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The Leonard Davis Institute for International Relations

Identity Balancing:
The Role of Interests in
Constituting British Identity,
1945-1949

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The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

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Since the 1940s, transatlantic relations have been one of the most prominent features of British identity. Britain has been a most enthusiastic protagonist of these relations, defending them zealously by encouraging extreme Atlanticism and fulfilling a central role in the establishment of NATO. However, despite warm relations with the US during World War II, after the war, when a militarily and economically shattered Britain had to redefine its role and identity, transatlantic relations were not its initial choice. In the immediate post-war years, Britain sought to create a Third World Force that would thwart what it defined as "avaricious capitalism" and "tyrannical communism." Then, in 1948, Britain played a central role in the consolidation of the European continent and defined itself as part of a European civilization distinct from the US. It was only in mid-1948 that Britain re-embraced transatlantic identity as a dominant trait and reaffirmed the similarity of its principles, ideas, and practices with those of the US.

What accounts for the frequent variations in British identity in the years 1945 to 1949? What caused Britain to downplay the transatlantic aspect that was such a dominant feature of its identity during the war and embrace alternative identities? And what led it to re-embrace this identity in mid-1948? This paper seeks to answer these questions by presenting the theoretical concept of "identity balancing." The basic assumption is that identity serves as a balancing tool in statesmen's hands that provides a solution for material interests; in other words, states confront physical threats to their security not only through the formation of alliances and the acquisition of armaments, but also by forming a common identity circle

with all threatened states. Because states choose their circle of identity according to security necessities, if their security interests are altered, then their identities are as well.

An examination of British foreign policy after World War II using the concept of identity balancing reveals that the shift in Britain's identity derived from changes in its security interests. After the war, Britain believed that its interests would be best served by forming a Third World Force; therefore, it emphasized the difference between its identity and that of its wartime allies. However, as the British economy continued to deteriorate and the Soviet geo-strategic menace escalated, Britain realized that it could not defend itself without American support. Since the US conditioned its support on a consolidated Europe, Britain sought to "invent" a common European identity. However, once Britain realized that being a part of a European identity circle was harmful to its security interests, it reverted to the strategy of forming close relations with the US, emphasizing the transatlantic identity dimensions common to both countries.

The fact that the similarity of values and principles between Britain and the US has assumed a seemingly-natural, long-term character over the years often obscures the frequent variations in British identity after World War II. This perpetuates the perception of common identity as a continuous, nonfragmented element in Anglo-American relations. Such a perception is almost inevitable, for when identities are deeply internalized there is a tendency to treat them as perennial and to ignore their roots. However, it is precisely when the degree of internalization is so embedded that the denaturalization of identities and the exposure of their origins becomes essential. One of the aims of this paper is to denaturalize the roots of the transatlantic identity by tracing the processes that preceded it internalization.

This paper consists of four sections. In the first, I discuss the inadequacies of the rationalist (neo-utilitarian) and constructivist literatures in conceptualizing the relationship between interests and identities, and I demonstrate how the possible connection of interests as constituting identities is ignored by both approaches. The second section considers Balance of Power theory literature and concludes that almost all versions of

this theory assume that states use only material tools in balancing against security threats. Addressing this theoretical void, the third section presents the concept of identity balancing, elaborating on the rationale underlying it and on the process preceding it. In the last section, I examine the ability of the concept of identity balancing to account for three shifts in British interests and identities during the period 1945–1949.

Interests and Identity

One of the main arguments between rationalist (neo-utilitarian) and constructivist approaches concerns the impact of identity and interests on each other and on states' foreign policy. Neo-realists conceive states to be like-units, and therefore they eschew the importance of identity — which is located in the second image — as irrelevant (Waltz 1979). Instead, they emphasize the role of material factors in determining states' behavior and interactions. Liberals and neo-liberals, although recognizing the influence of ideational factors, fail to explain how these identities are formed and transformed and how they affect states' interests. In addition, they tend to treat identities as individual traits and to ignore the communal characteristic that they may acquire (Goldstein and Keohane 1993; Moravcsik 1997).[1] As a result, all rationalist theories treat identities and interests as pre-given and therefore as exogenous to states' interactions. In addition, they assume that states' interests and interactions have only a limited impact — since, while capable of shaping states' behavior, they cannot shape their identities (Kowert 1999; Ruggie 1998; Wendt 1994).

In contrast, constructivist theories define material interests as endogenous, due to the fact that they are constituted by states' identities and interactions.

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1   Moravcsik himself admits, "Liberals take no distinctive position on the origins of social identities, which may result from historical accretion or be constructed through conscious collective or state action, nor on the question of whether they ultimately reflect ideational or material factors" (1997, 525). Goldstein and Keohane say that "ideas *as well as* interests have causal weight in explanations of human action," meaning that they treat identity and interests as two distinct and separate variables and fail to conceptualize the mutual effect that they have on each other (1993, 4).

Relying on the assumption that "who you are determines what you want," constructivists explain variations in states' interests and strategies as resulting from changes in their identities. In contrast to rationalist theories, constructivists do not treat identities as pre-given; rather, they perceive them to be the unintended product of states' interactions. In this respect, constructivists believe that states' interactions affect not only their behavior but their identities as well (McSweeney 1999; Ruggie 1998; Wendt 1994, 1999).

Both rationalist and constructivist perspectives have crucial shortcomings. Those of the former have been elaborately discussed; they mainly concern the tendency of rationalists to conceptualize interests as stable and pre-existent and to ignore the significant influence of identities and the processes through which they are formed, transformed, and shape interests (Katzenstein 1996; Lapid and Kratochwil 1996; Ruggie 1998; Wendt 1994). The inadequacies of constructivists arguments have had much less attention given to them; but their significance cannot be ignored. The main weakness is the excessive focus on a unidirectional connection, which postulates that identities shape interests but not vice-versa. It is hard to explain why most constructivist scholars have chosen to ignore the opposite possibility — that is, "What you want can sometimes determine who you are." Accounting for this unidirectional connection becomes even more difficult when we consider that such a perception is incompatible with the constructivist ontology, which emphasizes mutual constitutivness, dualism, and agent-structure relations. McSweeney has criticized Wendt (1999) and Campbell (1992) in this regard:

> Philosophically and empirically, however, it is not clear that the causal connection is unidirectional. ... It is certainly the case empirically that what we want can also modify what we become in identity terms. ... [T]he range of interests available to us can cause us to reinvent the social identity appropriate to them. ... Interests can play the decisive role in triggering the process of identity transformation. ... [T]he relation between identity and interests is probably best conceptualized as *recursive*, following the logic of structure and agency. (1999, 127)

Some constructivist theorists, relying on this ontology, have referred to the possibility of interests as constituting identities.[2] However, they include these references only parenthetically, without adequately theorizing this recursive connection. The result is that there is no coherent constructivist theory regarding the impact that interests might have on states' identities. It seems that Barnett's criticism of Walt's excessive materialism can now be used against the excessive idealism of constructivist theorists, whose strong commitment to ideational factors have prevented them from properly conceptualizing the impact that interests might have on identities.[3]

When we consider the fact that interests shape identities, an additional weakness of constructivist theories is revealed. In theorizing the factors motivating states' actions, Wendt enumerates three possibilities: force, interests, and identification. While the first two affect states' actions by shaping their behavior alone, the third has the potential to shape their identity and determine what they want and who they are (Wendt 1999, 250, 273). I claim that the second motivation — for action (interest) — is capable of determining not only states' behavior but their identity as well.

This paper seeks to address the inadequacies of the rationalist and constructivist perspectives on the concepts of identities and interests. I will demonstrate the significance of presenting a recursive connection between identities and interests by projecting it on the traditional theory of balance of power.

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2 Wendt claims that "material structures can have sui-generis effect on collective identity formation" (1994, 389). Chafetz et al. contend that group cohesion may increase in response to external threats (1999, XIII). Kahl agrees, claiming that common threats create a political space for states to positively identify with one another (1999, 115). Hall claims that "identities and interests are co-constituted," and refers to the possibility of national identity as a statesmen's tool (1999, 147, 186).

3 In criticizing Walt's inadequate conceptualization of the notion of "intent'" in his balance of threat theory, Barnett claimed that his "failure to give ideational forces their proper due" stemmed in part from a "commitment to materialism that forces Walt to reduce ideational factors to the level of ideology and to see them as parasitic on the material" (1996, 406).

Balance of Power Theory

Balance of power is one of the most controversial concepts in IR literature. This concept was already considered vague and inconsistent several decades ago (Claude 1962; Haas 1953). Even after innumerable attempts to properly conceptualize it as a distinct theory, many controversies still remain — and new ones continue to arise. It seems that this theory is characterized more by debated hypotheses than by agreed-upon ones.[4] Scholars still argue over this theory's basic assumptions, such as the definition of the concept itself (Haas 1953); the object of balancing (Barnett and Levi 1991; David 1991; Schweller 1994; Walt 1987; Waltz 1979); and the prevalent behavioral pattern of threatened states (Christensen and Snyder 1990; Kaufman 1992; Schroder 1994; Schweller 1994; Sweeny and Fritz 2004; Walt 1987; Waltz 1979, 126).

However, despite these many controversies, most theorists seem to agree on the various tools for creating balance. Almost all versions of balance of power theory, with very few exceptions, presuppose the existence of hard balancing: that is, that balancing is generated either through forming alliances or strengthening the armed forces. This assumption is so fundamental that most theorists do not even specify it in their theory — it becomes apparent only after examining their empirical research. Considering that constructivist ontology emphasizes ideational factors, it is quite surprising that this implicit materialistic assumption of balancing tools also characterizes its versions of balance of power theory.[5] Paul summarizes this materialistic

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4   The common hypotheses are numerable: almost all balance of power theories rely on rationalist assumptions that postulate the anarchic character of the international system and the central role of rational states. These theories also agree that states use balancing strategies to prevent a potential hegemon from rising to a dominant position in the international system. These balancing strategies are designed to maximize states' power or security either by mobilizing internal materialistic resources (internal balancing) or by forming alliances that are defined as short-term military or economic cooperation (external balancing).

5   For example, although Barnett claims that ideational factors play a significant role in forming states' threat perception (in choice of allies and determination of alliance boundaries), he nevertheless embraces the materialistic perception of balancing tools. Barnett attributes a significant role to states' identity in his examination of Arab countries'

perception by claiming, "Although scholars disagree on the precise meaning of the term, balance of power is deemed to operate most prominently in the military, political, and economic relations of states" (Paul 2004, 5). There is nothing wrong in presenting a materialistic approach for balancing tools — as long as it is capable of adequately explaining outcomes in the international system. However, "[t]he exclusive focus of classical and neorealists [and constructivists] on interstate military balancing has made balance of power theory, although useful, narrow and inflexible" (13).

The focus on materialistic balancing tools alone is problematic, from both empirical and theoretical perspectives. According to the former, it appears that traditional military alliances constitute a less significant characterization of the current international system.[6] In addition, public support for internal resource mobilization is decreasing. In more and more countries, the public is less willing to bear the economic and social burden of armaments and is less tolerant towards legitimizing the use of such means (Richman 1994). As a result, statesmen are required to introduce justifications, other than security arguments, to rally the public around the flag. From the theoretical perspective,

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attempts to form strategic connections and military integration through the Collective Arab Security Pact and dual alliances of Egypt with different Arab countries. He thus sees identity as a precondition for forming and defining the different poles in the international system. However, similar to rationalist theorists, he also believes that a pole is defined as such only once the relations take a military or economic (and therefore a materialistic) form (Barnett 1996). Similarly, Suh presents a three-stage institutionalization theory to explain the formation and endurance of alliances. In the first stage, states choose their allies according to power considerations and express their preferences through the material instrument of military alliances. In the second stage, power considerations are mediated by domestic interest constellation. In the last stage, the alliance inluences states' identities, institutionalizing them through recursive interactions. This institutionalized identity, in turn, is one of the mechanisms defining states' interests in preserving the alliance (Suh 2007). Although Suh does relate to the recursive connection between interests and identities, he also presupposes that balancing is achieved merely through alliances while the formation of a common identity is treated only as the unintended product of states' interactions.

6　For example, for every year between 1925 and 1986, eleven states, on the average, entered into formal military alliances. In contrast, for every year between 1986 and 2000, only seven states, on the average entered into formal military alliances. Data drawn from COW available at http://www.correlatesofwar.org/ (Gilber and Sarkees 2004).

a materialistic approach to balancing tools antiquates the literature of balancing patterns. This is because it is incompatible with the multidimensional perception that attributes great importance to alternative power resources, such as soft power (Nye 1990), moral power (Hall 1997), normative power (Manners 2002, 239–240), as well as Barnett and Duvall's typology of compulsory, institutional, structural, and productive power (Barnett and Duvall 2005). In other words, both empirical reality and theoretical developments obligate us to project the discussion of alternative power resources onto balancing literature. In this respect, the concept of soft balancing constitutes an innovative perception of balancing tools.[7] However, despite the great contribution of this concept, much work is needed to further develop it theoretically and empirically.[8]

Identity Balancing — A Theoretical Framework

Identity as a Means of Balancing

When viewing how the major theories of international relations conceptualize central ideas such as balance of power, interests, and identities, it becomes clear that they ignore or under-conceptualize the possibility of states employing identity terms to serve their security interests. The concept of identity balancing, however, presumes that states balance against security

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7   Soft balancing involves applying nontraditional balancing tools — such as economic statecraft, international institutions, and diplomatic arrangements — to inhibit, prevent, or undermine the hegemon's policies. States choose to avoid hard balancing and apply soft balancing when the consequences of the former might be too costly (Pape 2005), or when the threat to their own sovereignty and security is not immediate or direct (Paul 2005).

8   From a theoretical perspective, in contrast with traditional logic of balance of power, soft balancing assumes that states employ soft tools not to prevent a hegemon's ascension, but only to frustrate its policies (Brooks and Wohlforth 2005). In addition, the difference between soft balancing and normal diplomatic friction is not completely clear, since any action of second-tier powers is immediately categorized as soft balancing (Lieber and Alexander 2005). Empirically, the only relevant case study is the attempts by France, Russia. and China to soft balance against the US. Therefore, there is insufficient information to determine whether their actions resulted from genuine attempts to balance or from other factors.

threats *not only* by forging alliances or by mobilizing internal resources, but also by adopting an identity common to all threatened states.

What is the added value of identity as a means of balancing? What are the accompanying sources of power that enable it to act as an effective means of balancing? The advantage of identity, as opposed to material factors, is that it is viewed as a natural, static, and long-range phenomenon; thus, when acting in concert with material factors, identity grants legitimacy and permanency to these factors in two ways.

First, identity balancing is a means of persuading a public that may be averse to mobilizing internal resources or entering into obligatory alliances. Defining relations in terms of a common identity grants them a natural and legitimate status, thus relegating to the sidelines any public discussion of the material benefits to be accrued from such relations and making them self-evident.

Second, in addition to persuading domestic public opinion, framing relations in terms of identity enables states to signal how committed they are to strategic cooperation and to ensure a deeper commitment on the part of the other partners. This is because identity is not as dynamic or fragile as material factors, and therefore its influence is more long-ranging and less subject to opposition. This lends a degree of unity and mutual obligation to strategic relations and helps to overcome one of the greatest obstacles to international cooperation: the fear that one side will renege on its commitment (Grieco 1988). Thus, states that have a deep interest in strategic cooperation will tend to stress the common identity characteristics they share with others. However, states that are hesitant about cooperating with others will tend to blur the significance of any common identity.

Thus, although not always a product of material interests, identity can sometimes be used to serve functional needs. The power inherent in identity stems from its ability to strengthen public support for material balancing and to provide a permanent commitment to strategic cooperation. It portrays the bloc to which the states belong as characterized by loyalty, consolidation, and unity. This portrayal of a consolidated pole may have a practical impact

on the security of the bloc's members, since it might deter the opposing bloc from attacking.

The Stages of Identity Balancing

The argument that identity serves as a means of balancing assumes that security interests lead to the creation of a common identity. However, the question that arises is how the process of identity balancing works. What are the stages through which the material interest is translated into and leads to the formation of a collective identity? The formation of a collective identity comprises four stages: identifying the security threat, pinpointing common identity characteristics, highlighting these characteristics, and internalizing them.

First stage: Identifying the security threat

During the first stage, states identify a threat to their physical security and locate other states that are similarly threatened. The level of this threat is determined by the degree to which states feel that an attack by a specific actor is highly probable. Probability is determined by the capability and intentions of the threatening actor expressed in protocols, reports, documents, and security strategies released by persons or organizations of the threatened states as part of the decision making process.

Second stage: Pinpointing common identity characteristics

During the second stage, states work to form a collectivity consisting of all those states confronted by a similar threat. Each country has an extremely broad bank of varying and contradictory characteristics. Some of these are common to all threatened states and therefore conducive to the forming of a collectivity; others lack commonality, thus undermining this purpose. However, this varied array of characteristics ensures that every state may find some common ground with any other actor within the system. Thus, states select and highlight only those characteristics that enable them to join a collective identity group.

At this point, these characteristics do not yet form a coherent identity.

However, by means of creation, construction, emphasis, and adaptation of identities, they are consolidated into a new common identity that did not necessarily previously exist. In this process, states only have to ensure that the selected characteristics meet two criteria: they must be broad enough to contain all the threatened states, and they must be narrow enough to exclude the enemy. Aside from these two criteria, the content of identity is not fixed; common characteristics can be anything a state chooses, as long as they are shared by all. They may be primordial (such as language, ethnicity, or region) or exist on a cognitive level (such as worldviews, beliefs, or ideologies). They may be dominant or marginal, real or imagined, old or new (Jenkins 1996, 104). In other words, when the identity characteristics common to the threatened states are primordial, they will determine collective identity. However, when the identity characteristics common to the threatened states exist on the cognitive level, these characteristics will create collective identity.

Thus, there is no general or uniform definition of what composes the identity of states, since determining which characteristics are important is not predetermined but rather stems from a conscious decision (McSweeney 1999, 98), and this decision is determined by security considerations.[9] In this respect, every identity, even if primordial, is imagined — existing within the minds of the actors — and therefore is a function of a social understanding (Anderson 1999; Cohen 1985, 98).[10]

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9   Different definitions for the concept of identity in IR literature include specific dimensions — essentialist, cognitive, or both. For example, cognitive dimensions are found in the definition that is presented by Abdelal et al., in which collective identity is a social category that varies along two dimensions: content and contestation. While the latter relates to the degree of agreement within a group over the content of their identity, the former includes four types of meanings of collective identity: i) constitutive norms, ii) social purposes, iii) relational comparisons, and iv) cognitive models (Abdelal et al. 2006). Essentialist dimension can be found in the definition used by the editors of the *Security Studies* volume dedicated to articles on identity, which postulates that actors categorize themselves according to features such as common nationality and religion (Chafetz et al. 1998 XII–IX). Similarly, Wendt's definition for "type identity" includes shared experience and history (1999).

10   However, this does not mean that states turn into a homogeneous collective group. Differences of opinion and worldviews among group members may and frequently do

Third stage: Highlighting collective identity

During the third stage, the relevant identity is framed by statesmen as
ideology that is under threat and whose defense is crucial for the continuous
existence of the state and requires cooperation among all states with similar
identity characteristics. However, just as the static and obligatory features
of identity are advantageous, they have their disadvantages too, since the
public does not always readily accept what is obligatory. Thus, decision
makers must enter into a long and complicated process of persuading
and re-educating the public and formulating public opinion.[11] Does this
mean, however, that the public will passively accept the state's interpretive
framework? Does the government have the power to dictate what public
discourse and dominant narratives should be without the public having
any say in the matter? Clearly all public discourse is formulated through
interaction between the state and various domestic players. However, three
factors increase the likelihood that the state's interpretive framework will be
adopted as dominant.

First, public opinion tends to devote less interest and attention to matters
of foreign policy, so that in these matters, as opposed to domestic issues,
fewer interested players are willing to present competing interpretations.
As a result, the interpretations put forth by the government with respect to
foreign policy are usually accepted without any significant opposition.

Second, the written and electronic media play a significant role in the
formulation of public discourse. Wolfsfeld argues that in general decision
makers wield a great deal of influence over coverage by the media for three
principal reasons, among others: i) their high social and political status
encourages the media to attach greater importance to their views than those
of other players; ii) they have a great many resources at their disposal,
which enable them to create media events; iii) their value as media-creating
agents is high, and their high-ranking positions ensure that they receive a

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exist, but they are "masked by the appearance of agreement and convergence ... which
constructs and emphasizes the boundary between members and non-members" (Jenkins
1996,108). Thus, the common identity is designed to enable actors who must cooperate
to do so without "having to explore their differences in damaging detail (Ibid.).

11   On persuasion see Cruz 2000; Finnemore and Sikking 1998; Payne 2001.

great deal of positive exposure through coverage of cabinet decisions, press conferences, interviews, press releases, and speeches (Wolfsfeld 1991). As a result, wherever there is a conflict over competing interpretations, the government's interpretive framework has an advantage in the media over alternative interpretive frameworks.

Third, and finally, the government's interpretive framework benefits from another advantage that stems from its control over socialization institutions and the state budget. These allow the government to take direct and indirect steps, both manifest and covert, to instill within the public the identity interpretation that coincides with security interests. These steps include the establishment of government-controlled radio and television networks; the development of educational programs and the publication of textbooks; the establishment of committees, information agencies, and government-owned news agencies; the distribution of pamphlets; and the creation of student and cultural exchange programs.[12] Thus, while the influence of domestic groups on the formulation of public discourse cannot be ignored, the state's influence, particularly in matters of foreign policy, is dominant, thereby increasing the likelihood that its interpretive framework will be adopted.[13]

The second and third stages of identity balancing describe states' efforts to form a shared identity in light of a common security threat. However, this is not to claim that these stages lead to the immediate adoption of an internalized identity; rather, they constitute initial phases in a long process at the end of which a common identity is profoundly internalized. This means that during these stages, the common identity exists only at the rhetorical level — not yet at the cognitive one. It does not at this point influence how states define themselves or their interests. It is only in the fourth stage that this common identity moves from the rhetorical to the cognitive level.

Fourth stage: Internalizing the common identity
Once the threat has been identified and the appropriate identity characteristics

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12 For examples for the use of such strategies, see Aldrich 2001, Shawn 2002.
13 For a similar argument regarding the power of states in managing and manipulating public opinion see Ginsberg 1988.

have been chosen and framed as significant, we enter the fourth stage of identity balancing. This stage, dependent upon the length of time that the security threat lasts, does not always occur. If the security threat alters or dissolves within a short period of time, the functional identity that was geared towards assisting states to confront this threat does not have sufficient time to become integrated and remains in the realm of rhetoric. However, if the security threat persists over a long period of time, identity, which began as a mere functional need, becomes deeply integrated. It transcends its original purpose and becomes an inherent factor within the fabric of society. As a result, the security threat becomes secondary, and upholding common identity characteristics becomes a central factor: thus, it is identity that formulates the state's interests. Therefore, the fact that collective identity is imagined does not mean that it is also imaginary. Once these identities are fully constructed and well-established, they become real; and although they are not primordial, they function as such. These identities have real consequences — they can mobilize people to act or even die on their behalf (Jenkins 1996, 83, 105).[14]

Identity Balancing, Constructivism, and Rationalism

The concept of identity balancing converges with the constructivist approach and differs from the rationalist in three principal ways. First, it assumes that the identity of states is not predetermined and fixed but is formed through a process of social construction by way of interactions among states. Second, it assumes a mutual influence between the agent and the structure, since, while agents are independently capable of formulating their own dominant identity, they choose among a wide range of ideas and practices embedded within the structure. Finally, the concept of identity balancing assumes that

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14   There are two factors that may explain why the utilitarian collective identity is internalized to such a degree: first, in order to be compelling for both the allies and the adversaries, the adopted identity must be highly internalized. As a result, the common identity, whether preexistent or "invented," requires constant construction, maintenance, and cultivation in order to make it real. Second, once a state presents itself through a certain prism, other states learn to see it similarly and treat it accordingly, thus strengthening and reproducing the utilitarian identity (Croning 1999, 282).

at a given point, functional identity formulates states' material interests. This argument fits in with the constructivist assumption that identities construct interests.

However, identity balancing's assumption that interests have the power to construct the identity of states challenges the unidirectional link presented by constructivist literature. In addition, constructivist theories are challenged by the fact that the process of identity formation is not an accidental by-product of states' interactions but rather a calculated response to physical threats.[15] This logic also challenges the neo-realist perception of balance of power as a law of behavior (Waltz 1979) and as an automatic response of states to physical threats (Claude 1962).

Identity Balancing — Connecting the Theoretical to the Empirical
The argument that interests constitute identities may seem trivial. What, then, is its added value? On a theoretical level, the above argument has been included in studies of national identities, but not in those of identities within the international system as a whole.[16] This is most clearly seen in discussions of theoretical concepts that we would have expected to include a consideration of the influence of interests on identities — such as literature on balance of power or on the link between interests and identities. On an empirical level, projecting the argument that interests lead to identities onto balance of power has important implications on our understanding of the origin of states' identities. It is precisely when identity is internalized that researchers become imprisoned within a hermeneutic circle that causes them to view this identity as a natural phenomenon. This is when it becomes important to recognize that interests lead to identities on the interstate level as well, thus encouraging research that denaturalizes identities by revealing the stages leading to their formation.

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15 This is where identity balancing and neo-functional theory of integration depart. Although both assume that initial functional necessities constitute a common identity, the former perceives it to be an intentional consequence of states' interests, whereas the latter perceives it to be an unintentional by-product of states' interactions.

16 For a comprehensive review of the literature on the role of interests in constituting national identity, see Kowert 1999.

The transatlantic identity is an example of a collective interstate identity which has been so profoundly institutionalized that it is almost impossible to imagine Britain and the US as identity rivals. We are used to seeing the relations between these countries as natural, deriving from their participation in a shared civilization with common principles, ideas, and values. Precisely because of this, our proving that these relations stemmed from material interests, rather than from a common civilization, will significantly enhance the relevance of the concept of identity balancing. I will now apply the concept of identity balancing to three shifts in British identity in the years 1945 to 1949.

British Interest and Identity, 1945–1949

> We have no eternal allies and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual and those interests it is our duty to follow. (Palmerston 1848)

Britain's choice to emphasize its transatlantic identity through its active role in NATO's creation should not be taken for granted. Its prominent identity changed four times between the close of World War II and NATO's creation. During the first period, Britain sought to restore the order that preceded the war and to fill an independent role in the international system. For this purpose, its leaders emphasized Britain's identity as opposed to both the USSR and the US. During the second period, it became apparent that Britain could not defend itself without American assistance, and consequently it emphasized the common characteristics that bound it to the US. However, because the US conditioned its assistance on Europe's consolidation, in the third period Britain invested great efforts into uniting the continent by shaping a common European identity. During the last period, as tension with the USSR increased, Britain strove to bind the US to a stricter security guarantee for Europe in general and Britain in particular. To this end, British leaders struggled to invent an identity common to both Europe and the US: the transatlantic identity.

First Period: Presenting an Alternative Third Force:
Identifying a security threat

World War II significantly changed the character of the international system. Britain, which had been devastated by the war, watched the US and the USSR as they rose to a predominant position. These two factors — the character of the new international system and Britain's relations with both superpowers — shaped Britain's threat perception immediately after the war.

Observing the new distribution of power in the international system, the British government and especially its foreign minister, Ernest Bevin, realized that none of the superpowers would seriously take British interests into consideration, and thus that Britain must strive to achieve them independently. It was evident that in order to position itself as an equal power among the superpowers, Britain must become the undisputed leader of Western Europe and the Dominions.

The necessity of such a strategy was even more apparent in light of the deteriorating relations with both of the superpowers. Britain, which was the first to view the USSR as a threat to European stability, became even more suspicious as a result of ongoing Soviet penetration into Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In July 1945, Undersecretary Orme Sargent issued a memo stressing the necessity of challenging the USSR in Eastern Europe to discourage it from pressuring Italy, Greece, Turkey, and Germany. In 1946, Frank Roberts, the British ambassador to Moscow, presented a similar interpretation of Soviet intentions when he warned that apart from the ideological contest, Britain was perceived as the main obstacle for Soviet expansionism, and he recommended a resolved reaction that would deter the USSR from undermining Britain's influence in these regions. As Britain's suspicions toward the USSR grew, so did Bevin's determination to take a harsher position towards the Soviet leadership (Baylis 1993, 37–38).

On the other hand, any attempt by the British and American leaders during the Cold War and its aftermath to depict transatlantic relations as unique and harmonious was incompatible with post-World War II reality. In 1945, the Labour Party, which supported a socialist policy, won an unprecedented

majority of 146 seats. This decreased the chance for close Anglo-American cooperation, as the dominant party in Britain despised the values of capitalist America. As a result, "it was far from obvious that the British would choose to work under their former colony rather than seek an alternative" (Spirtas 1998/1999, 312).

From the American perspective as well, warm Anglo-American relations were not considered a natural preference, as Britain and the US did not have a similar interpretation of Soviet intentions. Not only did Roosevelt work to develop close relations with the USSR, but he also limited relations with Britain to avoid arousing Stalin's suspicions. At the Yalta conference in 1945, he refused to form a united front with Britain, rejecting the idea that a strong understanding between the two would restrain Stalin's expansionist ambitions (Ovendale 1985, 9). Roosevelt's aim to achieve close relations with the USSR was considered a relatively minor obstacle for Britain. The most critical problem was that the US conceived Britain as presenting a graver threat than the USSR to a peaceful Europe.

The fact that Britain doubted the ability of a world organization to preserve peace in Europe was only one factor augmenting American resentment towards it. Other factors were the mutual suspicions and clash of interests regarding Palestine, the British grievances regarding the strict loan conditions posed by the Americans after the war, and their sudden abolishment of the lend-lease law (Williams 1997, 7). In addition, both countries presented different perceptions regarding Britain's imperial role, the preferred military strategy, and the world order to be implemented after the war (Lundestad 2005, 25).

In contrast, in his personal conversations with Stalin, Roosevelt found that common interests and perceptions, such as their desire to eliminate European imperialism and their determination not to give Indo-China back to France, were binding them together. Moreover, American politics were characterized by strong feelings of Anglophobia, and Britain was accused of having deceivingly dragged the US into World War I. Lundestad even claims that many Americans preferred "the democratic and peaceful USSR over Churchill's imperialist Britain" (Lundestad 2005, 23–25). Frankel concludes

this best when he claims, "The relationship was, in fact, 'special' only for the British" (Frankel, 1975, 206). A symbolic act which best exemplifies this perception is found in Acheson's order to destroy all copies of a paper produced by American and British diplomats defining their countries' "Special Relationship" (Acheson, 1969, 387).

These developments convinced Britain that its interests would be best served by forming an alliance comprising Europe, the Commonwealth, and the colonies. Such an alliance, it was assumed, would enable it to equate its power to that of the two superpowers, confront their pressures, and influence the balance of power. In October 1945, Orme Sargent wrote, "It behooves us all the more to strengthen our own world position vis-à-vis our two great allied rivals by building ourselves as the great European power. ... Once we have acquired this position both the United States and the Soviet Union are more likely to respect us and therefore collaborate with us than they are at present" (cited in Edmonds 1986, 29).

Pinpointing common characteristics

In order to establish itself as an independent actor on the international scene, Britain had to form a collectivity with Europe and the Commonwealth while simultaneously distinguishing itself ideationally from both superpowers. This purpose was achieved by Britain's highlighting of its democratic and socialistic characteristics. The former was designed to challenge the tyrannical characteristic of Soviet communism, while the latter was intended to offer a moral alternative to the extreme American capitalism characterized by "greediness and avarice." In January 1948, Bevin expressed this ideational middle ground claiming, "We should advertise our principles as offering the best and most efficient way of life. We should attack, by comparison, the principles and practice of Communism and also the inefficiency, social injustice and moral weakness of unrestrained capitalism" (cited in Kirby 2000, 404). That same month, Prime Minister Clement Atlee made a similar point:

> At ... one end of the scale are the Communist countries; at the other

> end the United States. ... Great Britain ... is placed geographically and from the point of view of economic and political theory between the two great continental states. ... Our task is to work out a system ... which combines individual freedom with a planned economy. That is not to say that our ideas are in any sense "watered-down capitalism" or "watered-down communism"; nor that they constitute a temporary halting-place on a journey from one creed to the other. Ours is a philosophy of its own right. (cited in Kirby 2000, 403–404)

After socialism and democracy were selected as suitable characteristics for achieving the materialistic interest, they were consolidated into a coherent new identity named the "Third Force." The Third Force was defined as a socialist alliance of Europe, the Commonwealth, and the colonies designed to challenge both American and Soviet values. The assumption was that by developing and mobilizing the materialistic resources of the colonies, Europe, under the leadership of Britain and France, could become strong enough to function as an independent actor. Britain justified the use of its colonies' resources by including these colonies in a European identity framework under British leadership. The fact that these colonies were not even located in Europe did not pose any problem since Europe's geographical definition was easily substituted by an amorphous spiritual one (Bullock 1983, 520).

Highlighting the functional identity

In order to highlight its role as a Third Force superpower, Britain emphasized the superpowers' inferior values in comparison with its own superior moral values. In the spring of 1946, senior officials in the Foreign Office suggested launching an anti-Communist propaganda campaign. In April of that same year, an anti-Communist Russia Committee, which provided British representatives abroad with publicity material for use against the Soviets, was created (Wilford 1998, 355). Mayhew Christopher suggested answering communist propaganda with a "Third Force Propaganda" and thus planted the seeds for the creation of an Information Research Department in 1948.

Mayhew stressed that the new propaganda policy should not concentrate solely on communism, but should rather "balance anti-communist with anti-capitalist arguments" (Defty 2004, 51–52). A Cabinet Defense Committee memorandum dated March 1946 stressed, "In the European scene ... we are the last bastion of social democracy. ... [T]his now represents our way of life as against the red tooth and claw of American capitalism and the Communist dictatorship of Soviet Russia" (cited in Edmonds 1986, 28).

Internalizing the functional identity

Despite repeated statements propagating the Third Force identity and the establishment of an information center to this effect, this identity did not have sufficient time to be fully internalized. In a short time, the Third Force strategy turned out to be unrealistic. Britain's weak economy and the growing Soviet threat prevented Britain from developing complete independence and forced it to ensure its security by relying on American assistance. Consequently, Britain had to reassess its security threat and the chosen identity through which to confront it.

Second Period: Initial Signs of Western-Transatlantic Identity
Identifying a security threat

British perceptions of the Soviet threat as an imminent one, which had already began to develop in 1945, intensified and became unequivocal in 1946. A 1946 memo issued by Geoffrey Warner, head of the Russian Department in the Foreign Office, stated that the threat of war with the USSR existed due to the Soviet military pressure in regions of vital interests to Britain and America. This, claimed Warner, forced Britain to clearly articulate the red-lines that would make war inevitable (Baylis 1993, 41–43). However, because of Britain's weak economy, it was unable to handle this threat alone. In 1946 and 1947, the government's chief scientific adviser concluded that Britain was "a bankrupt nation" (Barker 1983, 69), and the Foreign Office predicted an economic disaster unless security expenditures were immediately reduced. However, such a reduction was unfeasible in light of the growing Soviet threat. In 1947, the Foreign Office published

yet another crucial report claiming that the expectations for superpower cooperation were illusionary. The report posited that in light of the Soviet threat on the one hand and Britain's weak economy on the other, acting independently of the US was a dangerous luxury that Britain could not afford (Baylis 1993, 41–43). In February 1946, Bevin, becoming disillusioned over the prospect of attaining a Third Force strategy and recognizing the implications of these memos, wrote to Atlee, "I believe that an entirely new approach is required, and that can only be based upon a very close understanding between ourselves and the Americans" (cited in Baylis 1993, 44). Roberts adds that relations with the US were not an ideological stance but a necessity: "[W]e were not strong enough on our own. We needed the Americans ... not on ideological grounds but because we couldn't manage ourselves. ... [T]hey were a balancer in the region" (cited in Croft 1994, 80).

In other words, Britain's material interests and security concerns forced it to confront the Soviet threat. However, since its weak economy prevented it from implementing an internal balancing strategy, it sought to confront this threat by forming close relations with the US.

Pinpointing common characteristics

Realizing its growing dependence on the US, Britain downgraded its strategy of creating a Third Force identity and instead focused on locating characteristics that would bind it to the US. To this end, Britain had to articulate its identity components as being compatible with those of the Americans. In the meantime, Kennan had already written the long telegram proclaiming that Roosevelt's vision of the USSR as an important contributor to a peaceful world was untenable. This vision was replaced by Truman's doctrine that conceived the USSR to be a grave menace to America's interests and ideology. Thus, paradoxically, the main obstacle for achieving close relations with the US derived from Britain's characterization as a social-democratic state (Anstey 1984, 418). The American tendency to immediately and directly associate socialism with the USSR, combined with the fact that the British ambassador to the US stressed ideological reliability as an important component in America's foreign policy, forced

Britain to obscure its socialistic identity dimension. A Foreign Office memorandum from April 1946 titled "The Soviet Campaign against This Country and Our Response To It" suggested that the "Americans would be entirely sympathetic if we told them that in our foreign policy we intend to put up a strong and persistent advocacy of the liberal idea, ideologically, economically and politically" (Documents on British Policy Overseas, 203). In June 1946, Lord Inverchapel recommended that Bevin, in a speech before the House of Commons, should emphasize the "basic similarity of ideals and principles between Great Britain and the United States" (331).

This was not at all simple given the British public's socialistic ideology and its hostility towards America. Britains espoused social-democratic ideals, supported close relations with the USSR, and despised American capitalism and the concept of the "American way of life" (Kirby 2000, 387). In April 1947, MP Richard Crossman publicized the *Keep Left* paper, signed by twelve other MPs, blaming the government for developing an exaggerated dependency on the US and urging it to adopt a socialist foreign policy. In August 1948, the American ambassador to Britain, Lewis Douglas, reported on strong negative emotions towards the US inside and outside the British government. "At times," he wrote, "their attitude towards the US borders on the pathological" (cited in Kirby 2000, 399). As a result, British leaders had to find a way to develop an anti-Soviet policy without arousing resentment among the British public and the members of Parliament. This goal was achieved by actively convincing the public that Britain and the US share common identity characteristics; in this way, cooperation would be both automatic and natural.

After extensive deliberations, the common characteristics utilized by the British government to highlight both its identity gap with the USSR and its identity connection with the US were first and foremost anti-communism and the threat to democracy and freedom posed by tyranny. Being cognizant of Truman's deep Christian roots, Sir Charles Nicholas also suggested mobilizing Christianity to highlight the ideological dimensions of the Cold War. Kirby claims that "the perception of the Cold War as one of history's great religious wars can be attributed to Anglo-American

propaganda exploiting the crusade concept, transforming containment into a morality play in which western civilization and Christianity were defended from the encroaches of a godless Communism" (2000, 389, 396). In January 1948, Bevin emphasized the role of ideology in combating communism when he said, "We cannot hope successfully to repel Communism only by disparaging it on material grounds, and must add a positive appeal to Democratic and Christian principles, remembering the strength of Christian sentiment in Europe. We must put forward a positive rival ideology. We must stand on the broad principles of Social Democracy which, in fact, has its basis in the value of civil liberty and human rights" (Kirby 2000, 405). These common characteristics were all consolidated into a Western identity that was to be framed by leaders as a civilization under threat.

Highlighting the collective identity

The principal means used by the Foreign Office to highlight common Western identity was compatible rhetoric. In 1946, memos delineating the appropriate rhetoric to be used were sent to British diplomats in the US, instructing them to emphasize that Britain was not Communist and that the British people rejected any possibility of future cooperation with the USSR. They were also asked to emphasize the similarity between the American and British identities and to convince the Americans that the "American way of life about which they talk so much is in all the fundamental things much the same as the British way of life" (cited in Anstey 1986, 380). Bevin used similar rhetoric when he stressed Britain's role as a fortress of Western Civilization. In 1947, Undersecretary of State John Balfour ordered the government ministers to highlight the distinction between British Socialism and Soviet Communism, and to emphasize the British Government's determination to defend Western values from totalitarian threats (Anstey 1986, 398). In 1946, the Committee for Russian Affairs stressed the necessity of recruiting the Vatican in the war against communism (Kirby 2000, 389). Despite the urgent need to cut expenditures, British Information Services in the US represented the largest British publicity operation abroad. It was centered in New York and had branches in Chicago, Washington, and San Francisco, as well as

representatives in Boston, Detroit, Seattle, Houston, and Los Angeles. It produced and distributed material such as magazine articles, press releases and background information notes, films, pamphlets, and periodicals. It helped organize educational and cultural exchanges, and it maintained daily contacts with representatives of the American news media (Anstey 1984, 421).

Internalizing the common identity

The propaganda campaign stressing the concept of Western civilization did manage to alienate British public opinion from the USSR and make it more amenable towards the US. However, this Western identity was not internalized — for two reasons.

First, it seems that Britain was not absolutely certain that binding itself exclusively to the US was the best strategy for maintaining its security. Although, Britain acknowledged its growing economic and security dependence on the US, the latter did not express any willingness to grant firm support to the transatlantic idea. This, combined with the bitter experience of America's unexpected withdrawal after World War I, inhibited Britain from adopting such a security framework. Britain was afraid that a total commitment to a transatlantic framework would automatically categorize it as a USSR enemy, thus making the threat a more imminent one. Consequently, during this period, Britain emphasized two different and even contradictory identities. On the one hand, it demonstrated a deep commitment to a Western democratic system that would include America; on the other hand, through various statements and actions, it continued to pursue the goal of forming a Third Force.[17] This was often

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17 The commitment toward a Western system was expressed to Marshal on December 1947 and in a series of documents presented to the Cabinet on January 1948. The goal of forming a Third Force was expressed in different statements. In January 1948, Bevin said, "It is for us, as Europeans and as a Social Democratic Government, and not the Americans, to give the lead in the spiritual, moral and political sphere to all the democratic elements in Western Europe, which are anti-Communist and at the same time genuinely progressive and reformist, believing in freedom, planning and social justice — what one might call the 'Third Force'" (Bullock 1983, 514). During the 1948 New Year's broadcast, Atlee supported the concept of Third Force when he spoke about a Western

interpreted as an inherent contradiction in Britain's foreign policy. However, what seemed to be indecisiveness over Britain's prominent identity was actually indecisiveness regarding the identity that would best provide its security. This empirical analysis challenges the constructivist logic that, although capable of accounting for long-term changes in states' identities, has difficulty accounting for frequent identity zigzags and the parallel emphasis of contradictory identities.[18]

There was yet another reason that the Western identity was not internalized at this stage. In 1948, US officials began signaling that assistance would be provided to Europe only after it showed signs of recovery and consolidation. Director for European Affairs John Hickerson stated that any proof that Europe was able to stand on its own would increase the probability of American support. Under Secretary Robert Lovette stated that the US would examine its support of Europe only when there was proof of Europe's unification and of its strong determination to create a framework for self-defense (Baylis 1993, 68–69). Secretary of State George Marshall stated,

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European civilization. According to Atlee, Britain's goal was to preserve the British way of life in a world dominated by two non-European superpowers (Kirby 2004, 404). In an important memo dated January 4 entitled "British Foreign Policy First Aim," Atlee claimed that Western European countries despised America's spiritual values. However, in a letter to the US in the same month, Bevin developed these ideas while omitting the quest for an independent role. Instead, he called for the creation of a European Union backed by power, money, and strong determination "bound together by the common ideals for which the Western Powers have twice in one generation shed their blood" (cited in Baylis 1993, 67). In January 1949, a small cabinet group approved construction of a British bomb, justifying it as a means to "hold our position *vis-à-vis* the Americans" (Perkins 1986, 44). In July 1947, Stafford Cripps, Minister of Economic Affairs said, "[W]e must be ready at any moment to switch our friendship from the United States to Russia" (Dalton 1962, 239 cited in Croft 1994, 97). The British Foreign Office also instructed its diplomats to ensure that forming close relations with the US did not cause resentment within the USSR.

18 Constructivism perceives identity transformation as a long and complicated process in which states, through recursive interactions, locate shared ideas and characteristics that bind them to one another. Since, according to constructivists, identities are a by-product of recursive interactions, it is not clear how they can explain situations in which these interactions generate contradictory identities. In addition, since constructivists assume that the process of identity formation is so long and complex, they would find it hard to account for frequent changes in states' identities.

"[Y]ou, Bevin, must help me on this by doing as much as you can in Europe on your own before I can go back and begin work with Congress" (cited in Croft 1994, 111) The consequences of these remarks were clear: Britain and Western Europe would have to consolidate themselves as a unified pole before American assistance would be provided. On 4 January 1948, Bevin said he believed that "the moment is ripe for consolidation of Western Europe" (cited in Barker 1983, 114).

Third Period: A European Identity
Identifying the security threat

The British perception of the USSR as being the gravest geostrategic menace to its security continued throughout 1948. What changed was not Britain's cognizance of its dependence on American assistance, but rather its understanding of the identity framework that would persuade Congress to provide such assistance. Officials in the American administration left no doubt that Europe would have to consolidate itself as a unified pole in order to encourage Congress to approve greater American involvement in the European scene.

Pinpointing common characteristics

From a twenty-first-century perspective, a common European identity may seem natural and well-established. However, in 1948 such an identity did not exist. Because the security interest demanded the creation of a European identity, a work group was founded for the purpose of developing spiritual dimensions common to European countries. This group, encountering great difficulties, turned to a British philosopher, requesting him to delineate identity dimensions common to all European countries. His reply was that "on a purely intellectual plane nothing very clear, simple and obviously true can be said *without enfeebling qualifications*" (cited in Anstey 1986, 384 fn. 50; my emphasis). This response meant that developing a European identity required articulating general and amorphous dimensions. Thus, the group chose common identity dimensions that focused on anti-communism and democracy, with an emphasis on the freedom of the individual. In contrast to

the concept of Third Force, socialism as a common European ideology was not emphasized — in order that the US would not appear to be financing socialism and would not be prevented from joining a European framework in the future.

Emphasizing the common identity

There is broad agreement among scholars that the Treaty of Brussels was signed in March 1947 to demonstrate to the US that Western Europe was serious about defending itself and was determined to stand on its own feet.[19] However, aside from the materialistic aspect manifested in this strictly formal military alliance, under Article Three of this treaty, the signatories pledged to make every effort to lead the public "towards a better understanding of the principles which form the basis of their common civilisation" (cited in Anstey 1986). A European identity was also to have been consolidated through a spiritual "Western Union" federation. In December 1947, Bevin proposed the idea of a "Western Union" to American Secretary of State George Marshall, stressing the importance of implementing identity balancing in addition to materialist balancing. "It is not enough," he said, "to reinforce the physical barriers which still guard our Western civilisation. We must also organise and consolidate the ethical and spiritual forces inherent in this Western civilisation of which we are the chief protagonists. ... *Political and indeed spiritual forces must be mobilized in our defence*" (cited in Jackson 2003, 240; my emphasis). Speaking before the British parliament, he said,

> ... if we are to have an organism in the West it must be a spiritual union.

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19 According to Elizabeth Baker, the Western Union was designed to encourage the US to grant Europe a full military backup in light of the Soviet threat. Kaplan supports this claim, arguing that the British and French governments were not really interested in creating a European federation, but were only trying to achieve a more significant American involvement in Europe. By presenting a consolidated pole, they sought to break down America's reservations about deepening its involvement (Kaplan 1994, 18). Baylis agrees with these claims but maintains that in addition to this goal, Britain continued in its attempts to develop a Third Force, and that pursuing American assistance served as a strategy to ensure Britain's independent role (Baylis 1993, 73–74). In any case, these scholars all agree that developing a common European identity was designed to provide a solution for a functional security need.

> While no doubt, there must be treaties, or, at least, understandings, the union must primarily be a fusion derived from the basic freedoms and ethical principles for which we all stand. It must be on terms of equality and it must contain all the elements of freedom for which we all stand. (Jackson 2003, 241)

The Information Department also played a crucial role in enhancing public awareness of the existence of a common European civilization. Bevin, acting personally to foster the development of such a spiritual union, spoke of a "historic European civilization," and he suggested recruiting the Church for this purpose. He intended to meet with Church leaders and planned to hold a world congress of Churches under the slogan "socialist-democracy" designed to replace the term "democratic-socialism" that aroused Marxist associations (Ovendale 1985, 75).

Internalizing the common identity

The propaganda campaign for establishing the existence of a common European identity proved to be successful. Unfortunately for Britain, it was too successful, for at some point Bevin lost control over his own idea of a European unity and was forced to witness its rapid implementation in practice. Bevin believed that the weakness of the French led them to relinquish their chance to recover as an independent nation and to press instead for the establishment of a European federation (Bullock 1983, 586). He feared that overemphasizing Britain's European circle of identity would internalize it to an unalterable degree, thus enabling the US to renounce its responsibility of involvement in Europe. Paradoxically, Britain made every effort to prevent the European identity from becoming internalized. As Belgian Prime Minister Spaak recalled, Bevin was never again "to show up in this light. On the contrary, he seemed surprised and even worried when he saw the ideas, which he himself pioneered, being put in practice" (Kirby 2000, 407, cited in Edmonds).

Fourth Period: A Transatlantic Identity

Identifying a security threat

Towards the end of 1948, the Soviet menace was amplified to an unprecedented degree. The deterioration in Germany, the revolution in Czechoslovakia, and the possible similar threat in Norway made it too dangerous to experiment further with European integration. This, combined with Bevin's fear of the potential damaging consequences of cultivating a European identity separate from the US, convinced him that Britain's security interests must be guaranteed through a transatlantic security framework rather than a European one.

Thus, although Britain's threat perception did not change, the identity framework it perceived as necessary to confront it did. A brief produced in October 1949 by the Permanent Undersecretary's Committee entitled "A Third World Power or Western Consolidation" stated Britain's options bluntly. This document outlined three possible paths available for ensuring British security: consolidating the Commonwealth, uniting Europe as an independent Third Force, and forming an alliance with the US. Since the first two alternatives were deemed to be unattainable, the third was adopted.

Pinpointing common characteristics

The characteristics suitable for emphasizing a common transatlantic identity were already in place from previous attempts to mobilize American assistance: mainly Anti-communism, the preservation of democracy, and human rights, as well as a religious component that championed the merits of Christianity over atheism and godlessness (Kirby 2000, 408). Because of the strong support both in Europe and the US for the advancement of a European integration, Britain had to emphasize the fact that these characteristics composed not only the European identity but one much more comprehensive: a Western civilization.

Emphasizing the common identity

Britain's shift of focus from a European orientation to a transatlantic one is reflected in the removal of Frank Roberts from his role. Roberts played a central part in Paris in establishing the OEEC and in developing the Marshall

Plan, and he was considered vital by the French and the Americans for the success of the European integration process. However, in 1948 he was transferred to Washington to undertake a similar role in the establishment of NATO (Bullock 1983, 633). The Americans and Europeans protested this act, which they perceived as weakening the OEEC. But Bevin insisted that the work in Washington was more important.

However, it was obvious that Britain could not act unilaterally and therefore had to invest great efforts in mobilizing the support of the American public. In November 1948, William Edwards, head of the British Information Services in the US, concluded,

> Whether we like it or not we have to admit at this stage of our history that the United States has assumed such a dominant place in the world, and our affairs are so inextricably mixed with hers that the British policy can never totally be effective unless it has the tacit support and backing of the American people — or at very lest is not effectively opposed to them. (cited in Anstey 1986, 375–376)

Therefore, the British shift towards a transatlantic orientation was manifested mainly in identity rhetoric. One day after the coup in Czechoslovakia, Bevin met with Dougals, the American ambassador to Britain, and told him that a joint action was essential "lest the period immediately before us should turn out to have been the last chance for saving the West" (Kirby 2000, 408). In March 1948, Bevin presented to the Cabinet a document entitled "The Threat to Western Civilization." He claimed that resolute action must be taken to hinder the Soviet threat to Western civilization, asserting that it was vital to base the campaign on the higher moral and spiritual values of that civilization (Ovendale 1985, 74). He also suggested mobilizing the Christian Churches for this cause (Kirby 2000, 408). In February 1948, Bevin convinced Atlee to place an embargo on ministerial visits. This was due to Bevin's concern that British ministers' public references to Britain's system of social services would prevent Congress from approving financial aid to Britain under the assumption that by doing so it would in effect be financing Socialism (Anstey 1984, 430).

Britain's rigid commitment to the transatlantic idea was manifested in what Warner defines as "extreme Atlanticism." According to him, it included deep suspicions of anything considered threatening to the idea of a transatlantic community, especially the Schuman Plan and the creation of a European Assembly, which further promoted the idea of a European federation. Since France was mainly responsible for these two initiatives, it was perceived by Britain as the central threat to the Atlantic idea (Warner 1985, 249).[20]

Britain's attempts to weaken its commitment towards the European integration process caused many rifts in Anglo-American relations. The basis for these rifts lay in the differing interests motivating these states, which in turn produced different circles of identity. Britain sought to attain a deep American involvement in Europe in an attempt to prevent further development of a European identity that might have become fully and irreversibly internalized. However, the US on its part was not yet dependent on a transatlantic framework for its security, and it tried strenuously to avoid committing itself to a long-term role in Europe. In order to refrain from such involvement, the Americans emphasized the existence of a unique and separate American identity, which they claimed differed from the European one. However, the British hampered this American interest by "refusing to merge their identity into a European union, as the Americans understood the word, and of trying to retain their wartime 'special relationship' with the USA" (Bullock 1983, 535). This diversity of interests explains why the British and not the Americans repeatedly emphasized the "special relationship" concept, and why their commitment to the transatlantic identity was more extreme. These facts demonstrate yet again that the degree of

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20 Britain's attempts to replace the European framework with a transatlantic one led to
    many disputes with France. During a Brussels Treaty meeting in July 1948, the French
    Minister George Bidault introduced the idea of establishing a European Assembly, but
    Bevin rejected it. When French Prime Minister Ramadier spoke of "the need for some
    illusions and dreams,", Bevin replied "that he had dreams himself, but as Foreign
    Secretary he had to keep wide awake" (Warner 1986, 38). It seems that Bevin tried to
    prevent the idea of a European Assembly from materializing since he realized the ability
    of such a concept to add a strong identity dimension to European relations thus binding
    Britain too firmly to the European framework.

commitment to a common identity depends on the extent to which this identity is considered necessary for providing for material interests.

Internalizing the Transatlantic Identity — An Imagined Community

The North Atlantic Treaty was signed on 4 April 1949, thus realizing Britain's broad aim of committing the US to the European continent. The signing of the treaty indicated that British efforts to invent a common transatlantic identity were highly successful. The various leaders speaking on this day highlighted NATO's role as a fortress defending the principles, values, and ideals of Western civilization. The transatlantic identity, which initially emerged as a product of materialistic interests, created a new community on the international stage. As the community continued to develop and consolidate, its existence was no longer justified in terms of materialistic interests but rather in terms of the urgent need to save Western civilization from the Communist threat; thus common identity changed from a means to an end. The logic of "What you want determines who you are" internalized the transatlantic identity so deeply among the member states that in the end it created the logic of "Who you are determines what you want." Acheson expressed it best when he said in June 1950, "[I]n our unity there is strength, and in our strength there is unity."

Conclusion

At the end of World War II, Britain emphasized its special relationship with the US, claiming that it was founded on a similarity of identities, values, and ideas between both states. However, after the war, this shared identity was quickly replaced with various alternative, and even contradictory, identities. Britain's frequent zigzag from one identity to another is explicable only when we add its security interests to the equation. Initially, assuming that its interests would be best served by forming a Third World Force, Britain chose to blur its shared identity with the US and to define itself as a social democracy, thus positioning itself between communist dictatorships and avaricious capitalism. However, once the Third World Force strategy

appeared to be unfeasible in light of Britain's economic crisis and the Soviet menace, Britain sought to form close strategic relations between Europe and the US. Since the latter conditioned such relations on a consolidated Europe, Britain dedicated its efforts to unifying the continent by crystallizing a common European identity. When Britain realized that positioning itself within a European identity might lead the US to evade its commitment towards the continent, it re-emphasized its shared identity with the US by highlighting the democratic dimension of its social democracy and stressing its transatlantic identity. Thus, adopting a transatlantic identity was not an accidental by-product of British interactions with the US; rather, it was the result of a conscious and planned scheme designed to increase Europe's chances of gaining American protection from the Soviet geo-strategic menace. Therefore, it is possible that if the circumstances had been reversed — if there been an American rather than a Soviet threat — Britain would have chosen to ally itself with the USSR by emphasizing the socialist dimension of its identity.

This review of British foreign policy in the period 1945–1949 demonstrates the significance of implementing the concept of identity balancing in explaining this empirical reality. It also exposes the theoretical and empirical void that the major IR approaches create in their focus on materialistic balancing tools and their disregard of the influence of interests on the formation of identities. When we examine British foreign policy from the perspective of identity balancing, the significant role of British identity as a balancing tool is revealed, and an important dimension of the empirical reality, which is ignored by rationalist ontology, is exposed. Similarly, it is only in examining the frequent variations in British identity that we notice the difficulty of the constructivist approach in explaining why Britain emphasized its unique connection with the US while simultaneously rejecting this connection by expressing contempt for American values. When we treat identity as a product of interests, the concept of identity balancing accounts for these variations by focusing on variations in material interests. The weaknesses inherent in rationalist and constructivist approaches in explaining the empirical case demonstrate the significance of theorizing the

connection between interests and identities and of conceptualizing identity as a balancing tool.

This review also highlights the effectiveness of identity as a long-term and binding balancing tool — as opposed to the short-term and loose character of material balancing tools. Today, transatlantic identity is one of the most prominent characteristics of the relations between Europe and the US. This identity has been so profoundly internalized and naturalized that the identity rivalry and mutual contempt of the past have been forgotten and no one ever doubts the ideational connection that binds both sides of the Atlantic. However, future research will have to examine whether the growing rift that has characterized transatlantic relations since the end of the Cold War also constitutes a product of identity balancing. Central European countries, led by France and Germany, employ terms such as "multilateralism" and "preventive engagement" in criticism of US foreign policy. This might reflect an attempt to balance against US hegemony by dividing transatlantic identity into two distinct European and American identities separated by different values, ideas, and principles. It may be that the same balancing tools, which were previously used by Europe to balance with the US against the USSR, are today being used by Europe to balance against US hegemony.

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Since the 1940's Britain's transatlantic identity has been one of its most prominent features. This identity has been so profoundly internalized that one often forgets Britain's "zigzagging" between three alternative and even contradictory identities after World War II: 1. A Third World Force aimed at creating a bridge between East and West 2. A European civilization 3. A transatlantic identity

I account for these variations in British identity by presenting the theoretical concept of **identity balancing** which postulates that states manipulate their identities in order to fulfill materialistic interests. Identity balancing is a four-phase process: 1. States identify a threat to their physical security and locate other states that are similarly threatened 2. The threatened states emphasize identity characteristics which unite them and downplay those that separate them 3. They frame the common characteristics as being crucial for their continued existence and as requiring cooperation among all states with similar identity characteristics 4.this utilitarian identity becomes so deeply integrated that it transcends its original purpose, becoming an inherent factor within the fabric of society.

Applying the concept of identity balancing I explain the shift in Britain's identity as deriving from a shift in its security interests. After World War II, Britain believed that its interests would be best served by forming an independent pole and therefore emphasized the difference between its identity and that of its wartime allies. As the British economy deteriorated and the Soviet geo-strategic menace escalated, Britain realized that it needed American support. Since the US conditioned its support on a consolidated Europe, Britain sought to "invent" a common European identity. Once it realized that a European identity circle enabled the US to evade its commitment to Europe, it reverted to the strategy of forming close relations with the US, emphasizing the transatlantic identity dimensions common to both countries.

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