Changing the national narrative: Discourse on citizenship and naturalisation policy in Germany and the UK, 2000-2010

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses policy change in German and British nationality policy between 2000 and 2010. It presents some initial findings from doctoral research, focusing mainly on the elite discursive shifts that have accompanied the changes. The decade in question has seen dramatic changes as both countries have renegotiated their identities. While Germany has shifted from an ethno-cultural discourse to a paradigm of what one might call constitutional patriotism and conscious effort to increase naturalisation rates, the UK has become more restrictive, and discourse is aimed at lowering the number of new British citizens. A comparison of the trends in both countries concludes that, though some of the changes are similar, the evidence does not point towards policy convergence but rather toward a crossing of paths.

Key Words: nationality policy, discourse analysis, ethno-cultural nationality, citizenship, naturalisation, Germany, United Kingdom, constitutional patriotism
Introduction

The past decade has been a period of upheaval for citizenship and naturalisation policy in the UK and Germany, with clear elite discursive shifts reflecting accompanying evolutions in their respective national identities. Germany has gone from insisting that it was not a country of immigration in the 1990s to widespread recognition of its long-resident foreign population and the pressing need to increase integration. The UK, on the other hand, has shifted from elite discursive acceptance of immigration – even, at times, despite public opposition – to increasingly open hostility, and a continual raising of the bar for naturalisation.

Rogers Brubaker’s (1992) classic distinction of ethnic versus civic citizenship is arguably too simplistic in application to Germany and the UK, but there is some truth in these stereotypes. Identity discourse at elite levels in both countries has, until recently, largely followed Brubaker’s pattern. His assertion that the conception of citizenship in Germany was too path-dependent to allow for change, however, was overthrown through a series of political events that led to a re-evaluation of national identity and membership in the 1990s. Despite this, the ethnic focus of nationality discourse continued to be prevalent in Germany until very recently.

This article examines the shift in perspectives on integration in the UK and Germany and the resulting implications for national identity. Throughout the changes in both countries, there is clear evidence of conscious construction and alteration of the national narrative. This article will describe the changes to citizenship and naturalisation policy (CNP) in the UK and Germany over the past ten years, examining elite discursive shifts that give evidence of changing national identities in the face of long-term migration. Despite the popularity of convergence literature (see Bulmer, 2007; Green, 2007b; Marig and Wimmer, 2000; Turner and Green, 2007), the research presented herein supports a growing body of literature indicating continued divergence of British and German CNP (Green, 2007a; Page, 2007).

Theoretical framework

It is necessary to clarify the terminology used herein before outlining the theoretical framework. The terms ‘citizenship’ and ‘nationality’ are frequently used interchangeably, though they are separate concepts. When used precisely, citizenship describes not just one’s nationality but also the democratic rights and duties that accompany this legal status (Hailbronner, 2010: 1). In Germany, politicians consistently employ the term ‘nationality’, but in the UK, usage is far more mixed, due in part to its complicated colonial history and the resulting six main forms of British nationality, including British citizenship. One could argue that more recent discussions in both countries revolve more around citizenship than nationality, as recent legislation seeks to codify rights and obligations as well as possession of a passport. With that in mind, this article’s use of the terms reflects their use in the respective countries.

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1 This article was originally written for presentation at the DAAD conference ‘Deutschland und Europa: Grenzen und Grenzgänge(r)’ in Berlin, 5-8 May 2010.
2 Because this article presents research extracted from my ongoing doctoral research, the evidence presented is not symmetrical and offers preliminary findings, for which the author welcomes feedback.
3 For a concise history of British nationality legislation, see Hansen (2000).

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Further terms requiring clarification are ‘discourse’ and ‘discursive shifts’. Discourse, as used in this article, is very broadly defined, encompassing the use of written and spoken language, including choice of words and repetition of phrases. Discursive shifts occur when there are changes to popular phrases or previously unacceptable ideas become mainstream. This is discussed further in the context of behavioural scripts below.

The empirical research tests a theoretical framework that synthesises literature from New Institutionalism, economics, and path dependence/punctuated equilibrium. This hybrid framework treats CNP as an institution to test hypotheses concerning institutional reproduction and change. As Lindner (2003) points out, institutional stability and change are ‘two sides of the same coin’, as change arises when the mechanisms that ensure stability – so-called reproductive mechanisms – break down. The reproductive mechanisms analysed for the thesis are gathered variously from rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism, and sociological institutionalism and can be classified roughly into three categories: utilitarian-functionalist, power-distributional and cultural-sociological (Table 1).

Table 1  
Mechanisms of reproduction

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The findings presented in this article are those from the third category, largely from changes in behavioural and discursive shifts at the elite level. Sociological institutionalism provides most of the literature on the roles of discourse and behaviour in institutional change, proposing that institutions are composites of behavioural ‘scripts’ that influence society (Clemens and Cook, 1999: 445). These scripts are composites of norms and contain systems of encouragement of conformity to and punishment for deviation from the accepted path, thus playing a strong role in deciding actors’ behaviour (Stacey and Rittberger, 2003: 866). When scripts are present, actors are punished for deviating from the accepted discourse. However, when scripts change, previously unacceptable behaviours go unpunished or are even rewarded, as occurs when centre-leaning parties adopt policy priorities advocated by extremist parties because voters indicate a clear affinity for such ideas. In this way, fringe actors can slowly shift the acceptable behavioural scripts, thereby achieving institutional change.

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The UK

After a long history of formally unrestrictive policies (see Hansen, 2000), recent UK immigration and nationality policies have shown an increasingly conservative trend, with restrictive changes made to nearly every criterion for naturalisation since 2000 in the UK (Appendix: Table 2, Table 3). This research does not argue that restrictive discursive shifts have not happened before in the UK; rather, it seeks to expand understanding of developments in the past decade. They have occurred several times in post-war British immigration policy, most notably in the aftermath of Enoch Powell’s infamous ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech in 1968. The popular support that Powell drew gave him the power to force Heath towards a more conservative immigration policy (Hansen, 2000: 190). It became acceptable to profess anti-immigration positions, as long as one was careful to make clear that comments were not of racist intent.

Such a shift in behavioural scripts is again evident in the period in question, 2000-2010. After a few decades of carefully constructed scripts and elite shunning of people expressing anti-immigrant sentiment, the discursive shifts between the 2002 and 2009 bills indicate an increasing number of mainstream politicians openly expressing worries about ‘thresholds’, ‘limits’, and lack of integration.

This section analyses the identity discourse evident in debates surrounding limits on immigration, responses to external pressures, and the imposition of language requirements and the Knowledge of Life in the UK Test. The discursive patterns in each of these areas highlight a common pattern in the process of change: the executive introduces a proposal for change; the proposal is rejected as being contrary to British identity as a liberal country of immigration; the change is dropped, only to be brought back a few years later; upon second introduction, the change that once excited so much condemnation passes with little comment.

Limits on immigration

During the 2002 Nationality, Asylum and Immigration (NIA) Bill debates, limits on immigration were discussed, but concerns about the number of people settling permanently in the UK were generally confined to Conservative politicians, such as Peter Lilley (Hitchin and Harpenden), who did not receive a great deal of sympathy for their views (UK Parliament, 2002b: cc. 378-381). Several chastisements were given during the Immigration, Asylum and Nationality (IAN) Bill (2006) debates for behaviour politicising immigration during the 2005 General Election campaigns (UK Parliament, 2005b: cc. 30, 171, 297). However, come the 2009 Borders, Citizenship and Immigration (BCI) Bill debates, behavioural scripts had shifted. Although actors coupled demands for ‘limited immigration’ with the catchphrase ‘firm but fair’ throughout the decade (UK Parliament, 2002a: c. 885; 2002b: c. 379; 2002e: c. 523; 2009c: c. 255; 2009d: c. 156), the 2005-06 and 2009 debates show increasingly anti-immigration rhetoric (UK Parliament, 2005a: c. 275; 2009b: c. 190, 193, 207; 2009e: 1172). Discussions of naturalisation requirements were conducted in terms of immigration policy, with ministerial claims of ‘making migration work for Britain’ closely intertwined with increasing the requirements for naturalisation (UK Parliament, 2009b: c. 174; 2009e: c. 1130-1131). There were fewer mentions of the positive contributions of migrants and more expectations placed on them. Lord West, the Labour minister in the House of Lords during the BCI Bill, encapsulates the argument: ‘We want to encourage those with the right values
to become citizens. With rights come responsibilities, and those responsibilities must first be
demonstrated, ensuring that the benefits of British citizenship are earned. This is at the heart
of the Government’s firm-but-fair system’ (UK Parliament, 2009e: c. 1130). MPs were not
chastised for citing the statistic that ‘citizenship is granted to a new person every five

Nationality acquisition policy remains tied to a discourse of numbers, functioning more as an
extension of immigration policy than a policy in its own right in the UK (Dummett, 2006).
Because of its colonial history and its post-colonial involvement with the Commonwealth, the
UK has never developed a free-standing citizenship policy. As a result, the restrictive
tendency can be tied to the nearly inevitable result of delayed influences of policy outcomes
in immigration and asylum policies. Around a quarter of naturalisations are consistently
granted on the basis of marriage (Danzelman, 2009: 13), which is difficult for a liberal
democracy to regulate.

Although the UK has tightened language and ‘integration’ regulations regarding spouses, it
cannot prevent its citizens from marrying people from other countries and is a signatory of
multiple conventions which state that everyone has the right to marry without regard to the
spouse’s nationality and that the country of one’s nationality must facilitate the naturalisation
of the foreign spouses of its citizens (Council of Europe, 1997; United Nations, 1948, 1961,
1966). This apparent disregard of international treaties in favour of domestic politics reveals
the prioritisation of domestic political concerns over international commitments.

A further quarter of acquisitions are the registrations of minor children on the basis of a
parent’s nationality (Danzelman, 2009: 23). Again, the UK has little power to restrict
naturalisations in this area, and it has been forced to equalise legislation to allow the
registration of children on the basis of either parent’s nationality, as it had historically been
restricted to the mother’s nationality. The other roughly fifty per cent of naturalisations are
granted on the basis of residence. This includes both people given refugee status in the UK
and highly skilled migrants, as the lower tiers of immigration do not allow qualification for
naturalisation (Danzelman, 2009).

A deeper look at trends in citizenship uptake reveals a roughly five-year delay between the
sudden increase in asylum seekers in the UK at around the turn of the millennium and
applications for citizenship (Error! Reference source not found.). The UK experienced a
peak in asylum applicants in 2002, at which time the highest numbers of applicants and
people granted refugee status were from Iraq, Zimbabwe, Somalia, and Afghanistan (Matz,
Hill, and Heath, 2001: 23-24). Five years later, these same people had fulfilled the residency
requirements to apply for citizenship, which large numbers did. This has led to a widespread
sense of panic about the numbers of people acquiring citizenship without the realisation that
the UK can reasonably expect these numbers to decrease in the coming years as a reflection
of the recent decrease in recognised refugees.

With the uptake of citizenship averaging around 150,000 people a year in the years leading
up to 2010 (Danzelman, 2009: 1), discourse has increasingly focused on the question of
numbers. Arguments widely used in the 1960s about strains on resources, lack of space, and

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7 For an overview of changes prior to the decade here discussed, see Dummett (2006) and Hansen (2000).
panic about numbers have resurfaced, with many of the statements following the general formula of, ‘I’m not a racist, but the UK simply cannot take on more people’. It is increasingly acceptable to say, ‘The problem is simply one of numbers. There is clearly some limit’ (Peter Lilley, UK Parliament, 2002b: c. 378). Given that the same arguments were put forth when the national population was around a third lower than today (Hansen, 2000: 182-190, 210; Ipsos MORI, 2007), their validity remains questionable.

**Figure 1**
Asylum/Exceptional Leave to Remain and Citizenship Grants, UK, 1992-2008

![](chart.png)

**External pressures**

The governmental agenda also shifted during this period in response to pressures on other policy areas and the electoral rewards of a restrictive stance. The July 2008 Draft (Partial) Immigration and Citizenship Bill (‘Consolidation Bill’) (Home Office, 2008) was replaced by the BCI Act (UK Parliament, 2009a) in the 2008-09 legislative period amidst government promises that it would be resurrected in October 2009 (UK Parliament, 2009b). The government argued that the items in the BCI Act required immediate legislation but that the Consolidation Bill had not been entirely abandoned. However, with a General Election looming before the end of the 2009-10 legislative period, the Consolidation Bill was pointedly left out of the Queen’s Speech on 18 November 2009 (UK Parliament, 2009f), making it unlikely to appear again before 2011, three decades after the previous consolidation bill, the British Nationality Act (1981). The politicians rarely expect reprisals for these moves because restrictions are popular with the majority of the electorate, and the people most affected by changes in CNP cannot use their votes to protest until they have navigated the naturalisation process.

Discourse during debates in the House of Commons and the House of Lords about the three nationality law bills between 2000 and 2010 indicates the influence of exogenous factors in causing a rapid, unplanned response to events external to CNP. Like many other policy
areas during this time period, the most commonly cited exogenous factors were related to the effects of radical Islam. The UK faced race riots in 2001 that prompted a debate about integration, especially of non-white minorities. This resulted in a Home Office review and the publication its report on community cohesion (Cantle, 2001). David Blunkett became secretary around the same time, entering with a pre-set legislative agenda (Williams, 2010), and the recommendations from the report simply served to reinforce his proposals.

The terrorist attacks in the USA on September 11, 2001, however, directly occasioned the addition of clauses altering laws regarding deprivation of citizenship (UK Parliament, 2002e). Even more clearly, the London bombings on July 7, 2005 led to the late introduction of clauses affecting the deprivation of citizenship to a bill that was intended to legislate immigration and asylum, not nationality (UK Parliament, 2005b). However, both of these cases affected only policy on the deprivation of citizenship; acquisition remained largely untouched by these events.

Language requirements

When the government introduced language requirements in the BNA (1981) for naturalisation applications on the basis of residency, many organisations and parliamentarians expressed concerns about the potentially discriminatory nature of such a requirement. By 2002, however, the introduction of clauses requiring more formal proof of language ability led to expressions of support and assertions that the previous requirements had been too casual. However, the extension of these language requirements to spouses of British citizens received intense criticism from some parliamentarians and organisations. Some expressed fears that it would interfere with rights to family life; others felt that it would act to exclude these spouses.

Parliamentary debates from the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum (NIA) Bill (2002) indicate conscious discursive construction by the parliamentarians and clearly defined behavioural scripts from which few strayed. The direction of the discussions exhibits a lack of acceptance of greater restrictions on spouses, especially the introduction of a formal language requirement. Before 2002, the general assumption was that spouses of British citizens would naturally acquire language skills in the course of marriage, but the government cited evidence that linguistic integration was not as high as it had been assumed or hoped (UK Parliament, 2002f: c. 1168). Even so, the introduction of a language requirement for spouses of British citizens proved very controversial. Several hours were spent discerning whether it was just or discriminatory to enforce such a requirement.

Some of the legislators still expressed concern about having a language requirement for anyone: ‘It worries me deeply that there is a requirement to learn English’ (UK Parliament, 2002e: c. 445); ‘I do not believe that we should impose conditions which are not at present imposed on the citizens of this country’ (UK Parliament, 2002e: c. 451). However, there was a general consensus that economic migrants should be required to prove their proficiency. Discourse surrounding spousal language requirements suggested that it was interfering with British citizens’ right to chose a spouse: ‘I have to say that the suggestion from a Labour Member of Parliament...that prospective spouses coming to Britain for arranged marriages should be required to learn English was rightly criticised as being a case of the state dictating who was to marry whom’ (UK Parliament, 2002f: c. 1167).
The new clause passed, however, and by 2009 the politicians no longer questioned the existence of such a requirement but rather were more concerned that the standard of proficiency expected was too low. In fact, some politicians congratulated themselves on the positive impact of having enforced the spousal language requirement because of preliminary results indicating that it decreased the social isolation of spouses from non-Western cultures. While those in support of language requirements expressed them to be justified for naturalisation applicants in 2002, the discursive shift by 2009 had led to requirements not only that immigrants must show language proficiency but to proposals to test visa applicants in their home countries before granting entry clearance, akin to the model used in the Netherlands. Such proposals did not draw as much outrage as ten years prior, even though they have the potential to detract significantly from family life and will hit women, the poor, and the least educated the hardest because of limited access to English courses in their home countries. The Conservative government formally announced the implementation of such requirements starting 29 November 2010 (UK Border Agency, 2010).

Knowledge of Life in the UK Test

Another clear example of the technique mentioned above – introducing a change, receiving criticism, withdrawing it, and reintroducing the same change at a later date – is the changes in the application of the Knowledge of Life in the UK Test. As Table 2 (Appendix) shows, this test was not a requirement at the starting point in 2000. It was brought in after much heated debate in the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act. Major objections were made on the grounds of it being discriminatory against non-EU nationals (UK Parliament, 2002c, 2002e). The government convinced the parliamentarians that it was not discriminatory, however, on the grounds that the test was not required for visa applications but only for naturalisation, and EU nationals were subject to the same criteria as non-EU nationals in the naturalisation process (UK Parliament, 2002d: c. 020). Several of the objecting Members subsequently withdrew their objections on the grounds of these reassurances.

In 2006, the government changed the point of application of the Knowledge of Life in the UK Test (UK Parliament, 2006), making it compulsory for anyone applying for settlement in the UK (Appendix: Table 2). Such a requirement was directly contrary to the assurances given during the 2002 debates that the test was not discriminatory against non-EU nationals, as EU nationals do not need to apply for settlement status in the UK because of their right to live in any EU member state. The UK government continued with this tactic in 2009, presenting the possibility of using the Knowledge of Life in the UK Test as a hurdle for settlement and a second exam focused on civics and history for applicants for naturalisation (UK Border Agency, 2009: 5). This was justified on the grounds that the Knowledge of Life test examines applicants on topics that are important to settlement, while a civics exam would make sure that applicants understood the political system and how to exercise the rights of citizenship, such as voting, to which applicants had not previously had access.

Summary

This brief overview indicates the breadth and depth of changes in nationality acquisition and the connected discursive shifts in the UK between 2000 and 2010. The process of change in the UK is particularly interesting because it follows a clear pattern of testing an idea, withdrawing it after a negative reaction, then subsequently re-introducing the idea successfully when the initial aversion has worn off. This method becomes apparent through
an overview of government publications, documentation of public and parliamentary response, and parliamentary debates.

The discursive shift between 2000 and 2010 was clearly towards a more restrictive position. Despite expressions of concern from a wide array of immigrants’ rights associations, the UK government lengthened the residence requirement for labour migrants and those on the protected route, for whom the path to citizenship could now take eight years from the time of acquisition of a qualifying residence status (Appendix: Table 2). This drew harsh criticism especially from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, whose office has long demanded that the path to citizenship for recognised refugees should take no more than five years (UNHCR, 2009: 2). The domestic political rewards for a restrictive citizenship policy have clearly outweighed the international punishment for behaviour in violation of treaties of which the UK is a signatory.

Germany

Germany, on the other hand, has moved from a very restrictive citizenship regime for much of the twentieth century to a more liberal regime that attempts to fulfil treaty obligations and to further integration. After decades of naturalisation being the exception rather than the rule, even for second- and third-generation immigrants, Germany’s official policy now encourages naturalisation, and policies are intended to increase integration and naturalisation rates. Although some of the German policy changes have been similar to the UK, others of the changes now make Germany more liberal than the UK (Appendix: Table 2, Table 3, Table 4). It is Germany’s discourse, however, that presents the strongest evidence of the liberalising shift. From widespread statements that Germany was not a country of immigration in 2000 to open acceptance that it is a country of immigration in 2010, this reflects a broader discursive shift. Politicians are now punished for politicising integration, and there is a broad consensus in favour of easing naturalisation.

Although discussions in Germany have revolved around citizenship as the end-point of integration, a reward for taking on German values, German identity discourse has shifted substantially in the past ten years. After successful right-wing campaigns against foreigners in the 1990s, parties who have subsequently strayed from the newly established behavioural scripts have been punished rather than rewarded by voters (Meier-Braun, 2002: 102). From Brubaker’s famous prophecy that Germany’s policy process was too path dependent to be able to institute an ius soli (birthright) system of citizenship (1992: 185) to a system more liberal than France and widely accepted by the German public (Thränhardt, 2002: 359), discourse surrounding national identity is strongly indicative of dramatic change.

Even in the first years after the landmark changes to the Staatsangehörigkeitsgesetz (StAG) came into effect on 1 January 2000, both academic and public discourse continued to focus on the xenophobic, ethno-cultural German identity. Yet the past decade shows evidence of discursive, legislative and administrative shifts that commentators ten years ago largely dismissed as impossible. Germany has learned in recent decades that citizenship policy, while not a routine issue like the annual budget, cannot be ignored because countries must

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8 ‘Deutschland ist kein Einwanderungsland’.
9 ‘Deutschland ist ein Einwanderungsland’.
address the situation of the millions of foreigners living within their borders, as it has become clear that they are not temporary migrants looking to leave soon. As a consequence, it has realised the necessity of higher levels of naturalisation (Green, 2004: 142). Higher levels of naturalisation cannot be realised simply through legal and administrative changes, however: uptake of German citizenship continued at levels seen as disappointing after an initial surge in response to the 1999 changes. Uptake must be encouraged through greater public acceptance, higher incentives for naturalisation, and a discursive shift from an ethno-cultural national identity to a more civic identity. This section examines the historical influences on German discourse and policy, the politicisation of immigration, the roles of public opinion and the media, and finally the shift towards positive public discussion of integration and greater ‘constitutional patriotism’ replacing the ethno-cultural model.

**Historical influences**

There were many reasons for Germany’s focus on ethnically-based citizenship in the decades after World War II. Facing a divided country, using German ancestry as the determining factor for citizenship eased the process of naturalisation for refugees from the Soviet bloc. It was a means of circumventing the separate citizenship declared by the German Democratic Republic in 1967 (*Staatsbürgerschaftsgesetz der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*). However, with the fall of the Iron Curtain and the official unification of Germany, ethnically-based citizenship became a loophole that led to an influx of hundreds of thousands of people a year, leading to the national joke that one only needed to have a German shepherd in the family to claim German citizenship. With unprecedented numbers of people claiming German citizenship, ethnic Germans began to be seen through the same lens as other visible immigrant groups. As the 1990s passed, it became obvious that German ancestry was not enough to pass on a shared heritage, and many of the ethnic German immigrants lacked German language skills. These pressures contributed to debates on German national identity.

The experiences of other immigrant groups were an additional to the debates. Until the 1990s, many immigrants and Germans alike shared the belief that the guestworkers would eventually return to their home countries (Constant and Massey, 2002; Klimt, 2003: 263). Thus, many of the immigrants were uninterested in naturalisation, and German nationality law made naturalisation the exception rather than the rule. However, by the 1990s, Germany began to feel the pressure of second- and third-generation unnaturalised immigrants who had been born and educated in Germany, some of whom had never been to their ancestral homes; yet they did not possess the rights of citizenship.

At the end of the 1990s, the statistical outlook after decades of immigration provided growing proof that many of the immigrants were there to stay: ‘at the end of 2002, the average residence period of the 7.3 million foreigners in Germany was 15.3 years; two-thirds had lived in Germany for eight or more years, and one-third for more than twenty years’ (Green, 2004: 6). Even in the third generation, many of the descendents of primary immigrants were still foreign citizens, and German law did not allow for *ius soli* citizenship until the legislative reform passed in July 1999.

Yet Germany still had not established a system of integration, and discourse laying the blame at the feet of immigrants was common. Immigrants were discussed as the sources of many problems, including criminality, the overstraining of the welfare state, cultural conflicts,
and unemployment. Politicians and even ecological activists began to create a stigma surrounding the foreigners as dirty, loud, and problematic (Meier-Braun, 2002: 43). Faced with a lack of affiliation with modern German culture, the ethnic German immigrants themselves added much to the stigmatism of the Turks, creating a pariah group that would distract attention from their own maladaptation. To add to these complications, the number of asylum-seekers nearly quadrupled from 1989 to 1992 as non-Germans tried to leave the former Soviet Union as well (Joppke, 1998: 125).

**Politicisation, public opinion and the media**

From widespread statements that Germany was *not* a country of immigration in 2000 to open acceptance that it *is* a country of immigration in 2010, this reflects a broader discursive shift. For many years, the media and politicians taught Germans to see immigrants as a political problem. These actors have consistently pushed a word association between immigrants and criminality (Ireland, 2004: 53). The German political parties have carefully watched public opinion polls about immigration when deciding their agendas. With a record number of respondents sensitive to the issue of ‘asylum and foreigners’ in a *Politbarometer* poll in 1992 and extremist groups gaining ground in parliamentary elections, the government was forced to confront the issue with proposals that led to legislative reform in 1993 (Green, 2004: 84). Again, during discussions of naturalisation reforms in 1997, politicians noted public opinion and manipulated it to gain votes. Meier-Braun notes, ‘Ultimately, it [the discourse] was not about the topic – facilitating naturalisation – but about a hitherto unknown form of exploitation of immigration policy for the retention of power’ (Meier-Braun, 2002: 89-90).\(^\text{10}\)

In the 1990s, there were several campaigns that politicised migration for electoral gain. The Republikaner party’s successful right-wing campaign used the slogan ‘Germany first’\(^\text{11}\) in their successful 1989 European election campaign, breaking the 5% barrier (Thränhardt, 2002: 354). In 1991, the CDU campaigned under the slogan ‘every additional asylum seeker is an SPD asylum seeker’ (Thränhardt, 2002: 354). The xenophobic CDU campaign in the famous Hessen *Land* election helped them to win only months after clear defeat in the 1998 federal election (Thränhardt, 2002: 359). Famously, Otto Schily, at the time Federal Minister of the Interior, stated in 1998, ‘Germany’s breaking point from immigration has been exceeded’, (Tagesspiegel, 1998).\(^\text{12}\) The government ‘argued that immigration of people from alien cultures is not in the national interest as social and political stability are tied to the national homogeneity of the state’ (Schmidt, 1999: 99). Other campaign slogans from the 1990s included ‘Germany for the Germans’, ‘Foreigners out!’, and ‘The boat is full’.\(^\text{13}\)

Parties who have subsequently strayed from the newly established behavioural scripts, however, have been punished rather than rewarded by voters, and there is a broad consensus in favour of easing naturalisation. When the CDU candidate Jürgens Rüttgers tried to politicise the issue once again during the 2000 North Rhine-Westphalia election after an agreement not to bring up immigration, the party was severely punished (Meier-Braun, 2002: 89-90).\(^\text{10}\)

\(^\text{10}\) ‘Letztendlich ging es wieder einmal nicht mehr um die Sache – erleichterte Einbürgerung –, sondern um eine dieser Form noch nicht dagewesene Instrumentalisierung der Ausländerpolitik für den Machterhalt’.

\(^\text{11}\) ‘Deutschland zuerst’.

\(^\text{12}\) ‘Die Grenze der Belastbarkeit Deutschlands durch Zuwanderung ist überschritten’.

\(^\text{13}\) ‘Deutschland für die Deutschen’, ‘Ausländer raus!’, ‘Das Boot ist voll’
Rüttgers lost his credibility in the election by using the slogan ‘Children, not Indians’\(^{14}\) in reference to the importation of foreigners to fill information technology jobs.

**Integration starts at home**

By 2005, 18.9 per cent of the population in Germany had an immigrant background, rising to close to 40 per cent in Germany’s large cities (Statistisches Bundesamt Deutschland, 2006). Amongst those under the age of 15, the proportion was 30 per cent and almost 45 per cent of those in large cities (Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Migration, 2007). Such statistics have become common knowledge in much of Germany and, rather than fuelling arguments that the country was too full, they have begun to support arguments that a greater effort must be made by the Germans to facilitate integration.

The new catchphrase in Germany has become ‘integration takes place on-site\(^{15}\)’, more idiomatically, ‘integration starts at home’, emphasising the importance of the local community (Bundesregierung Deutschland, 2007). This reflects the growing consensus that federal legislation can only set the framework for integration, while the local institutions must take charge of the actuality of policy administration (Häußermann and Kapphan, 2008: 15-16). Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel has recognised the need for greater dialogue about integration, convening a series of integration summits to which practitioners, immigrants, and various interest groups were invited to discuss the state of integration and how to improve it. Although these summits have drawn criticism and have suffered from key groups’ decisions to boycott them, they still symbolise a shift towards greater inclusion and consultation with the people to be integrated, a radical step in German policy. Following the federal example, local authorities have sought the opinions and suggestions of immigrants and minorities more in the policy-making process (Wundenberg, 2008).

People of migrant origin are spoken of now as ‘policy partners’, reflective of a paradigmatic change at both the local and national levels (Häußermann and Kapphan, 2008: 23). Some cities have begun openly recruiting people with migration origin for public service jobs (Häußermann and Kapphan, 2008: 25).

**Summary**

Both ‘foreigners’ and Germans seem to have a tacit understanding that the acquisition of German citizenship is not simply a membership to the state and all its civic responsibilities but also indicative of a cultural understanding (Brubaker, 1992: 178). This cultural membership seems to be a form of expression of loyalty to the German state, a central theme in many of the policy discourses in the 1990s in Germany (Green, 2004: 104). German integration efforts have focused increasingly on linguistic unity whilst moving away from ethnic identity. With this has also come a growing emphasis on constitutional patriotism similar to the American model: creating a national identity through loyalty to the political institutions and democratic ideals rather than through a common ethnic history. Where integration in Germany previously meant something closer to assimilation, requiring the immigrant to lose any previous identity and become virtually undistinguishable from ethnic Germans, discourse in Germany has sought to re-define this term. The National Integration Plan proposes that ‘integration means integration into the social, economic, intellectual,

\(^{14}\) ‘Kinder statt Inder’

\(^{15}\) ‘Integration findet vor Ort statt’
cultural and legal fabric of the host country without giving up one's own cultural identity’ (Bundesregierung Deutschland, 2007: 127). For the first time, there is widespread discussion of reciprocal adaptation in place of an expectation that immigrants must make all of the changes (Bundesregierung Deutschland, 2007: 127; Häußermann and Kapphan, 2008: 18).

Conclusions

Rather than showing evidence of convergence, a comparison of these two cases indicates that perhaps Germany and the UK have crossed paths on trajectories headed in opposite directions, a finding contrary to convergence studies in many other policy areas. This supports the conclusions of several policy experts in a special issue on policy convergence in the UK and Germany (Page, 2007: 184). Though there is evidence of policy sharing with regards to popular ideas like naturalisation ceremonies and swearing of oaths according to a more American or Dutch model, in terms of requirements likely to affect the ability of the foreigners to naturalise, Germany is in many ways now more liberal than the UK, which has tightened the criteria for naturalisation to such an extent that it is only more liberal than Germany in its widespread acceptance of multiple nationality. Yet the UK retains its reputation for liberal policy in much of the national discourse, while Germany continues with its post-war pattern of self-criticism.

While Britain seems to be reviving the sentiments of the 1960s, indicating a discursive shift towards exclusion and greater assimilation rather than reciprocal integration, Germany seems to be shaking off its ethno-cultural model and building a linguistic and constitutional patriotism. Germany has now largely dropped slogans like ‘the boat is full’, while British discourse increasingly cites overburdening of the infrastructure and welfare system. Anti-immigrant discourse is becoming more acceptable in the UK at all levels, with restrictive immigration policies featuring in the campaign manifestos of the major political parties and in parliamentary debates without backlash or even with reward, while attempts to politicise immigration and integration in Germany have increasingly resulted in punishment of the responsible actors.

For the time being, it appears that British identity discourse will continue to accept certain levels of anti-immigrant speech, and policies will continue in a restrictive direction; on the other hand, German discourse appears to be growing more liberal and more stable, and the country appears to be establishing a new discursive norm that is more inclusive and exhibits more elements of reciprocal integration.

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16 ‘Integration bedeutet die Einbindung in das gesellschaftliche, wirtschaftliche, geistig-kulturelle und rechtliche Gefüge des Aufnahmelandes ohne Aufgabe der eigenen kulturellen Identität’
## APPENDIX

### Table 2
Comparative Table of naturalisation requirements, 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good character</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Fines up to 180 days' wages, prison sentences up to 6 months</td>
<td>Fines up to 180 days' wages, prison sentences up to 6 months</td>
<td>Fines up to 90 days' wages, prison sentences up to 3 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Casual, none for spouses</td>
<td>Yes, including spouses</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes/No†</td>
<td>Yes/No†</td>
<td>Yes, CEFR B1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship oath/pledge</td>
<td>Oath</td>
<td>New oath and pledge</td>
<td>Oath and pledge</td>
<td>Oath and pledge</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizenship ceremony</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exam</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, for settlement</td>
<td>Yes, possible second test</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of law and society</td>
<td>Approx. £150</td>
<td>Approx. £150</td>
<td>Approx. £575</td>
<td>Approx. £800</td>
<td>500DM (adults)/100DM (children)/reductions possible</td>
<td>€255 (adult)/€51 (children)/reductions possible</td>
<td>€255 (adult)/€51 (children)/reductions possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of residence</td>
<td>3 yrs (spouses), 5 yrs (residence)</td>
<td>3 yrs (spouses), 5 yrs (residence)</td>
<td>3 yrs (spouses), 5 yrs (residence)</td>
<td>3-5 yrs (spouses), 6-8 yrs (residence)</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>8 years/7 years*</td>
<td>8 Years/7 years*6 years**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absences from country</td>
<td>Avg. 90 days/yr, 90 days in final year</td>
<td>Avg. 90 days/yr, 90 days in final year</td>
<td>Avg. 90 days/yr, 90 days in final year</td>
<td>Absolute 90 days/yr</td>
<td>Up to 6 months</td>
<td>Up to 6 months</td>
<td>Up to 6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other: Activity (UK)/Optionsmodell (DE)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Restrictive changes indicated in bold. Liberal changes indicated in italics.

* Upon successful completion of integration course. ** In cases of ‘extraordinary integration’, especially linguistic.
† Proof of sufficient German knowledge required for naturalisation by right (Anspruch) but not for naturalisation by discretion (Ermessen).
Table 3
Changes in UK deprivation of citizenship criteria, 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 British-born</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Definition</td>
<td>Treason</td>
<td>Eur. Convention on Nationality wording</td>
<td>‘Conducive to public good’</td>
<td>‘Conducive to public good’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Removes right of abode</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Naturalised on false information</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
Changes in German deprivation of citizenship criteria, 2000-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Application for foreign nationality</td>
<td>Yes, except by prior approval</td>
<td>Yes, except by prior approval</td>
<td>Yes, except by prior approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Adoption by foreigner</td>
<td>Yes, if acquiring adoptee's nationality and not related to a German parent</td>
<td>Yes, if acquiring adoptee's nationality and not related to a German parent</td>
<td>Yes, if acquiring adoptee's nationality and not related to a German parent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Optionsmodell</td>
<td>If no choice submitted before 24th birthday</td>
<td>If no choice submitted before 24th birthday</td>
<td>If no choice submitted before 24th birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Entry into foreign military</td>
<td>Yes, unless bilateral agreement</td>
<td>Yes, except by prior approval</td>
<td>Yes, except by prior approval</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Treason</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Naturalised by deception</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Williams, Helen (2010, Jan.). [Interview with senior Home Office official].