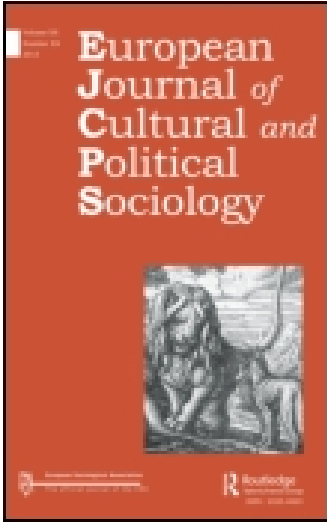


This article was downloaded by: [211.7.23.2]

On: 13 October 2014, At: 08:00

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH,
UK



European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/recp20>

Territorial disputes and national identity in post-war Germany: the Oder-Neisse line in public discourse

Shigeki Sato^a

^a Faculty of Social Sciences, Hosei University, 4342 Aiharamachi, Machida, Tokyo, 194-0298 Japan

Published online: 26 Sep 2014.

To cite this article: Shigeki Sato (2014) Territorial disputes and national identity in post-war Germany: the Oder-Neisse line in public discourse, *European Journal of Cultural and Political Sociology*, 1:2, 158-179, DOI: [10.1080/23254823.2014.957224](https://doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2014.957224)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/23254823.2014.957224>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Territorial disputes and national identity in post-war Germany: the Oder–Neisse line in public discourse

Shigeki Sato*

Faculty of Social Sciences, Hosei University, 4342 Aiharamachi, Machida, Tokyo, 194–0298 Japan

(Received 6 October 2013; accepted 5 August 2014)

After World War II, Germany lost territories east of the Oder–Neisse line. Focusing on the role of national identity, this paper considers how the government and major political groups of the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) laid claims to the eastern territories from the late 1940s through the early 1960s and how the FRG came to recognise the Oder–Neisse line in the 1970s. Further, the paper examines the shift of the dominant form of national identity from a ‘Reich Identity’ to a ‘Holocaust Identity’. In the 1950s and the 1960s, claims to the eastern territories were based on the ‘Reich Identity’, which maintained that the German Reich of 1937 existed after the war. However, the ‘Holocaust Identity’, according to which Germans have a ‘special duty’ to reconcile with their ‘past’, began to be more widely accepted after the mid-1960s. This paper argues that national identity constitutes a field of discourse where different actors, groups or individuals, compete for hegemony by representing and invoking conflicting schemes of national self-understanding.

Keywords: nationalism; field of discourse; border disputes; eastern territories

1. The German eastern territories in a historical context

Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation.

The above statement is taken from Ernest Renan’s ‘What Is a Nation?’ (Renan, 1990, p. 11). However, it is not always well recognised that today’s Germany was ‘reunified’ simply by ‘forgetting’ large territories east of the Oder–Neisse line. In the aftermath of World War II, Germany lost territories east of the Oder and Lausitzer-Neisse rivers, which included Eastern Prussia, Pomerania, and both upper and lower Silesia. These areas constituted approximately a quarter of the pre-war German territories, that is, the territories before the expansion of the

*Email: ssbasis@aa.cyberhome.ne.jp

Third Reich that began in 1938, which were placed under the rule of Poland and the Soviet Union after the war. This massive territorial loss resulted in the forced migration, also known as the ‘expulsion’ (*Vertreibung*) of over 12 million Germans from eastern Europe. It has been claimed, though this figure is controversial, that a further two million Germans lost their lives during the expulsion (Ahonen, 2003, p. 11). In November 1990, the Federal Republic of Germany finally acknowledged the Oder–Neisse line, when Germany formally abandoned these territories with the German–Polish Border Treaty, the signing of which had been pending for 45 years. As a result, the ‘reunified’ Germany of 1990 was reduced by 25% in comparison with pre-war Germany (or by more than 30% from pre-World War I Germany). In the provocative words of Herbert Czaja, the late president of the Federation of Expellees (Bund der Vertriebenen [BdV]), the ‘reunification’ of 1990 was a ‘collapse to the smallest Germany’ (Czaja, 1996). Indeed, the united Germany of 1990 was much smaller than the ‘small Germany’ which had been founded by Bismarck and the Prussian King in 1871.

It is crucial to analyse this development within a global historical context. It could be argued that the twentieth century was the Age of Nationalism. Many nations have, during this period, invoked and reconstructed their historical memories and records to regain or defend their appropriate territories. Some nationalists have referenced historical documentation to legitimise claims to their own national borders. Yet, in Germany, the process proceeded very differently; what were the cultural and political processes that allowed this to happen?

The advent of the Age of Nationalism is deeply related to the emergence of a new mode of political legitimacy (Wimmer, 2013). Before the Age of Nationalism, political rule was generally legitimised through the ancient traditions of dynasties or through religious or imperial universalism. In dynastic monarchies in the pre-modern world, for example, rulers ruled in the name of a ‘sacred’ dynastic tradition of their clan. In some large empires in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and East Asia, rulers ruled vast stretches of land in the name of the will of ‘God’ or ‘Heaven’ spreading across the world. However, in the Age of Nationalism, political rule is mostly legitimised in the name of the nation: any state must be ‘of the nation’ and ‘for the nation’. In this historical context, ‘the nation’ becomes a highly contested political concept, and geopolitical struggles tend to be conducted in the name of the nation (Brubaker, 2004).

In the case of post-war Germany, the FRG ceded its former eastern territories 45 years after World War II. Undoubtedly, it was very difficult for many Germans to accept this territorial loss. Not least, the eastern territories were associated with historic names like those of Kant or Herder, iconic figures in German culture. After World War II, some citizens vigorously resisted the ‘politics of renunciation’ conducted by the federal government. It is therefore astonishing that Germany eventually willingly abandoned one-fourth of its former territory. Why and how was this massive territorial ‘renunciation’ possible?

Several geopolitical factors can be indicated in this regard, although two seem to be the most important. First, as the Cold War progressed during the 1950s, the

boundaries of the existing states in Europe were consolidated – particularly notable was the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, which was decisive in establishing the division of Germany as the status quo. During this type of development, any policy of territorial revision would have appeared unrealistic, and even dangerous. In effect, vocal claims for the revision of the Oder–Neisse line would have implied challenging the Eastern bloc during the Cold War conflict. Countries of the Western bloc, particularly the United States, did not want to take such a risk. The conservative government of the FRG under the chancellorship of Konrad Adenauer was strongly oriented to the West, which implied that it needed to avoid an explicit claim to the eastern territories.

Second, the millions of expellees from the east constituted one-fifth of the entire population of the FRG in the early 1950s. These expellees were the most well-organised advocates of territorial revisionism, but were integrated into the society of the FRG relatively smoothly before the 1960s. Compelled by force to abandon their homes, they lost virtually all their personal belongings in the east. As they settled in Western Germany in the late 1940s and early 1950s, many expellees lived in devastatingly impoverished conditions. They were referred to as the Fifth Estate or the New Proletariat, and often faced discrimination from the locals in the regions where they settled.¹ However, expellees' living conditions greatly improved owing to 'equalisation' (*Lastenausgleich*) policies of the government and, more importantly, the economic recovery of the FRG. Today, it is often said that the integration of these millions of expellees was one of the greatest achievements of the FRG. Of course, not all expellees were completely satisfied with these post-war developments. However, as a result of their integration into their new western homes, revisionist or irredentist claims to old eastern homelands gradually lost their appeal among ordinary expellees, despite repeated exhortation by expellee organisations and their leaders.

These factors undoubtedly provide a context that played an important role in facilitating the 'forgetting' of part of Germany's 'proper territory'. However, they do not fully explain how political élites and the general public of the FRG came to *understand* this territorial loss. How did they accept the Oder–Neisse line? How did they think and talk about it? In order to answer such questions, this paper will focus on a shift of cultural identity throughout the post-war period in the FRG as its primary focus.

From the late 1940s through to the early 1960s, neither the conservative government nor most major political parties accepted the territorial losses east of the Oder–Neisse line. Territorial revision, based on the internationally recognised principle of 'national self-determination', was accorded higher legal and moral validity among the public at large. Arguments against 'national self-determination', or suggestions that the status quo of the Oder–Neisse line be confirmed, were politically risky. Arguing *for* the acceptance of the Oder–Neisse line in such a context would have required the *justification* of territorial loss as a right or at least as a better decision than territorial revisionism (to use 'revisionism' in the technical sense of adherence to an earlier geographical order). But, within the discourse

on the eastern territories, disparate schemes of *national identity* came to provide a different definition of validity and a new set of political idioms.

As Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper argue, the concept of ‘identity’ is a rather elusive and confusing one that has different meanings (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). In order to use this concept, we must disaggregate these meanings into different dimensions that specify its meaning in this paper. In the following argument, the term ‘identity’ refers to a cognitive dimension of the collective ‘self’. In other words, it refers to a discursive ‘self-understanding’ of ‘us’, at any rate in terms of the types of public argumentation that gain effective traction within political/cultural fields. In this sense, I follow a ‘cognitive approach’ developed by Brubaker and his colleagues (Brubaker, Loveman, & Stamatov, 2004). But I will take ‘contents’ of self-understanding more seriously by considering the ways in which actors ‘understand’ themselves from their own practical and ‘intersubjective’ point of views. Then, in terms of the ‘interpretative sociology’ advocated by Alfred Schütz (1932), I try to extract and show the workings of ‘interpretive schemes’ (*Deutungsschemen*), or semantic patterns, of self-understanding, used by different actors in everyday discourse. In this context, national identity implies an interpretive scheme for understanding how ‘our nation’ is, or what characterises ‘our nation’. It is represented in public discourse as ways of thinking and talking about, or ‘imagining’ (Anderson, 1991), ‘our nation’.

Historical narratives are crucial for the understanding of national identity: a nation is generally thought and talked about on the basis of ‘its own’ history. In his ‘ethno-symbolic’ approach to nationalism, Anthony Smith terms ‘*ethnie*’ the historical core of national identity (Smith, 1991). But Smith tends to essentialise the pre-modern ‘ethnic’ basis of national identity and overestimate its significance.² National identity is not always shaped by its ‘ethnic’ myths and symbols, as Smith argues. Experiences and memories of more recent historical events such as wars and revolutions also play an important part in constructing a nation’s identity, reshaping conception of its ‘ethnic’ pasts as well. In this article, I discuss two forms of ‘German’ national identity in public discourse in the FRG after World War II: ‘Reich Identity’ and ‘Holocaust Identity’. In neither pattern of national self-understanding does the older ‘*völkisch*’ ideal based on the German ‘ethnic’ pasts which appeared in the ideas of the German Romantics in the early nineteenth century and developed into aggressive nationalist movements in the first half of the twentieth century, come to the fore. It is the histories of the twentieth century, especially the catastrophic ‘past’ of National Socialism, that instead play a major role in shaping these visions of post-war ‘German’ identity influential after World War II.

The idea of a Reich Identity was formed on the basis of the legal concept of the ‘German Reich’ which signifies the constitutional and territorial continuity between the Germany before 1938, when the Nazi eastward military expansion began, and the post-war Germany ‘as a whole’, in spite of the political division after World War II. This identity was dominant in public discourse in the first

15 years of the Federal Republic, especially in the disputes on eastern border issues. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, there was a general consensus among government leaders, major political parties, and the general public in the FRG that ‘the German Reich within the frontiers of 31 December 1937’ continued to exist. The re-establishment of *this* Germany, which included the eastern territories, was considered an accepted aim in public political discourse at the time.

However, in the 1960s, the political culture of the FRG began to change significantly. When coming to terms with the Nazi past became the public norm, the conceptual scheme that shaped the discourse on eastern policy changed. The general public’s appreciation of the Germany of 1937 weakened, and the scheme of a new, post-war German national identity began to offer a new set of political idioms in arguing for the acceptance of the Oder–Neisse line. According to the German sociologist Bernhard Giesen, this identity forms a ‘Holocaust Identity’. It was constructed ‘only through confrontation with the Holocaust’ and was ‘based upon the effort to avoid a repetition of the catastrophe’ (Giesen, 1993, pp. 236–255). Holocaust Identity, in other words, comes to represent a newly born Germany after the historical break caused by the Holocaust.

This identity was formed in the first instance among a small number of intellectuals in the early years of the Federal Republic. As Giesen argues, ‘intellectuals of the new Federal Republic, including the members of the Group 47 and the scholars of the Frankfurt School, gained a collective identity through contemplating the unsurmounted past of the nation’ (Giesen, 1993, p. 237). In the mid-1960s, this identity became popular among the new generation born after the war (Giesen, 2004, pp. 123–124). In the early 1970s, Willy Brandt successfully evoked it in his New Eastern Policy. Brandt and his colleagues argued that Germany should accept the loss of the eastern territories because Germany had a special duty to contribute to ‘reconciliation’ and ‘peace’. This argument became widely accepted in FRG public discourse, however, only during the 1970s and 1980s. During the process of the final border settlement in 1990, the conservative-liberal government of Helmut Kohl reused this argument to alleviate the anxiety of other European countries which was created by German unification. For example, on 21 June, the day when the joint resolution of the Bundestag and the Volkskammer regarding the final recognition of the German eastern borders was passed, Kohl appealed to Germans’ ‘hope for sustainable mutual understanding and reconciliation with European neighbours’ in his parliamentary speech, stating that the ‘unified Germany will never be a threat to freedom and peace’ (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 11/217, p. 17143).

It must be noted that ‘national identity’ is never a unitary or fixed pattern of discourse. As Craig Calhoun argues, ‘the identity of the nation is essentially contested and not simply given by history’ (Calhoun, 1997, p. 54). National identity constitutes, rather, a *contested field of discourse* where different definitions and interpretations are presented and evoked in a ‘struggle for hegemony’ (Brubaker, 1996, pp. 55–76; Duara, 1996; Gramsci, 1971, pp. 57, 181–182). In the context of

the post-war Federal Republic, Reich Identity and Holocaust Identity represent two specific and competing views of 'Germany' in the disputes regarding the German eastern border. This article aims to analyse the process by which each of these identities was engaged in the struggle for hegemony over the Oder–Neisse line and eastern territories.³

In the field of public discourse, public organisations, such as local and national governments, political parties, special interest groups, mass media, and churches, as well as major politicians and intellectuals, present disparate claims on the same issue and each pursues its own 'good' position in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 94–115). The Oder–Neisse line has been a central 'stake' in eastern policy, although this issue became taboo after the 1970s. Various political participants have provided varying concepts and interpretations of national identity in order to justify their stances. I argue here that the shift in 'hegemonic' identity in the 1960s and 1970s formed an important political-cultural context in which the Oder–Neisse line became widely accepted as the Polish western border.

Therefore, this article is not a historiographical study about what *really* happened in the eastern territories; rather, it analyses from a sociological point of view how the territories were conceived and contested in the Federal Republic and how the FRG came finally to 'renounce' the entire eastern territories.

2. Territorial revisionism and the Reich Identity

In Western Germany, claims for the recovery of the eastern territories were vigorous during the late 1940s and 1950s. Public opinion polls conducted through the Allensbach Institute, one of the leading opinion poll institutes of the FRG, found that a large portion of the population did *not* accept the Oder–Neisse line as the German–Polish border, and in 1951, only 8% of poll participants accepted this border. In 1959, while the percentage of 'undecided' individuals had increased from 12% to 21%, still only 12% accepted the Oder–Neisse line as the border (Noelle-Neumann und Peil, 1983, p. 525). In the 1950s, an overwhelming majority of the population believed that territories east of the Oder–Neisse line should be returned to Germany. In the first half of the 1960s, still over half of all poll participants still did not accept the Oder–Neisse line.

The government and major political parties of the FRG, except for the German Communist Party, failed to accept the Oder–Neisse line until the 1960s. For example, in September 1949, Federal Chancellor Adenauer stated in the Bundestag that the Oder–Neisse line was unacceptable as the German eastern border. According to the stenographical report, most representatives, regardless of political affiliation, warmly welcomed Adenauer's statement. Quoting the Potsdam Agreement of 1945, Adenauer said:

The Potsdam Agreement stated, 'The three Heads of Government reaffirm their opinion that the final delimitation of the western frontier of Poland should await the peace settlement.' Therefore, in no case can we accept the truncation of these

[eastern] territories, which was unilaterally undertaken by the Soviet Union and Poland. ('That's right!' And lively applause from the right, the centre, and the SPD) (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 1/5, p. 28)

However, in the following year, another German state – the German Democratic Republic (GDR) that directly abutted Poland – formally accepted the Oder–Neisse line as a 'peace border' in accordance with the Görlitz Treaty. All parties in the Bundestag (except the German Communist Party) produced a joint declaration in response to this treaty. Referencing the Potsdam Agreement again, they attacked the 'renunciation of our lands and people' by the GDR.

According to the Potsdam Agreement, the territories east of the Oder–Neisse line were merely put under trusteeship of the Soviet Union as a part of its occupying zone for the time being. These territories still belong to Germany. (Long and lively applause)

Nobody has the liberty to renounce our lands and people. (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 1/68, p. 2457)

Underlying these claims was a shared opinion that despite the collapse of Nazi Germany and the zonal division under the occupation regime, 'Germany within the frontiers of 1937' continued to exist. This notion derived from a provision in the London Protocol of 12 September 1944, in which the US, Britain, and the Soviet Union agreed that 'Germany, within the frontiers as they were on the 31st December, 1937, will for the purpose of occupation, be divided into three zones' (*Dokumente zu Deutschland 1944–1994*, 1996, p. 66). The concept of the Germany of 1937 was well known among West German political élites during the occupation era. For example, the cabinet of the Land of Hesse proposed a resolution in April 1947 that stated 'Germans will never accept the Oder–Neisse line. As far as Germany exists, Germans should possess the territories that they did until 1937' (Lehmann, 1979, p. 113). For most Germans, the 'Germany within the frontiers of 1937' was legally legitimate and morally fair because areas acquired through the Nazi expansion were exempt. As far as territories are concerned, the eastern borders of the Weimar Republic were identical to those of the 'Germany of 1937'. Therefore, even an anti-Nazi politician such as Kurt Schumacher, leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands [SPD]), could also oppose the Oder–Neisse line by insisting: 'If we Social Democrats talk about the German territories, they are nothing but those of the Weimar Republic. We do not see all the territories east of the Oder–Neisse line as lost' (Jahn, 1985, p. 37).

From the FRG's viewpoint, the Potsdam Agreement also presupposed the existence of the 'Germany of 1937', because it stated that the Oder–Neisse line was simply a provisional frontier until the final peace settlement would be signed between a reunified Germany and the former Allied Powers (Münch, 1976, p.42). The eastern territories were 'under the administration of the Polish state' but *de jure* still belonged to Germany. As a result, the political leaders of

the FRG made repeated claims regarding the eastern territories by referring to the Potsdam Agreement – they assumed this interpretation was shared by their Western Allies. The provision of the final peace settlement was adopted in Article 7 of the General Treaty of 1952 which ruled that the borders of ‘Germany as a whole’ (*‘Deutschland als Ganzes’*) should not be determined until the final peace settlement. The concept of ‘Germany as a whole’ was generally understood as a synonym for the ‘Germany of 1937’; the legal continuity of this Germany was regarded as internationally legitimate.

In legal discourse, ‘Germany within the frontiers of 1937’ was also called the ‘German Reich’ – a term generally used by legal experts, administrators, and most party politicians. Despite the surrender of the German army and the defeat of Nazi Germany, many agreed that the ‘German Reich still exists’ (Diestelkamp, 1985). The concept of the German Reich of 31 December 1937 was also used in Article 116(1) of the Basic Law, the West German constitution of 1949. This article definitively described a ‘Germany in the sense of the Basic Law’. In the initial years of the FRG, there was a general consensus that the provision of this article also defined the geographical border of Germany. The Federal Constitutional Court repeatedly endorsed this view.

The concept of ‘Reich’ here can be misleading, because the imperialist aspirations of the Greater German Reich tend to be associated with the term, which conveys the wrong meaning; in German legal discourse, Reich simply means the territorial and constitutional framework of the German state. The Weimar Republic was also called the ‘German Reich’ in its constitution. In the post-war FRG, the concept of the German Reich signified the territorial continuity between the post-war and the pre-1937 German states. In the initial years of the FRG, the re-establishment of ‘Germany’, noted in the Basic Law, implied reunification of ‘Germany within the frontiers of 1937’, including the eastern territories.

Major political leaders espoused their claims regarding the eastern territories by invoking a concept of self-understanding, which I term ‘Reich Identity’. For example, in May of 1956, Foreign Minister Brentano made the following remark in the Bundestag:

The government of the Federal Republic has never accepted the division of Germany at all. Based on the agreement with all German people ... the federal government has repeatedly declared that the German Reich within the frontiers of 1937 continues to exist and that the German people have never recognised the unilateral decision [on the eastern frontiers] made at the end of the war. (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages, 1949–*, 2/155, p. 8423)

While eschewing the use of the term Reich, the leftist SPD used the same scheme to claim the eastern territories. The following declaration was made by the Action Programmes in 1952:

The free and peaceful re-establishment of Germany is an urgent political demand of the German people ... The final decision on the German territory and border is left to

a peace settlement ... The cession of the German territories of 1937 caused a new injustice rather than a new justice. The Social Democratic Party of Germany cannot accept such a decision on both the eastern and western borders. (*Deutsche Parteiprogramme*, 1968, p. 265)

The tradition of the German Reich may date back to the ‘Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation’ in the fifteenth century. Nevertheless, the concept of the Reich Identity in the FRG was quite legally framed. The description of the Reich Identity was represented in legal terms, derived from legal documents, and was subsequently incorporated into the post-war constitution. However, the Reich Identity itself, as used in political debate, was still deeply associated with moral and emotional indignation stemming from the ‘expulsion’ of Germans in the aftermath of the war. While the Potsdam Agreement authorised the ‘transfer of the German population’ in ‘orderly and humane ways’, the actual process of expulsion was considered immoral, inhumane, and a serious infringement of human rights by most FRG citizens. In their opinion, to accept the Oder–Neisse line would have implied that they approved of the expulsion and the injustices connected with it. Memories of the expulsion were not just written and talked about in informal settings, moreover. The Ministry of the Expellees of the federal government compiled a huge, five-volume document of expulsion history, including several expellee interviews and diaries (Beer, 1998). The federal government did not explicitly make a correlation between this document and territorial revision. However, as Mathias Beer argues, ‘This record of the expulsion was regarded as a kind of security deposit that could allow for a favourable position for Germany in the negotiation for the future peace treaty’ (Beer, 1999, p. 112). In order to ensure its effectiveness, memories of the ‘inhumane and unjust’ expulsion added emotional impetus for continued claims to the east. To support their entitlement to their eastern homelands, organisations of expellees specifically and actively cited these memories.

Under the international conditions of the Cold War, however, the re-establishment of the Germany of 1937 became virtually impossible. Surprisingly, even in the mid-1950s, the preponderance of influential FRG political figures acknowledged this reality. In 1957, even Foreign Minister Brentano remarked privately that the eastern territories were ‘forever lost to Germany!’ (Stehle, 1988, p. 89). However, political leaders of the FRG could not mention this ‘reality’ in public. Such statements were likely to have provoked harsh criticisms from expellee organisations; the legal and moral validity of the Reich Identity would conflict with any suggestion that the Oder–Neisse line be accepted. Despite many internal conflicts, expellees became unified under the umbrella of the Federation of Expellees (BdV) in 1957, which was the second largest interest group. The BdV strongly urged the federal government to ‘steadfastly maintain our legal claims to the eastern territories’ (*Erklärungen zur Deutschlandpolitik*, 1984–1987, Vol. I, p. 76). Since major parties, including the SPD, needed their votes in elections,

they sought to win expellee support (Ahonen, 2003; Stickler, 2004). As such, the federal government and major political parties had to repeatedly (re-)confirm the perpetuation of the German Reich and the inviolability of the Germans' 'homeland rights' (*Heimatrechte*).

3. The recognition of the Oder–Neisse line and the Holocaust Identity

In the 1960s, the political culture of the FRG underwent radical transformation. To a great extent, this cultural shift occurred as a result of generational change. Apart from the youth revolt, a massive public spotlight was placed on the Nazi past, following the Eichmann and Auschwitz trials, which transformed the concept of German history and the self-understanding of Germany (Fulbrook, 1999, pp. 171–172). Absentee trials in the GDR, which judged former Nazi members or sympathisers in the FRG, facilitated this shift (Ishida, 2002, pp. 152–196). During the course of this cultural rupture, the predominant, post-war national identity became a Holocaust Identity, which gained popularity in public discourse. In the conception of this identity, *because of* the crimes committed by the Nazis 'in the name of the German people', post-war Germans believed they had a special duty to overcome their Nazi past by making every possible effort to contribute to peace and humanity. The term 'Holocaust' was popularised through the broadcast of the American TV series with this title in 1979. However, in this context, it is used as a general symbol of Nazi crimes committed against not only Jews, but other groups as well, including the Poles.⁴

'Holocaust Identity' as a general symbol of Nazi crimes was not new in the 1960s. After the war and international tribunals, arguments conforming to such an identity were used by intellectuals, such as Günter Grass and Karl Jaspers, and political leaders involved in drafting the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), or the West German constitution of 1949. Chancellor Adenauer also invoked this identity in order to promote the policy of 'reconciliation' with Israel in the 1950s. However, these intellectuals were rather heterodox and the political use of this identity was considered ad hoc and shallow in the late 1940s and 1950s.⁵ Moreover, until the 1950s, as far as the east was concerned, most Germans mainly considered themselves victims of an unjust territorial settlement and 'inhumane' expulsion (Moeller, 2001, pp. 51–87). The public norm of 'overcoming the past' did not apply to these 'eastern' issues.

As public discourse on overcoming the past became widespread in the 1960s, it also encroached on the eastern territories; this was particularly because the histories of key expellee politicians, such as Theodor Oberländer, Hans Krüger, and Hans-Christoph Seebohm, made them targets of anti-Nazi campaigns. Consequently, it came to be widely perceived that the German expellees were 'Nazi accomplices' and the loss of the eastern territories was equitable compensation for Nazi crimes (Kittel, 2007, pp. 13–30).

After the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, the political status quo became further consolidated. The recognition of the GDR inevitably implied the

acceptance of the Oder–Neisse line. However, in the face of the territorial revisionist narratives of Reich Identity, the ‘realistic’ statement that ‘the eastern territories were already lost’ still lacked sufficient credibility to justify the acceptance of the Oder–Neisse line in public.

The rise of Holocaust Identity in the mid-1960s broke this stalemate. Unlike Reich Identity, Holocaust Identity made no direct indications about German territory. However, according to the ideals of Holocaust Identity, the problems of eastern territories and the Oder–Neisse line could be discussed from a new perspective. It was now possible to talk about recognising the Oder–Neisse line in relation to German responsibility for reconciliation or European peace. This made it possible to propose acceptance of the Oder–Neisse line as the right policy option.

A crucial turning point here was the release of the lengthy memorandum *The Situation of the Expellees and the Relations of the German People to their Eastern Neighbours* by the German Evangelical Church (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland [EKD]) in October 1965. The memorandum repudiated the partisanship of territorial revisionism and proposed an open path for reconciliation with eastern neighbours. Without denying the injustice of the expulsion, the memorandum placed it within the broader context of Nazis crime history. The memorandum states

After a serious injustice was committed in the name of the German people on peoples in the east, especially the Poles, who occupy the [eastern] territories and reside there today, the German people must think about what kind of compensation it must make for the violation of their rights. Because of the painful history of oppressive policies ... and the internationally illegal treatment by the Nazis perpetrated upon the Polish people during World War II, we are inevitably confronted with the question of whether the Poles can make a political or legal objection against the German claim for the unreduced reestablishment of the former territory ... *The eastern neighbours brought to us a new conception of German duty to secure peace ... The legacy of the sinful past imposed upon the German people a special duty to respect the Poles right to live and to give Poles the space necessary for their future development ...* Therefore, today, the German government must refrain from making claims to the [Oder–Neisse] territories. (Cited in Henkys, 1966, pp. 201–202, italics added)

In this memorandum, the EKD argued that the renunciation of eastern territories was inevitable, and *morally necessary*, for Germans to fulfil their special duties of reconciliation and peace. According to the argument it presented, this duty is imposed upon the German people as an aspect of coming to terms with their Nazi past. The idioms associated with Holocaust Identity, such as ‘the Nazi crimes’, ‘the special duty’, ‘reconciliation’, ‘mutual understanding’, ‘peace’, and so on, were repeatedly used to make the argument appealing and persuasive.

The EKD’s memorandum resonated in public discourse (Henkys, 1966). Groups within the SPD and the Free Democratic Party (Freie Demokratische Partei [FDP]) strove for a more active eastern policy toward Poland, and they

gradually developed voices through harsh internal struggles. Emphasising the importance of ‘reconciliation’ (*Aussöhnung*) and ‘mutual understanding’ (*Verständigung*) with their eastern neighbours, they argued that the recognition of the Polish western border was an inevitable step in this process. Subsequently they attempted to modify the official party stances that had respected the ‘legal status of Germany’. Major publishing and broadcasting medias, which had been critical of the ‘revanchist’ politics of the expellee organisations since the early 1960s, played a significant role in this change in the public sphere (Kittel, 2007, pp. 31–57). Moreover, opinion polls also showed a remarkable shift of public opinion in the mid-1960s. In 1962, while only 26% of the respondents ‘accepted’ the Oder–Neisse line, 50% did not; however, in 1967, the figures were 46% and 35% respectively (Noelle-Neumann and Peil, 1983, p. 525). For the first time, research by the Allensbach Institute reflected the fact that the proportion of respondents accepting the Oder–Neisse line exceeded those who did not.

In 1968, the SPD altered its official policy line on the Oder–Neisse issue. In the federal party meeting, party leader Willy Brandt, who had once stated in a newspaper in 1963 that ‘renunciation is betrayal’ (Jahn, 1985, pp. 290–291), now pursued the ‘politics of recognition’. He remarked: ‘The German people have to think about reconciliation with Poland ... We have to recognize and respect the Oder–Neisse line until a peace treaty will be signed’ (*Dokumentation zur Deutschlandfrage, 1963–*, Vol. V, p. 91). Immediately after the party meeting, the President of the BdV, who was also an SPD deputy in the Bundestag, Reinhold Rehs, protested against this policy change. In a different meeting held by the BdV in the same month, the SPD’s resolution was regarded as a ‘violation of a promise’. The BdV stated, ‘In foreign countries, this declaration would be regarded as a *de facto* renunciation. The recognition of expulsion and annexation means surrender to brutal violence’ (*Erklärungen zur Deutschlandpolitik, 1984–1987*, Vol. II, p. 143). However, the SPD did not respond well to such a criticism, and Rehs finally left the party in 1969.

After the election of 1969, the SPD and FDP formed a coalition government under the chancellorship of Brandt. Under Brandt and his foreign minister Walter Scheel, the New Eastern Policy was implemented. In 1970 the government signed treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland (the Moscow and the Warsaw Treaties) that confirmed the Oder–Neisse line as Poland’s western border. However, the Christian Democratic Union (Christliche Demokratische Union [CDU]), Christian Social Union (Christlich-Soziale Union [CSU]), and the expellee organisations opposed this social-liberal eastern policy and sought to block the ratification of eastern treaties in the Bundestag. Against criticisms from these opposing forces, the government and ruling parties had to explain to the parliament and general public why the ratification of these treaties was the right decision. Holocaust Identity played an important role in this discourse. They repeatedly talked about the significance of the treaties – particularly the recognition of the Oder–Neisse line – by using previously referenced language

associated with this form of identity. For example, on the same day the Warsaw Treaty was signed, Brandt stated in a broadcast speech that:

An agreement with this treaty, or an agreement with reconciliation and peace, means to express a belief in German history ... We have to look into the future and to know that morality is also a political power. Constraints of injustice must be broken. (*Texte zur Deutschlandpolitik*, 1967–, Vol. VI, p. 264)

In this statement, he was clearly connecting the meaning of reconciliation and peace with Germany's history of the Nazi period.

Reconciliation is a key concept in Holocaust Identity and in Brandt's New Eastern Policy. In his memoirs, Helmut Schmidt noted that 'reconciliation was a decisive motive for Willy Brandt's – and later my own – eastern policy'. He added that it was 'a specifically German motive that stems from the recent Germany history in the Nazi era' (Schmidt, 1987, p. 306).

During his visit to Warsaw in 1970, Brandt 'fell to his knees' (*Kniefall*) in front of the Jewish ghetto memorial. This was considered an impressive 'ceremony of reconciliation' (Schneider, 2006). Just a week after his visit, the 14 December issue of the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* carried the photo of Brandt's *Kniefall* on its front page, and it reported that:

Brandt fell to his knees before the memorial of the Warsaw ghetto in order to show his repentance for the Nazi crimes ... He established the Oder–Neisse line as the German eastern border to show *his hope for reconciliation with Poland*. (*Der Spiegel*, 51, 14 December 1970, p. 25, italics added)

This report was actually incorrect. In the treaty, according to the official interpretation, the FRG did *not finally* settle the Oder–Neisse line as the German eastern border. As I shall discuss in the next section, the complex legal interpretation of the eastern treaties allowed for claims on the eastern territories after the treaties were concluded. However, this 'misconception' by the major public media was important at this point. Hope for reconciliation, symbolised by the *Kniefall*, was regarded as a kind of compensation for territorial loss in the past. The pictures of the *Kniefall* were circulated not only in Germany but internationally as well, and they were celebrated as icons of a newborn Germany. As the value of hope for reconciliation increased, the acceptance of the Oder–Neisse line would become easier.

In the New Eastern Policy, the social-liberal government also transformed the concept of Germany. The government no longer used the 'all German' notion of the Germany of 31 December 1937, but replaced it with the idea of Germany composed of the two German states in existence at the time. In Brandt's famous formulation of 'Two states – One nation', the 'nation' apparently did not include areas east of the Oder–Neisse line. The reunification for the social-liberal government was no more than the merging of two German states. The federal government actually repealed the 1961 guideline for geographical representation, which

included instructions for drawing the borders of 1937 in maps of Germany (Blumenwitz, 1980).

The CDU/CSU and expellee organisations criticised this left-liberal eastern policy as ‘politics of renunciation’ or ‘the violation of the right of national self-determination’. However, the SPD and FDP insisted that Germany could shed its legacy of the Nazi era and gain trust from neighbours by signing the Warsaw Treaty and accepting the Oder–Neisse line. To use the words of Hans-Dietrich Genscher: a peaceful, cooperative, and European West Germany could increase its ‘trust capital’ (Ash, 1993, p. 358) for a better position of the FRG in Europe and the world; this would better serve a wider set of German interests.

After a long and convoluted process of conflicts and negotiations, the Warsaw and Moscow Treaties were eventually ratified in the Bundestag in May 1972 (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 6/187, pp. 10939–10943). Despite the complexity of the issue, both public opinion and the major mass media in the FRG supported the New Eastern Policy (Rautenberg, 1997). An opinion poll by the Allensbach Institute clearly indicated the general public’s opinion in the FRG during this period: 61% of the respondents accepted the Oder–Neisse line in 1972 while only 16% did not (Noelle-Neumann and Peil, 1983, p. 503). After 1972, the institute ceased to ask questions about the Oder–Neisse line, which suggests that it was no longer considered an issue in the FRG.

In contrast, to claim the recovery of the eastern territories became morally unacceptable because it would have discredited and harmed the spirit of reconciliation; the support of the National Democratic Party of Germany (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands [NPD]) and other right-wing forces further delegitimised the claims for the territorial revision. After the ratification of the eastern treaties, the expellee organisations, still against the acceptance of the Oder–Neisse line, were largely marginalised and even stigmatised in the field of public discourse. Their stance was often criticised as anachronistic, revanchist, or even fascist.

4. The reformulation of Reich Identity

The New Eastern Policy of the social-liberal government did not put an end to the idea of the German Reich of 1937. The political and legal processes of the eastern treaties were much more complex. First of all, the FRG regarded neither the Moscow Treaty nor the Warsaw Treaty as a peace settlement. A resolution, which the Bundestag passed unanimously on the same day the eastern treaties were ratified, declared that the treaties were a *modus vivendi*, which implied that they do not prejudge final regulations of a reunified Germany in future peace settlements (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 6/187, pp. 10960–10961). According to the eastern treaties, the FRG would respect the Oder–Neisse line as the existing *Polish western border*. But the Oder–Neisse line was not recognised as a final German eastern border; for the FRG, ‘the German question is still open’.

As such, Reich Identity survived and provided conceptual resources and political idioms in arguments against the acceptance of the Oder–Neisse line by conservative and expellee politicians; as a result, the politics seeking the revision of the eastern borders continued after the eastern treaties. However, it was no longer possible, even for the territorial revisionists, to demand immediate alterations in existing frontiers. The Oder–Neisse line was now a difficult theme in public discourse, which resulted in the reformulation of Reich Identity.

First, the concept of the German Reich of 1937 was preserved as the official interpretation of the ‘legal status of Germany’, according to which, since the German border is not finally settled by the eastern treaties, the German Reich of 1937 still exists. In this interpretation, the German Reich was *over-legalised*. The Reich now existed simply as legal fiction where its actual significance to foreign policy was not clear.

Surprisingly, judgments of the Federal Constitutional Court, issued in 1973 and 1975, authorised this official interpretation (*Dokumentation zur Deutschlandfrage*, 1963–, Vol. VIII, pp. 295, 400). The expellee organisations and conservative members of the CDU/CSU welcomed the judgments; they repeatedly referenced them to demonstrate the importance of Germany’s legal status. Even the social-liberal government could not completely ignore this view, as it was constitutionally legitimate.

After the CDU/CSU regained power in 1982, some leading CSU politicians adopted a constitutionally fundamentalist stance by more openly invoking the concept of the German Reich of 1937. For example, Theo Weigel cited several legal sources regarding the legal status of Germany in May 1983, when he stated in the Bundestag: ‘Therefore, we can say of our Germany policy: the German Reich still continues to exist as a form defined by the constitution’ (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 10/4, p. 101). In 1985, an organisation of expellees from Schlesien, Landsmannschaft Schlesien, chose ‘Schlesien is still ours’ as their motto for the annual meeting. The chairman of the Landsmannschaft Schlesien, Herbert Hupka, explained: ‘This motto means that Schlesien is historically, spiritual-culturally, legally, and politically still a part of Germany within the frontiers of 1937, as the Federal Constitutional Court judged in 1973 that “the German Reich still exists”’ (*Archiv der Gegenwart*, 2000, p. 28461).

The SPD, mass media, and the Polish government criticised these ‘revanchist’ positions; however, Chancellor Helmut Kohl defended such statements by remarking that they merely addressed Germany’s legal status. Kohl insisted that ‘the German question is still open’ and cited judgments of the Constitutional Court and other legal texts.⁶

Second, the concept of the German Reich was *deterritorialised* and even *ethnified*: not a territorial revision specifically, but an improvement of the rights of Germans residing in areas east of the Oder–Neisse line. In other words, the issue became disputable in public discourse. Naturally, Germans who remained in the eastern territories were citizens of the German Reich within the frontiers of

1937. However, their human rights or ‘national group right’ (*Volksgruppenrecht*), that is, the right to speak German, to go German schools and churches, to cultivate the German culture, to migrate, and so on, were now issues in eastern policy discourse. Expellee organisations and the CDU/CSU insisted that the rights of Germans were being seriously violated by socialist dictatorship and the federal government had a duty to protect these rights.

For example, in November 1975, Helmut Kohl criticised the government’s eastern policy in the Bundestag:

The federal government again neglects the duty to serve the Germans remaining in the east for protecting their national group right, [although] it gave us some hope by stating in 1970 that it was possible to alleviate the linguistic and cultural burdens of the native German speakers in Poland. (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 7/202, p. 13959)

The BdV argued similarly, and officially stated in July 1976:

The BdV demanded the government to proceed more intensely than before the negotiations on the national group rights of the Germans in the eastern territories, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, especially on the rights of free use of their native language and development of their culture. (*Erklärungen zur Deutschlandpolitik*, 1984–1987, Vol. II, p. 221)

Through the concept of the national group rights or human rights, the expellee organisations and others with comparable views could also make claims to the rights of Germans who stayed beyond the ‘Germany of 1937’ areas, including Germans not only in Poland and Czechoslovakia, but also in the areas further east, such as Romania, Hungary, or Yugoslavia. The expellee organisations also attempted to appeal to the universal principle of human rights, which was decided within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).⁷

Migration from Poland was one of the most intensely discussed issues in the eastern policy of the mid-1970s. After the signing of the Warsaw Treaty, the number of German migrants, or ‘out-settlers’ (*Aussiedler*), was significantly reduced. The CDU/CSU viewed this as a result of the Polish government’s anti-German policy. According to the deputies of the CDU and CSU, applications for migration were being rejected and applicants and their families harassed in Poland. They argued that this was a serious violation of human rights and the federal government was responsible for it.⁸ Under the pressure of such criticism, the federal government began negotiating the issue with the Polish government; after the Agreement of 1975, the number of migrants recovered (Bingen, 1998, pp. 172, 194).

Despite these unsettled issues, efforts for reconciliation continued under the social-liberal governments of Brandt and Schmidt. During the 1970s, public concern with the Holocaust spread through mass media and education. As a

result, the ‘Holocaust Identity’ was increasingly nationalised as a form of German self-understanding. Coming to terms with the past became widely accepted and normalised for Germans in the FRG (Fulbrook, 1999, p. 171; Ishida, 2002, pp. 230–242). However, the over-legalised and humanised concepts of Reich Identity could still offer constitutionally legitimate arguments for territorial revision made by those who were not yet prepared to accept the Oder–Neisse line. Against such claims, SPD Deputy Dieter Haack emphasised the ‘*political and moral*’ significance of the reconciliation between Germany and Poland’ and criticised the legalist interpretation of the Oder–Neisse line by saying that ‘politics does not merely consist of laws’ (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 10/16, pp. 1059–1060, italics added).

On the issue of the eastern territories, struggles for hegemony between two national identities were now engaged with contrasting ‘politician-journalists of the left’ and ‘politician-jurists of the right’. The former, represented by left-liberal politicians and intellectuals and supported by the mass media, ‘argued on grounds of morality and realism’, while the latter, represented by conservative politicians and expellee functionaries, and supported by legal experts, ‘urged legalism and idealism’ (Ash, 1993, pp. 224–225). Despite the rise of anxiety to regain the eastern territories under the Kohl government, the moralist and realist narratives of Holocaust Identity became more prevalent throughout the 1980s – even some conservative politicians shared this identity. For example, in the much-celebrated speech on 8 May 1985, Richard von Weizsäcker made an important remark concerning the German eastern borders: ‘The dictates of mutual understanding (*Verständigungsgebot*) should come before legal disputes’ (*Bulletin*, 1951–1990, at 1986, p. 289). This suggested that the Federal President should acknowledge Holocaust Identity and accept the Oder–Neisse line. Although the BdV president, Herbert Czaja, viewed this statement as regrettable (Czaja, 1996, p. 628), legalist claims regarding the eastern territories became further marginalised and even lost support among the expellees themselves. This development constituted a discursive setting for the final legal settlement of the German eastern borders in 1990.

5. After the unification: the ghost of Reich Identity returns?

In November 1990, the German–Polish Border Treaty’s final recognition of the Oder–Neisse line ruled that the German Reich of 1937, even as legal fiction, would eventually cease to exist.⁹ The concept of the Reich played no substantial role in the political process of the unification. Otto Dann observed that:

No politicians referred to the German Reich or its institutions in the German unification of 1990, although the unification could surely have links with the national-historical legacy of the German Reich in many ways. The unification rather led to the decisive renunciation of the territorial claims of the German Reich. (Dann, 1993, p. 322)

Why? First, the concept of the German Reich was already marginalised in public discourse. Second, it was generally understood that any reference to the German Reich would jeopardise the opportunity to change history through unification. As Chancellor Kohl stated in the Bundestag, ‘You have to give a clear answer regarding the Polish western border if you would like to take advantage of this historical chance to achieve German unification’ (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 11/217, p. 17144).

In contrast, Holocaust Identity became ‘orthodox’ in unified Germany. In the mid-1990s, many politicians and intellectuals proudly talked of post-war German efforts to overcome their Nazi past and celebrated their achievement of a liberal democracy in the FRG. In 1994, even Jürgen Habermas, an iconic figure for critical intellectuals, wrote: ‘... only through normative confrontation with the Nazi past, a task taken on in the 1960s, did trust in the political system develop into the genuine loyalty to the constitution which is anchored in belief in a liberal political culture’ (Habermas, 13 May 1994). Just before Germany’s capital was relocated to Berlin, the foreign minister of the red-green government, Joschka Fischer, spoke thus of the new Berlin Republic: ‘It is the memory of Auschwitz, or the motto “no more Auschwitz”, that, in my view, could be the only basis of the new Berlin Republic’ (Lévy, 1999, p. 46).

Monuments, museums, and recollections of the Nazi past flourished. As the historian Jan-Holger Kirsch remarks, ‘They had to be implemented against the main stream of the society before ... [but] are now more easily accepted. They have now become part of cultural heritage that is promoted by the state’ (Kirsch, 2005, p. 66). Opened in 2005, the Holocaust-*Mahnmal* is one of the most striking monuments in Berlin. The leaflet for this monument states that ‘belief in the historical responsibility’ for Nazi crimes ‘is the core of national self-understanding for Germany’.

However, such developments after the unification do not mean that Reich Identity entirely disappeared. Ironically enough, the final border settlement and the collapse of the socialist regime made it *easier* to refer to the national minority right in the east, or to the historical injustice of the expulsion – in both international and domestic contexts. The ‘national minority right’ of Germans was actually stipulated in the German–Polish Friendship and Cooperation Treaty of 1991. There was an increase in public concern with regard to preserving the culture and history of the Germans in the east. The federal government greatly increased the amount of financial allocation for the ‘preservation of the culture heritage of the regions of German expulsion’ (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages. Drucksache. 12/2311*).

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the issue of the German expulsion was more openly discussed in Germany (Hirsch, 2003). It was no longer a topic relegated to the small circle of expellees. Even some left-liberal intellectuals and SPD politicians considered it as an important theme in contemporary German history. For example, the SPD Deputy Peter Glotz remarked in the Bundestag:

We want to talk about victims of the expulsion nowadays not because we want to forget victims of the war of aggression [started by Germans], but because we want to, and have to, talk about all facts from all sides. (*Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages*, 1949–, 12/41, p. 3186)

Glötz, together with the President of the BdV, Erika Steinbach, created the Foundation of the ‘Centre against Expulsions’. The Foundation advocated the establishment of a memorial and exhibition institution in Berlin that would display the history of expulsions. According to the Foundation, the exhibition would present the German expulsion, a serious infringement of human rights, as *one of many other expulsions* in the twentieth century. Thus, the Centre tried to universalise the German expulsion by placing it in the contexts of European or global history.¹⁰

Placing the issue of expulsion back in the German public sphere has been criticised in Germany and internationally. The issue of expulsion is still a contested issue that affects the German–Polish relationship.

Although the eastern territories were truly abandoned, they are not yet forgotten. Reich Identity has returned as a ‘ghost’. Notably, it is no longer related to the claims to territorial revision; rather, it frames memories of and historical interest in German culture in the east, or German expulsion from the east, and informs discourse regarding the ‘German east’. The memories are now one main aspect of struggle. Against the ‘orthodox’ understanding of the German past, protagonists of the legacy of Reich Identity claim that the German expulsion is another important part of German history, one that cannot be cancelled out by Nazi crimes. They attempt to parallelise the two dark histories of Germany rather than to relativise Nazi crimes. As Steinbach writes:

Many people are afraid that mourning the German victims would relativise the German responsibility for Nazism. But do the mourning and the recollection of the sufferings of millions of people actually lead to an escape from our peculiar responsibility imposed by history? Of course not. (Steinbach, 2004, p. 2)

With the resolution of the Bundestag, the mission of the Foundation of Flight, Expulsion, and Reconciliation, founded in 2008, is to ‘preserve the memory’ of the expulsion ‘in the spirit of reconciliation’.¹¹ As suggested by a recent conflict regarding Steinbach’s membership of the Foundation’s advisory board, the BdV and its president, Steinbach, may still be regarded as proponents of historical revanchism in both Poland and Germany. However, the project of this foundation itself suggests that after a long process of disputes, the history of the expulsion now constitutes an integral part of German history. How this history is to be interpreted and presented remains controversial.¹²

Notes

1. Many expellees, who were officially called ‘resettlers’ (*Umsiedler*), settled in the GDR, too. While 7.9 million expellees were incorporated in the FRG in 1950,

- some four million settled in the GDR (Reichling, 1986, pp. 26–39, 59–61). But many of these moved to the FRG before the Berlin Wall was constructed. In 1961, expellees made up about 21.5% of the total West German population (Beer, 2004, p. 24).
2. For a precise and ‘constructive’ critique of ethno-symbolism, see Wimmer (2008, pp. 9–14). He points out a ‘sampling’ problem of the authors of ethno-symbolism, who ‘look for continuity between ethnic pasts and nationalist presents, and find it’. For a response by Smith to this critique, see Smith (2009).
 3. Of course these two are *not* the only national identities of post-war Germany. For example, Giesen discusses Holocaust Identity and Economic Miracle Identity (the identity of the ‘*Wirtschaftswundernation*’) as the two ‘codes’ of national identity in the Federal Republic (Giesen, 1993, pp. 236–255). For more on the ‘economic miracle’ and national identity see also James (1989, pp. 187–189).
 4. It is emblematic that during his visit to Warsaw Brandt fell to his knees in front of the Jewish ghetto memorial in order to ‘show his repentance for the Nazi crimes’ to Poland.
 5. On the downplaying and silencing of the Nazi crimes in the Adenauer era, see Frei (1996) and Giesen (2004, pp. 120–129).
 6. Because of the intensification of criticism, Landsmannschaft Schlesien finally changed the motto of its annual meeting to ‘Schlesien is still our future’.
 7. For example, see *Erklärung der Deutschlandpolitik* (1984–1987, Vol. II, p. 270). The concept of human rights or ‘minority rights’ became more prominent in the discourse of the expellee organisations after 1988. For more details, see Salzborn (2001).
 8. For example, see *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestages* (1949–, 7/48, p. 2748 and 7/127, p. 8533).
 9. Expellee organisations and radical right parties opposed this treaty. But their influence was rather limited and there was no intense debate on this final border settlement. Czaja remarked that most Germans regarded the German ‘reunification’ as merely the unification of two German states (Czaja, 1989, p. 1).
 10. See the homepage of the Centre against Expulsions (Zentrum gegen Vertreibungen) (<http://www.z-g-v.de/index1.html>).
 11. See the homepage of this foundation (Stiftung Flucht Vertreibung, Versöhnung) (<http://www.dhm.de/sfvv/>).
 12. For example, see *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 7 January 2011, p. 4.

References

- Ahonen, P. (2003). *After the expulsion: West Germany and Eastern Europe 1945–1990*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined communities*. New York, NY: Verso.
- Archiv der Gegenwart: Deutschland 1949 bis 1990*. (2000). Sankt Augustin: Siegler.
- Ash, T. G. (1993). *In Europe's name: Germany and the divided continent*. New York, NY: Vintage Books.
- Beer, M. (1998). Im Spannungsfeld von Politik und Zeitgeschichte. *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 46, 245–289.
- Beer, M. (1999). Die Dokumentation der Vertreibung der Deutschen aus Ost-Mitteleuropa: Hintergrund - Entstehung - Ergebniss - Wirkung. *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*, 50, 99–117.
- Beer, M. (2004). Die Vertreibung der Deutschen: Ursachen, Ablauf, Folgen. In *Flucht und Vertreibung. Europa zwischen 1939 und 1948*, (pp. 24–65). Hamburg: Ellert & Richter Verlag.
- Bingen, D. (1998). *Die Polenpolitik der Bonner Republik von Adenauer bis Kohl 1949–1991*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.

- Blumenwitz, D. (1980). *Die Darstellung der Grenzen Deutschlands in kartographischen Werken*. Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Brubaker, R. (1996). *Nationalism reframed: Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brubaker, R., & Cooper, F. (2000). Beyond 'identity'. *Theory and Society*, 29, 1–47. doi:10.1023/A:1007068714468
- Brubaker, R. (2004). In the Name of the Nation: Reflections of Nationalism and Patriotism. *Citizenship Studies*, 8, 115–127. doi:10.1080/1362102042000214705
- Brubaker, R., Loveman, M., & Stamatov, P. (2004). Ethnicity as cognition. *Theory and Society*, 33, 31–64. doi:10.1023/B:RYSO.0000021405.18890.63
- Bulletin des Press- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung*. (1951–1990). Bonn: Dt. Bundes-Verlag.
- Calhoun, C. (1997). *Nationalism*. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press.
- Czaja, H. (1989). In Erwartung eines gerechten Ausgleichs: Eine Betrachtung auf das Jahr 1989. *Deutscher Ostdienst*, 31/51, 22 December 1989.
- Czaja, H. (1996). *Unterwegs zum Kleinsten Deutschland: Marginalien zu 50 Jahren Ostpolitik*. Frankfurt am Main: Knecht.
- Dann, O. (1993). *Nation und Nationalismus in Deutschland 1770–1990*. München: Beck.
- Deutsche Parteiprogramme 1861–1961*. (1968). Göttingen: Musterschmidt Verlag.
- Diestelkamp, D. (1985). Rechtsgeschichte als Zeitgeschichte: Historische Betrachtungen zur Entstehung und Durchsetzung der Theorie vom Fortbestand des Deutschen Reiches als Staat nach 1945. *Zeitschrift für Neuere Rechtsgeschichte*, 7, 187–207.
- Dokumentation zur Deutschlandfrage*. (1963–) (Vols. 1–10). Bonn: Verlag für Zeitgeschichte.
- Dokumente zu Deutschland 1944–1994*. (1996). München: Bayerische Landeszentrale für politische Bildungsarbeit.
- Duara, P. (1996). Historicizing national identity, or who imagines what and when. In G. Eley & R. G. Suny (Eds.), *Becoming national: A reader* (pp. 151–177). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Erklärungen zur Deutschlandpolitik: Dokumentation*. (1984–1987) (Vols. I–III). Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutsche Vertriebenen.
- Frei, N. (1996). *Vergangenheitspolitik: Die Anfänge der Bundesrepublik und die NS-Vergangenheit*. München: Beck.
- Fulbrook, M. (1999). *German national identity after the Holocaust*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Giesen, B. (1993). *Die Intellektuellen und die Nation: Eine deutsche Achsenzeit*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.
- Giesen, B. (2004). *Triumph and trauma*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. New York, NY: International.
- Habermas, J. (1994). Die Last der doppelten Vergangenheit. *Die Zeit*, 13 May 1994.
- Henkys, R. (Ed.). (1966). *Deutschland und die östlichen Nachbarn: Beiträge zu einer Evangelischen Denkschrift*. Stuttgart: Krenz-Verlag.
- Hirsch, H. (2003). Flucht und Vertreibung: Kollektive Erinnerung im Wandel. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (pp. 14–26), B40–41.
- Ishida, Y. (2002). *Kako no kokufuku: Hittora go no doitsu [Overcoming the past: Germany after Hitler]*. Tokyo: Hakusuisha [in Japanese].
- Jahn, H. E. (1985). *Die deutsche Frage von 1945 bis Heute: Der Weg der Parteien und Regierungen*. Mainz: von Hase & Koehler.
- James, H. (1989). *A German identity 1770–1990*. New York, NY: Routledge.

- Kirsch, J.-H. (2005). 'Befreiung' oder 'Niederlage'? Zur Konfliktgeschichte des deutschen Gedenkens an Nationalsozialismus und Zweiten Weltkrieg. In B. Asmuss et al. (Eds.), *Krieg und seine Folgen 1945: Kriegsende und Erinnerungspolitik in Deutschland* (pp. 60–71). Berlin: Deutsches Historisches Museum.
- Kittel, M. (2007). *Vertreibung der Vertriebenen? Der historische deutsche Osten in der Erinnerungskultur der Bundesrepublik (1961–1982)*. München: Oldenbourg.
- Lehmann, H. G. (1979). *Der Oder-Neisse-Konflikt*. München: Beck.
- Lévy, B.-H. (1999). Ein paar Versuche, in Deutschland spazierenzugehen (II). *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 18 February 1999.
- Moeller, R. G. (2001). *War stories: The search for a usable past in the Federal Republic of Germany*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Münch, I. v. (Ed.) (1976). *Dokumente des geteilten Deutschland*. tuttgart: Kröner.
- Noelle-Neumann, E. and Peil, E. (1983). *Allensbacher Jahrbuch der Demoskopie 1978–1983*. München: K. G. Saur Verlag.
- Rautenberg, H.-W. (1997). Die Wahrnehmung von Flucht und Vertreibung in der deutschen Nachkriegsgeschichte bis heute. *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (pp. 34–46), B57.
- Reichling, G. (1986). *Die deutschen Vertriebenen in Zahlen* (Vol. 1). Bonn: Kulturstiftung der deutschen Vertriebenen.
- Renan, E. (1990). What is a nation? In H. K. Bhabha (Ed.), *Nation and narration* (pp. 8–22). London: Routledge.
- Salzborn, S. (2001). *Heimatrecht und Volkstumskampf: Außenpolitische Konzepte der Vertriebenenverbände und ihre praktische Umsetzung*. Hannover: Offizin.
- Schmidt, H. (1987). *Menschen und Mächte*. Berlin: Siedler.
- Schneider, C. (2006). *Der Warschauer Kniefall: Ritual, Ereignis und Erzählung*. Konstanz: UVK.
- Schütz, A. (1932). *Der sinnhafte Aufbau der sozialen Welt*. Wien: Springer.
- Smith, A. D. (1991). *National identity*. London: Penguin.
- Smith, A. D. (2009). *Ethnosymbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Stehle, H. (1988). Adenauer, Polen und die Deutsche Frage. In J. Foschepoth (Ed.), *Adenauer und die Deutsche Frage* (pp. 80–98). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck.
- Steinbach, E. (2004). Ein kaltes Herz belibt gegen jedermann kalt. *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 October 2004.
- Stickler, M. (2004). 'Ostdeutsch heißt Gesamtdeutsch': *Organisation, Selbstverständnis und heimatpolitische Zielsetzungen der deutschen Vertriebenenverbände 1949–1972*. Düsseldorf: Droste.
- Texte zur Deutschlandpolitik. (1967–1991)* (Vols. 1–8). Bonn: Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen.
- Verhandlungen des deutschen Bundestages. Drucksache.* (1949–). Bonn: Bundesdruckerei.
- Wimmer, A. (2008). How to modernize ethno-symbolism. *Nations and Nationalism*, 14(1), 9–14. doi: 10.1111/j.1469-8129.2008.00306.x.
- Wimmer, A. (2013). *Waves of war: Nationalism, state formation, and ethnic exclusion in the modern world*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.