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Collective Identities in World Society Some Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations

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Introduction[1]

How should social scientists react to what appear to be increasingly contradictory developments in social relations at the end of the twentieth century? With a postmodern shrug of the shoulders? If familiar institutional structures are in an advanced state of decomposition, traditional scholarly methods of trying to get a grip on them are also likely to be of little avail. One often has the impression that "anything goes": globalization proceeds alongside fragmentation (Zürn 1992); supranational political entities develop at the same time as a renaissance of the nation-state (Langewiesche 1995); increasing international and transnational interdependence is apparently not inconsistent with strengthened nationalism and ethnicity (Elwert 1989; Leggewie 1994); integration and separatism are quite compatible with one another. In short, it looks as though reality is no longer paying any attention to traditional theories of society.

If we were to insist on hanging on to the idea of modernization as a process of ever-increasing rationalization, all these instances of re-drawing of borders would be no more than temporary anachronisms, momentary setbacks within a development that cannot ultimately be held back - from communal social relations to global society-formation in the Weberian sense.[2] In this chapter I put forward a different view, namely that a significant portion of social action is "based on a subjective feeling of the parties [...] that they belong together" (Weber 1968: Vol. I, 40), that is to say it is a matter of community-formation (Vergemeinschaftung) rather than rationally-motivated society-formation. This means that society- and community-formation should be understood not only as ideal types existing side by side, but also as modes of social relations which exist in a constant interrelationship with one another, neither of which can replace the other because each of them performs a specific function within human society as a whole. Nationalism, ethnicity, separatism and other forms of social fragmentation can thus be understood as specific expressions of community-formation (see Connor 1994), which come into being under certain conditions and can serve either to advance or to hinder the society-formation process which is advancing at the same time. Similarly, the extent and intensity of society-formation influences in a number of ways the conditions in which community-

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[2]   Weber (1968: Vol. I, Part One, Ch. I, § 9); see also Esser (1988).

formation comes about and the effects it has. If, therefore, we understand community-formation not as a leftover from pre-modern social relations but as a necessary form of those relations in the present, we have to ask how it occurs.

There is general agreement that globalization, increasing interdependence, integration and the creation of supranational institutions as forms of international society-formation can be interpreted in terms of rationally-motivated adjustment of interests or similarly motivated agreement (Weber 1968: Vol. I, 41).[3] However, some other kind of motivation may be at the root of the simultaneous trend towards social fragmentation. For Weber (1968: Vol. I, 40-41), the ideal-typical distinction between society- and community-formation is based on a difference of attitude which lies at the root of these two forms of social relationship. Community-formation is not motivated by interests, but comes about on the basis of a feeling of belonging. Assuming that nationalism, separatism, regionalism and the formation of ethnic groups are forms of social relations in which community-formation dominates over society-formation, we must examine the motivations behind this community-formation if we want to find out more about the conditions which encourage social fragmentation.

In this paper, I seek to answer this question with the help of social-psychological theories.[4] According to social identity theory, the desire and striving for a positive self-image is the driving force behind the evaluation of social categories and groups, because there is an individual advantage to be derived from a positive evaluation of categories and groups of which one is oneself a member.[5] "Social identity" is understood to mean "those aspects of an individual's self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging" (Tajfel/Turner 1986: 16). This means that we can speak of "collective identity" whenever a certain social identity is of overriding importance for the members of a collective, i.e. when a number of individuals accept a social categorization which enables them to differentiate themselves as a group from the rest of the world, and in the process to

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[3]   See the abundant literature on globalization; an excellent overview of this literature can be found in Beisheim/Walter (1997).

[4]   This approach seems to me to be a more promising way of investigating the connections between individual identity, collective identities, and international relations than Bloom's "identification theory" (Bloom 1990), a concept which is more psychoanalytically oriented and applied only to national collective identities.

[5]   The fact that individual advantage is central to the assumptions of this social-psychological theory does not necessarily place it in the vicinity of rational choice approaches, as this psychological gain is not accessible to any intentional calculation.

value the group more highly - which in turn enables each individual to benefit in terms of his or her own self-esteem.[6]

The individual's need for a positive social identity can therefore be seen as the basic motivation for the construction of collective identities and thus for community-formation in social relations.[7] But the individual's need for community is not enough to explain tendencies towards fragmentation which are extremely diverse in their scope and intensity. We therefore need to develop a model which can specify the factors that are significant in the creation of collective identities, in order both to answer the question of which collective identities emerge as world society develops, and to make it possible to make statements about the strengths of these identities. While society-formation seems to involve a tendency towards de-bordering, community-formation is always associated with the drawing of boundaries because identity-formation requires a demarcation of one's own group from those who do not belong to it. It is this relationship of tension between society- and community-formation which makes it so important, in view of the increasing globalization of social relations, to ask precisely what effects those social relations in which community-formation is dominant have on international relations; in other words, the question of central concern is that of the conditions under which collective identities are formed within world society.

In order to pursue this question, I begin by presenting a concept of "world society" which provides a framework for the analysis of the various dimensions of trans-border social relations already mentioned. The next step is an examination of the concept of identity which, in contrast to other approaches to the term, stresses its reflexive dimension. Those concepts of "identity" already employed in the IR literature are then examined in order to establish what contribution they are able to make to our understanding of collective identities and to the research question outlined above. A brief overview of the literature on national identity follows. In the fourth section I take up the social-psychological concept of identity, social identity theory and self-categorization theory, approaches which offer a good basis for an investigation of community-formation processes understood in terms of the formation of collective identities. The task here is to make plausible the claim that the categorizations involved in every perception of reality also fulfill the individual's need

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[6]   Social identity theory is set out in more detail in section 4 of this paper.

[7]   Weber himself can be cited to make more plausible the association of collective identities with his concept of community-formation: "All kinds of other visible differences can, in a given case, give rise to repulsion and contempt [...]. Seen from their positive aspect, however, these differences may give rise to consciousness of kind, which may become as easily the bearer of group relationships" (Weber 1968: Vol. I, 387).

for social identity, and that this need provides the basic motivation for the construction of all collective identities. It becomes clear that these identities are constructed in accordance with Weber's ideal-typical category of community-formation, not least because this social relation between individuals and larger collectives is based on a subjective feeling and not motivated by rational, objectively identifiable interests.[8] In conclusion, I offer some thoughts on the relationship between collective identity-formation and the development of world society.

2.   The Concept of World Society

Our concept of world society is an attempt to develop an analytical instrument whose primary purpose is to make possible a more differentiated investigation of globalization and its consequences than the traditional concepts of International Relations allow (see World Society Research Group 1996). By linking our concept to Weber's ideal-typical distinction between society- and community-formation, we are able to examine relations in world society in terms of the specific mixture of rationally-motivated adjustment of interests and subjective feelings of belonging that are present in each case.

However, we should not forget that in each case we are dealing with ideal types, nor that society- and community-formation are, at both levels, processes which are interconnected with one another in various ways. An example will help to make this clear. Weber says that a national community is similar to an erotic relationship in being a typical expression of community-formation, while a market exchange relationship or a purposive (zweckrational) agreement designed to ensure a constant balance of interests correspond to the ideal type of society-formation (Weber 1968: Vol. I, 41). In this sense globalization and the revival of nationalism do not contradict one another, but are distinct forms of social relationship whose interconnections can be investigated. This enables us to understand nationalism's stress on subjective feelings of belonging as a logical reaction to the advance of de-bordering processes brought about by globalization, which constantly place in question traditional feelings of community. As a consequence existing borderlines are emphasized more strongly, which serves to put a brake on the de-bordering process. Globalizing society-

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[8]   Weber emphasizes this dimension of community-formation in his discussion of "race": "Of course, race creates a 'group' [*Gemeinschaft*] only when it is subjectively perceived as a common trait [...]. The resulting social action is usually merely negative: those who are obviously different are avoided and despised or, conversely, viewed with superstitious awe" (Weber 1968: Vol. I, 387).

formation is able to satisfy certain interests, but not the need for positive social identity which lies at the heart of community-formation. It is only the distinction between one's own group (for example the nation) and the rest that can provide the individual with a feeling of social identity.

However, it is also possible for society- and community-formation to have a positive interrelationship with one another, as Weber himself explains:

"Every social relationship which goes beyond the pursuit of immediate common ends, which hence lasts for long periods, involves relatively permanent social relationships between the same persons, and these cannot be exclusively confined to the technically necessary activities [...] there is always some tendency in this direction [to community-formation], although the degree, to be sure, varies enormously" (Weber 1968: Vol. I, 41).

For example, it may be that the existing transnational community in Western Europe, which exists in part on the basis of a shared cultural tradition, is partly responsible for the fact that society-formation processes at both the inter-state and the transnational level continue to advance, and thereby have positive effects on transnational community-formation in this region.[9] But it is only when the external borders of intensive society- and community-formation are congruent with one another that communal social relations can be considered a factor supporting, securing, and driving forward society-formation.

This concept of an interrelationship between society- and community-formation seeks to distinguish itself from a model in which one stage succeeds the other, as is for example the case according to the frequently-encountered thesis that society-formation gradually replaces communal social relations.[10] A much more satisfactory move is to integrate both forms of social action, together with the world-societal developments identified here as the institutionalization of trans-border relations and the diffusion of actors, within one analytical concept which is not

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[9] "For example, there is the question of the factors determining and the significance of transnational collective identities, which are one form of community-formation at the transnational level. This kind of transnational community-formation can contribute both to globalization and to the fragmentation of international relations, and the developing conflict structures in world society are particularly interesting here. One important factor seems to be the question of whether collective identities cross or follow geographical borders. It is possible that this is what determines whether conflicts take a violent or non-violent form" (World Society Research Group 1996), and see also Weller (1995).

[10] This view was originally held by Marx and Engels (1848), subsequently also by Durkheim (1897), and more recently by Beck (1983, 1986). Lohauß (1995: Ch. 8) has shown how inadequate this position is and proposed the concept of "societal community" (*gesellschaftliche Gemeinschaft*).

teleological, either in respect of any particular type of social actor or in respect of specific structures of social institutions. It is questionable, in view of the social fragmentation that can be observed everywhere and is breaking out along the most diverse lines of demarcation, whether it still makes sense to cling to a rationalism which insists on categorizing these developments as temporary obstacles encountered on the road to modernization. It is equally questionable whether states will remain the dominant actors in global social relations, and indeed they may already have lost this status in circumstances in which world-societal developments are passing them by in the shape of trans-border institutionalization and trans-national relations. An analytical concept put forward in this area should at least make it possible to assess how far states are being forced to share their dominant role in both society- and community-formation with other institutions and actors, and whether they are losing or regaining ground here. A state-centric constructivism (or to be more accurate, a constructivist realism) as proposed by Wendt (1992) cannot capture developments such as these.

Our concept of world society goes beyond this state-centrism, which can be explained by the fact that the American debate is still dominated by competition with realist theories, and examines states in their interactions with societal actors (see World Society Research Group 1996). The more societal actors orient themselves toward trans-border institutions and transnational relations become independent of events at the inter-state level, the stronger is the tendency for other collective identities to be formed at the transnational, regional, or other levels. However, before developing a social-scientific approach to dealing with the conditions in which collective identities come into existence within world society, it is necessary to clarify what is meant here by the terms "identity" and, still more importantly, "collective identity".

3.   Identity

"We need to situate the debates about identity within all those historically specific developments and practices which have disturbed the relatively 'settled' character of many populations and cultures" (Hall 1996: 4).

Hall and other authors see globalization processes and increasing migration as the triggers of a debate about identity that is being conducted both in political essays

and in the social-scientific literature (Hall 1996; see also Fuchs et al. 1993: 391).[11] But the frequency with which the term is used should not divert us from the fact that there is still no widely accepted concept or theory of identity to hand in the social sciences (see Henrich 1979: 136). It is therefore not surprising that those of a mocking disposition treat all talk of identity, not without reason, as a case of the blind leading the blind:

"What could these terms mean, 'collective identity' and 'national identity'? They are, quite frankly, as clear as mud. Who endows whom with identity, how, and to what end? Up until now, no-one has been able to exlain how this process works, but the terms are on everyone's lips. As Nestroy might have said: Whatever no-one understands is 'collective identity' [Was keiner versteht, ist 'kollektive Identität'].[12]

This is not entirely unfair as a characterization of the present state of the discussion, but the fact remains that the term "identity" evidently says something to contemporary sensibilities; a term that was completely without content would hardly come to be used in such an inflationary way or become so prominent. Standard reference works can be of some help in the search for a more precise conceptualization, but they cannot solve the problem.[13] For example: a recent German lexicon of politics defines collective identity as "the persistence through time and generations of the institutions, symbols, values and goals belonging to a group or to a society organized in the form of a state, as preserved for example in the 'national

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[11]   Assmann (1993: 252f) takes a similar view. Bausinger (1978: 204) argues: "Some authors have recently examined the inflationary use of the word 'identity' and criticized its vagueness. There is no doubt that identity is a fashionable concept, but such fashions - even in scholarly terminology - do not arise by chance. The reason why there is so much talk of identity is that identity has become a problem. Even though the concept has a number of diverse connotations, it embodies an element of order and security in the middle of change; what makes it particularly attractive is the fact that it does not in fact suggest something inflexible or ossified, but suggests relative elasticity, something that persists through changing constellations".

[12]   Rudolf Walther: Was ist "nationale Identität"? in: Die Zeit 33, 12.8.1994: 28. Similar views were expressed some time ago by Marquard (1979: 347) and by Henrich (1979: 133), who complained of the "extreme obscurity and confusion which characterizes the present usage of the term 'identity', especially in the social sciences". See also Michael Scharang: Abgrenzungswahn und Mordgier. Über das Geschwätz von der Identität, in: Konkret 9/92: 42-44.

[13]   Further evidence that fashion is an important factor is provided by the fact that in 1992 there was no entry for "identity" in the lexicon *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* (Brunner/Conze/Kosselek 1992). The 1982 edition of the *Wörterbuch der Soziologie* (Hartfiel/Hillmann 1982) has an entry for "*Ich-Identität*", but nothing for the collective identity. Schmidt's *Wörterbuch zur Politik* (Schmidt 1995: 409) refers to the identity theory of democracy, but can offer only one social-psychological concept of identity, which supposedly characterizes "the oneness of an individual or collective actor with its roles and locations within the societal and political environment".

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consciousness'" (Holtmann 1991: 237; Gerdes 1985: 348 gives a similar definition). Another lexicon defines collective identity by means of an analogy with personal identity:

"Both personal and collective identity come into being as the result of a process of self-definition [...]. By analogy with personal identity, collective identity emerges from interaction, roles and symbols. Establishing a collective identity requires shared convictions, attributions, and classifications. Identity is expressed in people's ways of thinking and in the forms in which their world-views and societal constructs are anchored" (Weidenfeld 1992: 376).

This kind of pseudo-definition is more a reflection of the diversity of current usages than a contribution to terminological clarification. The main problem is that such attempts at definition leave unanswered fundamental questions such as that of the subject of identity, and therefore unintentionally demonstrate once again how vague the concept is.[14]

The Latin root of the word "identity" has as its main meaning "unity of nature or being" (Wesenseinheit), in other words something like total equality, congruence, or correspondence.[15] Thus the initial connotation of "identity" is always complete correspondence with oneself, with one's own nature or being. This suggests that individuals should be seen as the bearers of identity, because one can hardly conceive of any way in which collectives could become conscious of correspondence with themselves.[16] Nevertheless, all these suggested definitions show that "collective identity" certainly does entail the attribution of some kind of "nature" to a group or society, which leads us to the conclusion that the identities of collectives are seen to reside in permanent features such as norms, values, and institutions.[17] If the identity of a collective could be determined on this basis, it may be possible to say whether collective behavior corresponds to or diverges from this collective identity. Collective identity could then be used as an explanatory variable whenever it was possible to generate statements specifying the conditions under which the established identity influenced the behavior of collective actors. On the other hand, the idea that collective

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[14]   "The terms 'collective', 'local', 'national', and 'ethnic' identity are often used in such a way that it remains entirely unclear who the subject of these concepts is, i.e. who is identical to what. It is not unreasonable to suspect that what is going on here is the same kind of terminological short-circuit as occurs with concepts like '*Volkspersönlichkeit*'. It is at least advisable to begin with a rather more precise definition of the terminology involved" (Bausinger 1978: 205; see also Bausinger 1986: 143).

[15]   See *Wahrig Fremdwörter-Lexikon*, München 1983: 294; *Duden Fremdwörterbuch*, 5th. edition, Mannheim 1990: 331.

[16]   "While the possibility of personal identity seems plausible, collective identity appears problematic", comments Assmann (1993: 240).

identities are also subject to change would require the expenditure of additional theoretical energy, because this would mean that their constitutive conditions would have to be specified independently of their effects; in other words, we would need a theory of how identities change. This would have to make it possible to specify how far a collective would have to change before we could speak of a new collective identity which, under certain conditions, influences the behavior of collective actors. However, one can also conceive of a concept of collective identity which treats the individual as the bearer of identity and uses the term "collective identity" for the relation of correspondence between the individual identities of the members of this group.

Lapid, discussing the role of identity in IR theory, comments:

"The problem is not the absence, but the oversupply of potentially rewarding definitions. The challenge, in other words, is not to push energetically to some consensual but arbitrary reduction, but to reflectively match suitable definitional assets to declared theoretical missions" (Lapid 1996: 7).

It therefore seems appropriate to begin by examining the use of the concept of identity in the relevant theoretical contexts, and to look for the answers that are offered, often no more than implicitly, to such basic questions as: Who are the bearers of identity? What conditions the emergence of identity and changes in identities? How can we explain the effects of identity? Who is the subject of the identification process, i.e. who attributes or ascribes identity?

The bearer of identity can be the individual within a social system; this identity reveals "a combination of characteristics and role expectations which render it recognizable and identifiable [...]. In this understanding of the term, identity is considered to be a complex of characteristics ascribed from the outside" (Frey/Haußer 1987: 3). In other words, identity is a matter of a specific combination of qualities belonging to an individual, which distinguish that individual from others. In much the same way, identities are often attributed to collectives and social systems - groups, institutions, states etc. - by the identification of features considered to be characteristic of that collective or social system. However, while an individual's identity can come into existence either via the attribution of characteristics from outside or, so to speak, from within as a performative self-reflection of the individual's consciousness, the identity of social systems or collectives is only conceivable as a complex of features ascribed from outside, since "for any social system, the system cannot be identical with its members; each member is at most a part of the system" (Frey/Haußer 1997:

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[17]   See Assmann (1993) for a discussion of essentialist notions of collective identity.

4). In the case of this kind of ascription of identity from without, in which the subject of identification differs from its object, the most important questions will be related to the appropriateness and correspondence of the identification, and the questions of how identity comes into being and of its effects will be of secondary significance.

Things are quite different in the case of the reflexive concept of identity, where the subject and object of the identification process are the same person.

"In this case, identity is understood as a self-reflexive process initiated and carried through by an individual. A person constructs his or her own identity by processing his or her own experiences and knowledge of him/herself [...]. In every case, what happens is that a person identifies him or her self, or aspects of that self, from an internal perspective" (Frey/Haußer 1997: 4).

However, this kind of reflexive identity emerges not out of an internal monolog, but as part of a societal process. The social environment is a precondition of this form of identity (see Mead 1973: Part III, especially Ch. 29), which is why the term "social identity" is so widely used. Most important of all, however, is the fact that this is a subjective concept of identity which results from reflection on one's own experience. On this basis, the individual constructs an image of him or herself. This identity then affects the behavior of the individual; in order to avoid identity conflicts, the individual will seek to act in conformity with his or her own self-image, and will orient his or her social relations towards the goals of developing and maintaining a positive social identity (see below, section 4).

The foregoing discussion has offered a brief sketch of two different, and in many respects competing, concepts of identity, and has drawn attention to some of the most problematic issues that arise in any discussion of the term. The next step is to present the concepts of identity in current use within International Relations, and to examine critically how far they contribute to the investigation of collective identities.

3.1. Identity in International Relations

"Identity" has recently been discovered by IR scholars. "A swing of the pendulum toward culture and identity is [...] strikingly evident in post-Cold War IR theorizing", comments Lapid (1996: 3; for similar remarks see also Katzenstein 1996b: 22, and Neumann 1996: 140). The three traditional, classical schools of thought in IR - realism, pluralism, and globalism - are unable directly to integrate identity (however defined) in their explanatory models (on this point see

Zalewski/Enloe 1995: 294-7, and Jepperson et al. 1996: 68-72). This observation is perhaps unsurprising, but it means that a good deal of analytic work needs to be done before we can hope to apply fruitfully in IR the meanings that can be teased out of the term "identity", and to develop the concept in such a way as to bring out its potential for this field of enquiry. The present treatment does not seek to explain what it is that makes "identity" so attractive, and perhaps necessary, in explanations of international relations after the end of the East-West conflict.[18] Rather, the objective is to present briefly some significant recent contributions to IR which employ the term "identity", and to specify more precisely the concepts of identity used. In this way I hope to be able to pursue the questions of how a fruitful concept of identity might be developed for use in IR, and whether this would help to advance the research project outlined at the beginning of this chapter - the investigation of the conditions in which collective identities are formed within world society.

Feminist scholars have singled out identity as an issue of particular importance (see Zalewski/Enloe 1995: 280f), and have on this basis persistently posed questions about the identity of actors in international politics. "It is no exaggeration to say that feminist research as such revolves around the question of identity", observes Locher (1996: 385, fn. 7). Personal identity is central here, since gender is primarily a characteristic of individual persons. Zalewski and Enloe (1995: 280) ask: "Who do people think they are and how does this shape not just their local but their international actions?", although they are unable to offer a concept which might provide an answer to their own question.[19] They try to work with a very broad concept of identity, incorporating both the reflexive dimension and the attribution of identity from outside (Zalewski/Enloe 1995: 282). They fall back on a reflexive concept of identity in dealing with the significance of group membership for the identity of individuals, but also want to focus on the way in which identity is assigned from outside in "identity politics". This means that they are unable to take any clear position on how specific identities come into being, and their thoughts on the effects of identity are equally vague:

"The consequences of who we are, how we identify ourselves, how we are identified by others (parents, police, journalists) are enormous. Identity determines

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[18] For discussions of this question, see Lapid (1996), Kratochwil (1996), Zalewski/Enloe (1995), Katzenstein (1996b), and Jepperson et al. (1996).

[19] I have singled out Zalewski and Enloe's treatment of the question because it appears in a "collection of essays about the major theoretical questions today" (Booth/Smith 1995: xi), because its title ("Questions about Identity in International Relations") indicates that it is relevant to my subject, and because the editors of this collection describe the individual contributions as essays „on the state of thinking about their particular topic" (Booth/Smith 1995: xi).

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how you are treated, what is expected of you, what you expect of yourself, what jobs will be available to you, what jobs you will even apply for, what your health will be, whether you will be allocated as a primary carer for children, whether you will be seen as an enemy or a friend." (Zalewski/Enloe 1995: 282-3)

In Zalewski and Enloe's use of the term, therefore, both individuals and collectives can be the bearers of identity, but there is no discernable mechanism connecting these two levels; rather, it looks as though collective identities are formed by some process analogous to that which produces individual ones.

There is a similar lack of clarity about the identity concept used by Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, Morten Kelstrup and Pierre Lemaitre (1993) in their definition of "societal security".[20] With one partial exception (Wæver 1993: 21), these authors see identity as an objective reality and so a quality of societies that is assigned to them from outside; there is no examination either of how it comes into existence, or of how it might change.[21] McSweeney's review points out how problematic this is:

"In their view, identity is a property of society, not to be confused with human beings. It 'emerges' (a frequently used term) from the peculiar interactions of people and institutions in each society, fixed and incorrigible like the computer output of a complex arithmetic. Identity describes the society, and society is constituted by identity. Since its computation or construction does not crucially depend on human decisions, it makes no sense to speak of correcting it. Societal identity just is. We are stuck with it" (McSweeney 1996: 87).

Wæver and his co-authors seem - and perhaps this is true of others as well - to have succumbed to the temptation to take up the concept of identity because it is currently fashionable; unfortunately, neither they nor anyone else seems to know where this trend is taking us: "Identity is a good thing, with a human face and ephemeral character which make it at once appealing and difficult to grasp" (McSweeney 1996: 82).

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[20]   In an exemplary review of Wæver et al.'s book, McSweeney (1996) has sharply criticized the concept of "societal security" put forward by these authors, and argued that a contradictory concept of identity lies at the root of the problem. I shall not, however, repeat here the details of McSweeney's critique.

[21]   Wæver's presentation of the concept shows occasional signs of a constructivist approach, but this is not compatible with the definition of societal security as "the security of a social agent which has an independent reality and which is more than and different from the sum of its parts" (Wæver 1993: 26); on this point see McSweeney (1996: 84).

Another author who has taken up the concept, in the context of an ambitious project in the field of security policy, is Peter Katzenstein. Katzenstein (1996a) sets out to investigate the significance of "Norms and Identity in World Politics":[22]

"This volume concentrates on two underattended determinants of national security policy: the cultural-institutional context of policy on the one hand and the constructed identity of states, governments, and other political actors on the other" (Katzenstein 1996b: 4).

Because it is increasingly difficult to explain the behavior of state actors on the basis of interests which, as the theory requires, should be derivable from the structure of the system, additional explanatory factors which influence interest-formation must be introduced. This brings us to the question of "'how people and organizations define self-interest.' The answer lies in the issue of identity, in variations to the degree of expansiveness and restrictiveness, with which people and organizations relate to one another. To what extent does the 'self' incorporate relevant aspects of the 'other' in its calculations of gains and losses?" (Katzenstein 1996b: 15).

The concept of identity being applied here is then explained in a closely-argued theoretical chapter written by Ronald Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter Katzenstein. It is stated at the outset that "identity" is treated simply as one of several influential cultural factors,[23] and that this concept is not to be understood "as a signal of commitment to some exotic (presumably Parisian) social theory" (Jepperson et al. 1996: 34). As a rule, the state is the bearer of identity, and "the concept of 'identity' thus functions as a crucial link between environmental structures and interests" (Jepperson et al. 1996: 59). "Identity" indicates "the basic character of states" (Jepperson et al. 1996: 33), and Jepperson, Wendt and Katzenstein see it as belonging, alongside "capabilities", to the "properties of actors" (Jepperson et al. 1996: 41). Various factors are involved in the formation of identity:

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[22] The main reason for Katzenstein's choice of research question is the fact that traditional utilitarian theories based on the rational choice approach are clearly inadequate to the task of offering an adequate representation or a satisfactory explanation of events, and above all of changes, in international relations in the 1990s (Katzenstein 1996b: 22; Jepperson et al. 1996: 40). In Katzenstein's view, the central problem is the assumption made within traditional theoretical approaches that the interests of states are laid down from the start: "State interests do not exist to be 'discovered' by self-interested, rational actors. Interests are constructed through a process of social interaction. 'Defining', not 'defending', the national interest is what this book seeks to understand" (Katzenstein 1996b: 2).

[23] The title of the volume, "The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics", is also to be understood in this way: "The empirical essays in this volume focus on the ways in which norms, institutions, and other cultural features of domestic and international environments affect state security interests and policies" (Jepperson et al. 1996: 37).

"Thus norms either define ('constitute') identities in the first place or prescribe or proscribe ('regulate') behaviors for already constituted identities [...]. Cultural and institutional structure may also constitute or shape the basic identities of states, that is, the features of state 'actorhood' or national identity" (Jepperson et al. 1996: 54, 58).

It will have become clear from the cited passages that this conception, like others already examined, does not employ a reflexive concept of identity - simply because the bearers of this identity are all collectives.[24] This means that identity stands for characteristics attributed from the outside. The problem then arises of which identity is to be treated as primary when there is no agreement about these characteristics, or when there are contradictions between different characteristics attributed to an actor.[25] Moreover, the use of analogy cannot answer the question of which characteristics of a collective are used in the derivation of its identity. Without some way of answering this question, it seems at the very least problematic to proceed, as Jepperson et al. (1996) do, to suggest explanatory models of political decisionmaking in terms of the causal effects of identities: "Variation in state identity, or changes in state identity, affect the national security interests or policies of states [...]. Configurations of state identity affect interstate normative structures, such as regimes or security communities" (Jepperson et al. 1996: 52).

Jepperson and his co-authors adopt more or less the conception of identity worked out by Wendt (1992, 1994, 1996) within his own specific, constructivist analysis. Wendt's critique of rationalism is developed on the basis of his contribution to the agency-structure debate (Wendt 1987) and the initial constructivist thesis developed there to the effect that, in Risse-Kappen's version, "social reality is a constructed reality in which agents and societal structures are mutually constitutive of one another" (Risse-Kappen 1995a: 175). Wendt's critique of rationalism is formulated as follows:

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[24] These authors do discuss this aspect of their use of the concept, but there is no theoretical discussion and the problem is "solved" by means of an analogy: "The term [identity] comes from social psychology, where it refers to the images of individuality and distinctiveness ('selfhood') held and projected by an actor and formed (and modified over time) through relations with significant 'others'. Thus the term (by convention) references mutually constructed and evolving images of self and other. Appropriation of this idiom for the study of international relations may seem forced, since states obviously do not have immediately apparent equivalents to 'selves'. *But nations do construct and project collective identities, and states operate as actors*. A large literature on national identity and state sovereignty attests to this important aspect of international politics. We employ the language of 'identity' to mark these variations. For the purpose of this project, more specifically, we employ 'identity' as a label for the varying construction of nationhood and statehood" (Jepperson et al. 1996: 59, my emphasis).

[25] Once again, McSweeney's critique of Wæver et al. is relevant; in particular McSweeney (1996: 87-90).

"Like all social theories, rational choice directs us to ask some questions and not others, treating the identities and interests of agents as exogenously given and focusing on how the behavior of agents generates outcomes. As such, rationalism offers a fundamentally behavioral conception of both process and institutions: they change behavior but not identities and interests" (Wendt 1992: 391-392).

"Identity" is thus taken to mean those characteristics of actors which are largely generated out of the structures which the actors constitute by means of their social action (Wendt 1994: 385). Thus societal structures constitute identities as characteristics of actors, and the actors form their own interests on this basis: "Identities are the basis of interests" (Wendt 1992: 398). But because of the assumption that social reality is constructed, this construction and perception of reality must itself be integrated into the analysis:

"A fundamental principle of constructivist social theory is that people act toward objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meaning that the objects have for them. [...] It is collective meanings that constitute the structures which organize our actions. Actors acquire identities - relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self - by participating in such collective meanings. Identities are inherently relational: 'Identity, with its appropriate attachments of psychological reality, is always identity within a specific, socially constructed world', Peter Berger argues".[26]

Although there is a suggestion of a reflexive concept of identity here, Wendt's constructivism remains in the final analysis partly a prisoner of materialism because he always treats identity as a characteristic of states, and treats these states as actors rather than as social structures, which one has to do if social constructivism is to be applied consistently.[27]

There may be good reasons why Wendt proceeds in this fashion, but theoretical problems and the associated failure to appreciate changes and transformations in the state-system cannot be resolved in this way (see Jaeger 1996; World Society Research

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[26]   Wendt (1992: 396-398); the quotation is from Berger (1966: 111).

[27]   "I treat states as agents having identities" (Wendt 1994: 392). When Wendt uses the terms "collective identity", "corporate identity", and "social identity" (Wendt 1994), they always refer to inter-state relations. In 1994, Wendt treated the claim that "states are the principal units of analysis for international political theory" as one of the three "core claims" (Wendt 1994: 385) of his IR constructivism. He made only minor changes to this thesis in a revised version of his 1994 article published in 1996 - "states are the principal actors in the system" (Wendt 1996a: 48). However, his very clear response to Mearsheimer abandons this argument and reduces the fundamental assumptions of IR constructivism to two (see Wendt 1995: 71f).

Group 1996; Brock/Albert 1995).[28] There are good reasons to be skeptical about whether this approach, which we could more accurately call constructivist realism or "sociological institutionalism" (Jepperson et al. 1996: 72) can deliver on its promise "to help us explain fully what John Mueller aptly calls a quiet cataclysm: the dramatic changes in world politics since the mid-1980s which have profoundly affected the environment for the national security of states".[29] The main challenge confronting this approach is that it will have to fill the gaps opened up by its concept of identity: "to focus more directly on identities and interests as the dependent variable and see whether, how, and why they change" (Wendt 1994: 331, my emphasis). Since the authors whose views have been summarized here agree that a whole bundle of independent variables are simply waiting for their chance to affect state identity, the greatest difficulty arising from this concept could in the final analysis be the problems it has dealing adequately with state identity as a dependent variable.

Recent work by Thomas Risse-Kappen employs an equally underdetermined concept of identity, especially with regard to the fundamental question of who the bearers of identity are. In Risse-Kappen's work, these could be individuals involved in communication situations, whose identities - in the sense of self-understanding (see Risse-Kappen 1995a: 176) - could be placed in question as the result of arguments (Risse-Kappen 1995a: 177, 178, 179); they could also be collectives or states or their representatives, whose identity is imposed upon them (see for example Risse-Kappen 1994: 175). If other democracies "are seen as similar, and therefore non-threatening, the result is the emergence of a common identity" (Risse-Kappen 1994: 179). The English version of this article published in the European Journal of International Relations has a slightly different slant on the question of the bearers of collective identity:

"The democratic character of one's domestic structures then leads to a collective identification process among actors of democratic states defining the 'in-group'. [...] If we assume a collective identity because of shared liberal values among democratic

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[28]   "Structuration theory makes it impossible to classify collective entities as actors. A collective unit such as a state can only exist if and when it is reproduced via the institutionalized practices of bureaucrats, politicians, and societal agents who make their own demands. The assumption that the state is an actor reifies the state when what is needed is a problematization of the mechanisms which reproduce it" (Jaeger 1996: 320). Although Jaeger voices this criticism from a perspective that is explicitly indebted to structuration theory (Jaeger 1996: 315), it is just as relevant in a social-constructivist context (see Berger/Luckmann 1980: 55).

[29]   Katzenstein (1996b: 2), referring to Mueller (1995).

state actors, cooperative norms regulating the interactions among democracies are likely to emerge when liberal systems are faced with cooperation problems."[30]

According to Risse-Kappen, the values and norms shared by state representatives form the basis of collective identities (Risse-Kappen 1995b: 4; 1995c: 509); norms "shape the identity of political actors through processes of socialization, communication, and enactment" (Risse-Kappen 1996: 366).[31] But there remains a major problem with this non-reflexive concept of identity. Risse-Kappen provides no answer to the question of which of the many common features present are significant for the formation of a collective identity. If actors have a number of different identities (Risse-Kappen 1996: 370) and collective identity is to be an explanatory variable, this question cannot be left to be settled by empirical analysis alone (as Risse-Kappen 1996: 370f suggests). If different identities are in competititon with one another, it is not legitimate for the researcher to decide which identity is to be treated as the explanatory variable relevant to the resulting identity-formation.[32]

However, Risse-Kappen's writings on the conceptualization of identity in International Relations do make one important contribution: they examine the domestic preconditions of international relations and attempt to provide a systematic description of the connections between them: "A sociological interpretation of a liberal theory of international relations then claims that actors' domestic identities are crucial for their perceptions of one another in the international realm" (Risse-Kappen 1996: 367; see also Risse-Kappen 1995b: 7, 28).

The next step must be a theoretically-oriented conceptualization of this connection, which implies that it would be most productive to treat individuals as the bearers of identity. Risse-Kappen himself has systematically elaborated concepts of norms, transnational relations and two-level games (see Risse-Kappen 1995b: 204-210), but no such concept for collective identities; hence, he can only make fairly

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[30]   Risse-Kappen (1995c: 505, my emphases). See also Risse-Kappen (1996: 393), and Risse-Kappen (1995b: 205): "... the collective identity among decision-makers".

[31]   Risse-Kappen uses the term differently in his book *Cooperation Among Democracies* (1995b), where populations as totalities are the bearers of collective identity: "One would expect a collective identity to emerge when democracies interact in an institutionalized setting such as an alliance. While Americans do not cease to remain Americans, and Europeans remain Europeans (or British, German, and French), they nevertheless identify with each other and care about each other's fate. Liberal theory assumes that the *content* of this collective identity refers to shared values such as human rights, the rule of law, and democratic governance" (Risse-Kappen 1995b: 204, emphasis in original).

[32]   Risse-Kappen's arguments about the possibility of stronger or weaker collective identities remain equally unsatisfactory (Risse-Kappen 1995b: 216, and 1996: 397f) as long as he can provide no way of measuring the strength of identity; it will hardly be possible to solve this problem without a specification of the bearers of identity.

vague statements about the effects of these identities (see, for example, Risse-Kappen 1995b: 32, 34, 184, 199-200, 205, 214, 218, and 223). It is also unclear how far his concept of identity is a reflexive one. On the one hand, Risse-Kappen refers to social constructivism and stresses that "state actions cannot be adequately understood without taking communications and self-understandings of actors seriously" (Risse-Kappen 1995b: 7, my emphasis), but at the same time a reflexive concept is inconsistent with the idea that collectives should be seen as the bearers of identity.[33]

We have seen that Wendt, by introducing "identity" as an intermediate element situated between structures and interests, argues against the neorealist assumption that behavior is directly determined by structure, and that Risse-Kappen uses "collective identities" as a tool designed to strengthen a liberal approach. Another author who has written on the subject is Jonathan Mercer (1995). Mercer's response to Wendt is an attempt to use "identity" in order to present the realist self-help system as an inter-group structure which results from human nature itself, and from which there is therefore no escape (see Mercer 1995: 236, 252). He supports this argument by incorporating Social Identity Theory, which explains the relative preferences expressed by group members within the "minimal group paradigm" (on this point see Diehl 1990; Weller 1993, 1995: 73f; and Mercer 1995: 237f) in terms of the individual's need for a positive social identity.

The central element of this social-psychological theory (for a more comprehensive account see section 4 below) is its exploration of the relationship between group membership and feelings of self-worth. In the individual's self-perception, membership in groups determines a person's position in society; this gives rise to the individual's social identity, which therefore contains those aspects of the individual's self-image which arise out of the group memberships. Because the sense of individual self-worth is partially derived from the evaluation of those groups of which the individual feels him or herself to be a member, there is an ever-present tendency to inter-group comparison, and to contrast groups to which one belongs with others (see Brown 1988). And because this comparison is intended to produce a positive result - for it is only in this case that the individual sense of self-worth can benefit - the individual tries to find ways of making this possible. As a result,

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[33]   If one searches for a systematic discussion of "collective identity" in Risse-Kappen's liberal-constructivist approach, one gets the impression that he could in fact manage without the term and could base his analysis on nothing more than values, norms, and a "sense of community" (Risse-Kappen 1996: 371; 1995b: 39); even so, Risse-Kappen repeatedly stresses collective identity when he makes general statements (for example: Risse-Kappen 1995b: 4, 26, 195; 1995c: 506; 1996: 358f, 385).

"mistakes of judgment" are often made which are to the advantage of one's own group and the detriment of other groups (see Weller 1993: 213).

Mercer fails to appreciate two problems with this thesis: firstly, the incompatibility of Wendt's understanding of state identity with the individual-based and reflexive concept used in Social Identity Theory, and secondly the multiple social identities possessed by each single individual. Mercer's unthinking equation of intergroup with interstate relations (Mercer 1995: 243) prevents him seeing the potential of the concept of social identity for the understanding of inter- and transnational relations.[34] Since Social Identity Theory only generates statements about the social identity of individuals, it provides no "theoretical and empirical support for the neorealist assumption that states are a priori self-regarding" (Mercer 1995: 251). Indeed, Mercer himself refutes his own claim when he observes correctly that group boundaries are not fixed, and that in the case of the EU one could imagine an ingroup consisting of a number of states. The formation of social identity is not based on the state system, as Mercer would have us believe, but on the categorization that is performed in the course of the perception of the social world (see Tajfel/Turner 1986: 13f, and Oakes et al. 1994: Ch. 4). These categorizations may in certain cases be congruent with state borders, as for example during the live broadcast of a football match between two national teams. But most of the time quite different categorizations determine our perceptions, and thereby the boundaries between ingroup and outgroup that go to create social identity - for instance, between men and women, rich and poor, "First and Third World", Christian and Islamic worlds, and so on. In order to render the identity concept used in Social Identity Theory fruitful for IR, we need to know which categorizations determine the perceptions involved in

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[34]   Surprisingly enough, Neumann (1996) also fails to appreciate the potential of Social Identity Theory. Neumann's valuable review of the literature on concepts of identity in International Relations does deal with this school of thought in its treatment of the question of "Self and Other in International Relations", and in connection with the observation that "the working boundary between an 'us' and a 'them' is the home turf of social psychology" (Neumann 1996: 144; an earlier article, Neumann 1992, is also relevant here). But he fails to see that Social Identity Theory would be eminently suited to developing further the research strategy he sketches: "The focus for studies of identity formation should therefore be the socially placed one of how these boundaries come into existence and are maintained. Students of international relations have studied physical and economic borders for a long time. The concern with these types of boundaries needs to be complemented by a focus on how *social* boundaries between human collectives are maintained. [...] Any social field will harbour more than one type of politically relevant collective identity. Particular care must be taken not to prejudice analyses by singling out only one type of human collective, say, nations, and neglecting others. [...] Collective identities emerge as *multifaceted*, and must be studied as such" (Neumann 1996: 167, emphases in original). My argument is that the concept of collective identity in world society, which I am in the process of developing here, can go a considerable way toward answering the questions posed by Neumann.

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inter- and transnational relations; only when we know this will we be able to say more about the borders along which the mechanism of attaching a positive value to the ingroup, and a negative value to the outgroup, functions, and only then will we be able to say when this can come to have major political consequences. After all, the political implications of international football matches for inter-state relations are minimal - one only has to consider the very low ratio of "football wars" to international matches in the period since the coming into being of the modern state system.

3.2.   National Identity

Perhaps the most frequently examined identity concept is "national identity". Discussions of the factors determining national identity frequently suffer from the normative weight carried by the term (see Westle 1994: 454-463).[35] However, there are also cases in which a theoretical perspective dominates, and these are more productive. It is possible to find a number of points of contact with the concept of "collective identity", which is taken up again in the following section.[36] "National identity" is most frequently taken up in connection with research on nationalism itself. Anthony Smith sees nations and nationalism as cultural phenomena based on national identity, which in turn is a specific expression of collective identity (Smith 1991: 3-8). Smith's concept of national identity is based on assumptions derived from his historical work on the origins of nations:

"The existence of these common assumptions allows us to list the fundamental features of national identity as follows: (1) a historic territory, or homeland; (2) common myths and historical memories; (3) a common, mass public culture; (4) common legal rights and duties for all members; (5) a common economy with territorial mobility for members. A nation can therefore be defined as a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (Smith 1991: 14).

The bearer of national identity is a "political community" (Smith 1991: 9), a collective which shares the common features listed. Smith's concept of national

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[35]   Willms (1982: 89) comments: "We can observe in many different contexts historical, cultural and political work related to the consciousness of national identity, a striving to place the national argument once again in the position of preeminence which its fundamental political importance is thought to merit".

[36]   Estel (1994) provides a comprehensive overview which also goes beyond the question of national identity; see also Brand (1993).

identity is a multilayered one which not only comprises these material dimensions, but also incorporates the reflexive dimension in pursuing the question of the functions of national identity: "Finally, a sense of national identity provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual selves in the world" (Smith 1991: 17).[37] Like the authors considered earlier, Smith pays no particular attention to the connections between individual and collective identity, but concentrates on the substantive, historical-cultural common features which constitute collective identity. For Smith, therefore, the question to be answered in connection with the possibility of a European collective identity is: "So what is common to all Europeans?" (Smith 1992: 70), although he does not entirely rule out the possibility that such common features could also be constructed (Smith 1992: 67-76).

The construction of national identity occupies a much more central place in Benedict Anderson's analysis (Anderson 1991). Anderson's view is that "nationality [...] as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind" (Anderson 1991: 4). A nation is therefore "an imagined political community", "imagined" because "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Anderson 1991: 6). For Anderson, therefore, a nation is a societal construction of belonging and exclusion.[38] "The nation is imagined as limited" (Anderson 1991: 7, emphasis in original), and this "nation" can be constituted in a number of different ways.[39]

"The nation is above all an imagined order, a culturally defined conception which designates a human collective as a single unit. The nature of this entity emerges out of the criteria laid down for the determination of national collectivity in the concept of order adopted by the nation. [...] Depending on these criteria and on the way in which they are mingled together, the results are various human collectives which are supposed to form an association characterized by national solidarity. The distinctive features which are acknowledged within the imagined order of the nation

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[37]   Larsen et al. (1993) use an equally multidimensional concept of national identity in their study of American national identity.

[38]   Anderson's concept of an "imagined community" fits in very well with Weber's "community-formation", according to which concept it is also quite possible that those involved do not know each other and need not be participants in any active process of negotiation of a communal identity (Weber 1968: Vol. I, 365) , and which only requires that something be subjectively experienced as a common feature (Weber 1968: Vol. I, 387). On this point see also Estel (1994: 37), and Fuchs et al. (1993: 350).

[39]   "Recent research on nationalism emphasizes, quite correctly, that 'the nation' was a kind of blueprint, an artefact resting on the desire to find something held in common, something shared" (Jeismann 1993: 14). Weber himself comments on this (Weber 1968: Vol. I, 397-8), and see also Estel (1994).

therefore form the basis of different sorts of nations. This means that the nation is by no means a natural and unambiguous form of social order; it can change over time and is capable of adapting itself to historical developments" (Lepsius 1990: 232).

But even if this means that we can treat the nation and national identity as social constructions, we still have to explain the preeminent position occupied over a long period by national identity in relation to other collective identities, whether at the trans-state level (for example a European identity) or on a smaller scale (sub-state regional identity). All social institutions offer possibilities for identification, and can provide feelings of belonging (see Burke 1992: 305, and Axtmann 1995: 93). The particular prominence of national identity as a specific expression of collective identity-formation is above all related to the societal norms governing legitimate violence. Before the nation state took on its function in the formation of societal structures, individuals' primary emotional attachments were to other institutions - towns, villages or tribes "were the objects of common identification, the shared objects of individuals' emotional attachments" (Elias 1970: 151). From a functional point of view, these institutions serve the purpose of defence against external physical threats. The emotional attachment is therefore strongly rooted in the prohibition and the legitimate use of violence (see also Weber 1968: Vol. I, 394; Assmann 1993: 245; Erdheim 1992: 732).

"When one examines what it is that unites the various figurations which at different levels attract this type of emotional attachment on the part of the individuals who form them, the first thing one discovers is that they are all units which exercise a more or less strict control over the use of physical force in relations between their members, while at the same time preparing these members for the use of force in relations with non-members, and in many cases even encouraging this" (Elias 1970: 151).

The legitimation of this kind of destructive violence, which is forbidden within one's own society, both presupposes and strengthens the categorical distinction between ingroup and outgroup. If relations with members of another society differ from relations within societies in respect of such a fundamental issue as the use of force, this fact must regulate perceptions of the social world in a very special way, for a misperception could take on existential significance. The distinction between "natives" and foreigners is therefore extremely important for the structuring of perceptions of the social world. Moreover, this categorization involves an evaluation: the outgroup must be accorded a lower value than the ingroup, for this is the only way in which the use of force, forbidden in respect of members of the ingroup, can be justified in respect of the outgroup. The recognition of this normative basis of the state

involves an identification with one's own state that will always be a positive one, because the ingroup is valued more highly than the outgroup.

In more recent history this understanding of the state has been decisively relativized, through the experience of trans-border exchange and international interdependence, and also with the help of international agreements and norms, in particular the prohibition of the use of force in international relations which is laid down in the UN Charter. In this way, intra-state norms have been carried over into inter- and transnational relations, and the significance of borders and so the preeminence of social categorization on the basis of state citizenship has been reduced by the growing importance of societal actors in international relations. This means that developments towards a world society (see section 2 above) are contributing to a decline in the significance of national identity, above all for those people whose social relations constitute this world society.

It seems, however, that the decline in significance of national identity which can be observed in some areas is being more than offset by other forms of collective identity.[40] The mass media and political essayists are quick to assign a collective identity to any group as soon as it shows signs of understanding itself as such. Because collectives now tend - especially since 1989 - to stress sub-national differentiations and exclusions more frequently, in addition to their common national elements, a number of new identity concepts have now joined "national identity". Common features such as culture, language, religion, descent, and region, which would be immediately noticeable if they had not already been used in the construction of nation states, have been discovered as new fields of collective identity-formation. Here a regional identity is said to be developing; there ethnic identity is playing a role; elsewhere religious identities are becoming more impotant; in certain places cultural identity-formation has made a breakthrough; here and there national identity has managed to return with a vengeance.

Whenever collectives stress one or more of their specific common features in order to differentiate themselves from the rest of the world and to emphasize their own exclusiveness, it is claimed that collective identity is involved. In this way, "identity" can easily become a category which covers everything and therefore explains nothing, a reference to features common to a collective on any scale whatsoever. Once again,

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[40]   Fuchs et al. (1993: 391) regard the process of West European unification and the waves of migration affecting some West European countries as factors which could have led to a "weakening or eclipsing of national-state identities" in this region. "Divisions between nation states play virtually no role in the construction of collective identities in the countries of Europe" (Fuchs et al. 1993: 395). This finding is based on representative surveys of public opinion conducted in the (then) 12 EU countries in autumn 1988.

as Nestroy might have said: Whatever provides us with no explanation is collective identity. The Bavarians, after all, have something in common. But why then have they not, up until now at least, developed a regional identity strong enough to make them want to secede from the Federal Republic of Germany? Europeans as a whole also have things in common, and one sometimes hears talk of a "European identity".[41] But why has this European identity begun to emerge in some places rather than in others? And would not the formation of a global identity provide the best hope for the end of war and the best opportunity for humanity to show that it is capable of rising to global ecological and economic challenges? After all, all of us living on the planet also have something in common. But it is clear that this alone is insufficient. A concept of identity which leaves out the reflexive dimension may make it possible to ascribe all sorts of identities from the outside, but it cannot help us to make generalizable statements about the formation of these identities.

3.3.   Identity as a Social-Scientific Concept

Any attempt to assess the importance of "identity" in social-scientific theories must make it clear what concept of identity is being used. The most promising starting-point would be the roots of the social-psychological terminology of identity as used by authors like Mead and Erikson, rather than the philosophical usages to be found in Plato, Aristotle, Leibniz and Kant (see Henrich 1979: 137-140). "In philosophical theory, identity is a predicate with a specific function: it serves to distinguish an individual thing or object as such from others of the same kind" (Henrich 1979: 135), whereas in social psychology "identity" is a complex quality acquired by persons. Thus, although the differences of meaning in the different contexts are clear, it is equally apparent that there is something in the content that links them to one another (see Henrich 1979: 134-137; Elias 1987: 209-210; Luhmann 1990: 21). However, a "truly hopeless confusion" (Henrich 1979: 136) arises when the difference between these two concepts of identity is not taken into account. A social-scientific concept of identity will always emphasize the social dimension of the

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[41]   Fuchs et al. (1993: 396) argue, on the basis of their opinion poll data, that "at least the initial signs of European identity-formation" can be observed.

emergence and effects of identity (see Mead 1973: Part III, especially Ch. 19), so that „it makes most sense to understand 'identity' as the constant pattern of behavior, and of self-interpretation of this behavior, which is the definitive result of the development within a language community of beings capable of speech" (Heinrich 1979: 134).[42]

This specification of the term singles out human beings involved in social exchange as the bearers of identity. Identity comes into being and changes as a consequence of individuals' interpretations of their own behavior - which entails a reflexive concept of identity. This still does not go far enough to explain how identity has the effects it does, other than in the formation of patterns of behavior, but it is clear that the subject of identification is the individual. Therefore, "identity" involves attributing greater significance to the self-understanding of individuals in contexts of social action; their behavior cannot be adequately explained if their identity is not taken into account.

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[42]   For a more strongly psychoanalytically-oriented concept of identity, see Lohauß (1995: 20-35), and Erdheim (1992).

4.   Social-psychological Theories of Identity

4.1.   Social Identity Theory

In the discussion so far I have on a number of occasions dealt briefly with the Social Identity Theory and mentioned that the need for a positive self-image is the basic motivation in the evaluation of social categories. I have also, in the course of my criticism of Mercer (1995), emphasized the fact that social identity can only be formed by individuals in a reflexive process, and that the categories used to draw boundaries between groups and to attach a lower value to the outgroup are not given from the start, but are based on the respective perceptions of reality of those involved.[43] The decisive point which suggests that community-formation processes can be explained with the help of Social Identity Theory can be found in the basic human need for social identity. In order to orient ourselves within our social environment, we have to define who we are with the help of social categories.

"We classify others as members of this or that group, and we also allot ourselves a place in relation to these very groups. In other words, our feeling of identity is closely connected with our membership various groups" (Brown 1990: 420).

As human beings create a social identity for themselves in this way, the categorizations made in the course of the perception of the social world acquire a special significance: they form the boundary between ingroup and outgroup. This means that a feeling of belonging arises among members of the ingroup when, in certain situations and in agreement with one another, they categorize the social world in such a way that each of them individually recognizes the others as members of this group.[44] In this way a certain social identity acquires a dominant significance for the

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[43]   My examination of national identity has stressed the institutional benefits which make it logical for individuals to attach themselves emotionally to specific communities. The decisive role here is played by the positive evaluation, i.e. the attachment of a higher value to the ingroup than to the outgroup (see Weller 1995). However, this perspective does not provide us with any way of identifying the requirements and conditions of changes in collective identities and their significance for political action. For this reason, it is necessary to employ social-psychological theories in order to advance the debate further.

[44]   There are similarities between this feeling of belonging and the concept of the "we-group"; on this point see Elwert (1989) and Leggewie (1994: 53). Social categorization carried out in this way is directly related to the practice of according a lower value to "other" groups for the purpose of deriving a positive social identity from the superiority of one's own group, in order to derive benefit for the individual's own feeling of self-worth (see above, section 3.2., and also Weller 1992; Tajfel/Turner 1986; Oakes et al. 1994). However, this aspect of social

members of a collective, and this can be termed "collective identity". However, it is important to stress that what happens here is not the attribution of an identity to collectives. Rather, the term "collective identity" can be employed in the sense of an identity concept developed on a reflexive, individual basis, whenever each of the individual members of a collective perceives all the others primarily as members of precisely this collective. Only this conceptualization of "collective identity" makes it possible to keep a firm grip on a reflexive concept of identity that saves us from understanding "identity" as something that is arbitrarily attributed from outside.[45]

The chief premise of Social Identity Theory is the categorization performed in the course of every act of human perception. On the basis of similarities and differences, the objects of perception are grouped in identical or distinctive categories. One of the main reasons why this happens is cognitive economy: without such a categorization we would be unable to deal with the enormous variety of stimulations reaching our consciousness. The order we create in this way, however, contributes not only to self-orientation but also to the structuring of the world in terms of categories and of the social world in terms of groups, and this enables each individual to find an answer to the question, "Who am I?"

"Social categorization allows the perceiver to 'structure the causal understanding of the social environment' as a guide to action. Importantly, it also provides a system of orientation for self-reference, creating and defining the individual's place in society" (Oakes et al. 1994: 81, emphasis in original).

This is basically the same conceptualization of social identity as the one put forward by George H. Mead, according to whom "the identity of the individual is derived from the societal process" (Mead 1973: 266). Each individual can only create and perceive his or her identity through social contacts, which is why we speak of "social identity". This social identity then includes those aspects of an individual's self-image which emerge from the social categories to which the individual perceives him or herself as belonging (Tajfel/Turner 1986: 16). This perception is preceded by the structuring of the social world according to categories that are context-dependent. The coming into being of collective identity therefore requires that the members of a collective perceive the social world through the prism of a certain categorization which is of great importance for the social identity of individuals.

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categorization plays only a minor role in the context under discussion here. On the preconditions and problems of collective identity, see also Estel (1994: 33-38).

[45] This conceptualization of "collective identities" should be distinguished from an understanding of the term as meaning something essential (*wesenhaft*), which individuals can partake of in order to create their I-identity; this understanding is usually associated with a normative idea (see, for instance, Habermas 1974 or Schmücker/Hering 1994).

One can best illustrate this process of collective identity-formation with the help of a conflict situation. If a demonstration leads to a confrontation with the police or other security forces, the perceptions of those involved will be structured by the distinction between police and demonstrators. This will undoubtedly be the dominant categorization, on the basis of which the members of both groups will form their social identities. For the police officers, the most important consideration in this situation is not the possibility that they might agree with the demands being made by the demonstrators, but their social identity as members of the forces of law and order. This self-perception results from the categorization that is dominant for all participants in the situation, and this leads to a subjective identification within the respective ingroups. Since the dominant identity on the police side is the awareness of being a police officer, a collective identity is formed which without doubt decisively influences the actions of each individual officer. The maxim guiding action here is not so much individual advantage as the feeling of belonging to the collective of one's own ingroup. This is also the case for the demonstrators.

The example of this conflict situation is intended to make it easier to see how the perception of the social world is shaped by a particular categorization process. But collective identities can also come into existence without such a direct conflict, since categorizations must be carried out whenever the social world is perceived. However, it is necessary to offer a differentiated analysis of which specific categorizations are used to structure perceptions of the social world, and of the range of the collective identities which result - in other words, which boundaries which separate ingroup from outgroup. These requirements can be met with the help of the meta-contrast principle developed within Self-Categorization Theory.

4.2.   Self-categorization Theory

Self-Categorization Theory is based on the findings of Social Identity Theory, but it is also in certain respects a further development of that theory (see Oakes et al. 1994). Its main goal is to illuminate the relationship between the cognitive categorization process and the reality of groups. The basic assumption is that the formation of social identity rests on a self-categorization. This means that the individual, in the course of his or her self-perception and the associated categorization of the social world, perceives him or herself as identical with others in a certain very specific dimension - in contrast to those individuals who are perceived in this dimension of the categorization as other. Thus, self-categorization can be carried out

at very different levels of abstraction in different categories, and the category selected is context-dependent. For example, in the context of the evaluation of university teaching, a professor will see him or herself as a teacher, a member of a group distinguished from the students. When it is a matter of a resolution protesting against cuts in the education budget, the same professor will perceive him or herself in the first instance as a member of the university along with the students. When a discussion about planned cuts in development aid takes place, people concerned about global justice and international solidarity will find their transnational identity activated as something that distinguishes them from those opposed to this form of aid. During the Olympic Games, on the other hand, national collective identity is likely to become dominant, because the differences which dominate perceptions revolve around nationality.

These examples also demonstrate that all social situations contain the potential for certain categorizations, according to which perceptions are structured and which are used as the bases of self-perceptions. The decisive contribution of Self-Categorization Theory consists of its capacity to explain theoretically which category is used for this categorization, and thus in the formation of social identity:

"This point is formalized in the principle of meta-contrast, which is so called because it involves a contrast between contrasts, a judgement of difference between differences. The meta-contrast principle predicts that a given set of items is more likely to be categorized as a single entity to the degree that differences within that set of items are less than the differences between that set and others within the comparative context" (Oakes et al. 1994: 95-96, emphases in original).

The decision about which categorization is to be made is therefore based on a comparison of the differences within potential categories with the differences between these categories. At the same time, however, it makes a difference which categories are, so to speak, made available through the social context and which of them are appropriate to this context. It is quite possible that in a personal, easily comprehensible context one perceives oneself primarily as an individual rather than in social categories, so the social identity is less significant for the individual's self-perception. But „following the meta-contrast principle, social categorization of the self and others becomes more likely as intergroup differences increase and intragroup, interpersonal differences decrease" (Oakes et al. 1994: 99, emphasis in original).

The larger the perceived social space, the more each individual is forced to make categorizations which place more emphasis on differences between the groups and similiarities within them. In this way, the social identity becomes more significant. And the result of social categorization is the depersonalization of self-

perception and behavior: "Most importantly, self-categorization theory proposes that it is this process of depersonalization that makes group behavior possible and produces its emergent, irreducible properties" (Oakes et al. 1994: 100). Collective identity comes into being when the members of a collective perceive themselves primarily as members of this collective, so that a depersonalization of both perception and behavior occurs.[46]

Collective identities are therefore based on the categorizations carried out in the course of the perception of the social world, by means of which individuals allot themselves a particular place in that world. In cases where states and nationality dominate the perception of international politics, it will be national collective identities that guide actions undertaken in this sphere. But we should not forget that other collective identities besides national ones are also frequently formed and can acquire partial significance, which means that categorizations are made that do not coincide with national borders. This kind of shift in collective identities can be demonstrated by means of an example from the end of the Cold War.

During the Cold War, perceptions of international relations were dominated in a very special way by questions of security policy. Security policy laid down the categories used by each individual to find his or her own place in the context of international politics. Around 1980, in accordance with the meta-contrast principle, the difference between "us" (the West) and "them" (the East) was perceived to be greater than that between "us" (Germans or Europeans) and the Americans. Therefore the categorization of the social world, as far as international relations were concerned, was mainly drawn along the border between the systems. In this systemic conflict, we perceived ourselves as "the West" and developed the corresponding collective identity. This provided us with a basis on which to develop military arsenals and strategies that now seem so irrational as to be hardly comprehensible. But when, at the beginning of the 1980s, the view that weapons and military strategies were more

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[46] The effects of collective identity-formation can vary greatly. Perceiving oneself primarily as a member of a group can be quite appropriate in one situation, problematic in a different situation and even dangerous in a third. A player in a women's football team will perceive herself primarily as a team member during the game, because the competitive situation makes it perfectly clear how her perceptions should be categorized, and even seems to determine them in a normative sense ("one for all and all for one"). However, in the context of a post-match social event it would seem to be quite possible that the difference between the two teams will hardly matter any more, as social contact with players from the other team and an individual self-perception comes to dominate. It could also be the case that meeting male functionaries at this gathering brings out a quite different categorization of the situation, and the two women's teams form a collective identity because the difference between the two teams seems smaller than that between them and the male functionaries. The meta-contrast principle states that categorization occurs at the point where the greatest difference is perceived, and collective identities are formed according to this categorization.

dangerous than the Soviet threat became widespread, the categorization involved in the perception of international politics also began to change. The most important difference was now seen by many to be the one between those favoring political detente and those who believed in the necessity of a military strategy based on nuclear deterrence and the balance of power, rather than between "East" and "West". The resulting categorization drew boundaries which no longer coincided with the national borders: "peace movements versus military strategists" replaced "East versus West". This also produced transnational collective identities, both on the peace movement side and within NATO (see Risse-Kappen 1995b), which led to deep divisions in many Western societies. From the mid-1980s onwards, one of the determining factors in European security politics was the information being received about reforms under way in the USSR. From this moment on, a crucial influence on categorization was the division between those who were skeptical about and those who reacted more positively to Mikhail Gorbachev's reform policy, because many Europeans saw this as a more significant difference than the systemic conflict - even though this had not disappeared. For most Americans, however, the greatest perceived difference remained that between "free West" and "oppressed East". The American understanding of the USA as the stronghold of liberty was only placed in question when the categories "East" and "West" lost their significance with the collapse of the Soviet bloc.

These changes in collective identities affected the West's decisionmaking on security policy. The loss of significance suffered by the collective identity "the West" during the 1980s made it more difficult for NATO's member-states to pursue a confrontational policy towards the Warsaw Pact. As the new foreign policy pursued by the USSR after Gorbachev came to power provided impetus to the categorization "supporters of detente versus opponents", especially in West European societies, well-defined collective identities developed along the line dividing those who thought there should be a positive response to Soviet disarmament and detente proposals from those who took a more skeptical view. During the period in which this question shaped the public debate, an important aspect of social identity for every individual was which school of thought one belonged to. Because there had been a change in the categories according to which international politics was perceived, and so also in collective identities, it was no longer possible for the West European NATO governments to stick to a security policy whose dominant collective identity was "the West". In the USA, on the other hand, no particular attention was paid in the mid-1980s to the opportunities that might be presented by the new Soviet foreign policy, and so no decisive shift in collective identities occurred - which meant that the US

administration remained attached to its old policy, oriented to the East-West dichotomy, much longer (see Risse-Kappen 1991 and Weller 1992).

The perception of international politics involves categorizations which are used by each individual as the basis of a social identity. Which collective identities emerge, in other words which correspondences in the formation of social identity, depends on which categorization is used by the individual in his or her self-perception in the context of international politics. A decision on which of the available categorizations is to be used is taken with the help of the meta-contrast principle. Another factor which is at least as influential as the meta-contrast principle is the representation of international politics. It is the media's presentation of the world which more or less implicitly provides the categorizations that guide the individual's perceptions. Social Categorization Theory therefore provides us with a concept of social identity which starts from the individual perception of the social world and the categorizations involved here. The structuring of perceptions of the social world of international relations according to the categories of ingroup and outgroup provides the basis for the formation of collective identities, and so for forms of community-formation that are not in all cases tied to state borders. By applying the meta-contrast principle to the presentation and perceptions of international politics, we can investigate the question of which dimension of collective identity-formation acquires particular significance in specific contexts of action.

5.   Collective Identities in World Society

Because of the individual's need for social identity, the life of social groups always leads to the formation of collective identities which can be understood as subjective feelings of belonging, or in Weber's terminology as community-formation. If we therefore accept that community-formation needs to be treated as a form of social relations which is just as significant as society-formation, we should expect that as global society-formation proceeds and leads to the development of a world society we shall observe not the disappearance of communal structures, as is frequently predicted, but simply a change in this regard - changes in collective identities. On the basis of the interrelationship between society- and community-formation, we can expect shifts in the formation of collective identities whenever there are changes in society-formation, either because of its intensity or borders, or because of the actors involved. In a world dominated by states, national identities will be the dominant form of collective identity-formation, and in a world characterized by power blocs and/or

global conflict formations (e.g. Cold War or North-South conflict) collective identities form in the first instance along the boundaries set by these categorizations.

With the end of the Cold War, one categorization that characterized international politics has disappeared, so that today - in accordance with the meta-contrast principle - other categorizations are affecting the formation of social identity and so the emergence of collective identities. As this happens, states remain the prototypical institutions producing community-formation because they are still the guardians of the prohibition of violence internally and responsible for the instruments of force in external relations, and so national identities are still a dominant expression of collective identity-formation. But as world society develops, states are losing their significance for collective identity-formation. The first reason why this is happening is that the distinction between legitimate outwardly-directed violence and the prohibition of violence in domestic affairs, a feature of states that is decisive for national identity, is declining in significance as norms and institutions are established between states. Secondly, perceptions of international relations are increasingly being affected by other institutions, which offer alternative categorizations and so alternative ways of forming collective identities: communities of states, trading blocs, regional economic communities, sub-state regions and transnational organizations.[47] The changes in international politics brought about by the development of a world society may give rise to new collective identities.[48] These new identities will always mean some kind of social fragmentation, since the categorization underlying them always involves a differentiation between ingroup and outgroup, on the basis of which individuals assign themselves a place in the social context of international politics.[49]

The perception of international relations as consisting of a world of states characterized by the Cold War clearly provided the dominant categorizaion for the creation of collective identities during the whole period from 1945 to the end of the 1980s. National identities and the feeling of belonging that arose from the overkill capacities of both sides characterized the emotional involvement of each individual in international politics. The end of the Cold War and increasing globalization not only mean that we currently lack clear categorizations for the perception of international

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[47]   See Axtmann (1995: 93, 97). Alonso (1995: 587) comments: "Among the forces challenging citizenship as a primary identity are three which I shall call supranational, subnational and transnational".

[48]   Over twenty years ago, Habermas posed the question of "whether the reality of the world society that is coming into being is compatible with an identity formed with reference to territories" (Habermas 1976: 110). However, Habermas uses a much less precise concept of identity than the one I have developed here with the help of Social Identity Theory.

politics; regional and transnational connections are also increasingly coming into being in a way that makes available alternative forms of collective identity. Since the development of world society reduces the significance of the nationality of actors on the world stage, other collective feelings of belonging come into play. Today we can observe more intensive community-formation processes at various levels: sub-state (secessionist movements) regional (e.g. border regions), transnational (e.g. the environmental movement), state (nationalism) and trans-state (e.g. the "Clash of Civilizations"). This means an increasing fragmentation of international politics, even though it is not possible to say what effects this is having on globalization and on inter-state relations. Community-formation can either strengthen or slow down the development of inter- and transnational society-formation; it all depends on whether the external borders of society-formation are the same as or different from those of community-formation (see Weller 1995).

Samuel Huntington's "The West versus the Rest" thesis (Huntington 1993) is a weak one (for a critical response see Senghaas 1995). However, it is not inconceivable that as globalization, which we can see primarily as an "OECD-ization" of the world, proceeds, a clearer dividing-line between North and South, between the rich and the poor world, will come into being. This dividing-line would not only be the place at which the majority of societized interactions come up against their limits, it would also serve to identify the boundary between ingroup and outgroup for the purposes of community-formation.[50] If perceptions of international politics come to be more strongly influenced by the idea of a North-South conflict, there is a danger that a "Northern" collective identity will emerge on the basis of this categorization.[51] If the external borders of intensive society- and community-formation processes coincide with one another and there are only a few collective identities that cross these boundaries - for example, transnational collective identities based on international

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[49]   Gephart (1993: 463-464) speaks of the "tragic paradox at the heart of universalistic community-building. [...] It seems that the formation of emotional communities is only possible if others are excluded".

[50]   Senghaas' (1995) analysis is a convincing one: there is no sign of any geocultural conflict formations coming into being, but a "geo-material" conflict constellation seems quite possible. Cultural factors would then be added to this, which would lead to dominant collective identities similar to those of the Cold War, with an accompanying preparedness to use violence and a danger of escalation.

[51]   Huntington's thesis of the "Clash of Civilizations" has of course itself contributed to the tendency to use this primitive model as a way of interpreting international politics. In this sense, the thesis itself can be understood as an attempt to form a new "Western" collective identity by offering or proposing a particular categorization for the perception of international politics (on this point see Hummel/Wehrhöfer 1996). The best way of telling whether this categorization offer actually succeeds in bringing into being a new collective identity which determines action will be to observe the extent to which it comes to dominate the presentation in the mass media of international politics as a whole.

solidarity - the result will be a much stronger tendency towards escalation and violence in the event of conflict (see Weller 1995). This makes it especially important for the analysis of world-societal developments not only to direct its attention to the increasing intensity and scale of social relationships, but also to ask what changes can be observed in communal relationships. Where collective action is concerned, we must above all be interested in the external borders of subjectively experienced feelings of belonging, i.e. of intensive communal relationships, which may perhaps undergo radical transformation as a result of changes in international structures and institutions. Community-formation can be understood as a form of collective identity-formation, the conditions of whose emergence can be investigated with the help of social-psychological theories. The empirical analysis of collective identities in world society should therefore begin by investigating the ways in which the categorizations governing perceptions of international politics are determined.

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