in the French case, the souvenir of German occupation – which is linked to the official narrative that legitimizes a polity, appeals to these discourses, and thereby guarantees attention – and therefore influence – in the public debate.

⁵⁷ “...here [in France], the PCF [French Communist Party] is the ‘party of the executed’ that has paid the price of blood for the liberation of France”, whereas in Austria, “...the soviet soldier never has been a liberator, but a *moujik* in uniform, violating women unpunished and trafficking stolen watches. And the uncle that died in the hell of Stalingrad equates, in the incalculable addition of human pain, the ex-neighbour gazed in Auschwitz.”

⁵⁸ “We must hope that the installation in power of the populist right, that will have problems to contain its anti-European passions, will not counter this evolution.”

G. German Reactions - Comprehension, not Confrontation

German reactions to French fears are once again partly dependent on the political position of the authors. While the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* tries to translate French fears, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* prefers an offensive discussion of the French theses.

On 4 February, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* finds: "Ratlosigkeit vor dem Phänomen Haider - In Frankreich weiß man nur wenig über Österreich."⁵⁹ The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* recalls that, on two successive days, *Le Monde* shows on its front-page a cartoon of Haider in Nazi-uniform, and a concentration camp with the inscription Arbeit macht frei. At this early stage, the *F.A.Z.* has not yet understood the deep impact that these traumatic reminiscences have on the French understanding of the situation. It is only later that the German newspaper admits the existence and salience - independent from its justification or not - of this discursive strand, when the co-editor of the paper, Berthold Kohler, publishes a leading article on 14 April. While still opposing the sanctions, he admits (against his former conviction) that the German government acted in the right way - precisely because of the "fear" that other nations have of Germany that lurks behind the pro-sanction discourses, which the *F.A.Z.* had only understood recently.

The editor, even if he personally believes it to be wrong, understands that the "European weight" of this argument is so important that the German government did not have much choice:

*"Die groteske Überreaktion auf Haider lässt erahnen, welche Argumente, welche historischen Analogien heraufbeschworen worden wären, wenn der 'germanische Block' gegen den Rest der EU gestanden hätte. Die Härte, mit der Österreich bestraft wird, legt den Verdacht nahe, dass dieses Gespenst noch immer die Nachtruhe des einen oder anderen Europäers stört."*⁶⁰

As the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* is politically closer to the French line and supports the sanctions, it has fewer problems of understanding the French fears. It even promotes and translates French analyses in the German discursive space. On 23 February, an article plays the role of "change agent." The author is a German

⁵⁹ "Perplexity in facing the Haider phenomenon - Little knowledge in France on Austria."

⁶⁰ "The grotesque over-reaction on Haider gives an idea of the arguments and the historical analogies that would have come up if the 'Germanic block' had stood against the rest of the EU. The hard punishment of Austria makes us suspicious that this spectre is still haunting the nightly calm of this or that European."

professor, a publisher living in Paris, Karl-Heinz Bohrer.⁶¹ He writes *“Die französische Herausforderung – In Paris kann man die abwiegelnde Reaktion der deutschen Konservativen auf Haider nicht fassen”*⁶² and starts from the deep differences between French and German conservatives when it comes to Haider. As the undeniable definition of Haider as “extreme right” has become part of the official French discourse and is accepted by a large majority, the German author fears a general estrangement of the two societies. He starts by de-legitimizing the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* strategy which consisted in framing the French discourse as uninformed and “intellectual”⁶³:

*“Im Präsidenten und im Intellektuellen drückt sich vielmehr eine allgemeine französische Härte aus, die – im Unterschied zum deutschen Desinteresse an breiter Information – die umfangreiche Analyse der innenpolitischen österreichischen Verhältnisse betreibt.”*⁶⁴

The French analysis is based on clear-cut definitions and – in its French context – of undeniable inner logic. Therefore, attenuation of the cleavages as favored by German conservatives would be dangerous:

*“Gegenüber dieser festen Position, die den Haider-Liberalismus als faschistoiden Korporatismus bezeichnet, ist deutsche Abwiegelung oder gar Polemik im eigenen Interesse objektiv deplaziert.”*⁶⁵

It is precisely the danger of “turning Haider into a German problem” that would be raised when the German conservatives continue to support the anti-sanctions camp:

⁶¹ Professor (ret.) of German literature in Bielefeld, guest professor in Stanford 1998, Gadamer-professor in Heidelberg 2001. Studied history, philosophy, German literature and sociology. Publishes the *“Mercur”*, “German journal for European thought”, lives in Paris.

⁶² “The French challenge – Paris cannot believe the appeasing reactions of German conservatives in the face of Haider.”

⁶³ Meaning “far away from reality” or led by intellectuals always ready to raise moral claims, but of few concrete impact on French politics.

⁶⁴ “The President and the intellectual express a very firm, commonly accepted French position that carries out an extensive analysis of the Austrian domestic affairs – contrary to the German disinterest in broader information.”

⁶⁵ “Faced with this firm position, that understands Haider-liberalism as a fascist corporatism, German appeasement or even polemics is objectively misplaced, in our own interest.”

“Deshalb nämlich, weil ein Verständnis zwischen den beiden konservativen Parteien der beiden Nachfolgestaaten des Dritten Reiches in Frankreich als Spitze gegen den Westen verstanden würde und folgerichtig geahndet würde: Ein 30 Jahre lang gebautes Vertrauen wäre über Nacht weggewischt. Man muss also wissen, was man will: innenpolitische Harmonie mit dem bayerischen Ministerpräsidenten oder außenpolitische Solidarität mit der französischen Republik. Beides zusammen geht zur Zeit nicht.”⁶⁶

Accordingly, he goes on, the relation of the French political establishment towards Germany is already changing, and there are questions on the CSU and its leader Stoiber, who counts, “in French political science, amongst one and the same ideological family as Haider.” Consequently, the problem is the indifference of the German conservatives, neglecting the French understanding of the anti-totalitarian compromise that was at the beginning of the Franco-German reconciliation. The problem is the German right:

“[...] in ihrer offensichtlichen Ahnungslosigkeit über das, was man mit Fug und Recht als ‘extreme Rechte’ bezeichnet. Aus Paris nimmt sich das so aus: Es sei bezeichnend, dass man auf Haiders Banalisierung des Nazismus hereinfällt und dann auch nicht mehr merkt, dass dieser Banalisierung die banale Erscheinung des Neonazismus selbst entspricht.”⁶⁷

Using these clear-cut categories, and on the basis of his knowledge and understanding of the French discourse, the author concludes on this fundamental statement that he translates to his German audience. It should be clear:

“[...] dass es sich bei der französischen Kompromisslosigkeit nicht um Profilierungstheater, sondern um die Basiselemente der französischen Nachkriegsrepublik handelt.”⁶⁸

⁶⁶ “Because a compromise between the two conservative parties of the two successor-states of the Third Reich would be understood by France as a point against the West, and it would be avenged: a confidence that was built over 30 years would vanish over night. One has to know what one wants: domestic harmony with the Bavarian minister president, or external solidarity with the French Republic. Both together are impossible at the moment.”

⁶⁷ “...in its obvious ignorance on what is rightly called 'extreme right'. From Paris, this looks so: It is revealing if one is fooled by Haider's trivialization of Nazism and subsequently does not understand that this trivialization corresponds to the banal appearance of neo-Nazism as such.”

⁶⁸ “...that French refusal of compromise is not political 'theatre' to gain profile, but a core element of the French post-war Republic.”

If the German conservatives were taking the side of the Austrian conservatives and the “blue-black” government in Vienna, this would be equivalent for France with:

“[...] einer Allianz der beiden Deutschländer mit faschistischer Vergangenheit. Die Ernsthaftigkeit der französischen Haltung als ein Prinzip überhaupt nicht wahrzunehmen und zu verwechseln mit machtpolitischer Finesse oder Hysterie, ist der Irrtum, der wiederum aus der verharmlosenden Erklärung der österreichischen Rechten herrührt.”⁶⁹

Only three days after this vivid account of the French understanding of the situation in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* for its part publishes an interview with Emmanuel Todd.⁷⁰ He argues that, “*Die deutsche Frage ist wieder offen*”⁷¹ and makes it very clear why it is not just the European “left” that supports the sanctions. This also explains why the German conservatives and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* are not supported by their western European allies. Todd continues:

“Es ist ein Schock. Das Land, das der Welt Hitler beschert hat, erlaubt es sich, der Welt eine Regierung mit rechtsextremen Ministern zu präsentieren. Dieses Ereignis stellt für mich alles, was ich bisher über die Souveränität der Nationen gesagt habe, in Frage.”⁷²

The fact that these different perceptions of Haider have to be taken into account, even in the German debate, and that they matter for the domestic political debate, is the European moment. It becomes salient because it is, at the same time, a domestic political and a European issue, and their combination is a pre-condition for the existence of a European public debate.

⁶⁹ “...an alliance of the two Germanys with a fascist past. To neglect the seriousness of this French standpoint as a principle, and to confuse it with power-political finesse or hysterical reactions, is the error that itself stems from the trivializing explanation of the Austrian right.”

⁷⁰ Expert of demographic election studies at Institut national d'Études Démographiques. Studied at Institut d'Études Politiques, holds a PhD in history of Cambridge University.

⁷¹ “The German question is open again.”

⁷² “It is a shock. The country that gave Hitler to the world presents a government to the world that includes extreme right ministers. This event puts everything I said to far on the sovereignty of nations into question.”

In the remainder of the interview, the French intellectual explains to a German audience why he is “shocked”, and raises exactly the points mentioned by Karl-Heinz Bohrer. The argument of a “fear of Germany” cannot be explained clearer than in these words:

“Mit Haider verhält Österreich sich so unverantwortlich, wie Deutschland vor siebzig Jahren. [...] Die neue Regierung in Wien ist ein Affront – ein Akt des Rassismus gegenüber allen Ländern, die von Hitler besetzt worden waren. Ich fürchte vor allem einen Einfluss auf Deutschland. Für mich steht fest: Die deutschen Nationen haben wegen ihrer Geschichte nicht das Recht, rechtsextreme Regierungen zu bilden. In dieser Situation haben die Europäer die Pflicht, ihre absolute Missbilligung zu bekunden.”⁷³

After these important contributions, it is no longer possible for Germany to neglect the different understandings of the situation in France and Germany. Moreover, it is clear that French fears are more than just partisan or strategic arguments, they testify also to a deeply rooted, nationally shaped, collective narrative of the past that finds itself at the origin of great parts of the post-war French self-understanding.

The reactions in the German discursive space – taking these fears seriously and admitting their importance in the French context – is, in a way, similar to the reaction of the German government presented in section B. Whereas the Scandinavian governments can claim their doubts about the sanctions without being suspected of friendliness to Haider,⁷⁴ this is a no-go area for Germans. Because Germany cannot share the French collective experience of occupation, it must accept the importance of this narrative in the French case, even without understanding at the beginning. But because Germany has not only not had the French experience, but was literally on the other side – as the perpetrators – it is automatically disqualified when opposing the pro-sanction discourse on the level of this common French – and European – experience, thus finding itself in the same camp as Jörg Haider and his FPÖ.

⁷³ “Concerning Haider, Austria acts as irresponsible as Germany 70 years ago. [...] The new government in Vienna is an affront – a racist act against all those countries that were occupied by Hitler. I fear especially the impact on Germany. For me it’s clear: The German nations do not have the right, because of their history, to form extreme right governments. In this situation, the Europeans are obliged to testify their absolute disapproval.”

⁷⁴ Although Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson visited Austria on 28 April 2000, he refrained from meeting any member of the government.

H. Conclusion

Studying the European sanctions against the Austrian government in 2000, this article has tried to understand the functioning of “memory politics.” Its six sections have attempted to account for the effects that are created when the “Past” is evoked against the present experience.

In a first part (sections B and C), two rhetorical reactions on the sanctions against Austria were compared: On the one hand, we saw that the statements of French officials gained relevance by their highly normative, but not negotiable, claims. These claims became salient within a discursive environment that fostered a nearly hegemonic discourse. On the other hand, the German Chancellor was entrapped in a two-level logic. Whereas he had to face stiff domestic resistance – with little to win, even if the sanctions were to last – he could not step back from his European standpoint, as this would have disqualified him in the European game, making the Austrian problem a “German problem.” Consequently, his reactions to the sanctions were of a pragmatic nature, argued with genuine German interest.

Sections D and E focused on the structure of the discourse and analyzed the strategies used to create a hegemonic frame. In bringing ahead an amalgam of Haider, the FPÖ, Austria and fascism or even neo-Nazism, the supporters of the sanctions could disqualify any alternative discourse. Opposing the sanctions carried the risk of being accused of fascism.

The strategies used by the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* to establish an alternative discourse (section E) were also revealing, as there was no space for a compromise position: Its “third way” tried to de-legitimize the pro-sanction discourse. Nevertheless, it became clear that the German paper underestimated one point of particular importance to the French understanding of the situation, a point that gives salience and power to the pro-sanction discourse over party lines. This point was raised in sections F and G, where the meaning of the traumatic past for the Haider debate was investigated. I found hints that explain how such a powerful translation from past to present is possible: Not by a causal logic, but by what I call a “discursive” logic.

Discourses assimilate past experiences (more precisely, narratives on past experiences) to current situations. Once they can be “translated”⁷⁵ (meaning that they are close enough to be adapted to a new situation) from past to present experience, from one discursive space to another, they gain salience in a public

⁷⁵ Diez 1999.

debate. This works particularly well when narratives of the past evoke traumatic psychological experiences that have universal meaning for a group. When these psychological markers are moreover embedded in the official narrative that gives legitimacy to a polity (as in the case of the French Republic), high attention and salience in the public debate can be assumed whenever these narratives are brought into the debate. This is what not only the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, but also the Chancellor and even Mr. Stoiber have to learn and to accept in the debate on the sanctions against Austria in 2000, and this is also the way in which the EU is defined against its Past.