

RESEARCH ESSAY

Constructing Peace and its Mechanisms

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At the beginning of the 20th century, in terms of power, Europe had it all; in terms of liberal demos of justice and popular sovereignty, Europe had it all; and in terms of interdependence, maturing laws, and regulation, again, Europe had it all. However, the circumstances produced the advent of not one but two world wars between the forces of the continent itself. The installation of a European Union and associated values of a united and pacific Europe such that it instituted an economic union (with well-defined parameters) and open borders were not predicted or even explained by the central tenets of realism or liberalism, without resorting to reductionism or truisms. This essay aims to privilege constructivism to demonstrate how the unique conditions of the 20th century led Europe to move away from war. Further, this essay makes sense of how this construction of peace in Europe may have influenced attitudes regarding the same issues in India.

The realist explanations lend themselves to explaining that the material benefits and the promise of security by the United States might have caused the union. In contrast, the liberal explanations carry the explanation that mutual interdependence fosters absolute gains and better cooperation, which led the states to form a union. However, this essay situates the explanation of this metamorphosis in the constructivist approach, which speaks to how material factors acquire meaning only through ideational factors (Wendt, 1995) and how ideational factors draw on specific conditions to create new interests constantly.

It seeks to answer questions that the realist and liberal interpretations fail to engage with by taking it as a given, such as why there was any faith in the distribution of gains, how a union of erstwhile warring nations fosters any sense of security at all, and why were the worn-torn European states so active in their commitment to this approach.

Constitutive theorising is extremely useful in putting emphasis on the ideas and values that European states identified themselves with and how they led them to act. It highlights the post-war experience of the European states, where a new superpower rivalry influenced the reconstruction processes. The subsequent elements of a shared idea of a booming civilisational past and a grim but potentially hopeful present gave rise to Europe-specific solidarity. Instead of building on multiple imperial heritages as was the case during empire-making and expansion, the identification with the idea of a civilisational Europe led to a new post-war solidarity-driven identity, providing the context where the interests of European states acquired their meanings. The new meanings led to the new interests behind the formation of the union; these interests, it can be argued, would be the growth of Europe as a whole to bring back glory and the shift away from acting to commit the Global South to acquire legitimacy and security.

So, it can be broadly established that identity, norms, and experience are prominent in how agents (here, states) shape, constitute, and reproduce the structure (here, the European Union). The best way to view and ground the aforementioned constructivist analysis that has led to a European transfiguration of sorts is represented through the study of de-Nazification and nuclear proliferation processes and the role and simultaneous creation of the overarching post-war European identity in the same.

De-Nazification

After harsh peace was established by the occupation of Germany in 1945 by the Allied forces, a judicial process was envisioned with the nature of being a cleansing process. It had two inconsistent goals: that of realizing 'certain allied objectives' and that of political and moral re-education. The trials were bifurcated into two: Nuremberg (with 24 high-level Nazi conspirators) and subsequent (for the low-profile yet systemically involved nazi bureaucrats) (Besancon, 2019). In practice, after the conviction of the obviously guilty prominent Nazis in the

Nuremberg Trial, there was no bona fide criteria to try or classify people under suspicion. On top of this, a resource and time crunch meant that it was easy for perhaps a non-nazi bureaucrat under the regime's duress to be convicted while some nazi profiteers or activists got off free. Such instances ensured that both sides attributed a lack of credibility to this process. The initial aims were abandoned as the Western states became wary of the communist influence of the USSR, and vice versa. This ensured that the credentials of being a communist or an anti-communist now subsumed other identities, and this led to unthinkable changes in the treatment accorded to the Germans.

Through the de-Nazification process, we see that it not only constitutes the new interests taking prominence over earlier interests of revenge or reconciliation through justice, but it also plays a role in strengthening the foundation for the union itself. The change in agents' priorities concerning the newly evolved bipolar structure led to astonishing accommodations. USSR sought the support of middling bureaucrat nazis by August 1947 itself and admitted to the need of nazi trained personnel to build its new socialist society (Kater, 1987). The Germans deemed the process of de-Nazification as unjust and faulty, and most of them were tired of war and Hitler, which resonated across Europe, so the UK and France wrapped up their trials by 1949. The new post-war indifference surrounding politics also led to a "Let-George-Do-it" plurality (Large, 1996). Secretary of Mission Brewster Morris, on behalf of the West German leaders (with the view on candidanship of Konrad Adenauer, a vehement anti-communist), persuaded the US to pursue relaxed conditions to make Germans vote "correctly" in a democratic election and the US capitulated to the demands of ending the de-Nazification. Dwight Eisenhower also accepted the newly-elected Adenauer's request to exonerate the national army. He made a statement that the great majority of the Wehrmacht had acted honourably, laying the blame solely on the SS (Bickford, 2011). This gave credibility to Germany, which allowed the rearmament to begin, with a non-ostracized, productive West Germany driving European integration in line with American plans.

The Nuclear Deterrent

As German rearmament began, the Third Reich was repeatedly called "Hitler's regime," distancing the rest of the population from the crimes committed in Hitler's name. The narratives of 'the German,' as innately

peaceful but overpowered by the fascists, began to pick up steam, too (Besancon, 2019). These narratives were used to produce conditions necessary to imply particular interests, such as revitalizing what was being identified as a largely victimised Germany. The idea of a renewed Germany, however, worried France. Moreover, the idea of a single leading force of a union would disrupt the narrative of European civilisational identity. France was also concerned by the competition between the two superpowers, for it meant that their interests identified with their chosen ideology took precedence. This led France (and perhaps others) to fear for its genuine independence, a fear boosted by its earlier occupations. There was a sense of humiliation, displayed by the fact that it was the community of leading scientists, and not military men, who rallied to urge the French state to create a ‘force de frappe’ (nuclear deterrent) (Mendl, 1965). The European states shared this experience of an abased state in fear. This was further extended by creating linkages to the ideas of an inherently peaceful German populace, which was being propagated to normalise West Germany. The French, on their part, repeatedly emphasised how the weapon was for the safety of the whole of Europe, which meant that it was seen as being sought for Europe and not their national interest. Charles de Gaulle famously quoted, “Yes, it is Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals, it is Europe, all of Europe, which will decide the fate of the world” (Oxford University Press, 2016) to counter American Trans-Atlanticism, and furthered the idea of a united Europe, with shared aspirations and lived experience, and hence a move away from the big powers who swagger around their nuclear weapons for they worry only of their own interests.

The strategy of capitalising on the shared and experientially developed fear of war (associated with superpower interests) worked so well that there were no significant objections to France from within Europe. The continent wanted priority for their interests during reconstructions without worrying about safety, for they were hopeful of potential growth. The anti-war attitude, coupled with the narrative playing on past ideas of defenders of Europe, was identified when even the most provocative French articles supporting a nuclear deterrent ended with a non-war situation (Lieber, 1966). This attitude resonated with the war-fatigued Europe, which was also eased in by the French calls for a deterrent and not a weapon, which resulted in the nuclear “deterrent” becoming a point of unity for other states to rally under rather than the cause of

dissension of the union. There were only American objections, and they were possibly assuaged through promoting West Europe's affinity towards the US over the USSR and the propagation of the "twin pillars" concept (Bailes, 1993), an endeavor towards a more equal balance of effort between the USA and Europe, where the nuclear deterrent represented Europe taking a more active role in providing for its own security affairs in the background of the US already shelling out a fortune under the Marshall Plan.

Trickle down to India

Finally, how does this explain particular European actions concerning India? First, let us consider a reconciliatory process (along the lines of de-Nazification). India represents a diverse populace with even more diverse constraints placed through structural inequities, but we witness that attempts to address the same were few and far between. The arguments that dominated the public discourse often lent weight to a form of Samaritanism and privilege unity in the post-independence era. It can be posited that the British action was to unite India as a unique and novel proposition. The roots of these are effectively traced back to the defense offered by the British for apathy towards damages inflicted by colonial rule, which was the production of a united India (Sen, 2021). It takes a massive leap of logic in the thinking that nothing was binding the Indian subcontinent's identity together except them and delegitimises earlier empires that had ruled vast swathes of land. In doing so, it sees any form of unity as an achievement that is a first-time occurrence and a precarious notion. Thus, foregoing consideration of diverse identities and considerations, as was common during colonial rule, was encouraged. Second, if we take up the question of the nuclear deterrent, then we see India employing the same rhetoric as that opted by France, going as far as to call its nuclear tests "peaceful explosions." India emphasises its no-first-use policy and gives an example of the occupations it has faced (and faces) while portraying itself as the stabilizing force of the neighborhood, which is in the footsteps of the norms of responsibility that France evoked back in the day. This has impacted the actions of major European nations who have gone far to give veiled threats but have not taken any actions against India, in contrast to Japan and the USA (Raja Mohan, 1998).

Conclusion

The easy acceptance of the highly polarising issues of rehabilitation of former nazis, and the acquisition of nuclear weapons, displays the primacy of the agent-structure interaction. We can discern how particular identities with respect to the bipolar structure fostered narratives that eased trust and integration despite the divisive issues at hand. The result was the development of a collective union of sorts and identity to grasp space amidst two warring superpowers. The devices employed in such an integration, and hence, a move away from war, are best explained by the constructivist approach. It is so because it has a monopoly on the importance it provides to identities, narratives, and discourse, on determining and explaining material interests and state behavior. Not stopping at this, the critical constructivist approach can be used to trace how people identify with certain identities and justify things through these identities, which helps us decode the basis of actions that have significantly influenced Indian actions.

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