

“Heading for the Abyss”

Interstate friendship, anxiety and
state biographical narrative change in Austria

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With you ends a whole generation of invaluable history.

Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how state biographical narratives can change and how this process might affect a state's ontological security. Moreover, it looks at whether interstate friendship could alleviate any feelings of anxiety caused by such changes. Using the case of Austria after World War II, the analysis focuses on political elites' articulations of Austrian state identity along a victim narrative as first coined by the Allies in the Moscow Declaration. Using a discursive psychology method, I show how Austria's state biographical narrative changed from that of a victim of the war to admitting co-responsibility in the crimes committed. Looking at official documents and parliamentary speeches, I show how the so-called victim myth was sustained and subsequently changed by politicians by drawing from distinct interpretative repertoires. Drawing from literature on political memory, emotions in IR and interstate friendship, I apply the ontological security concept understood as security of becoming to argue that this change was ultimately a showcase of agency that facilitated Austria's way to EU accession at a time when new standards for dealing with the past were established across Europe.

Key words: ontological security, friendship, biographical narrative, memory, emotions

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1 Introduction

Kierkegaard compared anxiety to the infinity of possibilities and the dizzy feeling one gets from staring into an abyss. Nietzsche said that if one were to stare long enough, the abyss would stare back. The title of this thesis is taken from the translated title of a 64 page booklet intended for pupils published in 1978 outlining the events that lead to the year 1938 and the annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany, also known as *Anschluss*.¹ The state of Austria ceased to exist as its territory was incorporated into the German Reich and all state institutions dismantled. The name *Österreich* was outlawed and replaced by the new term *Ostmark*, signifying that the former sovereign nation-state had now become a mere province of a bigger entity. The fact that there was no Austria proper during World War II, ontologically speaking, was especially significant when it came to assigning guilt after the war had ended. While Germany acknowledged all guilt from the outset, the question was more difficult for Austria: Can someone who did not exist at the time of a crime be found guilty of that crime, and if so, can a perpetrator also be a victim?

The idea that Austria had been both first victim of Nazi aggression, but also a perpetrator in the war was institutionalised by as early as 1943 when representatives from Great Britain, the United States and the Soviet Union came together at the Moscow Conference to sign four declarations, one of them the Declaration on Austria. While the first paragraph stated that the three governments agreed that Austria was “the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression” and that it “shall be liberated from German domination”, thereby implying that the country had been ridded of any agency, the Declaration closed with this sentence:

Austria is reminded, however, that she has a responsibility, which she cannot evade, for participation in the war at the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her own contribution to her liberation. (Tripartite Declaration on Austria, Moscow, 1 November 1943)

According to Uhl (2006), this last part had apparently been intended as a, albeit fairly ineffective, propaganda instrument intended to bolster any resistance among the Austrian population. Furthermore, the fact that it contradicted in a way the previous

¹ “Heading for the Abyss: Austria’s Way 1918–1945”, a translation of the German “*Start in den Abgrund: Österreichs Weg zum Jahr 1938*”, a 1978 pamphlet for teaching the 1918–1945 events in Austrian schools written by Walter Göhring and Friederike Stadlmann and edited by Franz Mrkvicka. Translation by Tom Appleton and Eli Lebow of Heidemarie Uhl’s contribution to Lebow et al.’s *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*. Duke University Press, 2006.

paragraph was in part due to the different agendas of the signatories: While the United States wanted to see an economically stable Austria become a viable partner, Britain and the Soviet Union expected reparations. However, according to Judt (2002: 160-1), establishing Austria “as the ‘first victim’ of Nazi aggression ... suited not only Austrians but also the prejudices of someone like Churchill [or de Gaulle], for whom Nazism was a natural extension of Prussian militarism and expansionist ambitions.” Regardless of intent behind its wording, and even though it consists only of a few lines, the Declaration was soon to be the main reference point for the founding myth of the Austrian Second Republic after 1945, as well as the accompanying victim myth, the *Opfermythos* or *Opferthese*. The Proclamation of the Second Republic, formally reconstituting the state of Austria, adopted by the three re-established parties of the Socialists, the Conservatives, and the Communist Party on 27 April 1945, quoted directly from the Moscow Declaration. Trying to counter the “co-responsibility clause”, the provisional government emphasised the

fact that the Nazi reign of Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich led the Austrian people, who had been rendered powerless and were bereft of any free will, into a senseless and pointless war of conquest, which no Austrian ever wanted any part of (quoted in Uhl, 2006).

The victim myth continued to be the main way of dealing with memories of the war, and at the signing of the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 which formally ended the Allied occupation, Foreign Minister Figl spoke of “seventeen years of a long and thorny road of bondage” (quoted in Uhl, 2006) finally coming to an end, implying that even though the war had ended in 1945, the ensuing occupation had only been an exchange of nationalities of the occupying forces.

While the articulation of the victim myth changed depending on domestic as well as external circumstances, for example the Cold War context, it persisted and determined especially foreign policy until the major turning point in the late 1980s/early 1990s. Bachleitner (2019) specifically singles out a 1991 parliamentary speech given by Chancellor Franz Vranitzky as the turning point of when the Austrian state changed from a “diplomacy of innocence” to a “diplomacy of guilt” with Vranitzky’s speech being the first time there had been a confession of co-responsibility and guilt with regards to World War II and the Holocaust. Prominent historians and social scientists, Austrian (Oliver Rathkolb, Heidemarie Uhl, Ruth Wodak) as well as international (see for example Robert Knight), situate the change in a similar time frame, some locating the first cracks in the victim facade in the mid-1980s during the time of the “Waldheim Affair”. Assuming that this shift from one biographical narrative of the Austrian state to another led to major fissures about the makeup of the “Austrian state identity”, it is from here that this thesis theoretically departs.

1.1 The Research Problem and Research Questions

Conceiving the nation-state as constituted through a biographical narrative means that experience (meaning given to the past) and visions of possibility (meaning given to the future) are properties of the nation-state (Berenskoetter, 2014) and thus play a role in shaping its identity (Ringmar, 1996). Connecting this idea to that of Giddens' notion of biographical continuity, scholars have made various links between narratives, state identities and ontological security (see, for example, Steele, 2008). Biographical narratives have been used for explaining state behaviour (Subotic, 2016) and linked to discursive articulations of collective memory and trauma (Innes and Steele, 2013). Combining conceptions of collective memory with an ontological security approach, "state identity is understood as a 'narrated identity' on the collective level" (Bachleitner, 2019).

In the ontological security literature, continuous narratives about identity are seen as anxiety-controlling mechanisms. As they help make sense of past experiences, they make predicting the future possible. The infinite possibilities and the abyss mentioned at the beginning of this introduction therefore become less threatening. If states are seen as not only physical security seeking but also ontological security seeking actors, then a change in the narrative that helps shape their identity (as change in biographical narrative) should be avoided, if one is to go with the definition of OS as security of *being*. This avoidance goes so far as to block out any "potentially disturbing knowledge" (Giddens, 1991: 188) and engage in a cognitive dissonance "wherein human beings tend to not perceive what is contrary to their preconceived or previously held perspectives" (Viotti and Kauppi, 1999, in Steele 2005). Applying this to the case of post-war Austria, information of co-responsibility and knowledge of Austrian perpetrators would have been intentionally disregarded in an effort to sustain the ontological security connected to the continuation of the victim myth and the affiliated state identity. Seeing ontological security as something wedded to the status quo (Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2020) and intrinsically against any change would fail to explain why a state would willingly consider such a change in the first place as well as rid a state actor of any agency when it comes to dealing with anxiety.

Adopting a view of ontological security as a security of *becoming*, however, grants us this possibility. We have to keep in mind, though, that being and becoming do not exclude each other, but that being is the process of becoming, since the process can never be closed. Additionally, if anxiety resulting in ontological *insecurity* is put into the mix, one can see that both anxiety and ontological insecurity harbour the possibility for a radical agency, unimpeded from a status quo. While this does not

mean that the subject is “*seeking* radical change”, it is endowed with “having the capacity to cope with life’s ups and downs” and taking charge (Berenskoetter, 2020: 284). Given this preliminary discussion, this thesis will therefore ask,

- 1) *How can state biographical narratives change?*
- 2) *How could this affect a state's ontological security?*
- 3) *Could interstate friendship provide ontological security in times of these narrative changes?*

I am aware that the last question might verge on speculation. With regards to the case of Austria, I am suggesting that a self-aware Germany on the one hand, and the prospect of joining the European Union (of which Germany was already a member) on the other were reliable significant others that promised enough future-foreseeing and the prospect of anxiety-taming for Austria to take the leap of faith into the abyss and abandon her traditional identity by changing its biographical narrative from victim to accomplice, from innocence to co-responsibility.

1.3 Thesis structure

The general structure of the thesis is as follows: The first chapter is written in the form of a theory review which sets out to introduce the concepts used for approaching my case. It will begin by looking at the idea of state identity to then go into the critical literature which will lead to the idea of state level emotions and memory, ontological security and friendship. The ensuing chapter on methodology will present the overall importance of discourse in (international) politics and the analysis thereof. It will present the particular method used to conduct this study, discursive psychology, as well as the connected idea of using discourses as repertoires from which politicians draw when constructing identities discursively. The methodology chapter will end with a short introduction of the case of post-war Austria and the empirical material used. The final chapter of the main text, the analysis, is set up to tend to the research questions. Finally, the conclusion will sum up the main points of the analysis as well as contextualize the study again by proposing potential further research on memory politics and ontological security in general, and Austria in particular, arguing that an ontological security approach can contribute substantially to the study of memory politics. In this regard, I hope for this thesis to be a contribution to existing literature in various ways and also show new applications and combinations of both theory and method.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter is a review of the theories and concepts to be used in this thesis. It will draw on various bodies of theory to build a theoretical framework providing the conceptual backdrop for my analysis. I will begin by discussing ideas of state identity approaches and memory politics more generally, as well as the role of emotions and memory in (international) politics. Then, I will look at the ontological security scholarship and the notions of chosen glory/chosen trauma, especially in connection with memory politics. The review will end with the introduction of the concept of friendship between states, mainly drawing on Felix Berenskoetter's work.

Beforehand, though, I want to give a rationale for focusing my analysis on the state, even though the state-centred approach has been criticised with good reason. Traditional IR scholarship has "obscured the role of non-state actors, international organizations, or domestic actors" with its excessive state-centrism (Epstein, 2010: 342), and has tended to further marginalise groups already located on the fringes, be it because of gender, class, or race. Furthermore, the frequent focus on material realities has too often neglected the power of socio-psychological aspects. However, since I am looking at state biographic narrative changes and ontological security on the state-level, with the state as the security seeker, I maintain that in this project a focus on the state as the main actor is valid. Applying theories and concepts that originated in the individual-centred fields such as psychology or sociology adds a new dimension to state-centred analysis. Of course, geopolitical developments over the past decades have shown that non-state actors have become a force to be reckoned with, challenging and undermining state power, in the context of international terrorism or solidarity and protest movements, for example. Nevertheless, the nation-state continues to be the main unit of organisation in the international sphere (in the UN system, for example) and the Westphalian system continues to persist. Therefore, developing new ways to analyse the state and its relations to other states, supra-state entities, or its own or foreign populations, is the beauty of ever evolving critical IR scholarship. I would like to go with Fierke's interpretation of "constructivism" when I say that this thesis follows a broadly critical and constructivist line, "in so far as they present a challenge to more traditional theories that assume the fixity of an objective world and the primacy of material power. The intent is to construct and facilitate a dialogue between different approaches regarding the various concepts" (Fierke, 2007: 3).

2.1 State-centred identity theory

The underpinning idea of this thesis is that states have identities in and of themselves, with their own biography, memories and related narratives along which they tell stories about themselves and others. The idea that there is more to the state than just rational interest in power, economic or material gain is central to the IR theory of constructivism. When Alexander Wendt wrote his *Social Theory of International Politics* it was predicted to become to constructivism what Waltz' *Theory of International Politics* was for realism (Zehfuss, 2001). Wendt set out to prove wrong the (neo-)realist claim that the international system is made up of selfish actors. To him, a different kind of anarchy was possible. According to Wendt, the international system is created through processes of interaction between its main actors, states. The identities of these actors are then developed, sustained, and transformed through and by these interactions (Wendt, 1994, 1999). Because of this, "anarchy is what states make of it" (Wendt, 1992: 183). In essence, this is what a constructivist theory of IR is about: International relations, and the identities of actors in the international system, are not a given, but rather socially constructed (Wendt, 1999). Wendt makes sure to differentiate his identity concept from that of interests: "Identities refer to who and what actors *are*. ... Interests refer to what actors *want*." (Wendt, 1999: 231). States' identities are the basis for their interests, "because an actor cannot know what it wants until it knows who it is" (Ibid.: 231).

Fierke echoes this point: "States, democracies, international institutions, ... only exist by virtue of the social, ideological, cultural or political structure by which they are given meaning and imbued with legitimacy and power" (Fierke, 2007: 3). Further, this is an ongoing process in which states take on "identities in relation to others, casting them into corresponding counter-identities, and playing out the result" (Wendt, 1999: 21). The important point here, and also for this thesis, is that while "these identities may be hard to change, they are not carved in stone, and indeed sometimes are the only variable actors can manipulate in a situation" (Ibid.). Bill McSweeney agrees with this notion that identities can change through interaction with others. He criticises Wendt, however, for the fact that he only mentions in passing the distinction between "the process of *state interaction with other states* in the international arena" and "the domestic process of *state interaction with sub-state actors*" (McSweeney, 1999: 126-7). This criticism is echoed by Maya Zehfuss' application of Wendt's approach to the identity transformation of Germany after the Cold War. She claims "that identities are more complex than a Wendtian account is able to acknowledge" (Zehfuss, 2001: 317). She criticises that Wendt pays too little attention to domestic factors of state identity (trans)formation. For Wendt, structural

change, and thus a key focus of systemic theorizing, supervenes identity change (Wendt, 1999: 338). Thus, identity transformation is significant, even if not a focus of the theory as such. Wendt's bracketing of domestic politics and his related failure to take the discursive production of identity seriously is not an innocent methodological choice but a necessary move if identity is not to immediately threaten his constructivist project (Zehfuss, 2001: 332). Furthermore, she points out that even though Wendt's constructivism recognises "'rhetorical practice' or verbal communication as significant, it fails to address *how* discourse should be analysed" (Zehfuss, 2001: 326).

This could now lead into a discussion of the level-of-analysis problem. Wendt treats the state as an actor, an individual, which helps "to bridge the gap between the different levels of analysis and travel between the self of the individual and that of the state" (Epstein, 2010: 339). To this, Roxanne Doty comments that "Wendt has trouble understanding how 'something can be an actor at all if it is not unitary'. Actually 'the state' is a good example of an actor that is, in fact, not unitary (if we must think of the state as an actor at all, and it is by no means totally clear we should)" (Doty, 2000: 138-9). Even Wendt's critics have granted him this advantage of seeing states as persons, as it allows to apply people-focused knowledge to understanding states' behaviour.

The state-as-person approach has evidently found its critics as well as adherents, and there is not enough space here to go into this conversation extensively. In the introduction of a forum on state personhood, Patrick Thaddeus Jackson argued that "there are a number of reasons why the question of state personhood should be an important issue for IR theorists", one of them being ethical considerations: "If the state is a person, does it follow that only the state as a whole can be held responsible for 'crimes against humanity' perpetrated by its representatives? Or do only individuals bear responsibility for such actions?" (Jackson, 2004: 257-8). While this question on ethics is particularly interesting for the case of my study, for the sake of answering this thesis' research questions, it is probably not necessary to align with either the state-as-person or as-if person approach. If we assume the state to have a "group self" in order to be able to apply theories that have been developed with regards to an "individual self", then so be it. Nevertheless, it is appropriate to use the anthropomorphism analogy since it facilitates theorising about state identity and narrative. For now, going on with this chapter, it should be clear that I believe that an understanding of state identity as something constructed in relation to others, but still open to change, offers a solid starting point.

Wendt has also been accused of having one foot in each camp, siding with both positivists and post-positivists at the same time (Smith, 2000; Hollis & Smith, 1991). As he is both against rationalist theories of IR, but also is not quite *critical* enough, he is nowadays seen as a *traditional* constructivist. To *critical* constructivists, his

work has acted as a springboard to launch new bodies of IR literature, making it even more interdisciplinary. The emotional and memory turn are emblematic of that. Since Wendt is lacking an account for emotions, which is important for this thesis, as I am claiming that states can *feel* ontologically (in)secure, the next part will look at emotions in (world) politics. I will also look at memory, since, as mentioned in the introduction, it is integral to understandings of identity narratives.

2.2 Emotions and memory in politics

A discussion of emotion in IR has to be included in this theory review since my thesis will be dealing with feelings of guilt, shame and innocence as experienced and expressed on a collective, state level. Furthermore, emotions of fear and anxiety are relevant in ontological security theory (see section further below). To me, a discussion on emotion on the state level has to follow one on state personhood. The above discussions on state identity take for granted Wendt's, and constructivism's in general, approach to the state as an individual actor and main agent in world politics. The question is whether it makes sense to ascribe the state an identity itself, rather than just seeing state identity as the sum of the various identities of the individuals making up the nation-state. Scholars of IR and other disciplines, like law, have easily adapted the analogy of seeing the state at least *as-if* a person, and it can be added that not only states, but other entities have been through a social process, which Hobbes called "personation" to be able to speak on behalf of collectives (Jackson, 2004).

Before the so called "emotional turn" about two decades ago, when IR scholarship started to acknowledge emotions as valid dimension in the analysis of international politics (see, for example, Mercer, 1996; Crawford, 2000), established theories of IR put emphasis on the rationality of actors and the bracketing out of emotions was taken for granted: For realism, it was the fear of military capabilities, for liberalism the feeling of trust in institutions and cooperation. Rational actors had to be wary of their emotions, as they could affect political decision-making negatively and hinder actors from perceiving the world accurately (Jervis, 1976). Even constructivism's ability to theorize emotions in IR has been scrutinized critically (Ross, 2006), indeed, Wendt's *Social Theory* was criticized for failing to account for emotions in IR.

By now, the significance of emotions has been accepted by scholars of various IR theories, and it is no longer a question of *whether*, but *how* to study emotions, as exemplified by Maéva Clément and Eric Sangar's 2018 volume on different approaches to the study of emotions in IR. The many contributions to their book prove that the "anti-emotional bias" exhibited by the social sciences is a thing of the past: "Take away the emotions, and there will be little international politics left"

writes Erik Ringmar in his chapter. Social scientists have added to psychological or physiological dimensions of emotions that they are also social phenomena, and therefore condition the social world of IR (Ringmar in Clément & Sangar, 2018: 33). Scholars have since engaged with emotions as a social phenomena. Neta Crawford argued that emotions of fear and empathy can be institutionalized, to the effect that they may counter adversarial feelings of individuals (Crawford, 2014). On group emotion, Jonathan Mercer states that, while “emotion happens in biological bodies, not in the space between them, and this implies that group emotion is nothing but a collection of individuals experiencing the same emotion. Group-level emotion can be stronger than, and different from, emotion experienced as an individual” (Mercer, 2014: 515). Similarly, Todd Hall emphasises that it is not actually the states who feel the emotions, but the people, making state emotion the sum of emotion felt by individuals that make up the state officially (Hall, 2015). According to him, processes of diplomacy can be explained through an emotional lens, by examining how representatives of states employ emotional language and actions to achieve their goals. Mercer (2010) calls feelings such as trust or nationalism “emotional beliefs”. Picking up on the rational vs emotional debate, he posits that “rationality depends on emotion”, and emotions strengthen such beliefs. In fact, they co-produce them together with cognition. So, again, rationality and emotion do not ask an either/or question. Emotions might affect decision-making, but they can do so in a rational way. What is also important from this discussion for my thesis is that while Mercer and Hall emphasise the individual's experience of emotion, in order to be able to talk about ontological security on a state level, I need to at least entertain the idea that a state can “feel”, even if it is only for the sake of this thesis’ arguments.

Research on, for example, feelings of humiliation in international politics show how emotions can affect international security dynamics (for example, Callahan, 2004; Fattah and Fierke, 2009). Collective memory and trauma can provide the basis for these feelings (Fierke, 2007). Writing on emotions in securitization (the discursive act of lifting an issue from the political sphere into the security sphere, making plausible the use of extraordinary measures to deal with it), Van Rythoven explains the construction of a threat during the securitization process as an emotional phenomenon, and that emotions like collective fear play a role in success and failures of securitizing moves (Van Rythoven, 2015). The audience’s susceptibility and reaction to these moves depends on memory, and potential trauma, which is why this theory review also needs to look at the practices of memory politics as well as the notions of chosen trauma and glory. According to Fierke, collectively experienced trauma, such as war, corresponds “with the collapse of community and those meanings that had structured everyday life ... , and a loss of feelings of being protected” (Fierke, 2007: 125; see also Edkins, 2003). However, not all past experiences make it into collective memory, hence the notion of “chosen trauma”,

and “chosen glory” for events that are given a positive connotation. A “chosen trauma is a mental recollection of a calamity that befell a group’s ancestors”. Narratives of chosen trauma and chosen glory provide “comforting stories in times of increased ontological insecurity and existential anxiety” (Kinnvall, 2004: 757; Kinnvall, 2006: 56). I will talk about ontological (in)security and anxiety in the next section. For now, let us take a deeper look at memory. Like emotions, memory also plays a role in fostering collective identities.

These discussions presuppose a collective memory, which, according to Maurice Halbwachs, is “the selective recollection of past events which are thought to be important for the members of a specific community”(Halbwachs, 1985, quoted in De Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak, 1999: 154-5.). It “maintains historical continuity by recalling specific elements from the archive of ‘historical memory’” (Ibid.). Historian Timothy Snyder understands collective memory as “the organisation principle that nationally conscious individuals use to organise their history” (quoted in Müller, 2002: 20-1). Sociologist Stuart Hall (1994: 201, in De Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak, 1999) also said that identities create meanings, “contained in stories that are told about the nation, in memories which link its present to its past”. In the Introduction, I already touched upon the idea that national identities are constituted by national memories. According to Jan-Werner Müller, this national narrative “functions as a matrix of meaning”, and “endows a collective with emotional and normative underpinning, as well as a ‘common language and set of understandings about how the world functions and how it ought to function’. It is this type of memory and national identity which are mutually constitutive; or, to put it differently, there is a circular relationship between collective memory and collective identity.” Identity is hence “established by what is remembered, and itself then leads in turn to certain pasts being remembered and others being forgotten: In this sense, and as Renan first pointed out, remembrance and forgetting depend on each other.” (Müller, 2002: 21).

Memories are being (re)produced to guide the present and the future. “Representations of trauma can provide a sense of collective feeling that is capable of underpinning political community” (Hutchison, 2010). The way the past is remembered and told by a group depends on the feelings connected to events, and these memories can in turn influence behaviour in the present. Todd Hall (2015) says that emotions determine diplomacy; Kathrin Bachleitner seeks to complete “the toolkit of traditional diplomatic strategies with memory in order to better explain state behavior” (Bachleitner, 2019: 492). According to her, “countries employ constructed historic images for foreign policy purposes”. Comparing West German and Austrian strategies of diplomacy towards Israel after World War II, she claims that “victimhood, like guilt, can both be a state of being and an emotion” (2019: 498), which is where I believe her account intersects with ontological security theory. At the intersection of emotion and memory, we find a whole body of literature on

collective guilt, or the lack thereof. A lot of these studies feature the case of post-war Germany (see, for example, Lüdtke, 1993; Rensmann, 2004; Zehfuss, 2007), but, especially when it comes to state denial of past events, the work of Ayse Zarakol (2010) features Turkey and Japan, and Jelena Subotic (2018) studied the Holocaust in political memory in post-communist European states. These works are also part of the wider ontological security literature, which I will discuss next.

2.3 Ontological security

The theory of ontological security (OS) has been “trending” in recent years, prompting a plethora of studies on various levels of analysis. Originating in the psychoanalysis of Laing psychoanalysis and the sociology of Giddens, the ontological security approach “highlights the need actors believe they have to feel as if they have stable identities” which they can achieve by sustaining coherent biographical narratives, and by engaging in routine interactions and home-making practices (Kinnvall et al., 2018: 249). Routine interactions with others help to build trust and predict the future by taming feelings of anxiety about the unknown. Evidently, there have been studies on narratives and memory without the influence of ontological security. However, if we see memory as central to an actor’s identity, it becomes a matter of ontological security:

Without narrative, without a state agent collecting the history of a nation-state into a story that informs current actions, the Self of a state does not exist. ... Conceptually, the 'idea' of the state cannot exist without this narration to develop a sense of continuity (Steele, 2008: 20; see also Berenskoetter, 2014).

Furthermore, notions of chosen trauma and glory that depend on remembering the past in a certain way can be well explained with an ontological security approach (Kinnvall, 2004, 2006).

The literature on OS offers varying forms of applications, from international, state focused analyses that see the state as an agent seeking OS (Mitzen, 2006; Steele, 2008) to domestic, society-level analyses that see the state as a structure providing OS to its population (Kinnvall, 2004, 2006). While Wendt treats the state-as-person, Steele and Mitzen treat it *as-if* person for the sake of being able to apply an approach whose focus of analysis was initially the individual. States then become ontological security *seekers*; as corporate actors, they engage in routine interactions with other states (Mitzen, 2006), or they invest in sustaining coherent self-narratives (Steele, 2008). Krolkowski takes issue with this anthropomorphism of the state. In her society-centred approach to OS, she treats the state as a structure. She posits that an

assumption of state personhood obscures important aspects of how the state affects individuals' sense of OS (Krolikowski, 2008). In this understanding, the state acts as an ontological security *provider* to individuals.

An ontological security approach can help our understanding of why memory is so important to states, societies and individuals, since fixed understandings of past events can help navigate the uncertainties of an unpredictable future (Giddens, 1991). In Mälksoo's words, "deconstructing the central historical backbone of the self could seriously disrupt and destabilize the respective identity and hamper its agency as an actor in international affairs" (Mälksoo, 2015: 228). Conversely, Browning and Joenniemi offer a different interpretation of OS, "one emphasizing adaptability rather than stability": "The application of ontological security to IR arguably has been geared too much towards identity-related stability. With the emphasis on maintaining stable and safe identities, change has been perceived as something disturbing and potentially harmful." OS has been reduced "to a question of identity preservation", when adaptability, resilience and "reflexivity towards identity is also central to ontological security" (Browning and Joenniemi, 2017: 32).

Understood as security of *being* in time, OS would fail to explain the willful and intentional change in biographical narrative such as in the case of Austria in the 1990s. Seeing OS as security of *being* implies a "status quo bias" that would make any kind of change unthinkable (Kinnvall and Mitzen, 2020: 240). Rossdale (2015) sees this as a limit of ontological security, since philosophically "ontology" is about being, but since there is no such thing as a "stable subjectivity", the process of ontological security seeking can never be completed. Echoing this, Berenskoetter points out that there is no agency in being ontologically secure, but "in the attempt to become ontologically secure" (Berenskoetter, 2020: 274). He laments that there is "no place for emancipatory agency because [the OS framework] is stuck with the assumption that the possibility of a radically open future generates a heightened state of anxiety and, as such ontological insecurity" (Berenskoetter, 2020: 283), especially if anxiety is seen as paralyzing. Alternatively, though, anxiety can create the opportunity for productive change, the chance to take agency, to take a "leap of faith" (Arfi, 2020) into an unknown future. Alternative views of anxiety have emerged as critique of rigid understandings of ontological security as something opposed to transformation. Rumelili (2015) offers a view on anxiety as productive, as opening a space for subjects to take charge and transform, accusing Giddens of overlooking the positive potential in anxiety. What I would like to take from this discussion to the analysis of my case later is mainly the idea that *becoming* is a constant process, that can only temporarily be closed down through routines with others, for example, the EU, which provides a structure for interactions. Understanding ontological security as security of *becoming* therefore could explain why Austria had the courage to take the "leap of faith" of revisiting and reshaping the existing biographical narrative of

victimhood. The hope of being perceived as a moral agent, atoning, and potentially moving closer towards significant others, maybe even friends, in the form of the EU, might have been enough of an incentive to change from a *diplomacy of innocence* to one of *guilt* (Bachleitner, 2019). Austria might have faced an anxiety of being left behind in a Europe that was coming closer together. At the same time, we have to understand that the EU, much like a state, can also be treated as an entity at the same time as it provides a structure, constantly evolving itself, by changing policies, incorporating new members, losing old ones. An analysis of the EU can therefore gain from the same sort of discussions on OS we have about the state. I will come back to this in the analysis chapter when I argue that the sanctions the EU posed on Austria's centre-right government in 2000 were a result of the threat such a government posed to the EU's own OS.

2.4 Friendship between states

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Wendt argued against a Hobbesian understanding of international politics as inherently hostile, calling for a theory of friendship in IR. He suggests a “Kantian culture”, drawing on Immanuel Kant's concept of “perpetual peace”. In this sense, Wendt uses the term friendship as

a role structure within which states expect each other to observe two simple rules: (1) disputes will be settled without war or the threat of war (the rule of non-violence); and (2) they will fight as a team if the security of any one is threatened by a third party (the rule of mutual aid). (Wendt, 1999: 298-9)

However, this merely “echoes Emanuel Adler's reformulation of Karl Deutsch's security community” (Berenskoetter, 2007: 650). Wendt totally neglects the emotional dimension of friendship, and the fact that the positive emotions of friendship can balance any negative ones. According to Berenskoetter, friendship can control feelings of anxiety by providing a “significant other”, since “friendship constitutes the other as familiar rather than foreign and implies a significant degree of trust”. On top of that, “seeking friends can be an explicit goal of foreign policy” (Berenskoetter and Van Hoef, 2017), which is in line with the idea that emotions influence foreign policy. Berenskoetter bases his consideration on Heidegger's alternatives to the Hobbsian account, which also works well with the idea of ontological security as a process of becoming:

[Heidegger] sees the state as a project in the making. ... [H]umans are temporal beings who can never know themselves in their entirety because they will never be able to know what tomorrow will bring, let alone what it means to die, which makes them something that is

to a significant degree always not-yet. From this perspective, incompleteness is the central feature of human existence and asks for a conceptualisation of being as a process of 'unfolding'. This requires an evolutionary ontology of the state as something which is neither static nor ever complete but a work in progress, something always in the process of becoming. (Berenskoetter, 2007: 655)

Together with Yuri Van Hoef (2017), Berenskoetter defines international friendship "as a relationship of mutually agreed role identities embedded in a strong cognitive, normative and emotional bond revolving around a shared idea of order". This means that "friends share structures of meaning, specifically an understanding of international order, which both consider desirable and possible, and which is negotiated on the basis of overlapping biographical narratives." In other words, friends draw on a shared understanding of their common history, and are at the same time oriented towards a common future by building a particular kind of order together (Berenskoetter & Van Hoef, 2017). This builds on Berenskoetter's previous discussions on the concept of friendship, where he draws from Aristotle, who determines three kinds of friendship: of utility, of pleasure, and of excellence, whereby only the last one could be seen as "true" friendship, since the first two are instrumental, "sought not for the sake of friendship but for taking advantage of each other, and they are unable to contribute to true happiness" (Berenskoetter, 2007: 665).

Established friendships are expressed discursively, emotionally and practically, impacting decision-making and long-term prospects for cooperation. Recognition is important in friendship: Friends meet eye to eye, accept their "mutually agreed role identities", which is reminiscent of "Hegel's discussion of the master-slave relationship" (Browning and Joenniemi, 2017: 42; Zarakol, 2011). Furthermore, Berenskoetter and van Hoef (2017) argue that "friendship functions as an anxiety stabilising mechanism and, hence, provides a feeling of ontological security to friends by giving meaning to their being in the world". Using this friendship lens, my argument is that international friendship can be beneficial for ontological security as friends share a common history, give this history the same meaning, accept each other's current position in the world, and hold a shared idea of the future (Berenskoetter, 2010). Together, friends can take a "leap of faith" into an unknown future and overcome "critical situations" (Ejdus, 2017). Additionally, "friendship also opens up space for rethinking the nature of self-other relations in IR and their importance for ontological security" (Browning and Joenniemi, 2017: 43).

Berenskoetter and van Hoef "highlight three types of practices unique to this relationship: providing privileged/special access, solidarity and support in times of need, as well as resolve and negative othering against third parties". While this last part could be interpreted in a way that suggests that enemies are needed for cultivating strong friendship bonds in a way that others are needed for a strong self,

we have to remember that difference plays as important a role in identity formation as similarity (cf. Fierke, 2007). Defining what others are like helps to be clear about what oneself is like, to draw boundaries between the self and others. Applying these thoughts on the case of the EU, I argue that there is at the same time an aspect of similarity among the members, but also clearly articulated difference opposed to outsiders. And while “‘group membership’ does not qualify for the status of friendship” (Berenskoetter, 2007: 661), and the notion exists that Europe “otherises” external others (cf Rumelili, 2004), I argue that the EU/Europe “otherises” itself as a temporal other of the wars of the 20th century. This point is also brought forward by Wodak when she writes that

“[a]n ‘other’ is also always found in a person’s narrative identity to the extent that the person changes over the course of time. In other words, the person who was different yesterday from the way he or he is today in turn will be different tomorrow from the way she or he is today” (Wodak et al., 2009: 15).

3 Methodology

This chapter will present the overall methodology followed in the thesis as well as the method employed, namely a discourse analysis following Jonathan Potter and Margaret Wetherell's discursive psychology. First, I will look at the benefits of studying discourse as a part of studying identity, and then explain the reasoning behind choosing discursive psychology for doing so in this research project. Second, I will introduce the most relevant concepts for my analysis, seeing discourse as *interpretative repertoire*, and the notion of *dilemmas of stake* present in them. The chapter will close with a short background presentation of the case of post-war Austria, the empirical material chosen, and shed light on the steps taken while applying the method before the subsequent analysis chapter.

In general, approaching questions of identity in international politics discursively offers distinct theoretical value to such studies. According to Epstein (2010), a discourse-focused approach is specifically suited for analyses that take the step from individual level of analysis to that of the state. To her, it allows us to study state identity without succumbing to “problematic assumptions about [states'] ‘selves’” (Epstein, 2010: 328). In her words,

[O]ne trait states can be seen to share with individuals, even on a very basic level of empirical observation, is that they talk. This ‘talking’ is central both to what they do and who they are — to the dynamics of identity. States, like individuals, position themselves in relation to other states by adopting certain discourses and not others. Moreover, these discourses function as important principles of coherence for statehood. (Epstein, 2010: 341)

This “coherence for statehood” can be understood as a continuing, persisting state identity, even while representing individuals in charge may change. High profile politicians and diplomats come and go but the state's identity and the discourse which shapes and sustains it persist. When it does change, though, it is also done through discourse, namely a change in discourse, which is particularly what I am looking at in this thesis.

Epstein is not alone with her advocacy for a discourse analysis approach to international politics and the state identities present in their arenas. Going with a type of discourse analysis for this project is in line with what Steele (2005) does in his “synthesising [of] a discursive approach with an ontological security interpretation” for a better understanding of “security-seeking behaviour and threats to identity” (Steele, 2005: 519). Quoting Campbell, Jennifer Milliken also sees the benefit of

applying discourse analysis to international politics, given varying “political consequences of adopting one mode of representation over another” (Campbell, 1993: 7-8, in Milliken, 1999: 225-6). Especially foreign policy studies are enriched by addressing discursive productivity, that is “the production of common sense and the production of policy practices by analysing how an elite’s ‘regime of truth’ made possible certain courses of action by a state” (Milliken, 1999: 236-7).

3.1 Method: Discursive Psychology

There is not one kind of discourse analysis, rather it comprises several methods such as the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, critical discourse analysis of Fairclough, or the one used in this thesis, Potter and Wetherell’s discursive psychology. They all “share the starting point that our ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations but, rather, play an active role in creating and changing them” (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 1). Discursive psychology (DP) is a kind of discourse analysis that is concerned with the self, identity, and subjectivity (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987: Chapter 5; Wetherell & Potter, 1992: Chapter 3). In their words:

Identity - who one is and what one is like - is established through discursive acts. Identity in talk is a construction, and achievement and an accomplishment; and of course, this construction and accomplishment is both private and public. Subjectivity is organized discursively as a public act of self-presentation, but introspection, private accounting for oneself and self description are no less discursive. ... We want to argue that the identity and forms of subjectivity which become instantiated in discourse at any given moment should be seen as sedimentation of past discursive practices. (Wetherell and Potter 1992: 78)

DP acts as an umbrella term for different strands of the method, such as ethnomethodology or conversation analysis, but all have in common that discourse is action-oriented, situated and occasioned language, as well as both *constructed* and *constructive* (Potter, 2004; Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). Additionally, all share the view “that identities are constructed on the basis of different, shifting discursive resources and are thus relational, incomplete and unstable, but not completely open.” (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 111). This idea that identities are always open to change is important here, even though closure can happen temporarily - Jørgensen and Phillips quote Stuart Hall here: “The changeable, contingent nature of identity does not mean that people start all over again with new identities every single time they speak” (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 112). I interpret this “sedimentation of past discursive practices” in a way that it is

impossible to start from scratch when it comes to discursive identity formation. There is always something pre-existing to draw from.

In DP, individuals are both products *and* producers of discourse, while Laclau and Mouffe's "discourse theory tends to view individuals solely as subjects of discourse" (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 8). DP features several analytical concepts, such as that of *interpretative repertoires*, "to emphasize that language use in everyday life is flexible and dynamic" (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 107). Furthermore, "everyday language use involves *dilemmas of stake* as people struggle to establish their accounts as factual and stable representations of the world and to deconstruct other accounts as the product of personal or group interests" (Potter 1996, in Winther Jørgensen & Phillips 2002: 113). Representing the world according to one's liking is achieved "through the way text or talk is put together, organized in specific ways which make a particular reality appear solid, factual and stable" (Wetherell and Potter 1992: 95). Therefore, one of the key questions DP asks, and helps to find answers to, is "How people, through discursive practice, create constructions of the world, groups and identities" (Winther Jørgensen and Phillips 2002: 119), which corresponds to the first of the research questions listed in the introduction, *How can state biographical narratives change?*

Furthermore, I do not use a critical discourse analysis approach as there already exists a quite extensive body of literature on Austria's post-war identity using CDA. Most notable is the work by Ruth Wodak and her team at the Department of Applied Linguistics at the University of Vienna. Their work has definitely influenced my reading of the material, even though their society level focus accounts more for the Austrian identity as experienced by individuals rather than the state. However, I do agree with their proposition that "national identities, as special forms of social identities, are produced and reproduced, as well as transformed and dismantled, discursively" (Wodak et al., 2009: 4).

3.1.1 Discourse as *interpretative repertoire*

In their discursive psychology, Potter and Wetherell (1987, 1992) use the concept of *interpretative repertoire* instead of discourse "to emphasise that discourses are drawn on in social interaction as flexible resources" (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 105). It is "basically a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterize and evaluate actions and events" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987: 138). They give the analogy of an ice dancer who picks out moves for their choreography from a repertoire, depending which ones fit "most effectively in the context" (Wetherell & Potter, 1992: 92). A repertoire is described as "a resource, a kind of treasure trove of ordinary sense-making, from which items of causal reasoning can be extracted" (Edwards & Potter, 1992: 94). Interpretative repertoires are therefore pre-existing

available resources, but they are shaped, remolded and customized by speakers. They are “constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistic and grammatical constructions” (Potter and Wetherell, 1987: 149). Further, an interpretative repertoire will often be organized around specific metaphors and figures of speech, tropes and analogies, and “each repertoire provides resources that people can use to construct versions of reality” (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 107).

In this thesis, this idea of discourse as *interpretative repertoire* will be used predominantly to answer the question how biographical narratives can change. Applied to my case, I identified a “victim repertoire” on the one hand which frames Austria as a victim of/in World War II, and the “co-responsibility repertoire” on the other hand, which understands Austria as an accomplice, a co-perpetrator in the war.² Each repertoire consists of a set of corresponding phrases or implied emotions. I took the following steps to fill out each side of the repertoires (Table 1, see 4.1): First, I came up with (preliminary) repertoires of victim and accomplice using concepts from the earlier presented theories. Then, I went through the material trying to define which samples drew from which repertoire. Here I realised that this is not done exclusively, since some speakers might draw from both repertoires in the same speech. The next step was to come back to adjust the repertoires. The final step was to analyse the material accordingly.

3.1.2 *Dilemmas of stake* in discourse

Another analytical concept that features in Potter and Wetherell’s DP is that of *dilemmas of stake*. A point stressed particularly in the strands of discursive psychology adhering to the interactionist perspective (either solely or in combination with poststructuralism) is that people in social interaction treat each other as agents who can profit from - and therefore have a stake in - their actions. Thus everyday language use involves *dilemmas of stake* as people struggle to establish their accounts as factual and stable representations of the world and to deconstruct other accounts as the product of personal or group interests (Potter 1996). For Edwards and Potter speakers “should be thought of as caught in a *dilemma of stake* or *interests*: How to produce accounts which attend to interests without being undermined as interested” (Edwards & Potter, 1992: 158). Being found out at “interested”, or personally invested, could lead to accusations of bias. In other words, “appearing to have ‘no stake’ or being ‘disinterested’ is often an interactionally desirable position” (Edwards

² In an earlier version, these were termed “the mythical repertoire” and “the factual repertoire”, but that was soon changed given that “Wetherell and Potter are not interested in finding out if an interpretative repertoire is a true or false reflection of the world but in analysing the practices through which the repertoires are constructed to appear as true or false” (Winther Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002: 108). The label “factual” might be interpreted in a certain way that would undermine just how real the experience of victimhood was to those who suffered during the war.

& Potter, 2005: 242). A way to avoid accusations of interest would be to explicitly state one's interest or goal.

A speaker has an interest in achieving something with their utterance, there is a motive behind saying something. An “independent witness”, someone who is uninterested (or appears to be so) has no stake in what is said. Whatever action their statement prompts does not affect them, which is why “something claimed by independent witnesses is less likely to be a fabrication” (Edwards & Potter, 1992: 105). With regards to the case of this thesis, we can ask questions in the likes of, what, if anything, was at stake for Chancellor Vranitzky when he decided to distance himself from the dominant victim narrative in 1991, or, whether the Allied powers had an interest in institutionalising the victim myth as Austria's foundation myth when writing the Moscow Declaration in 1943 or agreeing to leaving out the “co-responsibility clause” out of the State Treaty 1955.

3.2 Case: Austria - from victim to accomplice?

As mentioned, the case selected for answering the research questions is Austria. The country was chosen because it is a particular case of a change of state identity and the corresponding biographical narrative shaping and sustaining. A cornerstone of Austrian post war identity has been the notion of Austria being the first victim of Nazi aggression, exemplified in the annexation and de facto end of existence of the state following the *Anschluss* in March 1938. This victim narrative determined Austrian identity formation on state as well as society level and was promoted by developments on the international level as well: Since Austria had been “liberated” and occupied by the allied forces, the country was internationally recognized as innocent victim and hence not obliged to take part in large scale reparations - in contrast to West Germany (Bachleitner, 2019). A change in official narrative only started to happen in the early 1990s, with then Chancellor Franz Vranitzky's speech before the Austrian Parliament on July 8, 1991, officially admitting Austrian complicity in Nazi crimes.³ Austria is also a curious example since we are looking at an identity that was so explicitly ascribed by others (by the Allies and the rest of the international community), and then had to be reshaped reflexively (by actively letting go of the victim myth). The following list of empirical material serves to further present the case.

³ Vranitzky's speech could be seen as a direct reaction to something Carinthian governor Jörg Haider (then FPÖ) had said a couple weeks prior: “In the Third Reich, they had a proper employment policy.” (*ORF*, not dated)

3.3 Empirical Material and limitations

The material chosen consists of discourse produced by high ranking Austrian state officials, such as chancellors, presidents or party leaders⁴, either in parliament, at official events, or in official publications, like the parliament publication commemorating the 75th anniversary of the first parliamentary assembly after World War II. Since I am looking at the state of Austria as an actor, not actual human subjects, ethical considerations can be kept to a minimum. I am interrogating material that is readily available and was published for public consumption, and am not actually involved in any production process myself, such as interviews. If not otherwise stated or indicated by a reference, all translations of the German source material have been done by me. To be able to see a change in narrative, we have to examine not only the moment, or moments, in which the change happened, but also what was there before, and what happened after. Particular emphasis is placed on showcasing how heavily the victim repertoire was drawn from prior to the 1991 speech. Documents from 1943/45 (end of the war, first parliamentary assembly of a democratically elected government) and 1955 (end of Allied occupation, State Treaty) feature heavily to present the status quo pre 1991. Material regarding Austria's accession to the EC/EU and the EU14 sanctions in 2000 following the FPÖ in government will be used to illustrate a theoretical discussion on ontological insecurity and inter-state friendship to answer research questions two and three.

In the introduction I already mentioned the Moscow Declaration on Austria from 1943 whose wording was decisive for the creation of the victim myth and was also a crucial source of inspiration for the wording of the 1945 Proclamation of the Second Republic as well as the 1955 Austrian State Treaty. The “co-responsibility clause”, stating that Austria had been both victim and perpetrator during the war, which had featured in the Moscow Declaration had, however, been omitted from the State Treaty intentionally, thus further enshrining victimhood into the Austrian state identity. In addition to these, speeches by significant politicians will also be looked at, such as speeches given in the first assembly of parliament in 1945 which featured an abundance of references to the victim status of Austria. The analysis will also look at the official parliament publication on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the first parliamentary assembly in 2020. It features statements from all current party leaders on their parties' role in the post-war period as well as reflections on Austrian identity on the state and society level. Of course, the previously mentioned speech by Chancellor Franz Vranitzky in Parliament in 1991 which supposedly signifies a

⁴ In the Austrian political system, the government is led by the chancellor. The president has a predominantly representative and ceremonial role, but is also commander-in-chief of the Austrian military. “Party leaders” is used for the somewhat lengthy concept of “leaders of the parliamentary group”, or *Klubobleute*.

watershed moment and the departure from victim myth to co-responsibility will also be analysed. Additionally, a 1993 Vranitzky speech given at the Hebrew University in Israel, as well as President Thomas Klestil's 15 November 1994 speech in front of the Israeli parliament will also be looked at. Furthermore, the instance of Austrian accession to the EU, which was defined as the primary goal of Austrian foreign policy, succeeding in 1995, also forms part of the analysis. The EU14 sanctions following a centre-right government coalition in the early 2000s are another interesting event since they signify an international reaction, particularly that of Austria's "significant others" or alleged friends.

I am aware of the limitations this focus on elites entails; The ordinary Austrian's take will fall by the wayside. As mentioned above, post-war life for the Austrian population was marked by hardship and destitution, and it goes without saying that in any war, civilians are often the biggest losers, on either side of the front. What justifies a focus on elites in my project on memory and narrative change, however, is best explained by this quote by Jennifer Milliken on studying discourse in IR:

[I]f the analysis is to be about social signification, a discourse analysis should be based upon a set of texts by different people presumed (according to the research focus) to be *authorized speakers/writers* of a dominant discourse ... In order to address issues of selection bias - and to enable better theorization - one might also more narrowly select texts by whether they take different positions on a relevant issue ... and so could provide evidence of a discourse as a social background for meaningful disputes among speakers of the discourse. (Milliken, 1999: 233, emphasis added)

In line with that, Jan-Werner Müller (2002: 21) and contributors to his volume on memory in post-war Europe also see "high politics' understood as presidential speeches and other symbolic gestures by national representatives" as crucial to collective memory. "Most dangerously", Müller writes, "leaders can reconfigure memory to represent a narrative of victimisation" (Ibid.). Additionally, focusing on "entrepreneurs of memory'... allows us to think of the connections between the individual and collective memories in the light of the connections between the individuals and the groups of which they are members, taking into account the position they occupy in the group" (Constantin, 2011).

4 Analysis

Drawing from state-centred theories of identity, I propose that states have identities that are independent of the individuals that make up a state. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that while “these identities may be hard to change, they are not carved in stone, and indeed sometimes are the only variable actors can manipulate in a situation” (Wendt, 1999: 21). I argue that the way these identities can be manipulated is by changing corresponding narratives which depend on interpretations of past events. These interpretations are then sustained by a discourse that draws from a specific interpretative repertoire. Understanding identities as something that can be changed, and indeed can never be completely stable also facilitates an understanding of ontological security as something related to a process of becoming. In this sense, change is not given a negative connotation as a source of anxiety but rather a potential of agency and development towards becoming ontologically secure. The idea of friendship as something that can alleviate anxiety adds to this.

Having identified the appropriate interpretative repertoires of victim and co-responsible perpetrator, the material presented will be analysed using the discursive psychology method of matching the material with the repertoire and defining potential dilemmas of stake. Table 1 at the end of 4.1 illustrates the makeup of each repertoire. The analysis is structured along answering the research questions, which are ‘*how can biographical narratives change?*’, following with the question *how this could affect a state’s ontological security* and whether *interstate friendship could provide ontological security in times of these narrative changes*. The chapter will begin with looking at the process of how the Austrian state biographical narrative changed from that of victimhood to co-responsibility. Then, I shall look at how this change might have affected the state’s ontological security linking it back to the theoretical literature. Finally, in an attempt to explain why this change happened, I will explore the possibility of interstate friendship as a means to overcome the anxiety resulting from these narrative changes.

To be able to see and analyse a change in biographical narrative we have to look at what this narrative was before, during, and after said alleged change. Therefore, the material used for this section will, as mentioned before in the methodology section, span a rather long period of time. It starts even before the establishment of the Second Republic and goes until the 2020 parliamentary publication for the 75 year commemoration of the first parliamentary assembly in 1945.

4.1 A Change Is Gonna Come

*It's been too hard living
But I'm afraid to die
'Cause I don't know what's up there
Beyond the sky*

...
*Oh, there been times that I thought
I couldn't last for long
But now I think I'm able, to carry on*

Sam Cooke, "A Change is Gonna Come", 1964: 8-11, 28-30

4.1.1 Moscow Declaration and Proclamation of the Second Republic

As mentioned in the introduction and the presentation of the empirical material, the creation of the (victim) identity of Austria's Second Republic already started before the official end of the war. In the Moscow Declaration on Austria from 30 October, 1943, Austria was described as "the first free country to fall a victim to Hitlerite aggression" and that it "shall be liberated from German domination". This explicitly draws from the victim repertoire, not only because of the use of the word victim. "Liberated" connotes that it was a passive act, done to the victim by a foreign saviour. "German domination" puts the blame on Germany alone, domination adding another degree of passiveness and powerlessness. Judt (2002) points to the fact that Germany readily accepted all responsibility after the war which helped Austria (and quite frankly the rest of Europe) be affirmed in its victimhood.

With regards to the *Anschluss* - when the independent Austrian state ceased to exist - the representatives of the USA, Great Britain and the Soviet Union signing the Declaration stated that

[t]hey regard the annexation imposed upon Austria by Germany on March 15th 1938, as null and void. ... They declare that they wish to see reestablished a free and independent Austria, and thereby to open the way for the Austrian people themselves, as well as those neighboring states which will be faced with similar problems, to find that political and economic security which is the only basis for lasting peace.

The choice of the word “imposed” to describe the *Anschluss* disregards the fact that many Austrians had welcomed an integration to the German Reich. Even though the reality of the *Anschluss* had been gravely miscalculated: Many politicians had hoped that Austria would gain from being part of a greater Reich, when in reality it was downgraded to a mere accumulation of provinces (*Alpen- und Donau-Reichsgaue*). There was also no military resistance to the German troops, as Chancellor Schuschnigg had wanted to “avoid German bloodshed” (Uhl, in Brunner & Nachum, 2012: 151). In his last speech to the population in the night before the arrival of German troops, Schuschnigg bid his farewell “to the Austrian people with a German word and a heartfelt wish: God save Austria” (Ibid.).

Political and economic elites worked hard to clear the international observers’ minds from images of crowds happily waving and cheering as the German *Wehrmacht* rolled in, or when Hitler first spoke in Vienna. Instead, they were supposed to be filled with images of high culture like the Vienna philharmonic orchestra, the state opera, composers like Mozart and Beethoven, or popular culture in the likes of *The Sound of Music*, presenting a version of the happy music loving Austrians assaulted by barbaric Nazis (Rathkolb, 2015; see also Lamb-Faffelberger, 2003; Luger, 1992). Stereotypes of the easy-going beer-drinking, lederhosen-wearing Austrian still play important roles “in the definition of ‘typical Austrians’ and in the Austrians’ self-image, as well as in how they are viewed from abroad” (Wodak et al., 2009: 55).

The so-called “co-responsibility clause” also adds another dimension to the victim repertoire, that of resistance:

Austria is reminded, however, that she has a responsibility, which she cannot evade, for participation in the war at the side of Hitlerite Germany, and that in the final settlement account will inevitably be taken of her own contribution to her liberation.

When writing about how post-war Europe ‘otherized’ its past, Judt (2002) points out that emphasising a form of resistance is important to being perceived as a victim. This goes for many European countries in the post-war era but is particularly interesting in the Austrian case. As mentioned in the introduction, the call for Austria’s “own contribution to her liberation” was intended to strengthen any anti-Nazi resistance movements in the country at the end of the war. Admittedly, this is contradicting the idea that a victim is powerless, since resistance implies some form of agency. Indeed, the role and image of the resistance itself would be presented differently in the decades after war, particularly depending on the Cold War context: When anti-Nazism/fascism was replaced with anti-Communism, World War II resistance, which had been predominantly socialist-communist, was taunted too. Austrian historian Heidemarie Uhl notes that “by the mid-1950s memorials to ‘victims of Fascism’ were considered to be instruments of ‘Communist propaganda’”

(Uhl, 2006). Nevertheless, if we were to go with Judt's interpretation, the highlighting of the resistance in 1943 is important to the victim narrative, as it would feature heavily in the speeches of the time. Even contemporary commemorations emphasise the role of the resistance and liberation (*ORF*, 2021).

In terms of solidifying the victim myth into Austrian state identity, the Moscow Declaration was followed by the Proclamation of the Second Republic of Austria, announced on 27 April 1945 by the provisional government consisting of representatives of the three re-established political parties, the Socialist Party (SPÖ, today the Social Democratic Party), the People's Party (ÖVP), and the Communist Party (KPÖ). The Proclamation quoted the first two paragraphs of the Moscow Declaration directly. The last paragraph on co-responsibility was put in at the very end, commented only with the words:

The provisional government shall take the needed measures to contribute to Austria's share to her liberation, however it feels compelled to ascertain that this contribution can unfortunately only be a humble one given the exhaustion of our population and destitution of our country.

This emphasises Austrian victimhood again: The victim wants to help, but cannot, too bitter are the hardships suffered right now. Put into historical context, the stakes or interests at play here become clear: The Austrian economy of 1945 was in shambles, with a depleted workforce, a damaged industry and broken transportation system (cf. Solsten, 1994). Being perceived as a helpless victim might prompt more Allied generosity for the reconstruction process, and for that, co-responsibility had to be pushed aside. According to British historian Robert Knight (2000: 6), the Declaration's part on remembering Austria's co-responsibility was forgotten, or downplayed: Trying to counter the co-responsibility paragraph, the provisional government emphasised the

fact that the Nazi reign of Adolf Hitler's Third Reich led the Austrian people, who had been rendered powerless and were bereft of any free will, into a senseless and pointless war of conquest, which no true Austrian ever wanted any part of. (quoted in Uhl, 2006)

Again, there is a direct reference to the Austrian people being "powerless" and "bereft of any free will", as well as the idea that anyone who would have willingly joined the war could not have been a "true Austrian", implying that they must have been German (at least ideologically). This is a great example of attributing blame to establish a factual account to avoid being perceived as having stakes in what is being said (Edwards & Potter, 1992: 152). The perpetrator cannot have been Austrian since they must have identified themselves as German anyways. At the same time, articles 4 and 5 of the Proclamation declared void "the pledges of troth to the German Reich sworn by Austrians" and reestablished "the loyalty relationship between those Austrians and the Republic of Austria" (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 2005).

4.1.2 First parliamentary assembly and the Austrian State Treaty

The provisional government formed in April 1945 was succeeded in November that year by the first democratically elected government since 1930. An official publication commemorating the 60th anniversary of the election called it “a fateful day” in Austrian history (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 2005). Almost 3.5 million Austrians were eligible to vote, over 670,000 less than 1930, which was due to the decimation of the Jewish population, the general casualties of war (which led to a high percentage of women among the voters), as well as the exclusion of the *Ehemaligen*, the ‘erstwhiles’, former members of the Nazi party and the clubs closely connected to it. The *Ehemaligen* would later come together in a party called *Verein der Unabhängigen* (VdU), the Club of Independents, a precursor to today’s right-wing Freedom Party, (FPÖ, *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*).⁵ The voter turnout of 94.3% was the highest it had ever been in Austria, and it was argued that “the population had longed for their voting rights and had realised the importance of suffrage” during the years of fascist rule (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 2005). Even higher than the national average was the turnout in the east of the country which was under Soviet control. This was explained by the fact that daily negative confrontations with the Soviet forces (e.g. lootings and rape) had made the people even more aware of “the meaning of this democratic achievement” (Ibid.).

In 2020, commemorating 75 years since the first parliamentary assembly in 1945, the Austrian parliament published an over 100 page booklet on the history of the Second Republic, including notable political events but also remarks on components of Austrian identity, like culture and sport (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 2020). It also features the protocol of that first assembly, and speeches by members of parliament draw heavily from the victim repertoire. Karl Seitz, former president of the national assembly, former mayor of Vienna before the war and himself a concentration camp survivor, was elected to be the chair of the first assembly. In his opening speech, he emphasised that there should never be another *Anschluss* to Germany:

⁵ By 1949, a general amnesty had been granted to the *Ehemaligen* and both ÖVP and SPÖ had long started courting those potential voters. In general, efforts of denazification had only been noticeable in the first few years after the war, and even then there were stark differences between the occupied zones as the Western Allies had different rigour than the Soviets: For example, in September 1946, only 258 *Ehemalige* were interned in the Soviet zone, compared to 11,234 by the US, 7,186 by the British, and 1,871 by the French (Rathkolb, 2015: 410). By the time of the amnesties, it had become clear that some degree of elite continuity could not be avoided, and the emerging Cold War context also made the Allies less interested in the denazification project (Knight, 2019; Rathkolb, 2015). Further, the total amnesty of 1957 made proper persecution of Nazi war criminals formally impossible, and while Germany sentenced several in the Auschwitz trials in the 1960s, similar ones in Austria, like that of “Butcher of Vilnius” Franz Murer, concluded with acquittals (Rathkolb, 2015: 398).

We know that we are a small state. But we are not a despised state! We know that we have a history which endows us with a duty. We also know that we are ... convinced democrats and want nothing else than a state led by the laws of a true democracy. ... We are Austrians and we want to remain Austrians, we shall never agree to anything else. Only with force could we be overridden, like then, when Hitler moved into Vienna with this army. We want to forever remain an independent people.

In the identity literature, drawing distinct boundaries between oneself and others is deemed as a crucial move in the identity formation process. By clearly stating that Austria is Austria and Austrians will be Austrians, Seitz articulates Austrian identity as something distinct from any Germanness. Furthermore, the comment on Austria being a “small state” might come across as self aware, but also echoes sentiments of a helpless victim, curtailed to its smallest territory. Further, by “history which endows us with a duty”, he did not mean that the history of the war would put guilt or the duty of remembrance on Austria, but that Austria had to remember the democratic past of the First Republic, from the end of World War I up until the *Anschluss*. This reference to the First Republic could be interpreted as a take on a “chosen glory”, leaving out the memory of the undemocratic, authoritarian Corporatist State, the *Ständestaat* (1934-1938), and the Dollfuss dictatorship established in 1933. Further, it is a chosen glory because it was not seen as a glory at the time: Continuously referred to as the “state that nobody wanted”, the First Republic of Austria “was forced into independence against its will” (Wodak et al., 2009: 51). Invoking positive memories of the First Republic in 1945, Seitz managed to present his account as factual by referring to a not so distant history.

Other statements from the assembly also drew heavily from the victim repertoire. Leopold Kunschak, elected first president of the national assembly, referred to “a decade of the worst experiences, ... as if the sun had sunken in eternal darkness”, which only came to an end now that “the people, through their representatives, can decide over their fate/destiny”. This, similar to the Proclamation of the Second Republic, understands the Allies as some sort of saviours who had finally restituted (some of) Austria’s agency of which it had been robbed by the *Anschluss*. It should be noted here that Kunschak’s antisemitic past - prior to the war he had demanded a treatment of Austrian Jews similar to that of the segregation in the US such as special laws for Jews, restrictions of university access, or segregated schools - was never really problematised, and he did not shy away from public antisemitic disparagements in the years after the war (Rathkolb, 2015: 415).⁶

In his speech at the assembly in 1945, Chancellor Karl Renner talked about the Austrian people as subject to “seven years of slavery”, who “have done enough to be

⁶ In general, it was a taboo to bring up Nazi pasts of government members. At the time of the first ÖVP-SPÖ coalitions, not even famous “Nazi hunter” Simon Wiesenthal brought up 1950s finance minister Kamnitz’ former Nazi party membership, which was an open secret (Rathkolb, 2015: 403).

exonerated completely from the responsibilities of war”. Again, there are references to the resistance when talking about Austrian victimhood:

The Austrian people were not granted to independently bring down the imposed domination of the annexation power and the tyranny from within. But the people tried. The lucky ones that survived were witness to those victims from the resistance movements that paid the price with blood, at the scaffold or in the concentration camps.

Those foreign critics who ... claim that after seven years of slavery not enough has happened to acknowledge us as a freed people and to relieve us of the responsibility of the war completely, will show more justice towards Austria when we remind them: How could a people, physically downtrodden, morally overwhelmed by Third Reich propaganda, completely robbed of its own state, and separated into individuals, ... achieve what only the united Allies with their arsenal achieved to do in five years of war? ... The sword first had to shatter our chains. The chain burst and Austria resurged.

This quote probably best depicts this boundary drawing between Austria and Germany which was also done by Seitz in his speech. For one, there is a clear demarcation between Austria as the country under “imposed domination” and Germany as “the annexation power” spreading “tyranny”. Again, this discursive construction of an Austrian identity is based on “the construction of difference/distinctiveness and uniqueness” (De Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak, 1999: 154). Why it is problematic to think of identity as something that can be closed down by eliminating difference within the group should be clear from the previous theoretical discussion. This attempt to secure Austrian identity as distinct from German identity was very common at the time and a continuation of some sort of “Austrian exceptionalism” thinking that was present in the inter-war period, when Austria liked to see itself as the “superior German nation”, in terms of high culture among other things, and the conviction that joining the Reich would still leave Austria in a special position (Wodak et al., 2009; Rathkolb, 2015). Freud called this “narcissism of small differences”, where things like culture, and specifically the differences in the common language played a big role (Freud, 1982: 243, in De Cillia, Reisigl & Wodak, 1999: 163). After 1945, the common language of the occupier and occupant was often used as means to “excuse” the fact that the anti-Nazi resistance could not achieve more by itself. Edwards and Potter (1992: 159) point towards “excuses” to play down one’s interest and to establish an account as factual.

Chancellor Renner also mentioned the resistance in his speech, but it is pointed out that, given the circumstances of the war, the resistance - here representative for the entirety of the Austrian people - could not have done it with the little means it had. The Allies are thanked humbly, almost submissively, in the next paragraph to expressively underline that Austria was indeed a victim that was liberated from the Nazi occupation, and not a defeated co-perpetrator acting in collaboration with or as part of the German Reich. At the time, this aspect of liberation was most prominently

illustrated by the new official Austrian coat of arms: The eagle at the centre of the red-white-red flag, adopted from the First Republic, was now donning shattered shackles “in memory of the reacquisition of Austrian independence and the restoration of statehood” (Uhl, 2006).

With regards to the Allies and the ongoing occupation, Renner lamented that “war makes its own rules” and that “events of the war cannot be undone”:

The violent god of war walks over guilty and innocent victims alike. We may, one excuse us, complain time and again, but we cannot change it. Fate decided that our country is now occupied by four great powers and our people ended up in the sphere of influence of the four victorious nations.

Here, Renner implies that victims can be both innocent and guilty, but does not explain how. This could be interpreted as “systemic vagueness” (Edwards & Potter, 1992: 162). By avoiding to give too much detail about the way Austria came to be in a situation of renewed occupation, he manages the stake by restating the fact of the Allied occupation.

Interestingly, he also refers to Austria’s relations to Europe and the international community:

The Austrian people want autonomy and independence, want not only peace for themselves but also want to do everything so that peace in Europe can be preserved. ... [To achieve that,] the small, weak Austria ... needs the support of the United Nations and the members of the international community, the big and small ones.

In this context, Renner also called for the restitution of South Tyrol to Austria, to which the present members of parliament apparently answered with “thunderous applause”, according to the minutes of the assembly. The *Südtirolfrage*, the question concerning the restitution of South Tyrol, had been an issue since the province first became part of Italy in 1919. It was also given priority in the orientation process of Austria’s foreign policy in 1945 (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 2005). Renner called upon the Allies in 1945 to “give back South Tyrol” because Austria was already “small and weak” and a “safe state territory” would help Austria shoulder the burden of acting as a source for peace in Europe. (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 2020). It would continue to be an important foreign policy issue until EU accession - settling the violent conflict was part of the accession criteria.

Ten years after the first assembly of parliament, after a decade of Allied occupation, the Austrian State Treaty was signed on 15 May 1955 by Foreign Minister Leopold Figl together with the Allied occupation forces. In combination with the Law of Neutrality (*Neutralitätsgesetz*), adopted on 26 October 1955, it would become part of the founding myth of the Second Republic’s new found Austrian identity. To this day, neutrality and the State Treaty are part and parcel of the Austrian identity as

perceived by the Austrians themselves as they are among the ten most common answers to “What makes the Austrian identity?” (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 2020). Important points of the State Treaty are the prohibition of another *Anschluss* to Germany, the granting of minority rights to Slovenes and Croats, as well as the prohibition of re-engagement in National Socialist activities (*Wiederbetätigungsverbot*). Foreign Minister Figl was himself a concentration camp survivor and had only by margins avoided a death sentence in the final hours of the war in 1945. The words with which he presented the signed State Treaty to the masses waiting outside the balcony of the Vienna Belvedere palace became legendary: *Österreich ist frei*, Austria is free. Just hours before the signing, Figl had achieved that the “co-responsibility clause” of the Moscow Declaration reminding Austria about its co-responsibility regarding World War II was scratched from the Treaty’s preamble. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this act was argued to be signifying a “wall” between Germany and Austria to avoid any “*Anschluss* dreams” but also to allow for a non-German army tradition to begin here. The re-established Austrian Armed Forces were henceforth tasked to protect Austria’s neutrality (Rathkolb, 2015: 394).

Thus, without a mention of co-responsibility, the victim myth became *the* founding myth of the Second Republic. Domestically, it coincided with the post-war pains the population was facing: reconstruction, hunger, inflation. Internationally, the adoption of a “diplomacy of innocence” led the state to gain recognition as benign, while West Germany was cast as pariah and had to adopt a “diplomacy of guilt” (Bachleitner, 2019). Indeed, victimhood had been the official policy followed in the foreign ministry up until the 1980s when the facade showed first cracks as war crime accusations against former UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim surfaced during his bid for Austrian presidency. Prior to this, anything arguing against victimhood had been discredited as communist propaganda (Rathkolb, 2015: 392). Theoretically, this could be interpreted as an avoidance of “potentially disturbing knowledge” (Giddens, 1991: 188) that could have caused a rupture to Austria’s victim identity. In an effort to sustain the ontological security connect the the perpetuation of the biographical narrative of victimhood, anything that could have threatened the prevalence of the victim myth. Moreover, the difference between Austrian and German foreign policy was particularly visible in the ways the two countries handled reparations and restitutions to Israel and Jews (Bachleitner, 2019). Austria established foundations for that purpose only in the early 2000s (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 2020; Uhl, 2006). It is almost ironic that this happened under an ÖVP-FPÖ coalition government, but the basis for this change was laid by SPÖ Chancellor Vranitzky in the 1990s, something I will touch upon later.

The State Treaty laid the groundwork for the conclusion of the Allied occupation, and a neutrality emulating the Swiss model implying no attachment to either West or

East, was integral to the withdrawal of troops (even though the US had already started retreating, the Soviets were still very present in the East of the country). The Soviet Union supported neutrality, as it did not want to see another *Anschluss*, as that would strengthen West Germany that was already part of NATO in 1954. The Western Allies were hesitant as neutrality and non-alignment could have led to pro-communist sentiments in the county. In the end, declaring “everlasting neutrality” became emblematic of the end of the occupation, and the day when the Law of Neutrality became effective also became the Austrian National Day (26 October). Allegedly, the last foreign soldier had left the country the day before. The national holiday commemorating neutrality was established in 1965, most likely as a reaction to a weak sense of national identity among the Austrians at the time. Celebrating neutrality would be another way of boundary making between Austria and Germany. To this day, State Treaty and neutrality jubilees are more present than end of war commemorations. The ensuing relative identity stability was a prerequisite for asking questions to history and the realignment of history policy in the following decades (Uhl, in Brunner and Nachum, 2012: 159).

4.1.3 Vranitzky’s apology

The fact that the next empirical material is Chancellor Vranitzky’s 1991 speech is not supposed to be disregarding the efforts to establish Austria as an independent state and member of the international community after 1955. One of the most prominent and internationally known politicians who worked tirelessly for Austria’s foreign recognition was Bruno Kreisky (SPÖ). He acknowledged early the significance of relations with European states and other international partners. Himself of Jewish heritage, Kreisky had spent the war years exiled in Sweden and was thus impacted by the *Anschluss* trauma: To him, the fact that the international community had done nothing to avoid an annexation in 1938 was epitome of the inherent indifference towards Austria. To counter that, Kreisky realised the importance of expanding and cultivating contacts with international decision makers and an interest in international politics without direct implications on domestic policy (Rathkolb, 2015: 293). Austria joined the UN in 1955; On Kreisky’s initiative, the Organisation has maintained a Vienna office (one of the four major ones worldwide) since 1980. Austria was able to pay attention to international political developments beyond Europe also because of the fact that “the two traditional foci of attention, the successor states to the Habsburg Empire and Germany” were no longer demanding close attention (Katzenstein, 1976: 180). Kreisky proved international foresight in conflicts near and far: His work regarding the South Tyrol conflict - a violent independence movement that included bombings in the 1950s and 60s - was a first step towards Austrian EU accession (cf. Steininger, 2003). He also broadened the

policy of détente to include the struggle of Palestinians, especially given how the oil price crises of the 1970s proved that Western Europe and Austria were dependent on economic relations with the Arab states. Austria was the first state of the West to recognise the PLO, straining Austria-Israel relationships which would only become stabilized by Vranitzky's speeches in 1991 and 1993 (see below). Kreisky proved to be ahead of the times and at no point were his actions interpreted as violating the Law of Neutrality. On the contrary, his persona and Austria in general became internationally acknowledged intermediaries between conflicting fronts (Rathkolb, 2015: 298). To Kreisky, foreign policy was part of the Austrian identity formation process (Rathkolb, 2015: 299). Indeed, this shows a continuation from the intention of the State Treaty and the Law of Neutrality: Foreign policy would act as a source of Austrian identity and boundary making towards Germany, since an independently acting Austria would not consider a new *Anschluss*.

This short excursion is needed as it is important to know that there were indeed developments questioning the status quo and the victim narrative prior to Vranitzky's 1991 speech. As touched upon above, a turning point in the way the Austrian past was narrated started to crystallize in the years of 1986-88 in what is now known as the "Waldheim Affair". During his election campaign for the Austrian presidency, the World Jewish Congress pointed out that former UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim (ÖVP) had deliberately left out crucial parts in his autobiography when it came to his *Wehrmacht* past and work as SA officer stationed in the Balkans during the war. With a "now more than ever" slogan his bid for the presidency for the 1986-92 term succeeded. In 1988, Simon Wiesenthal demanded his resignation on the basis that Waldheim must have been aware of the war crimes committed in the Balkans during his deployment. However, the official narrative did not change until a few years later, even though in the *Anschluss* remembrance year of 1988 Vranitzky had already said that a "self-critical reflection" would be needed in Austria (*Jüdisches Echo*, not dated). Potentially the most interesting piece of empirical material to be analysed showcasing the change in narrative is therefore the already mentioned speech by Chancellor Franz Vranitzky (SPÖ) before the Austrian Parliament on 8 July, 1991 in which he called "for an extensive reflection on the role of Austria in a changing Europe considering its historical background" (*Demokratiezentrum Wien*, 2015; *ORF*, 1991). For the first time, a public admission of responsibility was uttered in an attempt to begin apologizing to survivors and descendants of victims.

Background to Vranitzky's speech was the tense situation in Yugoslavia, where all signs were pointing towards an impending war. The item on the agenda at the assembly had been statements by various ministers regarding the conflict. Vranitzky therefore started his speech by noting that Yugoslavia and Austria had been "good neighbours and friends for the past 45 years" and were connected "not only by close

political and economic ties, but also interpersonal ties, which were the foundation of this friendship” (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 1991). He continued by saying that to understand the sources of conflicts like that in Yugoslavia, one had to grapple with the country’s history, and that this also applies to Austria:

If Austria is to be taken seriously as an interlocutor in this dramatic and current matter, if we want our contribution to discussions on issues concerning Europe to be granted moral authority, then we also have to be strict when it comes to the assessment of our own history and must not shy away from a clear language.

According to the assembly minutes, this was met with applause from SPÖ coalition partner ÖVP, as well as MP Heide Schmidt, then member of the FPÖ who would go on to found a new party prompted by the FPÖ’s swing to the right under Jörg Haider’s leadership. Staying on the topic of a new Europe, Vranitzky continued:

Europe is setting new standards for itself. Standards for freedom, human rights and democracy, standards for the behaviour of all governments towards their own people and standards for states’ behaviours towards each other. All European countries have to do their part to make this new era a reality. ... Therefore, it cannot be permissible for anyone with political responsibility in this country to endorse any aspects of a dictatorship that were a means to persecution and war.

The last sentence highlights the context which prompted Vranitzky to use a speech on Yugoslavia to point towards domestic Austrian issues. His speech was interpreted as a response to what Jörg Haider, FPÖ party leader and then state governor of Carinthia, had previously said in a debate in the regional parliament. In a discussion on unemployment payments, Haider had said that the Third Reich had had “at least a proper employment policy” (*BBC*, 2000). He had to resign as state governor soon after (only to be elected back into office in 1999). Vranitzky went on to talk about the *Anschluss*, and that while “Austria fell victim to military aggression in March 1938”, there were “not few Austrians who had expected greater economic possibilities from the greater Reich”, and “many Austrians welcomed the *Anschluss*, supported the Nationalsocialist regime, were sustaining it on many hierarchical levels”.

The most quoted part of the speech in reports at the time (CNN), but also features in contemporary accounts of the victim myth, is as follows:

We accept responsibility for all acts of our history and our people, the good and the evil. But as much as we acclaim the good, we have to apologize for the evil to the survivors and the descendents of the dead. I do this expressively on behalf of the Austrian government.

This was the first time that an Austrian official mentioned acceptance of Austrian responsibility for what happened during the war, as well as the first time that an official apology was uttered in the name of any government. Vranitzky did not have to talk about Austria’s responsibility in WWII. Given the context of the assembly, he

would have gotten away with just talking about Yugoslavia, but the fact that he acknowledged that an account of Austrian history, as part of European history, has to include both good and bad, was remarkable. The reference to Europe could be interpreted as an attempt to present his account as factual and commonly accepted (at least by the EU members). Vranitzky had an interest in being perceived as authentic here, and the background of Haider’s “employment policy” remark proves that. Indeed, Vranitzky had ended the SPÖ-FPÖ coalition in 1986 when Jörg Haider took over as FPÖ party leader and steered it further towards the right (Rathkolb, 2017). Countering what Haider had said in the regional government was in line with this approach. On an international level, Vranitzky was working hard to weaken any reservations against Austrian EU accession. Moscow was sceptical because of the neutrality law. France was especially wary of “a third German state” to enter the EU - after German reunification (see Rathkolb, 2015; Uhl in Brunner and Nachum, 2012: 147). Following the footsteps of his pre-predecessor Kreisky, Vranitzky knew that Europe was now watching what was happening in Austria, and had to show that his country was playing on the same team when it came to dealing with the past.

When asked about Vranitzky’s speech, Simon Wiesenthal said in an interview that he was “very happy” about this “very important” “first step”, and noted that “young people were waiting for such an announcement”. The interview was part of a ORF contribution to the CNN world report, which Austrian reporter Eugen Freund concluded with these words, which I believe sums up the events quite well:

Victim or accomplice? It’s no longer either or. What many Austrians have repressed for so long is not official policy anymore. Recognition that only by dealing with its past, a country can successfully handle the challenges of the future. (ORF, 1991)

Following this discussion on how Austria’s biographical narrative changed after the war, it makes sense to summarise what each interpretative repertoire consists of. Table 1 distinguishes between the victim repertoire and the co-responsibility repertoire:

victim repertoire	co-responsibility repertoire
(diplomatic) innocence	(diplomatic) guilt
powerless, ridded of agency, passivity, defenselessness	acting on own accord, willfully, aware
non-apologetic	apologetic
oppressed, subjugated	collaborating
<i>chosen glory</i> of pre-war Austria	

<i>chosen trauma</i> of domestic (post-)war hardship, disregarding disproportionate Jewish suffering	recognising all victims of World War II
status-quo fixated	looking/open/ for (narrative) change
resistance focus	reality of weak resistance
liberated	defeated
vague descriptions and formulations	direct
attributing blame	accepting responsibility

Table 1 Interpretative repertoires of Austria as victim and/or accomplice of/in WWII

It is important to note that while after 1991 the victim repertoire was drawn upon less and less, it was not totally omitted from political discourse. In 1993 Vranitzky was invited to the Hebrew University in Jerusalem to receive an honorary doctorate. In his acceptance speech, he talked about a “collective responsibility” of all Austrians. Referring to the fact that there was no Austria after the *Anschluss*, he maintained in an interview to *Jüdisches Echo* that “[W]e can’t talk about ‘collective guilt’, neither in legal or moral understanding, ... also considering that not *each* Austrian was guilty, but a specific group” (*Jüdisches Echo*, not dated, emphasis added). I interpret the term “collective responsibility” as a device with which Vranitzky cleverly managed the *dilemma of stake* of representing on the one hand Austria and not wanting to lump *every* Austrian together - especially given that by 1993, demographics had changed considerably compared to the war years. On the other hand, the fact that he was speaking in Israel made it necessary for him to reaffirm his commitment to a shared Austrian responsibility that could not be put on a few individuals.

Vranitzky’s second speech is important, especially when contrasted with President Thomas Klestil’s 15 November 1994 speech in front of the Israeli parliament. As first president of the Second Republic to visit Israel, he did talk about Austria’s “historical heritage”. However, commentators remarked that his speech was clearly missing elements of an official apology, merely stating that “nothing could excuse the crime perpetrated by some of the worst Nazi henchmen”, and only tip-toeing around mentions of the Holocaust by calling it a “Jewish tragedy” that happened on Austrian soil. Referring to Austria’s policy of restitution in his speech, Klestil said,

We know that for a long time we did not do enough and we did not always do the right thing to ease the fate of survivors of the Jewish tragedy and that of the victims' descendants; and that we have omitted for much too long to commit ourselves to those Jewish Austrians who at that time had to leave the country humiliated and embittered. (Klestil, quoted in Wodak et al. 87)

This could be interpreted as another instance of “systemic vagueness” (Edwards & Potter, 2002: 162). Vranitzky himself explained Klestil’s “hesitance” or “caution” simply with the fact that the two just had “different tempers” (*Jüdisches Echo*, not dated).

The 2020 parliament publication commemorating the 75th anniversary of the first parliamentary assembly after WWII features in its introduction statements from all current party leaders in parliament. In her contribution, SPÖ party leader Pamela Rendi-Wagner explicitly talks about a 45 year long “reluctance to account for the past” and references her fellow party member Vranitzky’s 1991 and 1993 speeches as a turning point and the defining moment in ending the victim myth. At Vranitzky’s 80th birthday celebration at the Bruno Kreisky Forum in Vienna, historian Oliver Rathkolb commented retrospectively that the speech would, besides getting Vranitzky into the history books, also grant him international recognition for starting the erosion of the victim myth (Rathkolb, 2017). According to Rathkolb, Vranitzky “kept his cool” during the Waldheim years - he had to, since the Chancellor would often take up the President’s role at international meetings. He also claims that this speech, together with the one at the Hebrew University, was what calmed the tense Austria-Israel relations. He called Vranitzky “a political personality who in a seemingly chaotic world looks towards the future and tries to give orientation with calmness and a sustainable political strategy” (Ibid.).

4.2 To Another Abyss?

*And I know I can't explain
The commotion in my brain
Like a terrifying reality
Deconstructed but inadequately*

...

*So long ago, I set sail
And it chills me to the bone
That I'm so far away from home*

Bad Religion, “To Another Abyss”, 2004, 25-28, 16-18

On the basis of the empirical material examined so far, the first part of this analysis shows that Austria's state biographical narrative was challenged and subsequently changed discursively at several points in time, culminating with the admission of co-responsibility by Chancellor Franz Vranitzky's speeches in 1991 and 1993. The question is now, *how did this affect Austria's ontological security?* I shall answer this with reference to the literature presented in the theory chapter. I have previously mentioned that in Giddens (1991) understanding of ontological security, fixed understandings of past events can help a state prepare for an uncertain future. Given the historical context of the narrative change from victim to co-responsibility, the future was indeed rather uncertain: The end of the Cold War, German reunification, the end of Soviet Union, imminent war in Yugoslavia, and a potential EU membership are only some of the factors at play here. In this reading of ontological security, the narrative change would be seen as extremely disruptive to Austria's sense of ontological security and potentially anxiety inducing. Faced with all the possibilities of where to go next without a stable interpretation of past events, Austria might indeed have been paralyzed with anxiety.

However, the literature offers an alternative conception of ontological security that understands "adaptability, resilience and reflexivity towards identity [as] also central to ontological security" (Browning and Joenniemi, 2017: 32). While this does not mean that we should disregard all of Giddens' account, we have to understand that change is not inherently harmful and that revisiting one's history could lead to more than just disruption and the inhibition of agency. Indeed, more recent literature on anxiety has shown the "status quo bias" inherent in traditional ontological security writing which makes any kind of change unthinkable. Berenskoetter (2020) argued that an actor will actually gain agency "in the attempt to become ontologically secure". In a time of uncertainty, Vranitzky proved that Austria had the capacity to cope with this change. According to Wodak et al. (2009: 82), "for Vranitzky, Austrian identity was strong enough to face the historical truth", even though there were strongly divergent understandings of this truth in Austria at the time, even among the political elites. This is probably best exemplified by Vranitzky's own words:

We have to be respectful towards others, and also our own traditions, in a sensible way. We shouldn't destroy them but also not be constrained by them to discover new things. We will need to do that anyways, so better to be actively shaping this process than passively suffering. (quoted in Rathkolb, 2017)

But if it was not "another abyss" Austria was facing after the narrative change, what would come afterwards? Joining the EU definitely became more likely after 1991/1993. While Kreisky had already advocated for moving closer to the "new" Europe during the 1960s, it would take a few more years until accession to the EU

was defined as the primary goal of Austrian foreign policy in 1987, achieved in 1995. Arguably, the preceding admissions of guilt had an indirect effect on the bid. However, unlike West Germany, which had to prove its desire for reconciliation by committing to reparations to Israel in the 1950s (Bachleitner, 2019), the condition for Austrian EU accession was the settling of the South Tyrol conflict (*Österreichisches Parlament*, 2020).

As a matter of fact, as Austria was nearing EU accession, opponents were sustaining their arguments by focusing on Austrian neutrality and the corresponding law from 1955. In the West, some even sensed the possibility of a new *Anschluss*⁷, or at least a disproportional strengthening of Germany, were Austria to join the EU. In Moscow, joining the EU was long seen as a violation of neutrality and the State Treaty (Rathkolb, 2015: 281). On multiple occasions Chancellor Vranitzky did his best to convince European leaders like President Mitterand that Austria was not at all interested in becoming part of Germany again (Rathkolb, 2015: 307). Domestically, the danger of another *Anschluss* and the implications on neutrality also influenced the Austrian discourse on EU accession for as long as 1986 (Rathkolb, 2015: 281). To gather support in the run-up to the EU referendum, “the Austrian population was frequently reassured that nothing was going to change and that there was no cause for concern about a possible loss of identity” (Wodak et al., 2009: 2). Considerations regarding neutrality were quite appropriate then, and even today, the reality of a common EU security strategy and the trajectory towards a potential EU wide army could prompt new debates on the “everlasting” aspect of Austrian neutrality. After all, neutrality is the reason why Austria is not a formal NATO member. Wodak et al. note how Austria’s membership in the EU has indeed “led to a reformulation of one of the pillars of Austrian identity - neutrality - within the larger context of European integration” (Wodak et al., 2009: 5; *Österreichisches Parlament*, 2020). With regards to any *Anschluss* worries, we have to remember that circumstances that led to the events of March 1938 were obviously drastically different than in the 1990s. Bachleitner, for example, reminds that the end of the Cold War was also the end of the East as “evil other” to Europe (and the “West” in general) “and in its place now stepped the memory of Auschwitz” and with it a “duty of remembrance” for a new generation equipped with the warning “Never Again” (Bachleitner, 2019: 503).

However, the “Never Again” memo had not reached everyone: During coalition talks between conservative People’s Party (ÖVP) and right wing Freedom Party (FPÖ) following the general election in October 1999, it became clear that the rest of the EU members were not going to accept an Austrian government featuring the FPÖ. Founded by former SS leaders, the FPÖ had followed an ideology of pan-Germanism until the 1970s, and members had been involved in bombings in

⁷ In the academic literature, Peter Katzenstein’s *Disjoined Partners* (1976) ruled out another *Anschluss* given the fact that Austria had become too politically autonomous to integrate with West-Germany, regardless of cultural similarities.

South Tyrol in the 1960s. Party officials were openly anti-semitic and never uttered clear distinctions to the neo-Nazi scene (Wodak & Pelinka, 2002). The fact that the FPÖ was able to become a strong enough party to be able to support a government of either of the big parties was not due to their stance on immigration as only 47% of FPÖ voters had voted for them *because* of their anti-immigration policy. Indeed, “the prime motives of voting FPÖ were to fight against misgovernment and mismanagement (65%), and to promote change more generally (63%)”, given the fact that for most of the Second Republic’s history, there had been either a ÖVP or SPÖ government in power, or a coalition between the two (Falkner, 2001). It might not be too daring to conclude that the change in official state narrative did not prompt such an election result. However, the ÖVP-FPÖ coalition did not fit into the co-responsibility narrative, and definitely did not sit right with the international community. The ensuing EU14 sanctions are interesting in that they highlight what happened when Europe saw itself confronted with its other that it wanted to leave in the past (cf. Judt, 2002).

4.3 With A Little Help From My Friends

*What would you do if I sang out of tune?
Would you stand up and walk out on me?*

...

(Could it be anybody?)

All I need is someone

Knows just where I'm goin', yeah

Somebody who knows just what I'll show them, baby

Joe Cocker, “With A Little Help From My Friends”, 1969, 1-2, 24-27

I have argued that the biographical narrative change did not negatively affect the stability of Austrian identity following Vranitzky’s speech given the fact that assuming identity as something that can be “stable” is already problematic and assumes any kind of change to be detrimental to an actor’s ontological security. I now want to answer the question of how Austria was able to “go on” in this time of uncertainty, therefore considering *whether interstate friendship can provide ontological security in times of biographical narrative changes*. The literature on friendship between states answers this affirmatively. Even if a change were to cause negative emotions, friendship would be able to balance it with positive ones. Since a

friend is a familiar, “significant other”, friendship relations imply a significant degree of trust which in turn provides ontological security (Berenskoetter, 2007).

Just as people have different kinds of relationships to each other, so do states. Drawing on Aristotle, Berenskoetter claims that while there are different kinds of cooperation between states, friendship is the most genuine. In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that there is more to these international/interstate relations than a Schmittian friend-enemy binary. If peace is more than the absence of war, then friendship should be more than just the absence of enmity between two states. At the same time, having multiple friendships is possible, and each friend contributes to “self-fulfilment in a unique way” (Berenskoetter, 2007: 669).

To argue that joining the EU offered the prospect of such a friendship to Austria would imply that I see the EU as more than just a “security community” committed to keeping the members in check while offering economic benefits. However, I believe that suffices to say that it is a community of “significant others” and structures that provide a certain degree of predictability which in turn generates more trust between the members. Wendt’s conception of friendship as a “Kantian culture” comes close to this, in that “the regional institutions have enabled the states to overcome mutual Hobbesian suspicion” and establish an international community beyond anarchy (Constantin, 2011). Of course, one could argue against this by pointing towards transgressors within the Union that have been going against the values espoused by it, be it countries like Hungary and Poland which have been becoming less and less democratic, or the United Kingdom. Deliberations on what these instances do to the EU’s own ontological security go beyond the scope of this paper unfortunately. Nevertheless, the sanctions against the ÖVP-FPÖ government have shown what happens when a friend *sings out of tune*, goes against what is expected of them and challenges the established group identity. The fact that the sanctions were only short-lived and had no lasting political or economic consequences shows that the friendship between the members was strong enough to provide continuity when faced with this internal transgressor and potential threat to ontological security.

In addition to this, it is difficult to suggest that the prospect of a German-Austrian friendship was enough to face the potential ontological insecurity prompted by the change in narrative. Until today, any endeavor in this regard seems to be ideologically charged, especially given the persistence of pan-Germanic sentiments among both political elites and the population. To this day many FPÖ members of parliament are members in Austrian far-right fraternities, and frequent accusations of anti-semitism do not scare away voters (*Tiroler Tageszeitung*, 2019). Moreover, groups like the extreme right Identitarian Movement have established strong ties between their German and Austrian chapters, and indeed all over Europe (*Der Standard*, 2021). This aside, even though Berenskoetter’s interstate friendship

suggests a relationship based on “mutually agreed roles”, Germany and Austria are probably not able to meet on the same level in terms of mutual benefits like Germany and France are, for example. In fact, together with the “special relationship” between the US and the UK, the German-French relationship is to this day probably one of the “purest” interstate friendships given the fact that it applies to all three levels of friendship as defined by Berenskoetter and Van Hoef (2017). Perhaps the Austrian case is better understood if we look at friendship not as the goal but as an outcome. Evidently, there was an economic interest behind Austria’s bid for EU membership, potentially it was even the major driving force, while increased reputation among the international community was a side thought. Friendship could therefore be interpreted as a byproduct of attaining EU membership, while also a potential trigger for reactionary forces at home (see above). Even Berenskoetter suggests that friendship does not necessarily need to be the goal, even if it is often formulated as such.

Alternatively, relating this discussion to previous theoretical and empirical considerations, it could also be argued that joining the EU and other bilateral relations put pressure on Austria to maintain the biographical narrative change which started in the 1980s and culminated in Vranitzky’s apology and admission of responsibility. Being in a close relationship or friendship-like environment like the EU together with Germany that had admitted war guilt from the outset, Austria might have felt compelled to do the same. Germany had managed to stay a viable partner for cooperation even after reunification and proved to the international community that it was willing to recognise the pariah state stigma (cf. Adler-Nissen, 2014).

Keeping the historical context in mind, the end of the Cold War led to a thorough examination of Allied denazification measures and the discrepancies therein (Rathkolb, 2015). The end of the Cold War also opened up new possibilities of bilateral partnerships that could not have happened previously. Especially regional cooperation between Austrian border regions and neighbours of the former Eastern bloc and the successor states of Yugoslavia prove this, even though these partnerships were also facilitated by the European integration process. Connecting this with what Vranitzky said about Austria’s contribution to a new European standard for the relationship a country has with its own history, close ties with Austria that has revisited its past could lead to similar outcomes in those states that have tried to suppress memories of the war that could negatively affect national and state identity. Especially in places where anti-fascism was replaced by anti-communism could an informed examination of the past lead to a better understanding of the current political climate.

5 Conclusion

After the end of World War II, Austria adopted the so-called “victim myth” as a state identity that would guide the state’s understanding of its own history and its relations with others through foreign policy. The biographical narrative of Austrian victim identity was shaped by documents like the Moscow Declaration and continuous references to it by politicians. The fact that the Allies recognised Austria as first victim of Nazi aggression was highlighted while the reminder of Austrian co-responsibility in the war was conveniently scratched from the narrative. This omission was institutionalised with the Austrian State Treaty which made the victim myth into the founding myth of the Second Republic. Examining the rest of the empirical material in the context of this narrative, the first section of the analysis presents the different ways in which politicians drew upon the victim repertoire to sustain this particular narrative. By the end of this section, a change from one narrative to another can be observed as Chancellor Vranitzky’s 1991 speech drew from an unprecedented co-responsibility repertoire.

The second part of the analysis looked at what a change in biographical narrative would mean for the Austrian state’s ontological security. I argued that an understanding of ontological security as a process of becoming would take away the fear of change and open up possibilities for agency. Indeed, the change from victim to co-responsibility narrative did not cause Austria to fall into “another abyss” in the form of insurmountable anxiety but the possibility to move closer to other European states who were (re)interpreting their pasts in a common way.

Bringing in the concept of interstate friendship, the last section of the analysis looked at whether the promise of friendship could have led Austria to take a leap of faith into an unknown future by changing its biographical narrative. I tried to answer this question of *why* change happened speculatively, assuming that Austria did not want to be left behind in a Europe that was coming closer together. When the EU14 imposed political sanctions on the centre-right ÖVP-FPÖ government some 20 years ago, Europe was reminded of its past (self), but this did not cause ontological insecurity as there were enough significant others present to outbalance any negative feelings caused by this memory.

While this thesis uses Austria as a case, it could argue for findings larger than this and there are definitely things that could be learned from this case in terms of theory and other empirical contexts. Further research could therefore lead into different directions: First, instead of a state level analysis, the case could be approached

through a society level analysis. This means that one could look at how discourse on the state level influenced ordinary people and their thinking and behaviour, and more innovatively, their ontological security. If one is to understand the state as an ontological security provider, then the sudden change in narrative could have left people uprooted in their understanding of their national and personal identity. This is in line with other studies applying a discursive psychology method, as “insights developed from a study of public political discourse can help make sense of features of different sorts of discourse, including everyday talk” (Edwards & Potter, 1992: 7). In the Austrian case, some work has been done with regards to the prevalence of antisemitism after World War II, especially by the team around Ruth Wodak, but adding an ontological security perspective could grant further insight into the influence the state has on the individual.

A closer look could also be taken at the Austrian case through literature on small states, especially in regards to how Austria had to come to terms with a vast loss of territory and influence after the wars. Rathkolb (2015) touches upon Austrian exceptionalism in his discussions on the paradoxes that determine the Second Republic and its tendencies of solipsism, but it would be interesting to look at it from an ontological security point of view.

A further path for future research to take could be in terms of further applying and developing the friendship approach. The international friendship literature boasts works on Franco-German and US-UK relations, but it would be interesting to look at lesser researched states. For instance, I touched upon Bruno Kreisky’s time in exile in Sweden. There, he built a lasting friendship with fellow prominent social democrat Olof Palme. Together with Willy Brandt, they have been titled the three musketeers of social democracy in the 1970 (*Svenska Dagbladet*, 2017). It was from there that Kreisky was able to develop an outsider’s perspective on Austria and also his ideas on how an Austrian welfare state could look. Looking at Austro-Sweden relations beyond the personal friendship between Kreisky and Palme using Berenskoetter and Van Hoef’s framework could perhaps demonstrate some areas in which the theory could be improved to account for instances of close ties between state officials but a lack in institutionalised friendship or civil society networks. Furthermore, the friendship literature could benefit from non-Western cases that go beyond utilitarian alliances. In an alternative application, I have examined US-Iran relations through a friendship lens arguing that the two could never become true friends given the discrepancies in their interpretation of their shared history and different visions for a future world order.

All in all, this thesis showed that by facing change, owning up to its past and with a little help from its friends, Austria was able to go beyond the abyss of anxiety supposedly rooted in biographical narrative change and actually become more ontologically secure in the process.

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