

THE RETURN OF GEOPOLITICS IN EUROPE?

The end of the Cold War demonstrated the historical possibility of peaceful change and seemingly showed the superiority of non-realist approaches in International Relations. Yet in the post-Cold War period many European countries have experienced a resurgence of a distinctively realist tradition: geopolitics. Geopolitics is an approach which emphasizes the relationship between politics and power on the one hand; and territory, location and environment on the other. This comparative study shows how the revival of geopolitics came not despite of, but because of, the end of the Cold War. Disoriented in their self-understandings and conception of external roles by the events of 1989, many European foreign policy actors used the determinism of geopolitical thought to find their place in world politics quickly. The book develops a constructivist methodology to study causal mechanisms, and its comparative approach allows for a broad assessment of some of the fundamental dynamics of European security.

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Cambridge Studies in International Relations: 124

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THE RETURN OF
GEOPOLITICS IN
EUROPE?

Social Mechanisms and Foreign
Policy Identity Crises

Edited by
STEFANO GUZZINI

 **CAMBRIDGE**
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107027343

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First published 2013

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

The return of geopolitics in Europe? : social mechanisms and foreign policy identity
crises / edited by Stefano Guzzini.

pages cm. – (Cambridge studies in international relations ; 124)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-1-107-02734-3

1 Europe–Foreign relations–1989– 2. Geopolitics–Europe–History–20th
century. 3. Geopolitics–Europe–History–21st century. I. Guzzini, Stefano.
JZ1570.R48 2013

327.4–dc23

2012018839

ISBN 978-1-107-02734-3 Hardback

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book has been far too long in the making. Accordingly, from the very start, I need and want to underline how much gratitude I owe to the authors in this volume, who have continued revising their chapters over the years in the light of the evolving research project. They did so even when they could not win any 'brownie points' with a mere book chapter that had no secure publication outlet for much of the time. Having received no major funding, the project could not buy them out of their normal commitments. Luckily, all of them saw their intermediate or related research results published during that process, mainly as journal articles (see the Bibliography for more details).

Having taken so long, the project has incurred many intellectual debts. Its concept paper was presented at the joint ISA–CEEISA conference in Budapest in June 2003, where it received a spirited discussion by Yosef Lapid (thanks again). Country chapters were presented at panels we organised for the ISA convention in Montréal (March 2004), the SGIR conference in The Hague (September 2004), the CEEISA convention in Tartu (June 2006), and the ISA convention in San Francisco (March 2008). Thanks for all the comments and criticisms from the discussants and the audiences at those events.

Two events have been particularly helpful for advancing the project. The project was part of the EU-financed COST Action A24 ('The Evolving Social Construction of Threats'), which paid for a workshop meeting of all the participants on 5–6 June 2006 in Copenhagen at the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS). That workshop proved very important, since the first empirical findings, when discussed together, made it possible to reframe the entire project. Then, more personally, I was granted a fellowship at the Hanse Institute for Advanced Studies (HWK) in Delmenhorst, near Bremen, for the academic year 2007–2008. The opportunity to have time off to conduct research in political and critical geography, as well as interpretivist methodology, was fundamental for the present book. The major part of its introductory chapters was written there. My most sincere gratitude to colleagues and staff at the HWK.

Since 2008, I have presented the findings of the general project in lectures at the Hebrew University (Jerusalem) and the universities of St Andrews and Tübingen, as well as at research workshops and seminars at DIIS, Uppsala University, the Instituto de Relações Internacionais (IRI) of the Pontifícia

Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio), the COST Action A24 final meeting in Brussels (June 2008), the 'Uses of the West' conference organised at SAIS, Bologna (November 2008), and at a PhD workshop at DIIS co-taught with Ned Lebow and Janice Stein on 'Foreign Policy Analysis: Revisiting the Role of Ideas, Psychology and Causality' (2011), which was financed by the Danish Polforsk network. I thank all participants for their insightful comments – which I attempted to address, but was unable to do so in all cases.

Several colleagues and friends have been so kind as to take time off from their own work to read parts, and sometimes all, of my chapters for this volume between late 2008 and 2011. I am sure the following list is not complete, for which I apologise to all those I do not explicitly mention. But I owe at least to try to remember the many over the many years. My thanks go to Emanuel Adler, John Agnew, Marco Antonsich, Eiki Berg, Fredrik Bynander, Simon Dalby, Thomas Diez, Stuart Elden, Carlos Frederico Pereira da Silva Gama, Tine Hanrieder, Jef Huysmans, Piki Ish-Shalom, Peter Katzenstein, Friedrich Kratochwil, Victor Lage, Anna Leander, Ned Lebow, Mikkel Runge Olesen, Nick Rengger, Nick Onuf and PerOla Öberg.

Finally, I wish to thank John Haslam at Cambridge University Press for his support and patience. After the first reports, which asked us to go the extra mile, the referee and revision process took some time, but has been very useful for improving the quality of the book. My thanks go also to Louise Clausen for her assistance at DIIS, Catherine Schwerin for her language editing of the first submission, and John Carville for his thorough editing of my chapters for the final submission (and DIIS for providing financial support for the editing).

Introduction: the argument: geopolitics for fixing the coordinates of foreign policy identity

STEFANO GUZZINI

How is it that, precisely as the Cold War came to an end in a development that demonstrated the historical possibility of peaceful change against all (determinist) odds and seemed to herald the superiority of non-realist approaches in International Relations,¹ many European countries – in both the East and the West – experienced a revival of a distinctively realist tradition, that of geopolitics – a tradition that suddenly dared to say its name?

Most prominent in this context is perhaps the case of Russia, which has witnessed a quite remarkable turnaround. Banned during the Cold War as a mistaken theory, if not ideology, by the Soviet authorities, geopolitics has since acquired an almost dominant place in Russian analysis of world politics.² For a while, even a new parliamentary committee on ‘geopolitics’ was established in 1995 (lasting until 1999), chaired by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy’s former right-hand man Aleksey Mitrofanov. Although the actual influence of geopolitical thinking on ‘ordinary Russians’ is debated,³ there have been consistent and widespread references back to early twentieth-century geopolitical thought and ‘geopolitical necessities’, not least by Aleksandr Dugin. The latter is the perhaps the best-known representative of this resurgence, both through his *Fundamentals of Geopolitics*, reprinted several times, and through his political activism as party leader, director of a Centre for Geopolitical Expertise (founded late 1999) and adviser to the speaker of the Duma, Gennadii Seleznev.⁴ From Marx to Mackinder.⁵

But, the smaller countries in the post-Soviet space have also seen a revival. Although the exact status of geopolitical thought in Estonia continues to be

¹ Allan and Goldmann, 1992; Lebow and Risse-Kappen, 1995.

² Tyulin, 1997; Sergounin, 2000.

³ O’Loughlin, 2001.

⁴ Dugin, in particular, has attracted the scorn of critics, who have even likened him to a neo-fascist. See Ingram, 2001.

⁵ See now also Bassin and Aksenov, 2006.

disputed,⁶ the place reserved for Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' thesis in that country has been truly remarkable. Estonia's minister of foreign affairs wrote the foreword to the 1999 Estonian translation of Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*. For the book's launch, Huntington visited Estonia and spoke at a press conference together with Estonia's prime minister and minister of foreign affairs.⁷ His book was extensively reviewed in major newspapers and has more generally become part of popular discourse.⁸ Nor does the revival stop on the Eastern side of the former Iron Curtain. Quite strikingly perhaps, Italy has also seen a revival of 'geopolitics', with military general and political adviser Carlo Jean as its figurehead⁹ and a relatively new journal of geopolitics called *Limes: Rivista Italiana di Geopolitica* (the Italian equivalent to the French *Hérodote*, but with national success on the level of *Foreign Affairs/Foreign Policy*) as its main outlet.¹⁰ In Italy, Jean's books are the most widely read books in international relations written by an Italian. Together with *Limes*, they have accompanied and arguably contributed to the permeation of the discourses of politicians and newspapers by geopolitical vocabulary.¹¹

So, why is this? By analysing the relationship between the events of 1989 and the resurgence of geopolitical thought, the present collaborative study aims to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between international events or crises and foreign policy thought (and strategy) – or, more generally, between modes of thought and particular historical contexts in international relations. At the same time, it contributes to constructivist theorising in proposing a way to study shifts in the what Alexander Wendt has called the 'cultures of anarchy' in international society. The four central empirical claims it makes are set out below.

First, although we will show a relationship between international events and shifts in foreign policy modes of thought, this cannot be adequately understood in terms of a mere outside-in analysis, whereby an international event causes shifts in foreign policy ideas. In the context of the geopolitical revival after 1989 in Europe, it was apparently not self-evident – as our puzzle shows – that the success of *Ostpolitik* (the international event as seen by the German elite) would put an end to realist geopolitical thought as part of traditional Cold War thinking, in the same way as it did to the Cold War, even if many observers would have expected this to happen (particularly in Germany). Nor, as we will show, was a return to geopolitical thought necessary in the light of the ethnic

⁶ For an overview, see Aalto, 2000 and 2001.

⁷ Kuus, 2002, 307. ⁸ Aalto and Berg, 2002, 261–262.

⁹ Jean, 1995 and 1997.

¹⁰ Lucarelli and Menotti, 2002c. Dugin participated in the launch (and is a member of the editorial board) of yet another geopolitical journal in 2004, entitled *Eurasia: rivista di studi geopolitici*.

¹¹ Antonsich, 1996.

wars in the Balkans, as suggested by many realists. In other words, '1989' – our 'event' – caused no necessary shift towards understandings informed by either peace research or geopolitics. Instead, the significance and effect of the event have themselves been a result of the ways in which foreign policy discourses in different countries understood that event. This study claims that we need to understand the role of international events on foreign policy ideas from the inside out – that is, in the way the meanings of such events as '1989' are articulated within national foreign policy discourses.

This leads to our second claim, namely, that the revival of geopolitical thought is best understood in the context of several foreign policy identity crises, a kind of 'ontological insecurity'¹² that foreign policy elites encountered in Europe after 1989. We can distinguish here three types of such potential identity crises – that is, instances where previously established self-understandings and external role conceptions were susceptible to challenge. In some cases, for example in Russia, a country's place in the world was no longer self-evident, as previously established roles and self-understandings no longer seemed valid (post-1989 Russia could neither unproblematically refer back to the Soviet Union nor to Tsarist Russia). Sometimes, a country's role had been previously defined in a passive fashion – as in Italy, where the Cold War divide had done much of the job for Italian foreign policy thought. And, finally, some states would be recreated (as in the case of Estonia) or reunited (as in the case of Germany) as a result of the events of 1989, making it necessary to articulate an updated foreign policy identity. Hence, we have three potential crises: no identity, no longer the previously established identity, and no identity yet. Accordingly, we claim that the effect of the events of 1989 on foreign policy thought are best understood in the context of an identity crisis. Such an identity crisis occurs when a country's general foreign policy or its national-interest discourses face problems in their smooth continuation, because taken-for-granted self-understandings and role positions are openly challenged – and eventually undermined.

Third, we claim that mobilising geopolitical thought seems particularly well suited to respond to such an ontological anxiety or identity crisis. Geopolitical thought provides allegedly objective and material criteria for circumscribing the boundaries (and internal logics) of 'national interest' formulations. Invoking national interests almost inevitably mobilises justifications in terms wider than the interest of the ruler or the government. Such wider justification can be given by ideologies, as in the case of anti-communism and anti-capitalism during the Cold War, or through references to the 'nation', for instance. But, when yesterday's certitudes have gone missing, national interests have to be anchored anew. In such a context, geopolitics in its classical understanding provides 'coordinates' for thinking a country's role in world affairs. Deprived of

¹² Agnew, 2003, 115. For the concept of ontological security, see Mitzen, 2006 and Steele, 2005 and 2007.

traditional reference points and with a challenged self-understanding or outside view of its role, spatial logic can quickly fill this ideational void and fix the place of the state and its national interest within the international system or society. And geopolitics is particularly well suited to such a role, since it relies upon environmental determinism from both physical geography (mobilised often through strategic thinking) and human/cultural geography typical for discourses essentialising a nation.

Yet, although geopolitical thought fulfils this function handsomely, there is no necessity that it will be mobilised in national security or foreign policy discourses. To assume otherwise would be to commit a functional fallacy. Accordingly, our fourth claim is that whether or not geopolitical thought is mobilised to fulfil the above-mentioned function is dependent on a series of process factors: the 'common sense' embedded in the national-interest discourse that predisposes for it, the institutional structure (and political economy) in which foreign policy thought is developed, and the mobilisation of agents in the national political game.

Besides answering the empirical puzzle of a geopolitical revival after the end of the Cold War, the present study also aims to adapt methodological and theoretical tools for constructivist analysis. First, it uses a version of 'process tracing' in an interpretivist manner. The analysis is a version of *process tracing*, since it does not simply assume that when outside pressures translate into more or less uniform outcomes, they do so for the causes hypothesised. Without empirically checking the process of how international inputs translate into domestic responses, it is not possible to control for the risk of equifinality – that is, the possibility that the same outcome may have been reached by following different processual paths. Moreover, whatever regularity found without checking the process can be spurious and easily falls prone to the functionalist fallacy just mentioned.

It is *interpretivist* process tracing because its starting point is in the understanding of international events, not with those events in themselves.¹³ The tracing starts with the already diverse national interpretations of the international event. The 'international' event is therefore no constant and equal input for all country cases, a constant against which the variance of national process can explain the differing political responses, as in many research designs around globalisation and the hypothesised convergence of (economic) politics and institutions, for instance. The significance of the input – and indeed the input itself – is endogenous to the process. Moreover, as the conclusion will elaborate,

¹³ Moreover, it is about the interaction effects of such an interpretation with the events themselves in that the interpretation of what '1989 means for post-1989' interacts with the events of post-1989. For the concept of 'interaction effects', see Hacking, 1999, 31–32. For the discussion, see Chapter 11 of this volume.

this process tracing is best understood as a multilayered process of parallel dynamics and their interaction, rather than a single linear process.

Finally, the book wishes to contribute to theory development in constructivist IR by providing tools and micro-dynamics for analysing structural change. It does so by defining an analysis of social mechanisms that is consistent with constructivist and post-positivist assumptions, and by specifying two such mechanisms. The first mechanism of foreign policy identity crisis reduction is the core of the analysis. In the context of a foreign policy identity crisis, where self-understandings or outside role perception have been challenged by the interpretation of events, agents try to remedy the situation in at least four ways: they either deny the existence of any crisis, define it as a misunderstanding and negotiate with the outside about it, adapt to it, or try to mould international society to fit its own identity discourses.

A second mechanism relates to the underlying 'culture of anarchy', to use Wendt's expression. If 'anarchy is what states make of it', and if that making happens through and within the lifeworld of different 'cultures of anarchy', then the proposed analysis probes into the dynamics of such cultures, since these cultures are also what states make of them. It suggests that the evolution of the culture of anarchy in Europe after 1989 is fruitfully analysed through the way the interpretations of major events are driven and interact with different national foreign policy discourses, and how those in turn interact with each other in the reproduction of the more general culture. For this, the book proposes a mechanism called a 'vicious circle of essentialisation'. This forms part of a structural but bottom-up analysis in which the meaning given to the events of 1989 – an event that, to use the categories of the English School and Wendt, should have heralded and reinforced a dynamic from a Lockean to a Kantian culture in Europe – paradoxically also produced a movement in the opposite direction. For if the theoretical parameters of geopolitical analysis were taken seriously on both the national and the international levels, its dynamics of essentialising physical and cultural geography would produce an environment more akin to a Hobbesian culture.

In other words, where geopolitics has been used to resolve foreign policy identity crises, the very success of the 'desecuritisation' that occurred at the end of the Cold War might contribute to ushering in a 'resecuritisation'. Or, put differently, under certain conditions Kant makes Hobbes possible again. Now, through our understanding of the concatenation of the two mechanisms at work, we are able to see that a movement to a more Hobbesian culture happened not *despite* the end of the Cold War, but *because of it*.

Accordingly, the present analysis shares a normative concern typical of peace research (but not only that) – namely, the possibility that interpretations become potentially self-fulfilling prophecies that contribute to producing a threatening world while appearing as simple response to it; in other words, a concern about 'self-fulfilling geopolitics'.

The structure of the book is straightforward. The first part, consisting of three chapters, specifies the puzzle, along with the terms, central concepts and framework of the analysis. The second part provides six country studies. A concluding part first synthesises the empirical findings and then develops a constructivist understanding of process tracing and mechanisms so as to provide a way in which to conceive of the micro-dynamics of constructivist IR theories.

The mixed revival of geopolitics in Europe

STEFANO GUZZINI

At the end of the Cold War, when Europe was poised to reap the fruits of a new security environment, when the very nature of the de-escalation in Europe prompted such grandiose common security statements as the OSCE Paris Charter, when realism was facing its perhaps biggest theoretical challenge, many European countries would experience a revival not just of some version of realism, but of its more materialist and militarist wing: geopolitics. This project started by deriving a series of hypotheses for this puzzling revival. The initial setup specified four hypotheses: from the history of ideas, one might hypothesise the ideational path dependence of a materialist tradition; in terms of a sociology of knowledge, the revival of geopolitics might correspond to the reaction of a 'dissatisfied power'; from the perspective of constructivist foreign policy analysis, geopolitics might help to establish a new foreign policy identity following the disappearance of the previously existing roles with the events of 1989; finally, from a political economy or institutionalist perspective, the revival of geopolitics might be viewed within the context of the various epistemic communities, and differences in funding strategies, within the foreign policy expert field of individual countries, where the absence of political and theoretical distance of the expert system from politics – and particularly the military – would enhance the chances of a geopolitical revival.¹

After a first cut of empirical studies (2004–2006), a common workshop took stock of those four hypotheses and introduced a series of amendments and extensions that have come to define the setup of the present volume. First, as the introductory chapters showed, the initial puzzle needed to be reframed and the meaning of 'geopolitics' specified for the purpose of the research project. Political geographers, and particularly researchers working within critical geopolitics, did not find much puzzling in the revival, because previous shifts in the international system had also almost inevitably spurred the 'geographical imagination' before becoming taken for granted, as a new shared vision of the world took hold. Yet, here we met the revival of something more substantial,

¹ Guzzini, 2003.

which, following Mark Bassin, could be called ‘neoclassical geopolitics’. For the purposes of this volume, neoclassical geopolitics was defined as

a policy-oriented analysis, generally conservative and with nationalist overtones, that gives explanatory primacy, but not exclusivity, to certain physical and human geographic factors (whether the analyst is open about it or not), and gives precedence to a strategic view, realism with a military and nationalist gaze, for analysing the ‘objective necessities’ within which states compete for power and rank. (pp. 000–000)

Second, again taking our clue from political geographers, we noted that the revival of neoclassical geopolitics seemed linked not just to generic shifts in world politics, but also to the existence of an ‘ontological anxiety’ (Agnew). As David Atkinson remarks while discussing the revival of geopolitics in Italy in the 1930s and the 1990s, where each instance was characterised by international instability, ‘Italians developed forms of “geopolitical reasoning” to help themselves understand these contexts, and it is perhaps just such periods of flux and anxiety that tend to catalyse geopolitical reasoning.’² This important pointer, however, ends up begging the question: not all shifts and instabilities produce ‘anxieties’. Geopolitical reasoning did not resurface in all countries exposed to the allegedly same international instabilities.

As a result, we decided to reconfigure the relation between the four process factors. Instead of thinking them in additive terms, we opted to treat the factor of identity politics – or, indeed, the idea of a foreign policy identity crisis – as the fundamental one. Subsequently, we examined how some of the other factors influenced the process whereby certain identity crises prompted a return of geopolitical thought, while others did not. The occurrence of such an identity crisis within the foreign policy discourse would hence correspond to a situation in which (internal) self-understandings and/or (external) role conceptions were interpreted as being in jeopardy with the end of the Cold War, or at least in need of substantial redefinition.

Interpreting identity is done with reference to foreign policy discourses, which consist of a stock of common wisdom and collective memories, of shared lessons of the past and a series of *idées-forces*³ with which to make sense of the world. Knowing the content of such discourses makes it possible to understand how they might predispose the interpretation of international events – indeed, of how these events interact with the self-conceptions embedded therein. For this type of analysis, we found Jutta Weldes’ concept of a ‘security imaginary’ particularly useful.

The underlying hypothesis of the present volume accordingly became two-fold: first, the revival of geopolitical thought after 1989 can be best understood as the eventual effect of a foreign policy identity crisis triggered by a dissonance

² Atkinson, 2000, 112. ³ Bourdieu, 2000, 63, 68.

in the way security imaginaries were able to relate to the events of 1989. Second, an identity crisis does not directly effect a geopolitical revival. This depends on a series of process factors. Also here, the workshop introduced some changes by insisting more on the agential level in which geopolitical claims are used to political profit. In sum, a revival of geopolitical thinking can be expected when at least some of the following factors apply: there is a materialist tradition of thinking foreign policy, this tradition is institutionalised within the foreign policy expert culture, and there exists a political game in which such thinking is rhetorically used for political gain (usually on the conservative side).

The first chapter of this concluding section will summarise the findings of the empirical chapters of the present volume. As set out in [Chapter 3](#), these chapters had to analyse:

- (1) whether or not a geopolitical revival had taken place in the country under study;
- (2) whether a foreign policy identity crisis existed and, if so, of which kind; and
- (3) which process factors intervened in the revival (or not) of geopolitical thought.

Each chapter should also analyse in depth the content of the geopolitical thought concerned. This was important for answering the specification of the puzzle in terms of 'neoclassical geopolitics'.

However, in a further step, this concluding section will also elaborate in more detail the second aim of the present volume, namely, theory development. This will be done in the final chapter, which develops the role of social mechanisms in constructivist analysis by presenting two social mechanisms that dynamically connect international events with changes in the cultures of international anarchy. The first mechanism appears in the interaction between international events and foreign policy/security imaginaries: the just-mentioned identity crisis that triggers discursive practices to reduce the new dissonance in self-understandings and external role conceptions. A second mechanism appears when a series of revivals affect the self-understanding of international society itself – that is, the cultures of anarchy. In the case in which several security imaginaries revive geopolitical thought, they trigger a realist view of the world with a militarist gaze, and this in turn will affect the self-understanding of European international society.

In relation to this latter mechanism, it is crucial to know the actual content of the geopolitical revival that formed the core of the individual country chapters. For the overall empirical thesis is that precisely when international events seemed to herald a further move from a Lockean to a Kantian culture of anarchy ('the common European home', pan-Europe as a security community), these same events also triggered a series of identity crises that, in turn, if they led to a revival of geopolitical thought in the security imaginaries of

individual countries, brought Hobbesian understandings to the fore. The exact impact of these mechanisms may be difficult to judge. But, as with all mechanism analysis, focusing on them makes it possible to understand the present Lockean culture not necessarily as a stable one, but as one in which contradicting mechanisms may have been cancelling each other out. In short, knowing the geopolitical content of security imaginaries helps us to understand the actual working of the micro-mechanisms that underpin a constructivist theory at the systemic level.

The case selection for the research project included countries in which no geopolitical revival took place and also varied in terms of the different types of identity crisis that occurred and the hypothesised process factors. Countries were chosen for which some 'anxiety' was to be expected at the end of the Cold War either because they were new countries, or at least countries in new borders, or because their existing identities were closely connected to roles played in the Cold War. In this chapter, I will present the findings from the country studies and from there develop case-generated qualifications of the overall framework.

1 No identity crisis – no revival: the Czech Republic and Germany

The fundamental hypothesis of the present volume is that the geopolitical revival after 1989 is ultimately the qualified effect of an identity crisis. In cases where countries experienced no substantial geopolitical revival, the process tracing would allow three possible reasons for this. All of these concern the specification of the social mechanism reducing identity dissonance. First, a country might have been spared an identity crisis to start with because its foreign policy/security imaginary was disposed to interpret the events of 1989 in a manner in which its self-understanding and role conception were not challenged. Or, such a mechanism may have been triggered, but it was possible to answer it through means other than geopolitical reasoning. Or, finally, such a mechanism did trigger geopolitical reasoning, but the latter did not due to the opposite effect of the hypothesised process factors. In this context, the analysis of the two outlier cases may offer valuable insight into the functioning of the identity-crisis mechanism and its scope conditions.

The *Czech Republic* has not seen a revival of geopolitical thought since 1989. Even though Petr Drulák looks for occurrences of such a revival as widely as possible, both in formal and practical geopolitics, and although he employs a definition of geopolitics that is less restrictive than the neoclassical one used for the rest of the volume, he finds only instances of rhetorical but eventually inconsequential musings with geopolitical ideas. Drulák notes that there were two moments in which geopolitical ideas did appear: at the time of the breakup of Czechoslovakia and, much later, during the discussions around the

installation of a missile defence system. In each instance, the small flare-up occurred when the right came to power. However, the use of geopolitics was mainly rhetorical and almost indistinguishable from realism. Also, the use of geopolitics had no equivalent or anchoring in formal geopolitics.⁴ The Czech Republic's foreign policy expert system was not close to the military; and its research institutions could keep the political sector at arm's length.

Drulák gives one main reason for this non-event: political discourse in the Czech Republic is based on an anti-geopolitical tradition. Whereas geopolitics suggests inevitability and determinism, Czech political actors rely on a tradition that stresses the possibility of change. Such a stress on change and malleability is more consonant both with the communist dissidents' political tradition that Drulák traces back through history, as well as with the basically modernist setup of neoliberalism – views exemplified respectively by Václav Havel and Václav Klaus, the two most important politicians in the post-1989 period. In addition, this continuity in historical vision was somewhat Czech-centric, and hence not fundamentally affected by the breakup with Slovakia.

More fundamentally, the Czech foreign policy discourse seemed not to have displayed a foreign policy crisis in the first place. It was not self-evident that no such crisis would occur, however, since not only did the country emerge from the Cold War with a new foreign policy independence, a practical and strategic 'void' that 'needed' to be filled, but it also endured a further dramatic event: the separation from Slovakia – dramatic, that is, if the usual IR standards are applied. But the political elite felt no need for a reassessment; instead, it was as though they had just returned home from a temporary 'kidnap', to use Kundera's famous phrase.⁵ The events of 1989 did not produce a dissonance with a given (foreign policy) identity: they put an end to it.

Still, in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, not to speak of the former Soviet Union, such claims about simply restoring a previous identity – with the communist times being reduced to a hiccup of national history – did not have such a soothing effect and instead produced anxiety, as we will see in the case of Estonia.

To sum up the Czech case: the self-understanding that underlies the Czech foreign policy/security imaginary did not interpret the events of 1989 or the breakup of Czechoslovakia as threatening Czech foreign policy identity; quite the opposite. Therefore, the first mechanism of identity-dissonance reduction did not verify. In addition, the process factors would not have been conducive to such a development. With regard to ideational path dependency, the Czech case is characterised by the existence of a strong anti-geopolitical tradition. Its foreign policy expert system maintains a certain degree of independence from the military, whose own role is less significant than that of the militaries

⁴ For further analysis of IR in the Czech Republic, see Drulák and Druláková, 2000 and 2006.

⁵ Kundera, 1983.

of many other countries, and academic production is far from being primarily materialist. Finally, although political games did use geopolitical rhetoric, both on the right and on the left, and although such use was connected to the rise of right-wing governments or to military issues (as the example of the missile defence system shows), the use of such rhetoric seems so far to have been too weak to counterbalance the other factors and to initiate a reversal of the country's anti-geopolitical tradition.

Meanwhile, the analysis also highlights a complication for the setup of our process tracing. The anti-geopolitical tradition can be read both as underlying the foreign policy/security imaginary and as a process factor of ideational path dependence. Indeed, the latter two seem to interact with each other in the ongoing foreign policy identity process (and hence cannot be considered two truly independent factors or variables). Although it seemed a good idea to isolate identity crisis as the main trigger, the Czech case leads us to infer that the absence of such a crisis may not be independent of at least one of the process factors. And, in principle, this problem of interaction would apply also to other cases and other factors. This is a point to which I will return later.

The *German* case appears to be more complicated. For one thing, that country has seen a rise in the use of geopolitical argument, indeed of the very word 'geopolitics', which had been shunned for a long time on account of its association with the Nazi regime. Many observers, be it in history or geography, have registered this rise.⁶ Yet, on the basis of evidence from both the formal and the practical level, Andreas Behnke eventually argues that no *significant* rise in the use of geopolitical thought took place in Germany. Indeed, there was no identity crisis to start with, just as in the Czech case, although for different reasons. Whereas other chapters look at the mechanism and process through which geopolitics came to the fore in the countries concerned, the non-occurrence of such a development in the German case again calls for a different type of chapter. Behnke needs to substantiate his claim regarding the limited significance of the rise in the first place. And so he stacks the deck against himself by including both the practical level where many have located the rise and events from the period beyond the 1990s. Let us take his two main claims in turn.

All agree that 1989 and the subsequent reunification of Germany prompted a huge sense of satisfaction in that country, finally lifting the Sword of Damocles that had been hanging over it. But, these developments also provoked a certain degree of trepidation regarding the role of this new/old Germany in Europe and the rest of the world. Of this, there is perhaps no other more telling indicator than the two high-profile political assassination attempts that occurred in the context of reunification. Such assassination attempts are extremely rare in

⁶ See Bach and Peters, 2002; Bassin, 2003; Dijkink, 1996, 32–36; Reuber and Wolkersdorfer, 2002; Sur, 1995 and van der Wusten and Dijkink, 2002.

Germany and seem to occur only in times of high political polarisation. Aside from these two attempts, the most well-known case is that of Rudi Dutschke, a Marxist student leader who survived a shot in the head during the 1968 revolts.⁷ In the context of German reunification, the left-wing candidate for the chancellorship, Oscar Lafontaine, and the right-wing chief negotiator of the reunification treaty, Wolfgang Schäuble, were victims of assassination attempts during political campaign trips. Both survived. The two men were central personalities in the public debate over the procedure for reunification, Lafontaine standing for a more confederate position in which the German Democratic Republic (GDR) would be given time, Schäuble pushing for a swift unification where the GDR was not to be considered on a par with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), but would access the FRG and its constitutional setting.

Consequently, when offering reasons for the revival of geopolitics in Germany, observers seem also to agree that 1989 was crucial. In a passage that perfectly corresponds to the basic thesis of the present book, Etienne Sur writes:

It seems to me ... that the reference to geographic arguments ... by many German intellectuals is the sign (precisely) of a certain disorientation, if not a certain discouragement, in front of a new geopolitical reality that ... puts into question the established (*acquises*) representations of the idea of the nation ... It is as though, for some people, 'the hard soil' of [geographic realities] became the preferred orientation point (*point de repère privilégié*) in their attempt to come to grips with a national sentiment in full reconstruction and the painfully experienced identity reconstruction.⁸

Accordingly, the main question is not whether some form of revival has taken place, but what was its exact content and significance. Again, most commentators on the geopolitical revival immediately stress that their analysis deals with a series of writings that are at the margin of German debate, whether academic or political. These writings 'should not be equated with public opinion or with tangible influences on the perception of the foreign policy elite',⁹ or, in Bassin's words, 'much or most of the new *Geopolitik* remains on the political margins, well away from the mainstream'.¹⁰ And, yet, looking at the protagonists of the revival is important for Behnke's second point, namely, that there was no major identity crisis in Germany. For who was it that did push for a revival?

There are basically three groups in this revival. A first group consists of members of the German military, such as Heinz Brill, an academic working within

⁷ To indicate the deep rift of that time: in the subsequent German national elections in 1969, the NPD, the follow-up party to the Nazis in Germany, achieved its highest level of support ever: 4.3 per cent, 1,422,000 votes (in 1972, they were back to normal levels with 0.6 per cent). Rudi Dutschke survived but eventually died in 1979 from an epileptic seizure while bathing, a delayed effect of the earlier injury.

⁸ Sur, 1995, 33. ⁹ Dijkink, 1996, 34. ¹⁰ Bassin, 2003, 351.

the Research Unit of the Bundeswehr, or Joachim F. Weber, press officer for the army and former editor of the *Ostpreußenblatt*, who spoke of a 'renaissance of geopolitics and Germany in a crisis of orientation'.¹¹ A second group consists of various writers, most of them analysed by Bassin, who are journalists and whose background is not what Bassin calls the 'new German geopolitics', but pretty much the old German *Geopolitik*. This would apply to Felix Buck, born in 1912, who was Vice-President of the NPD between 1970 and 1977 (leaving the party in 1979)¹² and whose work is full of praise for Haushofer.¹³ And it would apply to Heinrich Lordis von Lohausen (1907–2002), an Austrian general who served in the Wehrmacht and whose writings represented a direct continuation of the tradition of *Geopolitik*. Finally, the third group consists of various intellectuals from the 'New Right' in Germany, mainly historians such as Karlheinz Weißmann, whose publication on the years 1933–1945 in a (formerly) prestigious series on German history provoked such a level of scandal (he was accused of revisionism for the history of the Nazi regime) that his contract was rescinded and the responsible commissioning editor fired. That commissioning editor was Rainer Zitelmann, together with whom Weißmann had published a reference book related to the revival of geopolitics.¹⁴ Zitelmann moved to the conservative daily *Die Welt*, before finally deciding to get out of academia and public debate altogether. Since 2000 he has worked in, and publishes on, real-estate management.

Now, if one were ever to wish for a group of challengers that would help to *solidify* established German national identity discourse, this would be it. For *Geopolitik* was not so much a taboo in German debates as it was the pre-established contender, easily defeated, in the national identity discourse. To paraphrase Ole Wæver's felicitous word about Europe: 'Germany's Other is Germany's Past.' Hence, when a heterogeneous group of marginal military thinkers and historical revisionists tried to use the moment of 1989 to find a place for geopolitical thought, they perfectly interpellated the pre-established 'Other' of German discourse. Trying to launch a redirection of German foreign policy thought by revisiting and rehabilitating parts of the (Nazi) German past, or simply sounding irredentist (as when Buck speaks of the Northeast Prussian territories under Russian command), does not exploit a disorientation within German national identity discourse; rather, it provides the 'Other' upon which such a discourse can be fixed, as Behnke writes. Moreover, as he shows, by the 1990s the German debate had just gone through a rehearsal in the *Historikerstreit*. With no new arguments, but only the hope of a different *Zeitgeist*, the revisionist onslaught failed to materialise.

In addition to these developments, and in order to conduct as wide an analysis of the potential revival as possible, Behnke also addresses practical

¹¹ Brill, 1994 and Weber, 1992. ¹² Virchow, 2006, 92.

¹³ Buck, 1996. ¹⁴ Zitelmann *et al.*, 1993.

geopolitics. Here, the Left–Green coalition’s more assertive German foreign policy, in particular its military role, was seen as part of such a revival. Again, Behnke’s analysis confirms the first argument: there was no identity crisis and no geopolitical revival. Indeed, the role expectation of the outsiders coincided with the self-perception mentioned above in terms of seeing Germany as a stabilising factor exactly because it did not play according to some ‘old-fashioned’ power political script, but would hold fast to its European German identity. Only when expectations regarding whether the German army should be able to intervene externally came to the fore did Germany’s potentially different international role become a matter for discussion. Accordingly, if anything, it was not 1989 or the reunification that affected the discussion of German foreign policy identity, but outside expectations (which were undoubtedly also shared by some within the German government) that Germany would again become a military power. Again, Behnke’s careful analysis shows that geopolitical references are at most superficial in the redirection of German foreign and security policy, which maintains a strong degree of continuity with that of the *Bonner Republik*.

All in all, neither formal nor practical geopolitics experienced a significant revival in Germany, the main reason being that the role and self-identification of Germany in its foreign policy/security imaginary were seen as being confirmed by the peaceful way in which the Cold War came to an end. The few attempts by German conservatives to use the profound political changes for a more nationalist definition of the national interest mobilised the past and hence the ‘Other’ of the existing self-understanding. Those geopolitical voices only reconfirmed the post-1945 (and mainly post-1966/1969) identity and prompted a quick and overwhelming response within academia, the expert field and politics for its continuation in the *Berliner Republik*.¹⁵

As with the Czech case, the analysis of the German case also has some implications for the general framework of analysis of the present book. In both country studies, the analysis of an ideational path dependence clearly interacted with the analysis of a security imaginary. Moreover, the German case shows that a foreign-policy identity crisis is nothing mechanical. All security imaginaries involve contending visions of the self, although one is (usually) predominant. As Chapter 3 of this volume insists, a foreign policy tradition provides interpretative material for diverging positions, although the range of the acceptable or discursively authorised positions is limited. As the German case shows, agency enters into the very definition of foreign-policy identity

¹⁵ Perhaps it will strike many as bizarre, this non-occurrence of an identity crisis, indeed the perseverance of the post- or even anti-nationalist national identity underlying German foreign policy discourses. Does not (or, must not) Germany have an ‘identity problem’? But, the German identity concerned would strike many Germans as being quite self-evident: only German nationalists and some non-Germans seem to have a problem with that allegedly ‘unnatural’, ‘abnormal’ German identity, not many or most Germans themselves.

crisis: neither in materialist terms (unification and the change of the international structure requires policy redefinition) nor in idealist ones (unification means a new identity hence identity crisis) is such a crisis simply the effect of external changes. Whether or not the interpretation of an event finally triggers a crisis is itself the effect of symbolic battles. In this case, there were attempts to challenge the post-1969 German identity of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with one's past), but these attempts mobilised the discursive Other and were thus quickly delegitimised. Hence, agency is part and parcel of the beginning of an identity crisis, not just its unfolding, while existing security imaginaries empower certain positions rather than others.

Finally, the hypothesised relation between the existence of an identity crisis and the revival of geopolitical thought does not so far seem to have been disconfirmed. In a sense, it would have been nicer for the framework of this book if at least in one case the process factors would have made the difference. But, in both of the cases discussed above, it was the initial trigger that did not work. This could imply, however, that process factors and the identity crisis are closely connected in a kind of common configuration, rather than lined up in a process. This is a point to which I will return in the final chapter.

2 Different types of identity crises and geopolitical revivals

Italy: geopolitics after 1989 and 'Tangentopoli' In Italy, there was a clear revival of 'geopolitics', as exemplified by the success of Carlo Jean's writings and the establishment of *Limes: rivista di geopolitica*, which had a distribution of up to 100,000 copies at the time of the Kosovo War.¹⁶ And, according to Brighi and Petito, Italy did indeed experience a sense of ontological anxiety after 1989. To some extent, this may seem puzzling. Looking from the outside, not much had changed, at least relative to the other countries examined in this volume. No new borders, no reunification, no central Cold War role lost, no new enemy or threats. So, why would such an anxiety be felt in Italy?

The analysis suggests that Italy has experienced a latent identity crisis for some considerable time, one that the Cold War could only temporarily quell. There is sensitivity within Italy's collective memory about the allegedly unfair treatment that the country experienced after World War I, which gave rise to 'irredentism' and a sense that the international community does not take Italy as seriously as it deserves. While outsiders barely took notice, Italian public opinion was reminded again and again of the 'sorpasso' (overtaking), the nickname given to the developments in 1987 whereby Italy's economy grew larger than that of Britain in absolute GDP terms (though not in terms of GDP

¹⁶ Atkinson, 2000, 111.

per capita or PPP).¹⁷ Whenever the G-7 is discussed, or the possible reform of the UN Security Council, there tends to be an insistence within Italian foreign policy discourse that ‘objectively’ Italy should be treated as being on a par with all of the major European powers (hence Italy’s resistance to a permanent seat for Germany). What is remarkable is the continuous sense of being treated as inferior, of having to prove one’s worth. Thus, an important theme within the Italian foreign policy imaginary turns on the idea of Italy as a country that other countries do not respect as fully they should, a country that is not given its due.¹⁸

During the Cold War, Italy’s position as one of the founding members of the EU and its unflinching support of US policies could ensure a foreign policy that was both passive and yet – through the United States, NATO and the EU – ‘importantly’ connected to world events. In exchange for its support, external powers refrained from scrutinising Italy’s domestic politics, which were riddled with various problems related to the unfinished nature of the country’s democratic system, and much was excused (if not funded) on account of the Italian authorities’ central role in the anti-communist front that went right through the middle of Italian society.¹⁹

With the end of the Cold War, several events could be seen as shaking this deal, however. First, what was to be the role of NATO in Europe after 1989? How far would the EU go? And what was to be Italy’s place in this context? What would it get from being a passive supporter? In addition, the anti-communist bulwark had become less important. Indeed, communism in Italy went quickly on the defensive. Instead, with the opening to the East, ‘democratic standards’ had become the main way of assessing countries in Europe’s core. Such expectations began to be formulated at the exact same time that Italy’s clientelistic system was running into a major financial crisis in the early 1990s, leading to

¹⁷ Never mind that this ‘*sorpasso*’ was financed by a huge debt that would come back to haunt the political system in its major crisis in the early 1990s and facilitated by a change in statistical accounting, through which a larger part of the black economy was included within GDP (causing GDP to increase by 18 per cent in a year).

¹⁸ Dinger, 2011. In general, Italy’s political self-understanding tends to oscillate between highly self-critical assessments of the country’s political system and international importance, a position most often found in internal debates and on the political left, and a self-representation, used abroad and predominantly on the political right, as a cultural and economic powerhouse, an old nation whose importance has been systematically marginalised by (jealous or arrogant) foreign powers or international society at large.

¹⁹ Italy was also the staging ground for the largest contingent in NATO’s secret ‘Stay Behind’ paramilitary organisation (which had recruited many former Nazi and fascist soldiers and officers), known as ‘*Gladio*’. These troops were responsible for reconnaissance and sabotage in the event of a Soviet invasion, but have also been linked to strategies of terror and subversion against ‘internal enemies’ – communist, social democratic and/or pacifist – when that invasion never came about. For a short presentation of *Gladio*, see Ferraresi, 1992.

its implosion.²⁰ The exit of old political protectors laid bare the systematic corruption and fiscal crime, a complex system of 'parallel government' and the role of organised crime in Italian society. The legal uncovering of 'Tangentopoli' ('Bribesville') and the prosecution of high-level politicians and managers was surely seen by many Italians as a moment of long-awaited national pride. Finally, it was possible to identify with a country that had, on its own, started to cast off the rotten parts of the system. However, this 'purification' ('*mani pulite*', or 'clean hands') also led to the delegitimation of major parts of the existing elite. The breakdown of a system that had kept the Christian Democratic Party in power since the beginning of the post-1945 Republic – Giulio Andreotti had been longer in a government position (1947–1992) than Enver Hoxha in Albania, critics wryly remarked – left a void. The definition of what Italy was to be was up for discussion. Old answers would no longer suffice. The positions within which Italian identity were to be discussed were also less defined than in the German case. There was a sense that Italy had to look for new bearings. At the same time, the debate (mainly on the right) reflected an increasing concern over the possibility of being moved back down to second class within the European powers.

The vigorous revival of geopolitics falls into this context of Italy's redefinition and reassertion of status, with a right-wing political spectrum on the defensive following the *Democrazia Christiana's* demise. The rhetorically strong references to 'geopolitics' – an idea that was almost as *non grata* in political and academic debates in Italy as in Germany – seemed to respond to the created void in two ways. First, the revival mobilised the materialism and determinacy in geopolitical thought to argue for a new necessity in Italian foreign policy. Building on a desire to leave the passivity of the Cold War period behind, 'geopolitics' would be the wake-up call for a self-conscious definition of Italy's national interest and foreign policy. Such a view is clearly one of the rationales behind Carlo Jean's writings (and success).

Second, the establishment of *Limes* corresponded to the need for a new forum in which Italian foreign policy could be debated. This is probably part of the explanation for the fact that, as Brighi and Petito show, the geopolitical revival also came from the left, not just the right, to the extent that *Limes* is published by a centre-left publishing house. The success of *Limes*, whose launch was supported by government funds in 1993, initially lay in its creation of a forum where 'security intellectuals' could attempt to address the post-1989 void in a language that seemed to hold out the promise of answers. In its appeal to allegedly natural 'facts', geopolitics suggested to provide a good way of establishing a 'neutral' – because more ideology-independent – ground for overcoming the Cold War divides that characterised Italian political discourse. However, along with ideology, *Limes* also kept 'academic' theoretical distance

²⁰ Guzzini, 1995.

at bay, remaining almost entirely untouched by theoretical findings within the field of international relations. This was done to ensure a wider audience, but not solely for that reason. Accordingly, *Limes* often reproduces the common-sense language of diplomacy (realism) and military strategy (geopolitics). This was to be the common 'bipartisan' ground. Furthermore, the editor(s) of *Limes* was (were) not looking for such common ground: he (they) wanted to create it. So, the publication was open to both the right and the left, but only within a certain predefined realm. According to its statement of purpose, *Limes* was

founded on the open and opposing (*contrastivo*) confrontation of diverse geopolitical projects and representations. The essential point is that they refer to conflicts of power in space (land, sea, air), and that they can be put on maps (*cartografabili*) ... with no wink (*ammiccamento*) to the geographic determinism *en vogue* in the political geography of the 19th century or in some geopolitical schools of the 20th century.²¹

Yet, it should be added that, besides the presence of a rather clear Italian self-assertion in its editorial work²² and an editor who tends to see the world strongly through geopolitical eyes,²³ in *Limes* geopolitics can also be defined rather widely – for example, in relation to the 'geopolitics of taxis'.²⁴

Hence, to sum up, there was both anxiety and a foreign policy identity crisis in Italy; geopolitics appeared a promising way of handling these developments; and actors within the political, military and media establishment picked up on this potential. Why geopolitics? Here, the different process factors play a role. Indeed, as Brighi and Petito show, almost all of the factors specified for this study favoured a revival. There is a strong materialist tradition in Italian political culture (ideational path dependence); the foreign-policy expert system is close to the political and military establishment; and independent academic or parallel expertise is rare, underdeveloped and non-theoretical.²⁵ Things have started to change during the last decade – albeit in a patchy manner – with an increasing professionalisation of IR in academia and increased openness towards foreign literature that goes beyond the limited theoretical inspiration of the early 'Huntington–Kissinger–Brzezinski' triad of the 1990s. Indeed, theoretical work itself has made a new and modest inroad in this period, while geopolitics has receded.

²¹ See the homepage at <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes/chi-siamo>.

²² Caracciolo *et al.*, 1997.

²³ Indeed, at a talk in Copenhagen, he based his vision for Russia's foreign and security policy on Russian geopolitical writings. See Lucio Caracciolo, 'Eurussia: is Pan-European Security Possible?', presentation at a conference at the Danish Institute for International Studies, 22 April 2009. See www.diis.dk/sw76035.asp.

²⁴ <http://temi.repubblica.it/limes/geopolitica-dei-taxi-guidatrici-velate-alla-ribalta/12321>.

²⁵ See the courses and programmes assembled by Bonanate, 1990.

*Turkey: geopolitics left and right and the problem
of an endemic identity crisis*

If Germany was a country where almost all of the relevant factors seemed to pre-empt the possibility of a revival of geopolitical thought, in Turkey the situation was almost the opposite. As with other countries where military regimes continued to exist after the period of European fascism, as on the Iberian Peninsula or in South America, geopolitics did not need a revival: it was always there.²⁶ True, there was a considerable upsurge in publications and open references, as evidenced by Pinar Bilgin in [Chapter 7](#), but there was little novel in these developments.

Yet, such an upsurge was made possible by the existence of a Turkish security imaginary characterised by what Bilgin calls ‘geopolitics dogma’. Such dogma is characterised by:

- (1) the assumption that geographic elements are natural and constant facts, which establishes geopolitics as a scientific and objective view of the world;
- (2) an axiomatic belief in the primacy, if not determinacy, of geography as a factor shaping world politics;
- (3) the assumption that Turkey’s geographical location is special in a way that makes such factors extra-determinist for the Turkish case; and
- (4) the presentation of Turkey as occupying a place envied by friends and foes alike.

This dogma plays an important role for Turkey’s security imaginary, since it relates closely to two of the latter’s main features. First, it is connected to the perennial question of Turkey’s identity, which, with the arrival of the Turkish Republic, has been decided as ‘Western’. And in this context, whatever differences there may be in relation to other Western countries (in terms of religion, culture and so on), common security interests – the ‘geopolitics’ so to speak – placed Turkey on safe Western terrain during the Cold War. Besides helping to interpellate a safe Western identity, the geopolitics dogma also serves to negotiate Turkey’s Westernness with a conflicting but equally foundational collective memory, namely the Treaties of Sèvres in which the Ottoman Empire was divided up by Western powers. The Sèvres metaphor stands for a West that cannot be trusted and that was ready to undermine the very integrity of the Turkish Republic’s precursor. Here, the geopolitics dogma mediates, since its emphasis on geographic necessities means that there was nothing intrinsic about the behaviour of the ‘Western’ nations at that time: they were basically compelled to act as they did.

²⁶ See respectively, for example,; Dodds, 1997 and 2000; Gangas-Geisse, 2001; Hepple, 1992; Kacowicz, 2000; Santis-Arenas, 2001 and Sidaway, 2000. For earlier assessments, see Child, 1979; Hepple, 1986a; Kelly, 1984 and Reboratti, 1983. Note that Chile’s General Augusto Pinochet has himself published a book with the title *Geopolitics* (in 1968).

Given the central role of the underlying materialist logic of the security imaginary in general, and the fixation on the 'Western' identity in particular, the events of 1989 did, according to Bilgin, produce an 'ontological anxiety' (Agnew). When, during the 1990s, the EU proved less than forthcoming in terms of granting Turkey membership, despite enlarging to include countries of Central and Eastern Europe, when even the United States had shown some signs of impatience with regard to Turkey's democratisation process and human rights record, whatever the self-understanding of Turkish foreign policy identity, the resulting external role ascription was one of a marginal Western, perhaps not entirely European, state with a Mediterranean or even Middle Eastern identity. In this context of perceived betrayal, Turkey experienced the large expansion of geopolitical writings that Bilgin documents, which stretches from a series of new journals to academics and politicians, including the present Foreign Minister (Prof.) Ahmet Davutoğlu.

But why retrieve geopolitics? Although, in this case, the geopolitics dogma seems to suggest that looking for geopolitical arguments will be the 'natural' response, according to Bilgin, two of the process factors did play a further role by limiting the search for answers to the vocabulary of geopolitics: the central role of the military and the state of academic IR (whose professionalisation and independence has however improved over the last years). The ubiquity of the military and the mainly materialist teaching with little theory to provide observational distance to common-sense understandings or even critique of the geopolitical 'view from nowhere', amplify the pull of geopolitical argument and the promptness with which the resort to it is made.

Bilgin's chapter also highlights the importance of the agential process factor hypothesised in the framework, since geopolitics featured prominently in Turkey's daily political battles. This, however, did not pitch conservative forces using geopolitical arguments against a left wing that shunned them. Rather, both sides used geopolitical argumentation freely. Bilgin notes that the basic vacuity of much geopolitical argument – being twistable for any environmental determinacy that would come handy in political debates – readily facilitates such a situation.

For the general framework of analysis, the Turkish case therefore leads to two follow-up questions, one concerning the process by which geopolitics is mobilised, the other related to its role in appeasing identity crises. For the first issue, Bilgin's analysis questions the role of conservatism for geopolitical argument. We have already experienced in earlier chapters that geopolitical rhetoric was not alien to non-conservative forces, be they Havel in the Czech Republic, various politicians from the Green–Red coalition in Germany, the editor of *Limes* (although his belonging to the left is debatable) in Italy, and here Ecevit and others in Turkey. It is clear that even though conservative nationalists seemed to have used geopolitical arguments with more ease or naturalness, geopolitics is not their exclusive domain.

Is this 'bipartisan' use of geopolitics due to a merely rhetoric strategy? A purely rhetorical use is indeed more easily explained: every political actor tries to mobilise and tap into a security imaginary in order to enhance the resonance of his or her argument. When symbols become a conscious tool and not only a cultural disposition, actors will engage in symbolic battles in which any 'authorised' argument may be used if it serves to increase the legitimacy of one's point. Only in contexts where actors are aware of the implications that a reproduction of geopolitical ideas might have (militarising international politics) will they be hesitant about such use, and may either not resort to geopolitical argument or seek to limit its use (as in the case of Germany). In fact, in such countries, one might expect that the arguments will not resonate as 'naturally' as elsewhere.

But, what about neoclassical geopolitical thought? There are two ways in which the left or reformists may become attracted not only by the rhetoric but also by (some of) the content of geopolitics. In a cogent discussion of Social Darwinism, Mike Hawkins has shown how this worldview has been appropriated by racists, reactionaries and reformists alike.²⁷ Darwin's theory of evolution includes both a sense of natural inexorability and a sense of the possibility of change if external conditions are altered – it is both nature and evolution. Consequently, much depended on which side of the tension the theorist came down on. The more conservative side would construct a line from some Malthusian shortage to a perennial struggle for land or primacy, whereas the more pacifist would insist on Darwin's analysis of a selective process of increasing social complexity, in which physical violence has become replaced by economic and ideational competition. Being fundamentally about an agnostic process, ideological contenders could decide either to stress the unchangeable nature of human selection or the evolutionary effects of such selection. Applied to our geopolitical argument, this would mean that, at least in principle, there could be ways of arguing for the primacy of geographic factors that nevertheless, by sufficiently stressing the historical character of such factors, allow for a reformist vision.

The Turkish case, however, seems rather different and leads to a second way of understanding the presence of the left in the geopolitical revival: nationalism. If, as the present book argues, geopolitical revival occurs as a response to a foreign policy identity crisis, then discussions around the nature of such identity, the 'national interest' and the very 'nation' itself are bound to flare up. In many countries, the issue of nationalism is almost exclusively reserved for the right, but not in all. There is, for instance, a republican (sometimes even Jacobin) tradition on the French left, and a liberal republican patriotic tradition in the United States (which makes nationalism a very broadly shared value within political discourse in that country). In Turkey, the main established party on

²⁷ Hawkins, 1997.

the left (the Republican People's Party, or CHP) regards itself as the heir to the Kemalist tradition. That tradition may appear leftist, since it is the Westernising tradition within Turkey, and hence reformist in comparison with more traditionalist understandings of Turkish society. At the same time, however, it also tends to defend the exceptionalist role of the military in Turkish society, which, seeing itself as the guarantee for Turkey's territorial integrity and secular society, has kept Turkey in a state of limbo between a regime that is democratic and one that is constantly in a (cold) civil war (with all 'necessary' consequences for human rights that this entails). In other words, it is not the conservative but the nationalist component that seems to be crucial for understanding the role of our process factor, at least in relation to Turkey.

But, the Turkish case is also instructive for a second facet of our framework of analysis. So far, the first mechanism was understood as occurring at the meeting between the foreign policy/security imaginary and an outside event (the end of the Cold War), where the interpretation of this event triggers a dissonance within the foreign policy identity contained within the imaginary. The theoretical framework clearly indicated that this had to be seen in an interpretivist way, in the sense that there was no automatism involved: a certain event did not necessarily have to trigger an identity crisis (as we have also seen in the German and Czech cases). The Turkish case, however, does point to a particular qualification: the possibility of an endemic identity crisis in which no stable self–other understanding exists. Obviously, all identity is a process, not some fixed entity. And, yet, to be 'identical' requires a sense of continuity (in the making). The nature of the geopolitical revival in Turkey seems to suggest that identity is more precarious within some security imaginaries than in others, and hence a Turkish identity crisis may be endemic. Inversely, if the main hypothesis is correct – that is, that identity crises may trigger the rise of geopolitical thought – the repeated inability of geopolitics to provide a stable fix to this may indicate the existence of a vicious circle – an idea that I will now develop in a bit more detail.

The events of 1989 only exposed an ongoing and permanent identity crisis that was exacerbated by the fact that Turkey's strategic importance (the geopolitical fix) could no longer outweigh the increasing distance between expectations concerning what it means to be part of the West (the EU) and what Turkey is willing to deliver as of now. It is basically the crisis of Kemalism when being Western is no longer measured by the 'right' alphabet, the secularisation (and militarisation) of the state, not even by the market economy (ever since Prime Minister Turgut Özal in the 1980s), but by the democratic and human rights record. This is partly the result of the positioning of the EU in its *acquis communautaire* – or, indeed, in its attempt to project itself as a normative power (at least at times). But, it also results from the Cold War and its termination, since human rights records were a key argument in the ideological struggle against the USSR.

Second, it seems that identity processes in the Turkish case may be taking the form of a vicious circle. On the one hand, geopolitical arguments are readily resorted to in times of crisis. But, if the foreign policy identity crisis is latent, since the Western anchoring has never been secured, it needs little to surface time and time again, continuously mobilising the geopolitical dogma. On the other hand, or so a hypothesis derived from the Turkish case, exactly for the apparent determinacy of such thought, which tends however to be useable for all possible positions, geopolitics does not ultimately stabilise identity discourses. Its suggested determinacy makes it attractive; its actual indeterminacy means that the fix it provides is always precarious. Hence, although geopolitical thought is an easy and quick fixer, it is not sufficient in itself, and indeed may become part of the problem: if it crowds out any other forms of discourse, the latent identity crisis is bound to return. In these circumstances, one could expect social mechanisms similar to those available for the reduction of individual cognitive dissonance. One of these, *wishful thinking*, adapts the perception of reality (or beliefs); here, this would involve assuming that Turkey's Westernness is acknowledged after all. The other, '*sour grapes*', will tend to adapt the desires; hence, as Bilgin shows, some alternative vision like 'Eurasianism' will surface in a way that enables Turkey's self-identification and role perception to coincide better.²⁸ Nevertheless, despite the lure of geopolitics, the latent identity crisis will not be resolved by a geopolitical approach and the debate on the issue will tend to oscillate like a pendulum without coming to a halt, even an imagined one (see the comparison with the Russian case, below). This is a point to which I will return in the next chapter.

Estonia: civilisational geopolitics

The background for the Estonian case is different again. Here, 1989 cannot be seen as an event that was interpreted in such a way as to produce a crisis for a given security imaginary (as in Italy or Turkey), nor as an event that would put an end to such an imaginary (as in the Czech Republic). Estonia was not just kidnapped: it ceased to exist as an independent state for several decades. Hence, the return to independence in 1991 meant not a crisis in the identity processes within a given foreign policy tradition, but rather the latter's very creation. Indeed, the fact that Estonia had not been an independent country for quite some time, argues Merje Kuus, meant that identity was initially articulated not in foreign policy terms, but in civilisational ones – and by cultural elites rather

²⁸ This idea is obviously inspired by Jon Elster's discussion on social mechanisms within a widely conceived rationalist analysis (see, for example, Elster, 1998 and 2007). Whether or not, or how, such ideas may be used for an analysis of mechanisms of discursive practices will be discussed in the next chapter.

than intellectuals of statecraft. Not physical, but human and cultural geography would lead the geopolitical revival.

Therefore, as Kuus shows, Estonian identity discourse focuses on, and actively constructs, the cultural entity of a nation rather than a state and its interests.²⁹ The Estonian nation and its legitimacy hark back to times immemorial, well before the Soviet hiatus. The discourse locates Estonia – including its religion and its culture – in the West, and not with Russia (automatically cast as the East). Estonia is the front state at the faultline. This produces a strong sense of ‘othering’, because the discourse functions on what people are, and not on what they do. And this has implications for Estonian society to the extent that the civilisational Other can be individuals ‘among us’. Individuals become, writes Kuus, ‘carriers of geopolitics’. The civilisational concept of identity thus pervades political debates, from those on foreign and security policies to those surrounding a host of domestic issues that include immigration, citizenship, minority rights and education. Its vision of threat is as much the power of the Russian Empire, as it is the fifth column inside.

It is in this context that Kuus analyses how Huntington’s mappings and cultural identifiers were eagerly and prominently appropriated in the Estonian public sphere, so much so that they became part of and legitimated ‘common sense’. Huntington’s theses bundle up geopolitics and culture, ‘casting geopolitics in terms of essential identities and framing culture as a geopolitical matter’. And, since the security imaginary is not formed in terms of the language of state interest, but that of cultural identity and civilisational faultlines, its embedded identity does not allow any vision of hybridity or mixture. As with every essentialist ethnic argument, it leads to tropes of ‘purity’, where mixing is never a compromise or the natural evolution of an identity in process, but merely a witness to decline or defeat.

Kuus’ account prompts three reconsiderations for the initial framework of analysis. One has to do with the very definition of geopolitics, since some may consider Huntington’s ‘clash of civilisations’ as not being ‘geopolitical’. The second has to do with the interaction of domestic and international discourses – or, indeed, the question of to what extent foreign influences can impact on the process under investigation. Finally, her analysis shows how nationalism is not only reserved for great or dissatisfied powers, but also for a ‘geopolitics of the weak’.

How can Huntington be a part of geopolitics? Does he not speak all about culture, not nature? There is little doubt that Huntington’s thesis about a clash of civilisations falls squarely into the geopolitical tradition. Classical geopoliticians have always insisted in the national/ethnic component as a fundamental principle of the geography and politics of the state. This could be seen in the

²⁹ For a related discussion that examines various levels of Estonian discourses, including visual ones, see Berg, 2003.

early Ratzel, where he discusses how soil (*Boden*) and humans together form a state, and how the nature of that state depends on ideas and a common consciousness: the borders of the state reach as far as do the '*leitende Gedanken*' (guiding thoughts) about it. Ratzel mentions religious and national ideas, as well as historical memories, insisting on the role of national consciousness.³⁰ For his part, Kjellén has his chapter on geopolitics immediately followed by one on ethnopolitics, showing how both are part of the personality of a state and how loyalty (to the regime) and nationality (to the nation) feed into each other.³¹ The national principle appears in Mackinder's defence of population exchanges as they occurred after World War I between Greece and Turkey,³² or in the various visions of the civilisational primacy of Europe/the West/the White Race, in which versions of Social Darwinism would make *nations* struggle for survival.³³ And, of course, German *Geopolitik* was closely connected to a 'virulent ethnic German nationalism'.³⁴ Classical geopolitics has always included ethnopolitics, physical and human/cultural geography. Once the link between geopolitical discourse and nationalism is identified (see the discussion of the Turkish case, above), this should come as no surprise.

However, the problem for geopolitical analysis is that when it includes cultural and ideational factors (national awareness), we can no longer be sure what exactly the 'necessities' of nature are. In fact, in this context, it does not seem intellectually bizarre to search for biological continuities or roots that could serve as a way of reducing culture to nature once again. Such a move would obviously be shunned today if it came in a 'racial guise', but not necessarily if it were based on psychology or cognitive sciences, as with social identity theory, for instance.³⁵

Hence, including civilisational and cultural factors does not cause an argument to step out of geopolitical logics. Material and cultural factors are tied to each other by the underlying concern of nationalism. But by using cultural factors, geopolitics does something to them. By adding more and more indeterminate (and socially constructed) items to the list of crucial factors, while keeping an argumentative logic based on a 'natural determinacy', geopolitics tends to objectify culture and to essentialise nations. It is not fortuitous that Huntington's last book eventually led him from the clashes of (homogeneous) civilisations to the national threats that, according to him, Hispanic immigrants pose to an ultimately essentialised Anglo-Protestant core of the United States.³⁶

³⁰ Ratzel, 1897, respectively 13–14, 32.

³¹ Kjellén, 1924 [1916], 123. These are the only two chapters that are thoroughly developed.

³² Mackinder, 1944 [1919]. ³³ E.g. Kjellén, 1924 [1916], 122.

³⁴ Herb, 2002, 179.

³⁵ For ways in which such a take can be used to defend realist critiques of constructivism, see Mercer, 1995 and Snyder, 2002.

³⁶ Huntington, 2004. For a thoughtful critique of these political and conceptual walls, see Katzenstein, 2010.

This reproduces the dilemma mentioned in the Introduction to this volume: the moment geopolitical writers acknowledge that such non-material factors are both necessary and not reducible to nature or necessity, the civilisational turn loses its alleged determinacy, one of the very reasons of its appeal.

The second point raised by Kuus' chapter concerns the interrelationship between domestic identity discourses and the outside world. In fact, here we not only meet the internal logic of geopolitical argument, the disposition to fix foreign policy identity by allegedly natural or necessitous constraints, but the fact that the argument comes from an external and authorised centre of knowledge. As Kuus writes, Huntington's theses were regarded as external proof of Estonian common sense; in return, Huntington himself used the way in which some Eastern European countries were able to identify with his thesis as a confirmation. Still, the reason why Huntington – and not some other legitimate Western voice – would be received with such esteem has to do with the predisposition of the foreign-policy common sense, i.e. with the action made by local intellectuals, and is hence not reducible to some foreign 'imposition'.

Finally, we can see in the Estonian case how geopolitics can be informed by a sociology of knowledge, whereby it is not meant to aggrandise the claims of actual or aspiring great powers, but rather defends – or indeed brings into being – the independent existence of a nation. Then it stands for a 'geopolitics of the weak', the defensive nationalism of the small country.³⁷ References to a greater (protective) community to which one belongs hark back to the same defensive sense of nationalism, however offensive its implications might be for Estonian citizens of Soviet/Russian descent.

Russia: geopolitical revival unable to fix the security imaginary

The end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union led to much rethinking of what 'Russia' stands for, its role and self-identification in the 1990s. Indeed, as one insightful observer has noted, both politics and international studies have been 'obsessed with identity'.³⁸ This obsession was accompanied by a flurry of geopolitical arguments mobilising different historical lineages of the Russian nation in an attempt to fix a new foreign policy/security imaginary. So far, the hypothesis of this volume seems to hold. But, as Astrov and Morozova argue, for all the ubiquity of geopolitical argument within Russian political and public discourse, ultimately the recomposition of the security imaginary relied on inspirations that were not strictly geopolitical. Geopolitics was a quick response to a crisis – in fact part of the very definition of the crisis – but it provided no long-term fix.

³⁷ Thanks to Eiki Berg for having insisted on this in a private communication.

³⁸ Morozov, 2009a.

The Russian case offers interesting comparisons with Estonia and Turkey. As in Estonia, the revival was to a considerable degree civilisational, since what was at stake was the redefinition not just of the state, but of the nation. In both Russia and Estonia, the geopolitical revival would at first prompt essentialised understandings. But, whereas Estonia used civilisational arguments in a defensive way in order to bolster its position within the West and against another civilisation further East, Russia, perceiving itself as being at the core of such a civilisation, was looking for a more self-assured way of defining itself. This enabled Russia to make a more substantial recourse to its own symbolic resources. And those proved more multifaceted, open to diverse historical lineages.

Like Turkey, Russia seems to have been caught in a kind of perennial identity crisis. Both countries have been considered part of Europe – but not really (cf. the idea of the Ottoman Empire as ‘the sick man of Europe’). More specifically, the role assignment of a ‘great power’ by international society has usually been half-hearted for both countries. Whereas Russia (and later the Soviet Union) had seen itself as a central player, subsequent international societies have not necessarily been forthcoming in granting that status. Hence, the discussion of whether or not Turkey or Russia were part of Europe and/or the West was always paired with a discussion of whether they were ‘acceptable’ members of international society. And, with every turn whereby international society became more demanding – increasingly in terms of the criteria domestic regimes needed to fulfil, not just the power a country was able to project – both Russia and Turkey were facing exclusion.³⁹ Indeed, often the two sides constructed each other as the (significant) other.⁴⁰ Astrov and Morozova show that, as in Turkey, geopolitics did not provide a stabilisation of the identity in Russia’s foreign-policy imaginary.

The authors identify four themes that have dominated post-1991 Russian debates, namely, ideology, modernisation, Russia’s distinctiveness and possible objective grounds for Russia’s (re-)assertion following the demise of communism and the Soviet Union.⁴¹ They argue that the 1990s posed a major problem for the rearticulation of the relevant foreign-policy imaginary. To the outside observer, often prone to confuse Russia with the Soviet Union, it may appear a quick step to simply refer back to the long history of Russian identity and foreign policy, breaking with the immediate Soviet past while reaching out to the rich reservoir of lessons and lineages from before. However, this would not prove easy. The first ‘liberal’ years, in which Russia’s identity and foreign policy was grafted onto an existing ‘Western’ model, failed in the economic

³⁹ For the more recent Turkish case, see Rumelili, 2003 and 2004; for an analysis of Russia’s repeated attempts to achieve great-power status, see Neumann, 2008.

⁴⁰ For Russia, see, for example, Neumann, 1995 and 1999; for the Ottoman Empire, see, among others, Said, 1979.

⁴¹ Note that the first themes are compatible with the ones that Hopf has found prominent in the identity debate in the Soviet Union and Russia; see Hopf, 2002.

crisis and provoked turmoil by the end of the decade. Hence, the break with the Soviet past was not successful. But, nor was a return to it possible: the role of communist ideology in the self-understanding within Russia's foreign-policy imaginary was gone. Accordingly, argue Astrov and Morozova, there was no ready imaginary to fall back upon. More precisely, the crisis was not just a new debate about which historical memories should become dominant within a given foreign-policy imaginary; it also involved a decision regarding which type of imaginary would be chosen as the baseline in the first place – a result of the multiple subjectivities of the Russian/Soviet past. Hence, the Russian case is one of a foreign-policy identity crisis in which there is no longer an identity. As analysed in the opening chapters of the book, crises arise when the security imaginary predisposes for the understanding of events in such a way as to unsettle an established or dominant self-understanding or the relationship between that self-understanding and outside role attribution. Russia is not only a case of the second, but also of the first.

In this disorientation, geopolitical thought did flare up and did mobilise previous geopolitical thought. Indeed, what would be more appropriate than to reflect upon the last time in which the Russian foreign policy/security imaginary had faced some similar problems, namely, when Russia became the Soviet Union? Both Vadim Tsymburskii and Aleksandr Dugin would rely on that past for their Eurasian recomposition of a more geopolitically informed identity and, potentially, security imaginary. Astrov and Morozova show the different ways in which the two seek to recompose this identity, arguing that, with some qualifications, Dugin can be considered a 'neoclassical geopolitical thinker'.

However, the authors' main point is that although we have an identity crisis and a geopolitical revival, including a neoclassical one (Dugin), and although there is a clear redefinition of foreign-policy identity happening, the foreign-policy tradition is ultimately rearranged in a way that does not strongly rely on geopolitics. Instead, and this move is accomplished with the second Putin presidency, some version of technocratic realism informs it, which externalises the reasons for the crisis and ends up mobilising a Cold War identity, removed of its communist components and the risk of nuclear confrontation, but with the same threat – 'Atlantism' or 'Americanism' (the 'false Europe'). Stabilising at first, this externalisation epitomises an endemic identity crisis.

Accordingly, the Russian case also has some wider implications for the present volume. A revival of geopolitical thought has taken place in that country, and it has been plausibly triggered by the identity crisis that leading thinkers and politicians tried to address. The chapter does not dwell much on the other process factors, since we know that they all lead in the same direction. In fact, Russia was an 'obvious' case of a state where a revival of geopolitical thought could be expected to occur as a way of addressing a crisis. What is less obvious is the relationship between that first trigger and the security imaginary. As we have seen in several cases now, even if geopolitical thought is mobilised

for an easy fixing in times of identity crisis, it may not necessarily succeed. In the Turkish case, and to some extent also in the Italian case, a reason for this failure is that, despite its alleged determinism, geopolitical thinking can be rearranged to fit several stories (which all lay claim to determinism). Or, put differently, there is a determinism for each geopolitical story, but no determinism as to which determinism will be chosen. In the Russian case, this has produced a situation in which geopolitical debate, so important in the definition of the identity crisis, did not significantly affect the security imaginary, since other political actors were able to mobilise other historical lineages. Hence, the revival has had a more limited effect, at least so far.

This provides an important reminder that the link between the main social mechanism of this study (see next chapter) – that of dissonance reduction in an identity crisis – and the potential second one – the self-fulfilling prophecy of remilitarising security imaginaries – is far from direct. Russia witnessed an open debate about the reconstitution of its foreign policy identity (and political subjectivity more generally) within which geopolitical argument was highly visible. Hence, the geopolitical revival was indeed part of the mechanism that was sought to reduce the dissonance or indeed to reconstitute the country's foreign policy identity. But, although it affected the acuteness of the identity crisis, this revival of geopolitical discourse did not eventually become a major part in the reconstitution of the security imaginary, occurring in the guise of a technocratic great power realism (a kind of internal balancing, as realists would put it). It is not impossible that also this realism provided a version of a more militarised security imaginary that would feed back into a more Hobbesian European order, the second mechanism. However, its link to the geopolitical revival could, at best, be indirect and outside of the reach of the present volume's analysis.

It is in any case probably too early to tell. For rhetoric can inform behaviour that is subsequently rationalised/made sense of in such a way as to affect the security imaginary, to make it 'coherent'.⁴² In a public debate in which geopolitical references have become self-evident and legitimate, their rhetorical power can be called upon in later crises. Talk is not cheap, and identities and imaginaries are ongoing processes.

3 Conclusion

The present chapter's survey of the findings of the six cases can be summarised as follows (see Table 10.1).

⁴² This echoes Deborah Larson's argument that Cold War behaviour was not an effect of a pre-existing frame and ideology; rather, the Cold War ideology was an *ex-post* rationalisation that sought to make sense of improvised practices. Larson uses psychological 'attribution theory' to make her case; see Larson, 1985.

Table 10.1. *A synthesis of the country studies*

	Foreign policy identity crisis?	Which crisis?	Which geopolitics (formal, popular, practical)?	Which process factors? (+ for positive effect on revival, etc.)
Czech Republic	No crisis and no geopolitical revival	Potential crisis for 'longer' identity since new borders, indeed country. Finding: no crisis	Marginally formal and practical (and hence no significant revival)	(-) satisfied power for achieving political and national sovereignty (-) ideational path dependence: anti-geopolitical tradition (+/-) new institutionalisation of academia and expert system allowing a certain autonomy, but not yet much influence, and no military role in knowledge production (-) political debate not in terms of nationalist escalation
Germany	No crisis and no geopolitical revival	Potential crisis for 'longer' identity since new borders, indeed country. Finding: no crisis	Marginally formal and practical (and hence no significant revival)	(-) satisfied power for achieving national sovereignty (unification) (-) ideational path dependence: geopolitics – taboo through its past (-) peace research tradition, academia in role of observer (theory), military no special role in knowledge production ^a (-) political debate not in terms of nationalist escalation

Table 10.1. (*cont.*)

	Foreign policy identity crisis?	Which crisis?	Which geopolitics (formal, popular, practical)?	Which process factors? (+ for positive effect on revival, etc.)
Italy	Yes and geopolitical revival	Potential crisis for 'no longer' identity, since the established one closely connected to the Cold War. Finding: crisis for perceived status decline	Mainly formal and at the interstices between formal, popular and political (LiMes)	(+) dissatisfied power for lacking status recognition (+) ideational path dependence: materialist tradition (+) no peace research tradition and military role in knowledge production (+/-) role of academia increasingly observer oriented, but isolated (+/-) political debate sometimes in terms of nationalist escalation (government dependent)
Turkey	Yes and geopolitical revival	Potential crisis for 'no longer' identity, since the established one closely connected to the Cold War Finding: crisis for perceived status decline	All	(+) dissatisfied power for lacking status recognition (+) ideational path dependence: geopolitical dogma (+) no peace research tradition; military role in knowledge production; increasing academic autonomy but isolated (+) political debate in terms of nationalist escalation

Estonia	Yes and geopolitical revival	Potential crisis for 'not yet' identity, since newly established country and elite. Finding: crisis in status recognition and very definition of the 'essential' self	All, but mainly practical	(+) insecure power (+/-) no clear ideational path dependence (+/-) new institutionalisation of academia and expert system allowing a certain autonomy, but not yet much influence; no military role in knowledge production (+) political debate in terms of nationalist escalation
Russian Federation	Yes and geopolitical revival	Potential crisis for 'no' identity, since both self-understanding and role recognition in jeopardy. Finding: crisis for perceived status decline and insecure subjectivity	Mainly formal and practical	(+) dissatisfied power for lacking status recognition (+) ideational path dependence: materialist, but not strictly in geopolitical way (+) no peace research tradition; a direct role of politics and military in knowledge production (+) political debate in terms of nationalist escalation

Note:

^a Moreover, even if it were, the military tradition in post-1945 Germany ('Staatsbürger in Uniform') is not specifically geared towards geopolitics either.

1 *Was there a foreign policy identity crisis?*

A foreign policy identity crisis was identified in four of the six cases. Where such a crisis occurred, it followed a clear sense of disorientation regarding how to cope with the new role and/or self-identification the (sometimes new) country had to face. The two countries that experienced no foreign policy identity crisis also experienced no significant revival of geopolitical thought. In the Czech Republic and Germany, the events of 1989 (which here include the subsequent German reunification and the breakup of Czechoslovakia) seemed rather to reconfirm the prevailing identity within the security imaginary. Yet, the process factors stipulated by this comparative study (see below) seemed to work parallel with the underlying security imaginary. In other words, most if not all of the process factors that would facilitate a revival of geopolitical thinking were absent or weak in these two cases. Both countries had experienced a non-materialist political culture (for a longer period of time in the Czech Republic than in Germany), a clear separation of the military from the political and academic elite, and an expert system that was relatively independent – in terms of observer status and finance – and only partly co-opted by the political system.

2 *What kind of crisis?*

The study had selected six cases that varied in terms of the kind of potential crisis situation – that is, instances in which previously established self-understandings and external role conceptions could be reasonably expected to be challenged. We distinguished between three types of potential foreign policy identity crisis: no identity, no longer the previously established identity, and no identity as yet.

The first type – ‘no identity’ – can be seen in the case of Russia, where both the country’s previously established role as a superpower in the world and its self-understanding (neither Soviet Union nor Tsarist Russia) were in jeopardy. In addition, both of these aspects were intertwined in the geopolitical revival that has since been temporarily resolved through the revival of a technocratic great-power identity that incorporates a known adversary.

The second type – ‘no longer the previously established identity’ – covered different subtypes. The external roles of Italy and Turkey, for example, were so closely connected to the Cold War that the latter’s end ushered in some anxious self-reflection. In both cases, this resulted in an attempt to stem the perceived decline of status that clashed with the established self-understanding in which the country was either a pillar of the Western alliance (Turkey) or of the European project (Italy). Interestingly, this seems to have provoked more anxiety – indeed crisis – than the subtype of states that found themselves in new

borders, such as the Czech Republic and Germany. Although the fact of having a new state seemed to lay the ground for a potential identity crisis, in these two cases at least it did not result in one. In both states, there was a major debate about the 'new' state that had now come into being and had never existed within the current borders. But, internally, the changes met pre-existing aspirations rather than challenging them. And externally all was fine as long as the two countries would abide to the status expectations in the world, which for Germany meant in particular that it would largely maintain its Bonner Republic identity – which it did. Hence, to repeat the basic interpretivist point, the important trigger does not lie in the shifting of borders or indeed the production of new states; rather, it lies in the way in which the foreign policy imaginary, with its embedded identity discourses and international role attribution, makes sense of the historical changes. By implication, in other cases within the same subtype of 'new' old countries, an identity crisis might well have developed.

The last type – 'not yet an identity' – was represented by Estonia, where it was mostly the country's internal self-understanding that was at stake, while the very fact of access to the sovereign status of a state had established Estonia's international role to a large extent. There remained, however, an element of status recognition about which the new country's elite was quite anxious. Here, the role of Huntington's maps proved crucial, since they allowed a clear and 'objective' anchoring in the West (together with the status that comes with that).

3 *Which geopolitics?*

Did a revival take place within formal, practical or popular geopolitics – that is, within academic, political or public debate – during the 1990s? In this context, the authors of the case studies were asked to concentrate primarily on the expert system within the countries studied – that is, on both the academic and the political level, within which we also include parts of the public (when journals are analysed). Regarding the two countries in which no identity crisis occurred, it was shown that the openings that did take place in Germany occurred solely within the political sphere, while academic involvement was marginal; and, in the Czech Republic, it was again only within the political sphere that some temporarily significant borrowing of geopolitical wording could be found. In Italy and Russia, the revival took place within both practical and formal geopolitics. And, although the term 'revival' may not be the most appropriate expression in relation to the Turkish case, since geopolitics never really left the scene in that country, Turkey has seen the presence of geopolitical thinking across the spectrum, including at the popular level. In Estonia, geopolitics was also present in all three domains, although it has definitely receded within academia over the last decade.

4 *Which process factors were present?*

As noted earlier, identity crises and process factors were more closely tied to each other (see [Chapter 3](#), pp. 000–000). Accordingly, these are probably best understood not as factors that kick in only after a crisis has occurred, but as accompanying factors all the way along. Still, our process factors were not equally present in all of the cases under study:

- We hypothesised that the ideology of a great or dissatisfied power would enhance the chances for a geopolitical revival in response to a foreign policy identity crisis. The existence of such an ideology clearly contributed to such a revival in the cases of Italy, Russia and Turkey, but not the others.
- Ideational path dependence (the existence of a materialist political culture) was clearly present in Italy, Russia and Turkey; difficult to assess in relation to a new country like Estonia; and not (or no longer) present in the Czech Republic and Germany.
- In the field of foreign policy expertise, we suggested a series of hypotheses, namely, that (1) the existence of peace research institutes or, more widely, an academia in which IR is taught at the observer level that provides distance to the language of world politics and its practitioners, (2) the existence of institutional guarantees for the independence of expertise from politics and the military, and (3) the checked influence of foreign military or strategic experts would reduce the probability that the response to the foreign policy identity crisis would involve an attempt to fix it with the help of geopolitical thinking. This element could not be systematically covered in the chapters of the present volume (an adequate treatment would have required almost a book for each case study), since their primary focus was on the analysis of the revival and its content.⁴³ That said, some general trends are known. With the exception of Germany, none of the countries has any tradition of peace research. With the exception of Turkey, and to some extent Russia, the military is not particularly present within the foreign policy expert system. The issue of the independence of academia and the domination of non- or anti-geopolitical traditions is more tricky, however. For even if a country's academia is independent, it may well be insignificant within the foreign policy expert culture. Hence, one needs both to have an observer status and to be taken seriously by the field, which includes the political and/or military elite and the general media – which remains a challenge in many countries.⁴⁴

⁴³ The initial research project had even envisaged conducting Bourdieu-inspired foreign expert field studies in the particular countries. See Guzzini, 2003. However, this had to be dropped due to missing financial means. Nevertheless, some authors have set off down that road on an individual basis. See Kuus, 2010 and 2011.

⁴⁴ For an analysis of the Baltic states in this regard, see Berg and Chillaud, 2009.

Also, in some countries the political elite is actually able to provide some of the self-observing distance itself. Hence, the foreign policy expert system is best understood in terms of a configurational analysis of actors and institutions that only more detailed studies would be able to provide. Table 10.1, however, does include general trends for the countries examined.

- Finally, we included agency in the political debate as one factor that may contribute to the rise of a particularly geopolitical answer to a foreign policy identity crisis. There, so the expectation, the rhetorical power of 'geopolitics' can show when used for dealing with territorial issues, when being mobilised in a threat rhetoric, controlling domestic dissent and strengthening conservatism, as well as when establishing the primacy of foreign policy and the need for long-term strategy. This initial hypothesis had to be amended: although it was predominantly conservative forces that pushed for a revival, this was only the case in countries in which the use of nationalist arguments was limited to the conservative side. As it turns out, nationalism is the more fundamental category here. And that also means that if the debate turns on the definition of the state or the nation, geopolitics may not just provide arguments, but may become the frame of the argument. Here, among the four countries that have seen a geopolitical revival, all had experienced this circle of resonance at least during the 1990s.

5 *Did geopolitics provide a fix?*

Have the security imaginaries of the countries studied been affected in such a way that the now-dominant identity discourses rely predominantly on geopolitical determinism? This question is crucial for understanding the second social mechanism ('self-fulfilling geopolitics'), which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The country studies cannot give a final answer on this, but with the added hindsight of two decades after the 1990s, it could well be that the structural effects of the geopolitical revivals under study have been less pronounced than perhaps anticipated. Here, the Turkish case stands out, since 'geopolitical dogma' was already part and parcel of that country's security imaginary. And, yet, since geopolitics does not provide a clear determinate fix, the country is still searching for an enduring foreign policy identity, its absence repeatedly but each time only temporarily fixed by the geopolitical dogma: Turkey remains in a latent continuous identity crisis. And this limbo could potentially affect the geopolitical dogma and its force. The jury is still out on Estonia, Italy and Russia, the other countries that experienced a geopolitical revival, but where the security imaginary was not already geopolitical. The Russian chapter argues that, ultimately, strictly geopolitical ideas have not become dominant within the Russian security

imaginary. For both Estonia and Italy, it is possible to observe an increasingly critical academia and a more general decline of (neoclassical) geopolitical ideas, although geopolitical thinking is still very present within Estonia's defensive nationalist discourses. In all of the cases concerned, the appeal to geopolitics seems to have been limited in time, and hence – or so the hypothesis would go – perhaps also in depth.

Social mechanisms as micro-dynamics in constructivist analysis

STEFANO GUZZINI

In a first step, the case studies in the study presented here have proved crucial in specifying the occurrence of a foreign policy identity crisis as the major explanatory factor in the revival of geopolitical thinking in certain countries following the events of 1989. The other factors – ideational path dependence, institutional factors/political economy of a country's foreign policy expert system, and political struggles – were considered to be process factors that helped explain why geopolitical discourse was chosen as a way of responding to such a crisis. This suggested an analysis in terms of process tracing, since (1) we had a common starting point, the end of the Cold War, and were attempting to explain/understand a given (variable) end, the revival or not of geopolitical thought, and (2) it was impossible to rule out equifinality or to assume unit homogeneity. The process tracing would be both comparative and interpretivist. The comparison would make it possible to cross-check the different explanatory factors within their particular contexts. The interpretivist part was necessary since the starting point of the process was not a given outside event (i.e. the end of the Cold War), but rather the way in which that event was interpreted within different countries. More precisely, to start off the process leading to a potential revival of geopolitics, the interpretation of this event unsettled previous identity roles within a country's security.

After the second round of empirical analysis, further specifications about the relationship between the hypothesised factors became necessary, since it was found that these factors did not simply 'line up' in the analysis of the process. In the first section of this chapter, I will therefore present a way of thinking about process tracing not in terms of a linear scheme, but as the intermeshing of several parallel processes. A second section will then specify and qualify how causal/social mechanisms can be fruitfully applied in such process tracing and coherently used in an intersubjective and non-positivist social theory. The third section of the chapter will establish the two basic mechanisms underpinning the empirics of this study: a social mechanism of identity crisis reduction and a self-fulfilling prophecy mechanism (which I term a 'vicious circle of essentialisation'). Both of these mechanisms function as micro-dynamics for

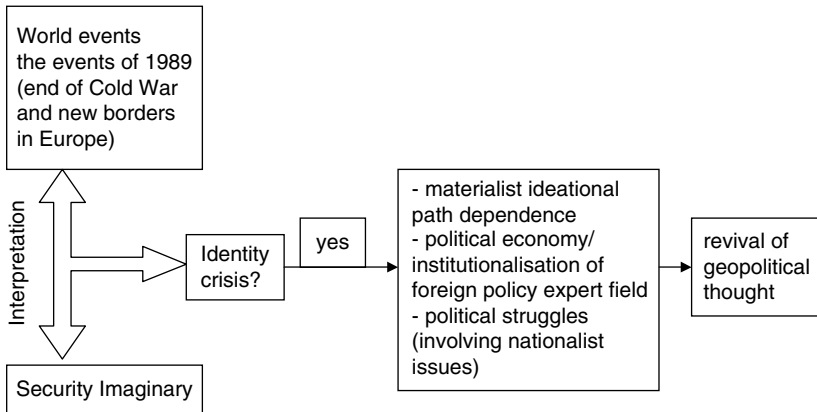


Figure 11.1. The return of geopolitics (I): a simple interpretivist process model

the analysis of structural change in constructivist theorising and provide the theory development of this book.

1 Interpretivist process tracing and parallel historical dynamics

This section will further develop the idea of interpretivist process tracing by adding a crucial component identified during the empirical analysis in [Part II](#): the need to look for parallel processes and their interaction, rather than for a single timeline from a critical juncture to the outcome.

Initially, the process-tracing design of the comparative study involved an Input–Mechanism/Process–Output model, with a qualification at the input side. That qualification concerned the inside-out vision of the input: rather than assuming that the end of the Cold War (‘the events of 1989’) had a direct impact on ideas, it would be the interpretation of those events on the basis of the pre-existing security imaginary – the reservoir of shared experiences and meanings, national lessons of history and embedded identity discourses – that would form the initial input into the process. Then, the study privileged one factor – the potential occurrence of a foreign policy identity crisis – as the starting point for the actual process, adding further dis/enabling factors later. This approach would give an almost classical I(nput)–M(echanism)–O(utput) scheme (see [Figure 11.1](#))

Though the process-tracing design was initially interpretivist, factors would be used both within a linear timeline and in an cumulative sense, whereby they were regarded as simply adding significance for the understanding of the outcome: the revival. It was thus possible to carry out the process tracing in a

manner not too different from that of a more positivistic approach, in which the various factors would count as simple intervening variables (and, given the empirical record, probably also having interactive effects).

The empirical case studies, however, added several complications to the initial framework. First, the initial trigger and the process factors were internally linked. In the analysis of the Czech case, the historical lineage of an anti-geopolitical tradition certainly predisposed the public and academic debate for anti-determinist and even progressivist assumptions regarding the nature of politics. But, it most probably interacted with the foreign policy imaginary itself: it is difficult to imagine a collective memory of scripts and lessons of the past (and 'Munich' surely rings a bell within the Czech foreign policy tradition) that could remain unconnected from such wider ideational traditions. Furthermore, such a link would go both ways. Hence, we cannot simply say that an identity crisis occurred and then ideational path dependence set in: the respective ideational structures were already part of the understanding of the security imaginary, and hence of the development of the crisis in the first place. By implication, rather than seeing one factor prompting another, their relationship should be seen as an *ongoing process*, in which the events of the decade after 1989 represent just a temporary external shock.

Similarly, second, the German case indicated the existence of a link between one of the study's process factors and the initial trigger of a foreign policy identity crisis. For attempts have been made to use 1989 and the 'mitteleuropäische Lage' to redefine Germany's 'national interest', in which geopolitical arguments were used to support the 'necessity' of such a move. Hence, there has been an ongoing symbolic struggle, one that could have provoked a crisis. For one thing, this means that a foreign policy identity crisis is not simply some kind of mechanical event in which a certain world history (that of 1989) encounters identities embedded in security imaginaries. Agency is present from the start, not just in the mobilisation of geopolitical thought after a crisis has occurred. Indeed, this very geopolitical thinking may be part of the symbolic struggle for a different dominant identity discourse in the first place, a struggle in which academic, popular and political voices will be heard. In a Bourdieu-inspired way, that agency is best understood within the specific rules of the game in their respective fields. Agency and the general dynamics of those fields, in turn, are also best seen as *ongoing processes* that are both parallel to and interact with the different ideational structures.

Third, the analysis of the Turkish case (and to some extent the Italian and Russian cases) points to the phenomenon of an 'endemic' identity crisis – a crisis, moreover, for which geopolitical thinking may be both a solution and a contributing factor. Geopolitical thought has been always a central feature of Turkish foreign policy expert culture, partly because of the importance of the military's (Kemalist) role in defining and defending the nation, and partly because of the existence of a more general materialist lineage within the foreign policy field.

And, yet, exactly because geography provides no unambiguous point of reference, it offers no lasting fix: the decision about Turkey's role in or in relation to the West cannot be read from the maps. Hence, the strategic crisis brought about by the end of the Cold War brings Turkey's endemic identity crisis to the fore, prompting a geopolitical response; but, the very response in terms of geopolitics is part of a later crisis foretold. For we have here a vicious circle: when in crisis, a geopolitically framed security imaginary with a precarious identity construction makes recourse to a remedy that provides only short-term solace and so nurtures the next outbreak of crisis, for which it finds no other interpretive means than to return to geopolitics, and so returns in a circle.

Finally, the cases of both Estonia and Russia forcefully reminded us that geopolitics does not necessarily or mainly refer to the physical components of geography that are so important for the military or strategic thinker, but also to cultural aspects and the nation. Geopolitics' reference back to cultural geographies and imaginaries, its mobilisation of content and symbolics of nationalism, although part of the reference definition of neoclassical geopolitics, was insufficiently stressed in the early chapters. Furthermore, the cultural component might qualify the second mechanism discussed later in this study, which so far was assumed to be the 'militarism as self-fulfilling prophecy' of peace research. Although it starts from the 'essentialisation' of geography – here, human and cultural rather than physical (although obviously connected to a space!) – its dynamics are probably different, a point to which I will later return in my discussion of the second mechanism.

These four findings from the empirical analysis have implications for the type of process tracing most congenial to this problematique. Clearly, the use of an input–output scheme that took as its starting point a foreign policy identity crisis and as its output a geopolitical revival would only beg the question. The input itself needs to be explained, and such explanation is partly provided by factors that the input generates during the process: geopolitical thought is both effect and cause of the identity crisis. At the same time, process factors are not 'variables' whose explanatory power 'add up' in a linear explanation;¹ rather, they are interlinked in a way that is not co-variational but relational – or, as Charles Ragin put it, 'combinatorial'.²

In my understanding, this requires a specific understanding of process tracing: one that is interpretivist, historical and multilayered. Process tracing needs to be *interpretivist* for reasons already outlined in [Chapter 3](#). The outside 'shock' event of the end of the Cold War is only a shock for some. Its meaning and effect depend on the way in which it is seen and interpreted. At the same time, the interpretation of such an event is not something that is carried out

¹ For an early statement, see, for example, Abbott, 1988. See also the collection of essays in Abbott, 2001.

² Ragin, 1987, for instance at 13–15.

on the individual level alone, for example by individual politicians, academics or journalists. Meaning is given within a particular context. An individualist focus on 'beliefs' (propositions about the world that particular actors hold to be true) is not sufficient to account for 'meanings', since it underplays the symbolic component of ideas and the background knowledge necessary for forming such beliefs in the first place.³ To understand meaning requires placing particular beliefs/ideas within their wider cultural context or more specific discourses.

In this volume, the central cultural structure is that of the security imaginary, a depository of meaningful collective memory, with its battles and defining positions, its scripts and metaphors that inform and, in turn, provide legitimacy when used in political and other discourses. Agency and individual interpretation enter into the process in which the security imaginary develops and evolves, but the latter cannot be reduced to it. Like any language, the security imaginary has a grammar of its own. Furthermore, given that the explanandum of this volume is itself an ideational fact (the revival of geopolitical thought), the process tracing conducted for this study has to account for how different ideational structures relate to each other. And this is done within an interpretivist understanding of ideas. For ideas are not conceptualised as objects that externally cause behaviour, but are constitutive of interests and identity (and hence provide reasons for behaviour).⁴

Process tracing also has to be *historical*: time/timing and sequence matter for any attempt to understand the unfolding of a given process. It did make a difference that there had been a previous geopolitical revival in Germany during the 1980s that mobilised the 'Other' in German identity discourses and hence eventually helped to 'vaccinate' (if such a metaphor is taken very loosely) German debates during the 1990s, when geopolitics no longer only appeared in its right-wing nationalist guise. As in all identity related processes, also memory and the representation of history and sequence needs to be endogenised into the analysis. And, as the interdependency of the relationship between geopolitical thought and identity processes in the Turkish case shows, the critical juncture in the present study relates to some of the process factors in both ways: it prompts them and is prompted by them. Here, sequence is crucial.⁵

³ Gross, 2009, 369.

⁴ This is an old discussion within all of the social sciences. For IR, it was held in the 1980s–1990s. See in particular Goldstein and Keohane, 1993; Kratochwil and Ruggie, 1986; Laffey and Weldes 1997 and Yee, 1996.

⁵ This is one of the points stressed by historical institutionalists. See Pierson 2000a and 2000b; Thelen, 1999 and 2000. When, unlike in the present volume, comparative historical studies stretch over long periods of time, the analysis needs also to include 'demonstration effects': when Barrington Moore notes that although the three types of revolutions he analyses could be seen as alternative routes, they correspond also to 'successive historical stages', where one revolution sets the stage for the next. See Moore, 1987 [1966], 413–414.

Finally, process tracing would gain from being *multilayered* – that is, by showing how autonomous processes evolve and interact with each other during the period an analyst has decided to study. Rather than assuming one single process line that various factors punctuate, we might look for a series of layers that can each be considered as having a path-dependent – that is, autonomous – process line of its own. Thus, ‘the focus is not ... on the trajectory of a single process. It is on the temporal intersection of distinctive trajectories of different, but connected, long-term processes.’⁶ As Falleti and Lynch show, such processes can be conceptualised within (horizontal) layers in an analysis that cuts a certain (vertical) time period out of them for the sake of studying a theory-informed puzzle.⁷ In her empirical case on welfare-state development, and on the basis of previous theoretical discussion, Lynch identified three such layers: the political arena, the institutional arena for social policy programmes, and slow-moving background processes such as population aging and the development of the private–public insurance market. Each such layer moves at its own logic and rhythm (or speed). Yet the analysis can investigate intersections at particular points in time which can provoke changes in the processes. Consequently, such an approach can lead to an understanding of change, if not creativity, by the way otherwise habitual practices interact⁸ (see Figure 11.2. for the ensuing reconceptualisation of process tracing).

2 Making sense of social mechanisms in interpretivist process tracing

How exactly can social mechanisms be used in an interpretivist context? As with process tracing, the literature on social or causal mechanisms has known considerable success in recent decades.⁹ Mechanisms seem to offer a way of

⁶ Aminzade, 1992, 467.

⁷ Falleti and Lynch, 2009, 1156–1158. For my own application of a similar approach (although I was not aware of this at the time), see Guzzini, 1995.

⁸ This is not the place to make a longer argument on this issue, but it can be derived from a post-Bourdiesian analysis. For the idea that changes in a field of practice can be induced by interference and transfer of practices from another field, see Guzzini, 1994. For an argument that habit can induce change, see Barnes, 1982. For a related and good discussion on how to combine habit with creativity, see Dalton, 2004.

⁹ The wording is not coherent in the literature. Since individualist approaches were prominent early on in the discussion, there is a certain tendency for non-individualist approaches to refer to ‘social mechanisms’. Also, some authors seem to prefer the latter term as a way of avoiding the risk of giving any impression that their theories might rely on an understanding of ‘causality’ as stringent as that contained in the idea of universal laws: interpretivists have traditionally been cautious with regard to causality. That said, with the necessary qualifications and provisos that are part and parcel of the mechanism literature, even constructivists can refer to ‘causal’ mechanisms. For some scholars, the whole point of the mechanism debate is to redefine causality in a different manner, not to deny it. For an early

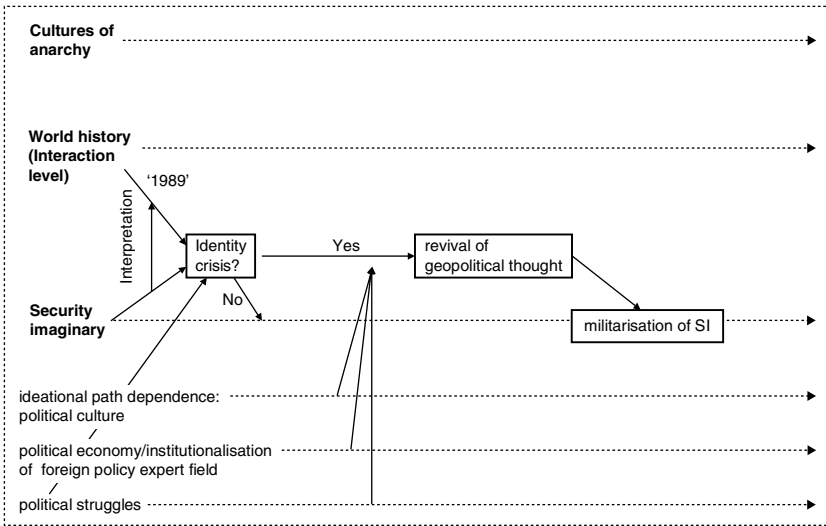


Figure 11.2. The return of geopolitics (II): a time-layered interpretivist process model

theorising below the level of general laws and yet above that of mere description. They make it possible to overcome the limitations of correlational analysis, where causality is reduced to the constant conjunction of variables without it being possible to check how we get from one to the other. When connected to the idea of process tracing – and the two are often, and for some observers even necessarily, linked – mechanisms have become the standard focus for rationalist analysts and basically all classical versions of institutionalism, whether rationalist, historical or sociological.¹⁰ More recently, constructivist versions of institutionalism have entered the fray and refer to theoretically informed process tracing and discourse analysis as their preferred methods, whether within political science or in IR,¹¹ while asking for the use of the need to use mechanistic explanations.¹²

This section, then, will try to advance an understanding of social mechanisms that is congenial with constructivist assumptions.¹³ All central parts of an explanatory theory, hence also mechanisms, need to be conceptualised

statement, see Patomäki, 1996. Here, I will use both terms interchangeably, with the understanding that, as Hedström and Ylikovski (2010, 53) write, this excludes approaches that define ‘causality in terms of regularities (such as Hume’s constant conjunction theory or many probabilistic theories of causation)’.

¹⁰ The *locus classicus*: Hall and Taylor, 1996.

¹¹ See, respectively, Hay, 2006, 58 and Checkel, 2005 and 2008.

¹² Wendt, 1999 and 2000.

¹³ For my attempt to understand the Copenhagen School of Security Studies through causal mechanisms, see Guzzini, 2011.

within the meta-theoretical setting in which they are used. Despite the need to conform to meta-theoretical coherence, and the resulting pluralism of conceptualisations of mechanisms, there is no necessary, let alone total, incommensurability between them. But understanding their difference requires some translation. For this reason, I will try to rely as much as possible on research on mechanisms as it has been carried out by others; but I will sometimes need to translate their theories and mechanisms into the theoretical framework that informs the present study.¹⁴

Let me start again with the main finding of this volume: the end of the Cold War provoked a revival of geopolitical thinking only in those countries that experienced a foreign policy identity crisis. And let us assume, therefore, that there is a link between crisis and revival. However, the crisis in itself does not 'explain' the revival, nor does it cause it in any kind of necessary or even probabilistic manner. Such an assertion would indeed beg the very question that induced much of the empirical analysis in the second round: *how* could the foreign policy identity crisis *cause* the revival? The wording in this sentence is deliberate.¹⁵ For, apparently, we are dealing with an analysis that seeks to understand the process involved (how). Yet, that process seems to have in itself some causal implications, since we can trace the event backwards as being the effect of some initial phenomenon. Although not causal in any strong sense, the analysis is surely a 'causal' one of sorts, albeit similar to the type conducted by historians. Process tracing appears to be about the causal 'how' of mechanisms, not the causal 'what' of correlational analysis.¹⁶ It is about how effects have been brought about ('causes of effects'), not what a cause effects ('effects of causes').¹⁷ This point leads naturally into a discussion of the status of an explanation, and how process tracing and causal or social mechanisms are linked. Let me derive my own use of mechanisms by making a short detour through the usual mechanism literature.

In recent methodological writings, there has been a tendency to see process tracing as the addition of intermediate steps to move from an independent to a dependent variable, or from input to output with a mechanism in between.¹⁸ This is often represented in terms of I(nput)–M(echanism)–O(utput). In one such reading, we would basically reduce the analysis of mechanisms to the specification of intervening variables and then apply the same type of correlational

¹⁴ Translation makes incommensurability less of a problem. At the same time, it does not necessarily allow all types of eclecticism, since it does require coherence with the meta-theoretical context. For a different take on a discussion that is otherwise very congenial to my own, see Sil and Katzenstein, 2010.

¹⁵ This is Elster's formulation in his discussion of mechanisms; see Elster, 2007, 35.

¹⁶ For the wording of causal 'how' and 'what', see Vennesson, 2008, 232.

¹⁷ Bennett and Elman, 2006, 456–458.

¹⁸ See the discussion of George and Bennett, 2005 in Chapter 3.

analysis, but now to the distinct steps.¹⁹ De facto, this means that correlations are 'explained' by more micro correlations.²⁰ With such an approach, the only thing process tracing or mechanisms change for an analysis is the number of causal links involved; they do nothing to the very idea of causality implied. Indeed, for the positivist, mechanism or process tracing add little to an explanation, since there is nothing to exclude an ever-increasing chain of links, and hence an infinite regress, making the mechanisms involved ultimately descriptive, not causal.²¹ Consequently, in this vein, even authors defending mechanisms have insisted that it may be going too far, if not simply wrong, to pit correlational against mechanistic analysis. For them, bivariate correlations can and may need to serve as a first step of an analysis, or may even be combined with positivist (Hempel–Oppenheim) covering-law explanations.²²

However, reducing mechanisms to variables in this way does away with their very specificity. First, an intervening variable 'is added to increase the total variance explained in a multivariate analysis,' but that is different from providing and specifying the links in a process.²³ Such an approach starts from an assumption of static and additive causes, which are moreover understood as constant conjunctions, not in terms of sequence and the relational configuration of factors. Second, reducing mechanisms to variables implies that they are 'not just observable but observed,' which not all mechanisms are.²⁴ Here, the positivist commitment to observation primes and effectively excludes that which is the specificity of at least some mechanisms. Third, at least in some approaches, mechanisms are not attributes of the unit of analysis, as they would be as variables. Instead, 'mechanisms describe the relationships or the actions among the units of analysis or in the cases of study.'²⁵ Assuming otherwise denies again the possibility of a combinatorial causality.

To avoid this reduction of mechanisms to variables, most early defenders of mechanistic analysis phrased it in a soft rationalist manner. They openly repudiated the covering-law model and simple correlational analysis. In these readings, a correlation does not explain; at best, it summarises an explanation. Hence, it is important to open the 'black box' of how the event was actually reached. In Elster's prominent approach to the matter, mechanisms are the intermediate level of generalisation available between universal laws, which are unattainable in the social sciences, and descriptions, which are too unambitious. Not being general laws, mechanisms can explain (*ex post*) why something happened, but cannot be used for predictions, since we cannot know whether a mechanism will be activated or not and/or whether it will always have the same effects.²⁶

¹⁹ Gerring, 2007, 172. ²⁰ Mahoney, 2001, 578.

²¹ King *et al.*, 1994, 86. ²² Opp, 2005.

²³ Mayntz, 2004, 245. ²⁴ Johnson, 2006, 248. ²⁵ Falleti and Lynch, 2009, 1147.

²⁶ These formulations are taken from Elster 1998, 45. For an earlier argument making the same point, but in a different language, see Grosser, 1972.

It is quite understandable that rationalist scholars have insisted on mechanisms. Such an approach squarely meets the demands of methodological individualism, which says that all events, micro or macro, need eventually to be connected to the effects of intended or unintended agency. It is therefore quite normal to double-check which micro-behaviour has resulted in which macro-states. Applying a straightforward macro–micro–macro scheme, there would be three mechanisms: one relating the macro to the micro level, one on the micro level, and one from the micro to the macro level.²⁷ In the most extreme version of this understanding of mechanisms, an analysis that short-circuits individual action avoids the analysis of mechanisms altogether.²⁸ But, also more relaxed versions tend to define mechanism analysis in terms of a rationalist action theory alone. Diego Gambetta, for instance, defines mechanisms as ‘those minimal assumptions about agents’ make-up that we require to deduce how they both interact with one another and respond to external conditions.’²⁹ Consequently, different versions of rationality or cognitive processes (including emotions) become all that there is to mechanisms.

Still, it needs to be stressed that most rationalists using mechanisms are sociologists who base their analyses on a not exclusively utilitarian understanding of rationality. Here, *Werterationalität* plays an equal if not more important role than instrumental rationality.³⁰ Alternatively, the analysis is conducted in terms of *reasons*, widely defined, drawing on the classical rationalist desire–belief–(opportunities)–behaviour triangle.³¹ In this wider post-Weberian lineage, interpretation is part and parcel of the approach and methodology.

Yet, even this thicker rationalism falls short of the interpretivist process tracing advocated here. The problems are now less about the philosophy of science (as in the discussion about variables): the issue becomes one of social ontologies. That means, first, that we need to move beyond methodological individualism. Arguing from an institutionalist position, Renate Mayntz stresses that once we try to understand relational mechanisms (see below), we may find that the latter may not involve motivated individual behaviour to start with. Institutional and structural components are decisive parts of the micro–macro link: ‘If the *explanandum* is a macro-phenomenon, or the connection between two macro phenomena ... the main cognitive challenge is therefore to identify the structural and institutional features, that organize ... the actions of different actors so as to produce their macro effect.’³² Yet,

²⁷ Hedström and Swedberg, 1998a.

²⁸ For conflating (rational) action with mechanisms, see Hedström and Swedberg, 1998a, 11–12.

²⁹ Gambetta, 1998, 103. ³⁰ Boudon, 1998.

³¹ Elster, 1998 and 2007. ³² Mayntz, 2004, 252.

as Mayntz writes, we have, as yet, ‘no similarly filled tool box of mechanisms where specific types of corporate actor constellations and relational structures play the crucial role.’³³

Furthermore, second, it is essential to be aware of the risk of a naturalist or materialist reductionism. There is nothing in the analysis of mechanisms that per se calls for a materialist conception of institutions and structures. True, looking for mechanisms that might explain particular effects, and opening up box after box may produce a tendency towards naturalist reductionism. Individualist approaches (and perhaps not only them), for instance, can easily end up in the realm of cognitive psychology. Elster in particular has used findings from psychology to exemplify the working of mechanisms, such as the pair of ‘forbidden fruit’ and ‘sour grapes.’ Unable to reach the fruits growing in a neighbour’s garden, some people start to think that those particular fruits are the very best, whereas others convince themselves of the opposite. Thus, deprivation may cause some people to desire an object more, others less. Although we might be hard-pressed to predict the behaviour, we can retroactively explain the psychological mechanism behind whatever happened. And, so, Elster rightly notes that, for a methodological individualist position, the recourse to ‘psychology and perhaps biology’ are of ‘fundamental importance in explaining social phenomena.’³⁴

This can be pushed too far, however. When Mario Bunge, who has done much to introduce mechanistic explanations, writes that ‘learning is explained by the formation of new neuronal systems that emerge when they fire jointly in response to certain (external and internal) stimuli’,³⁵ I guess most social scientists are left wanting. In an excellent response to Bunge, Colin Wight exposes Bunge’s physicalist reductionism and demonstrates the need to include what he calls conceptual and/or semiotic mechanisms in social analysis:

All social activity presupposes the prior existence of social forms. Speech requires language; making, materials; actions, conditions; agency, resources; activity, rules. Equally, these prior social forms are concept dependent ... the concepts possessed by agents ‘matter’; they make a difference. And in complex social settings they are part of the causal complex and, hence, may be mechanisms.³⁶

To sum up: thinking in mechanisms is different from correlational analysis *and* perfectly feasible within a non-individualist and interpretivist framework. There is no necessary connection between mechanisms and methodological individualism or versions of materialism.

³³ Mayntz, 2004, 255.

³⁴ Elster, 2007, 36. This reliance on psychology can however also lead to the critique of (utilitarian) rationality. See, in particular, Mercer, 2005 and 2010.

³⁵ Bunge, 2004, 202. ³⁶ Wight, 2004b, 296.

Defining mechanisms

Not a big fan of new definitions, I follow Jon Elster's (standard) definition of mechanisms as 'frequently occurring and easily recognizable causal patterns that are triggered under generally unknown conditions or with indeterminate consequences'.³⁷ Such mechanisms are 'portable', in the sense that they are small, perhaps often trivial, components of an explanation that can be moved to other contexts and cases, although that new context may affect their working. They travel. And, although this does not necessarily herald a general theory with wide applicability, it makes it possible to connect cases and to transfer knowledge from one to another. Several components need to be clarified, however. First, the level of determinacy of such mechanisms is not clear. Second, also the exact level of theorisation (or empirical abstraction) is contested. I will argue that it is fruitful not to think of mechanisms in terms of determinacy and would make a plea to locate them at not too general a level.

Let me start with the last, the level of generality on which mechanisms are to be found. This can be quite high. According to some rationalists, it is basically 'rationality' itself that is to be seen as a mechanism. Such a view may seem strange, but it is coherent with the general rationalist outlook. Once one argues that general laws are impossible and that correlations are not real explanations, any real explanation comes through human action and the fundamental behavioural assumption about it (for rationalists): rationality. Rationality is crucial since it also provides an expectation of coherence against which 'non-rational' action can be judged. More importantly for the analysis of mechanisms, the assumption of rationality travels almost seamlessly between the level of action and the level of observation. Accordingly, the coherence it seems to promise applies also to the actors themselves: an actor becoming aware of some irrationality can therefore be expected to attempt to remedy this incoherence. Thus, the coherence requisite of rationality prompts corrective behaviour, and so rationality can well be seen as a trigger, a mechanism. Still, even within rationalism, rather than locating a mechanism within rationality itself, it makes more sense to refer to mechanisms as the different pathways through which attempts are made to reduce incoherence. Rationality may be the basic theoretical assumption for those mechanisms, but it is not the mechanisms themselves.

Consequently, if one thinks in terms of trigger and incoherence reductions, it requires no long stretch to think about all equilibria dynamics as possible mechanisms. The underlying theory that informs the latter posits a tendency towards an equilibrium. Accordingly, any event that puts the system out of equilibrium, or any actor out of a balanced (satisfied) mental state, may trigger mechanisms that seek to enable a return to the stable state or equilibrium. It comes therefore as no surprise that utilitarian rationalists (rational-choice

³⁷ Elster, 1998, 45 and, 2007, 36.

analysts) would see in models of economic equilibrium a starting point for social mechanisms.³⁸ And it takes little imagination to rephrase balance-of-power 'theory' into a series of social mechanisms: (internal or external) balancing, chain-ganging, buck-passing, and band-waggoning. Indeed, it may be a research programme to confront one of the major criticisms levelled against realism. With behavioural output so diverse as to cover all possible reactions, realism is non-falsifiable.³⁹ As a result, realists may be tempted to define *ex ante* all the possible conditions for which one mechanism rather than another would be triggered. If that were possible, it would save (neo-)realism as a behaviouralist theory. Colin Elman's work on typological theorising seems to be inspired by such an aspiration.⁴⁰ Nevertheless, it seems useful not to con-found mechanisms with theory/theoretical assumptions, although the two are obviously linked.

Nor should they be equated with the process proper, as sometimes appears to be the case in Charles Tilly's stimulating work on mechanisms. Tilly worked on the *longue durée*. Accordingly, whereas methodological individualists tend to cut down a process until they find the core in rational action, giving rise to a process with many smaller mechanisms, Tilly's approach maintains a holistic view of the process and therefore tends to see fewer but much larger mechanisms (or, indeed: processes). He distinguishes between three forms of mechanism: environmental, relational and cognitive. Cognitive processes are the ones already seen in rationalist approaches; environmental processes refer to 'externally generated influences on conditions affecting social life'; while relational mechanisms 'alter connections among people, groups and interpersonal networks'. And, 'processes are frequently occurring combinations or sequences of mechanisms'.⁴¹

When it comes to the specification of mechanisms, however, the distinction between processes and mechanisms starts to blur (and not only because Tilly constructs a table in which they are added up and not distinguished). In principle, mechanisms 'have uniform immediate effects, their aggregate, cumulative and longer-term effects vary considerably depending on the initial conditions and combinations with other mechanisms'.⁴² But, what would be, to take some of his mechanisms promoting democratisation, the uniform immediate effect of 'bureaucratic containment of previously autonomous military forces' or 'disintegration of existing trust networks' or 'visible governmental meeting of commitments to the advantage of substantial new segments of the population' (or 'elite defection', for that matter)?⁴³ It is not clear there is an

³⁸ Cowen, 1998, 129.

³⁹ Vasquez, 1997. Making the same case but on the basis of a conceptual analysis of power in realist theories, see Guzzini, 2004b.

⁴⁰ Bennett and Elman, 2006 and Elman, 2005.

⁴¹ Tilly, 2001, 24, 26. ⁴² Tilly, 2001, 25. ⁴³ McAdam *et al.*, 2008, 319.

immediate *effect* which has been explained, but one which has been announced or described. Indeed, Tilly admits that those mechanisms and processes are in some sense tautological. He defends himself by suggesting that such tautologies point to mechanisms as 'proximate causes' for democratisation. It seems, then, that rather than having uniform immediate effects, some of the mentioned mechanisms stand for wider processes whose relational and combinatorial effects are stipulated by an underlying framework of analysis. For the sake of the present volume, this kind of conceiving mechanism may be useable for thinking long-term self-fulfilling prophecies, but not for the main mechanism under analysis: the identity crisis reduction mechanism.

This leads to the second important issue: the determinacy of mechanisms. There are three main ways of dealing with (in)determinacy in mechanism studies. First, the conditions under which mechanisms come into place is left open. In other words, mechanisms are conceived as latent or emerging capacities that need to be triggered by some initial conditions. Those conditions can be varied, and their triggering effect on a mechanism may be contingent. But, once the mechanism is triggered, some 'uniform immediate effect' or sufficient causality (Mahoney) is assumed. Thus, indeterminacy is not in the mechanism, but in its triggering conditions. A second way consists in saying that certain conditions do trigger mechanisms, but they can trigger more than one; hence, the actual mechanism that is triggered in a specific case cannot be predicted. Here, indeterminacy derives from the alternative mechanisms that could respond to a certain input: the environment is underdetermining the response. Finally, a third way sees indeterminacy in the mechanism itself, which is said not to have determinate effects, since all depends on its interaction with other mechanisms and/or the process in which it unfolds.

Obviously, if we had a process tracing in which all three indeterminacies applied, the mechanism would carry no explanatory power at all. For this is a real conundrum. On the one hand, mechanisms are attractive to scholars who wish to explain in the absence of general laws, and who hence look for causalities as combinatorial, relational, conjunctural elements whose working is left open by the importance of conditions and changing contexts, or indeed the mechanisms themselves. On the other hand, leaving such working very open means that a given mechanism may no longer be able to explain anything at all. Opening up the black box of explanation beyond correlation would end up in mechanisms that would equally not explain but simply summarise or – worse – just presume an explanation.

Perhaps, therefore, Elster's definition is such not to accumulate those indeterminate moments. His analysis always stresses the indeterminacy due to the existence of several mechanisms which can be triggered at the time. But with regard to the other two indeterminacies, he posits that it is either the conditions under which a trigger works that are unknown or its effects. That would make for two different types of mechanisms and their analysis.

3 Two social mechanisms as (micro-)dynamics in constructivist theory

Having now established how mechanisms are best understood within an interpretivist process-tracing framework,⁴⁴ we can now try to conceptualise a first mechanism identified in the process that stretches from the end of the Cold War to the revival of geopolitical thought and then one in the effect such a revival could have on the culture of anarchy. The first mechanism will need to be established first and discussed more generally, since it is one that can be expected more generally to play an important role in constructivist theorising. At the same time, I will also touch on a second mechanism that links the revival of geopolitical thought to a change in the culture of anarchy, the mechanism of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The existence of such a type of mechanism has been established within the sociological literature for some considerable time, and I will therefore focus more on its potential role in constructivist theorising.

Before discussing these mechanisms, let me shortly specify the type of social theory of action that is consistent with this use of mechanisms in constructivism. Undoubtedly, the study has been informed by Bourdieu's theorising, which provides the reference for understanding the context within which agents 'play out' their struggles within their field.⁴⁵ This includes also the fundamentally political definitional struggles for imposing a certain 'vision and division of the world' as the correct one.⁴⁶ The basic move consists probably in a theory of action that focuses less on rationality and primarily on social recognition which happens in a certain context or spheres or fields, usually more than one at the same time. And so: how do identity processes unfold which establish a coherence in one's relation to time (e.g. past/history), space and social context in what Alessandro Pizzorno calls 'circles of recognition'?⁴⁷ Many parts of Pizzorno's analysis could be easily transferred to the present project in order to further specify the mechanisms under study here. Pizzorno shows that having several circles of recognition to which one belongs reduces the power of each individual circle in terms of defining status and constraining action, a point that has been also made in the 'shaming' literature within IR.⁴⁸ It also implies

⁴⁴ See also Piki Ish-Shalom's (2006) analysis of 'discourse-tracing' and hermeneutical mechanisms.

⁴⁵ Bourdieu, 1994.

⁴⁶ For an analysis of Bourdieu stressing its non-structuralist features, see Leander, 2011.

⁴⁷ Pizzorno, 2007, 146ff. For a (too) short statement in English, see Pizzorno, 2008. For further developments by some of his students/disciples, see in social theory Davide Sparti, 1996 and 2000, and in IR Erik Ringmar, 1996. See also Alexander Wendt's attempt to provide dynamics to his theory by referring to 'struggles for recognition' in Wendt, 2003.

⁴⁸ Pizzorno, 2007, 139. For the literature on shaming strategies, which obviously imply a social recognition–status–identity nexus, see, for example, Risse-Kappen *et al.*, 1999. This is also

that the identity crisis reduction mechanism is therefore not to be conceived in terms of a given equilibrium, but as a dynamic process with no fixed point of return. In the present study, this process is also played out with two circles of recognition, both domestically and abroad. Having a collective actor is therefore in principle no problem, precisely because the collectivity is opened up as a circle of recognition within the analysis.

To this must be added the performative components of Ian Hacking's 'looping effect', which can become a kind of mechanism in terms of dynamic circles.⁴⁹ For instance, Pizzorno refers to the virtuous circle of reputation.⁵⁰ Having a good reputation has self-fulfilling effects: people believing the good reputation will tend to inform their interpretations of acts and events to see it confirmed; and the actor to whom the reputation is ascribed will tend to conform to the expectation shared in their circle(s). Shared ideas and social practices of naming interact with and can affect other social realities.

A mechanism of foreign policy identity crisis reduction

The most fundamental factor for understanding the geopolitical revival that took place in several of the countries studied here was the occurrence of a foreign policy identity crisis within a country's national security imaginary. In combination with – and prompted by – ideational path dependence, institutional factors and political struggles (now understood as processes themselves), the occurrence of such a crisis made the revival of geopolitical thought possible. The actual content of the revival that took place in each country was defined by the symbolic struggles of the agents involved, whether these were in the sphere of politics, academia or public opinion. Precisely because the main process is about collective identity, strategic action becomes symbolic action, which, in a conscious fashion or otherwise, intervenes to define identity. Framed in and by the processes in the three layers, agents engage in a struggle over the definition of the nation's and/or state's self-understanding.⁵¹ And, in some of our cases, geopolitical argument appeared 'natural' within the terms of such a struggle and/or came in strategically handy, which led eventually to the revival of this type of thinking.

This process can now be analysed in more detail through a look at its central mechanism: identity crisis reduction. In Tilly's terminology, such a mechanism is intersubjective. Prompted by the occurrence of an identity crisis, whose

compatible with assumptions about human motives that feature the motive of honour or self-esteem. See Lebow, 2003 and 2008.

⁴⁹ Hacking, 1999.

⁵⁰ Pizzorno, 2007, 231.

⁵¹ Johnson, for example, insists on this non-rational component in symbolic action as a way of connecting cultural approaches to a theory of action; see Johnson, 2002.

origin is contingent, the mechanism has effects which, in turn, are only partly contingent. When an identity crisis occurs in foreign policy discourses, it will trigger symbolic actions to reduce that dissonance. However, the content of any such attempts will be dependent on the context within which the mechanism operates. It was only where many of the process factors identified for the present study accompanied the occurrence of a foreign policy identity crisis that geopolitics could appear as a possible solution and be revived. If the mechanism as such seems transferable to other environments, its exact content is context-dependent.

The underlying idea for conceiving this mechanism is that identity processes can be linked to dynamics of coherence or congruence. In a (loose) analogy to the cognitive dissonance-reducing mechanisms analysed by (soft) rationalists,⁵² one might view such processes as identity incongruence/dissonance-reducing mechanisms. A foreign policy identity crisis appears when there is either a tension or a contradiction in the self-understanding of a collective actor or a mismatch between that understanding and the dominant external role perception. Such a dissonance would then trigger more concrete responses, which include (1) *denial* that there is any dissonance to start with; (2) *negotiation*, that is, attempts to dissuade the other from the faulty identity vision (i.e. there is a perceived dissonance, but this is based on a misunderstanding); and (3–4) the acceptance of a real dissonance, which then spurs either attempts to change the international culture in such a way as to enable one's own identity to fit (*imposition*) or efforts to redefine the identity as a way of adapting to external expectations or projections (*adaptation*). I posit these responses as components of the overall analysis of this discursive mechanism.

To illustrate the first of these responses, we can draw on Jutta Weldes' initial analysis of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. Her puzzle was a non-event: why was it almost inconceivable for US decision-makers to view the presence of Soviet missiles on Cuban soil as being primarily aimed at defending Cuba from another attack, when such an interpretation seemed almost natural to the Cubans? Weldes peels away a series of possible explanations (such as the non-proportionality of the weapon systems for such a goal) to show that such a vision would have flatly contradicted the self-understanding of the United States in its foreign relations. Despite the United States' own colonialist past, which could have enabled a degree of empathy, and despite its involvement in an earlier attempted invasion of post-revolutionary Cuba, the US security imaginary predominantly mobilised an identity of anti-imperialism: the United States as the defender of the free world. Empathising with the Cuban version of the event would prompt a major dissonance, since it would portray the United States as the originator of the crisis, expansionist and aggressive. When the interpretation of a purely defensive missile installation contradicted

⁵² Besides Elster, see in particular Kuran, 1998.

US foreign policy identity, something had to give way. The Cuban vision was seen as pure propaganda. This example thus illustrates a first response: the denial of any dissonance.

A related response consists in keeping the identity within the foreign policy discourse unchanged yet adapting one's behaviour. Here, Janice Bially Mattern's analysis of US–UK relations during the Suez crisis provides a good illustration.⁵³ Bially Mattern analyses the way in which US foreign policy was able to change the British government's behaviour through the application of not only strategic but also symbolic force. Besides financial pressure, US foreign policy put its UK counterpart before a mirror which portrayed a picture of the UK as neocolonial and aggressive, no longer a friend and close to Western civilisation. This created a form of blackmail whose operation is understandable once we see the identity mechanism involved: either the UK abandoned the actions in which it was engaged and thus demonstrated to have kept its valued identity and the social recognition by the United States, its most significant other; or it continued its actions at the risk of being ostracised, of seeing its status, indeed its very membership in the exclusive Anglo-American Atlantic club, denied. In this case, under conditions of amity, the UK opted to keep the better image, the one that was in tune with its own self-understanding, and thus changed its behaviour. Whereas in the first kind of response, the discourse writes on the existing self-understanding, by not empathising with a different mirror-image, in the second it does so by accepting the vision of the Other (but then adapting its own behaviour). It is perhaps not accidental that both examples are from foreign policy crisis situations in which the mechanism, if triggered, needs a quick response.

The second type of response would be more typical for non-crisis situations where negotiation is given more time, and is hence closer to the conditions of the present study. Here, the logic is that though there appears to be a dissonance, it is not real, and better communication and diplomacy will resolve any misunderstanding. Now, in order to count as a response to a real crisis, such misunderstanding must be interpreted as being significant, as something that touches upon an important component of the identity embedded in the foreign policy imaginary. Not just any identity mismatch will automatically produce a crisis. Still, a crisis can occur, if, for instance, an external actor systematically emphasises components of a country's identity discourses that its own foreign policy elite wishes to regard as secondary – for example, Italy as an ambiguous political culture exemplified by widespread corruption and organised crime. Here, the mismatch is threatening because it might lead to an opening up of 'old wounds' or a reopening of identity clashes that it was hoped had been left behind. It may also touch a weak spot within the self-understanding, a point where national discourses can be ambivalent, if not contradictory. The

⁵³ Bially Mattern, 2005.

response can consist in public diplomacy alone, but more probably in particular deeds meant to impress on international society the country's preferred vision of its identity. US President Jimmy Carter's human rights initiatives after the Vietnam War can be read in this manner, aiming to deflect attention from a vision of the United States as a neocolonial or imperialist power, and to instead focus on the country's intended status as the universal defender of rights.

The third and fourth types of response are similar to each other in that in each case dissonance is first accepted and then faced. However, the two responses differ in terms of the locus of adaptation: at home or in the circle of recognition within international society. The policies of South Africa's former apartheid regime surely fit the first case of 'adaptation'. Besides economic pressure, the pariah status involved in being a country in which racism was legally condoned placed immense pressure on efforts to maintain a self-understanding as respectable, fomenting opposition from within (also among the white parts of the population) and eventually leading to a complete redefinition of state and national identity. In a weaker version, the same argument applies to all successful 'shaming' strategies where the response and adaptation lies primarily with the ostracised country. In a different version, as with the late Soviet Union, there can also be an active self-redefinition aimed at making one's identity more congenial to international society. Both *glasnost* and *perestroika*, along with a series of actions that ranged from allowing foreign inspectors to access nuclear bases (the Stockholm Treaty) to the acceptance of the independence of countries in the former Eastern bloc, not only undermined the rules of the Cold War game, but also provided a new self-identification of the Soviet Union that could be acceptable to international society. Note that the point here is not to engage in discussion on whether military competition, economic or other 'hard' sanctions were more important than shaming strategies in terms of bringing about such a change. The significant point is that the change is not just behavioural, but relational, since it also demands the recognition of a new identity beyond the previous pariah status. It hence affects the self-understanding of the country involved, a more long-term effect. For, if there is the exertion of pressure in the absence of an identity crisis – as is arguably happening with some so-called rogue states today (e.g. North Korea, Iran) – it prompts reactions of pride and efforts to maintain one's own status, not adaptation.

A last response, which I have dubbed 'imposition', consists in trying to make self-understanding and outside recognition coincide by changing the underlying rules for successful recognition. This strategy is clearly not open to actors whose status is low or insignificant in the self-understanding of international society. Moulding the culture of international society upon one's own image is surely one of the most ambitious diplomatic games there is. Arguably, this has been the US strategy since 1945, one to which it has resorted with particular force more recently, during the administrations of President George W.

Bush.⁵⁴ But, it also fits all the attempts to portray the EU's 'normative power' as an alternative for running international affairs and hence for establishing the values that define status in world society. Finally, and despite the impression that today's Russia is simply lagging behind in relation to the new rules for defining status in world affairs, the last Putin and now Medvedev governments can be often seen as trying to steer the international environment in such a way as to return to the older, more *Realpolitik*-oriented norms.

In summary, the mechanism of identity crisis reduction consists of a complex including the trigger provided by the foreign policy identity crisis and the reactions it prompts. Although a response aimed at recomposing the coherence of the foreign policy identity is generally to be expected, its content will vary. I established four different types of reaction, which are derived from logical ways in which identity crises can be resolved. Hence, the mechanism of identity crisis reduction has some determinacy and seems to be transferable to different contexts. But, whereas the general mechanism is comparable across contexts, the content is context-specific, as is the process in which the mechanism unfolds. In that process, symbolic agency plays a major role, though this may be unintentional. Seen this way, the revival of geopolitics stands for the revival of a particular conduit or medium within which a foreign policy identity crisis is created and an attempt is made to resolve it.

*Mechanisms of self-fulfilling prophecies: the
vicious circle of essentialisation*

A first purpose of the study set out in this volume was to explain the puzzle of a revival of geopolitical thought in Europe after it had just experienced the end of the Cold War. The first mechanism is central for this explanation. For the second specific purpose of the study, the possible self-fulfilling effects of a revival in geopolitical thought, a further mechanism would need to come into play. Although a systematic analysis of this mechanism lies outside the empirical part of our study, it can be now more precisely theorised with the knowledge we have at hand.⁵⁵

For the chain in that mechanism is quite long. Whereas the identity crisis reduction is a relatively short- or mid-term mechanism, self-fulfilling prophecies that affect deep structures are almost by necessity closer to the Tilly type of social mechanisms that stretch over a long time. They may not even realise, or, rather, given the long historical context, they may be neutralised by other

⁵⁴ See, for example, Buzan, 2004 and Guzzini, 2002.

⁵⁵ And self-fulfilling prophecies are some of the classical mechanisms recognised in the literature. See the repeated reference to Merton's initial formulation in Hedström and Swedberg, 1998b.

events and dynamics, other mechanisms. Nevertheless, their working can be assessed.

In the present case, the chain would start with the link from a revival in geopolitical thought and its effects on the security imaginary. Only in those cases where neoclassical geopolitics would have impacted on the foreign policy imaginary and hence imported realism's military gaze, as defined in [Chapter 2](#), or where it would have reconfirmed such a gaze (as in the Turkish case) would we expect a militarisation of that security imaginary.⁵⁶ As a shorthand, such militarisation leads to the reversal of Clausewitz's famous dictum, namely, that politics becomes the continuation of war by other means. Priority is given to worst-case thinking. Within its logic, a pre-emptive strategy, unilaterally decided, is admissible, if not necessary. Politics has to follow the primacy not just of foreign policy but also of military strategy. This corresponds to the classical peace research-cum-constructivist critique of the Cold War as a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁵⁷

However, the close analysis of the actual geopolitical argument in the cases contained in this volume shows that this is not the whole story. If a militarisation results from an essentialisation of physical geography typical for a certain type of strategic thinking, the mechanism can also start from the essentialisation of human or cultural geography. As the Estonian case, among others, indicates, this type of essentialisation can even be the main effect. Identity is essentialised by locating it back in time – as linked to a specific space. By suggesting immutable and unchangeable human geographies, it easily translates into a vision not just of 'us' versus 'them', but of friends and foes, be these outside or inside the community. As Morozov notes while discussing the Russian case, geopolitics' 'very basic theoretical premises produce a predisposition to view global politics in Manichean terms.'⁵⁸

In other words, the self-fulfilling geopolitics mechanism would start with any one of the two types of essentialisation typical for geopolitical discourse: that of physical geography, which informs and mobilises the military gaze of realism, or that of human/cultural geography, which prompts a homogenisation of ego and alter and a clean division between a (cultural) inside and outside, with the potential to make culture and spatial size coincide (nationalism, anti-immigration, in some cases also ethnic cleansing) and the conviction of an unalterable friend-foe vision of the world. Obviously, a combination of both would have the strongest effect in terms of triggering the mechanism, since nothing less than the ultimate military defence of a threatened nation/culture/ethnic group would then be at stake.

⁵⁶ This does not imply that the revival of geopolitical thought and its impact on the security imaginary is the sole way of militarising the latter.

⁵⁷ For an analysis of that link, see Guzzini, 2004a.

⁵⁸ Morozov, 2009a, 202.

A next step in the chain is the level of social – here, international – interaction. Once the essentialisation of the security imaginary begins to affect foreign policy behaviour, it will also affect foreign policy interaction, both directly and indirectly. For that interaction will increasingly be interpreted in a certain light. Hence, the essentialisation affects not only the action–reaction chain, but also the agents’ understanding of that chain. That, in turn, will affect behaviour again. When Germany first stalled in the discussions regarding a possible bail-out for the Greek government as it faced financial crisis in 2010, France’s Minister for European Affairs Pierre Lellouche (who has a background as a scholar in strategic studies), said that this was to be expected: ‘Twenty years after reunification, there is a new generation, there is globalisation, there is demographic pressure, you have a Germany that like everyone claims its national interests.’⁵⁹ ‘Demographic pressure’ – nothing less than Haushofer’s ‘*Volksdruck*’. Never mind that Germany has for decades had a birth-rate too low for its demographic reproduction, which would imply a ‘deflation’ of that so-called ‘pressure’. Moreover, since 2008, Germany has also a negative migration balance and is actually becoming less populous (by 13,000 people in 2009 – whatever change in ‘pressure’ that may possibly imply).⁶⁰ Also, regardless of this, with every new German generation, there seems to be a reason to say that the Germans are no longer kept in check by their past. In other words, it is not whatever event that prompts a need for geopolitical thought in explaining German policy, it is a geopolitical conviction read backwards into the political event and policy.

This leads then to the third step of the mechanism, the one crucial for linking it up with a self-fulfilling prophecy. Should several security imaginaries be essentialised at the same time and/or be diffused through interaction,⁶¹ a vicious circle of distrust takes hold in formerly friendly relations or is reconfirmed in inimical ones. Geopolitics becomes self-fulfilling by affecting the culture of anarchy, confirming its pre-existing Hobbesian culture or moving towards it.

This mechanism is hence similar to the mechanism of identity crisis reduction in that it concerns an intersubjective and (deep?) structural level, but it

⁵⁹ Hall, 2010.

⁶⁰ See the figures published by the *Statistisches Bundesamt*. For the birth–mortality balance, which has been negative since 1972, see www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Navigation/Statistiken/Bevoelkerung/GeburtenSterbefaelle/GeburtenSterbefaelle.psml. For the migration balance, see www.destatis.de/jetspeed/portal/cms/Sites/destatis/Internet/DE/Navigation/Statistiken/Bevoelkerung/Wanderungen/Wanderungen.psml.

⁶¹ The research design of this study can fall prey to a type of ‘methodological nationalism’, if it is read merely through the individual country studies and their aggregation. The international context (cultures of anarchy), and transnational factors are immediately more prominent in this second mechanism.

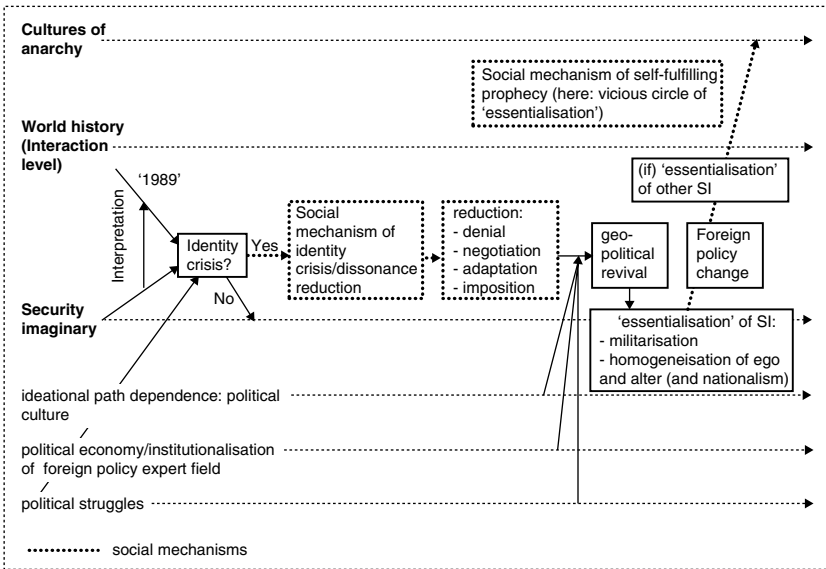


Figure 11.3. The return of geopolitics (III): social mechanisms in a time-layered interpretivist process model

functions in a different manner. And it is the ‘concatenation’⁶² of the two that connects the end of the Cold War with a potential move towards not a more Kantian collective identity, but a more Hobbesian one. Here lies the paradox: it is via the mechanisms of identity crisis reduction and the ‘vicious circle of essentialisation’ that peaceful change could trigger practices that are less conducive to peace.

This volume cannot comprehensively answer the question to what extent that second mechanism has been triggered in the Europe of the 1990s, nor assess how many countervailing processes have occurred.⁶³ However, it can specify some findings for the different links in the chain. For one thing, geopolitics did not experience a revival in two of the countries studied, and in some countries it is not yet clear whether the revival that did occur has affected the identity discourses embedded in the security imaginary (Italy, Russia), all the more since its effects are now receding (see also in Estonia). Hence, the essentialisation of security imaginaries did not take place in a comprehensive fashion during the 1990s for all of the countries under analysis. It seemed at one point as though international interaction could further militarise the self-understanding of

⁶² Tilly, 2004.

⁶³ In a personal communication, Emanuel Adler rightly insists on the possible presence of other parallel mechanisms, belonging to European practices and institutions, which can tame or even cancel out the effect of the ‘vicious circle of essentialisation’.

international society – namely, in the run-up to the Iraq War, where the administration of George W. Bush pushed for such a change. Its effects are too early to tell.

As for the essentialisation of human geography and its potential mobilisation of established and inflexible friend–foe schemes, such dynamics are visible. This said, the one scheme that would be connected to the end of the Cold War (the anti-Russian or – seen from the other side – anti-Atlantist European scheme) only appeared later, in the aftermath of the Russian–Georgian war, clearly mobilising a sense of ‘them there’ and ‘us here’. The most important identity divide, though, would pitch these two sides against ‘Islamism’. Here, the securitisation of religious identity has reached the interaction level, where it is – often because of a reflexive awareness of the self-fulfilling effects of such an approach – also opposed (i.e. it also triggers a de-securitising response). It is here that Huntington’s theses, rightly or wrongly, are often mobilised to legitimate an essentialised Europe (if not a Christian Europe, or, more politically correct, a Judeo-Christian Europe). But, although such essentialisation would stand for the same type of trigger and mechanism, it is only indirectly part of the concatenation of mechanisms that starts with the end of the Cold War. In cases where an identity crisis was answered with a revival of geopolitics, this was never with the Islamist as the ‘Other’. Yet, having prepared the terrain for such essentialised thinking, as it were, such a revival would make it possible for the essentialising logic of geopolitical argument to be transferred (and even further essentialised) to ‘Islamism’.

This leads to the final point that I wish to stress. We have analysed how the revival of geopolitical thought took place in a varied fashion within the respective national contexts. But, of course, it also occurred not only within a certain period of world history, but within a certain state of the culture of international anarchy.

Accordingly, it is necessary to ask how that culture relates to the ongoing processes within the sphere of political interactions and within security imaginaries. Just as the revival of geopolitical thought in individual countries needs to be seen in the context of the respective (national) security imaginaries, its aggregative effect needs to be embedded within the existing international culture. As we have seen on the national level, the path dependency of certain security imaginaries, as well as particular ideational traditions, institutional structures and political constellations, are more conducive to the revival’s having a structural effect. The same applies internationally. Here, the ongoing processes of Europe’s Lockean culture,⁶⁴ the institutional settings of a security

⁶⁴ If the Cold War can count as a Lockean environment, and the EU itself as an almost Kantian environment (at least a solidarist Grotian one), then the pan-European order of the 1990s is quite surely within the Lockean category. I do not wish to further dwell on the point that these categories appear rather crude. For if both the Cold War and the post-Cold War

community in the process of enlargement (via the EU), and the effects of the dense multilateralism within which diplomatic engagements take place within Europe ensure that the possible effects of a militarisation of security imaginaries have been mainly checked, although partly encouraged (via NATO). The existence of such an institutional web makes Lockean cultures of anarchy quite 'sticky'.⁶⁵

But, at the same time, the essentialisation of identities has been progressing. It is as though it fell into an institutional void with fewer buffers. Constantly fed by domestic populist nationalist debates, it is in this context that the second mechanism may indeed still be playing out its influence. Geopolitics is part of a more ethnic/cultural definition of the nation, as opposed to a civic/political one. The latter has been weakened in many corners of Europe where it used to be strong (e.g. France). And although this circle of essentialisation has not ushered in a complete reversal towards a more Hobbesian culture of anarchy, it has arguably pre-empted the move towards a more Kantian one. The stalling of European integration – or, more precisely, its federal component – is ample testimony to this. This is a counterfactual statement, for sure. But it is not arbitrary: it is based on the finding of such a mechanism.⁶⁶ It is in this context that social mechanisms may play one of their most important explanatory roles.

4 Conclusion

The present volume has sought to shed light on the paradoxical revival of geopolitical thought in Europe just as the end of the Cold War seemed to herald a new era. It argues that when a foreign policy identity crisis occurred, the alleged ease and determinacy of geopolitical thought came in handy to provide orientation, although such orientation was not necessarily long-lasting. Yet, such a crisis was not necessary, nor was it present in all of our cases. In the event of a

period count as Lockean, then the category is surely too wide. In fact, it seems to encompass almost all known international (not national) cultures of anarchy. It is almost as though it were the residual category, once situations of civil war (Hobbes before the Leviathan) and functioning democracies (or Kantian Republics) are excluded. Since neither a system of continuous civil war nor a comprehensive Republic have ever existed on the international level, all international societies were by definition Lockean. It may be one of the ironies of the English School that it argued in favour of conceptualising an international society qualitatively different from domestic ones (contra the domestic analogy) and made a plea for the Grotian or middle category, when, perhaps, this is the only category world history has ever experienced in international society in the first place – once the domestic analogies of civil wars and democracies excluded the others. For the purpose of this book, the main important point, however, is that we have to think about structural change of that culture of anarchy, however we label it, and then find words to categorise significant differences. It is about the dynamics of this culture, not its static definitions.

⁶⁵ Wendt, 1999 and 2003.

⁶⁶ This links the analysis of mechanisms to counterfactual reasoning. See also Lebow, 2010.

crisis, a response aimed at re-establishing internal coherence is to be expected, but, again, the content of such a response is not necessarily preordained. The content of geopolitical argument was contingent on a series of other ongoing processes, such as ideational path dependency, the institutional framework and political economy of national foreign policy expertise, and political struggles around the definition of the 'national' interest. The volume hence sought to understand the revival of geopolitical thought through an analysis of open parallel historical processes, within which it conceptualised a social mechanism of identity crisis reduction that, given a certain context, would trigger a response that mobilised or introduced geopolitical ideas.

The volume also suggested a second mechanism in the possible functioning of a self-fulfilling prophecy. If geopolitical thought affected security imaginaries, it would 'essentialise' either physical geography or human/cultural geography, or both. Such a development could set off a mechanism that, via foreign policy interactions, security-imaginary diffusion and the autonomous development of imaginaries, could mobilise a militarised vision of politics and essentialised identities (ego and alter) that, in combination, would make nationalist foreign policy and a rigid friend-foe scheme possible and likely. And, although militarisation in the classical sense was found to have been limited, the process of homogenising identities is going strong, albeit not without opposition. I called this second mechanism a vicious circle of essentialisation. Only the concatenation of these two mechanisms would produce the initial normative concern of a 'self-fulfilling geopolitics'.

These links are causal in the sense of 'how' causality. They are embedded in a process that, despite its focus on structures (security imaginaries, identity discourses, cultures of anarchy), institutional processes and their path dependencies, is basically open, since it is contingent on a series of contexts and factors.⁶⁷ In some cases, the concatenation of mechanisms did not get much beyond the start; in others it was halted elsewhere.

The analysis also shows that a pure focus on the interactive level of world events does not do justice to the simultaneous processes going on for which such events may have very different implications. Conceived in this way, the analysis is informed by a non-linear type of history and tracing of the historical process. In fact, the problem for the analysis then becomes to justify the necessarily few arrows that connect the ongoing processes. Looking at [Figures 11.2](#) and [11.3](#), we see that the mutual effects of these processes are continuous and would, in principle, need to be represented by arrows all over. This, however, is a problem not only for this analysis, but for all analysis. Explanation isolates certain arrows as significant in terms of their role in making sense of the cacophony of events, actions, practices and processes. Of course, the focus on

⁶⁷ The need to incorporate that openness of process within historical institutionalism is a point repeatedly stressed by Kathleen Thelen, 1999 and 2000.

certain links can turn out wrong. But this is akin to the usual risk of misjudging the significance of certain links, not for the fact of having to isolate some. Hence, it is a problem generally shared by all explanations.

And, so, we now reach the end of the actual analysis. By conceptualising mechanisms in a manner consistent with constructivism, and by and showing their empirical import, these last two chapters can finally shed light on the initial puzzles of the study. With the specified process and concatenation of mechanisms, it becomes possible to understand how both the revival of geopolitical thought and the move away from a Kantian culture of anarchy appeared not *despite* the end of the Cold War but paradoxically *because of* it. And by having identified two different types of mechanisms, the study provides theory development of the micro-dynamics of (macro-)structural change within a constructivist analysis.

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