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required, allowing space for analyzing the dynamics and the progress of a negotiation, as well as the "transformations in identities and interests" (p. 279) that, he suggests, are the product of shifting intersubjective understandings among the actors involved.

There is no doubt, however, that Singh's theory should command serious attention. It aims to blend the insights of both structural theories of strategic interaction and constructivist arguments about the generation of identities. The relative power or capabilities of actors prior to a negotiation is not, he argues, the sole determinant of its outcome, nor are the preferences of those actors given and fixed. What happens during a negotiation matters, too: Power relations can be reconfigured and interests modified as external circumstances change or actors adopt new tactics. For Singh, even the "identities" of actors can be transformed, as what he calls "meta-power" shifts intersubjective understandings of roles and positions. New or newly acknowledged information can thus change the preferences of actors. To take his own example, bringing developing states in from the margins of trade negotiations prompted an eventual modification in their stance in the Uruguay Round discussions on services. At first obstructive, with time these states became constructive negotiating partners as they began to recognize the new regard in which they were held by the developed world (pp. 287–88). The possibility that the processes of diplomacy can produce such "new epistemic understandings" underpins the author's enthusiasm, in his conclusion, for "negotiations-as-global-governance"—the nurturing of the diplomatic process with a view to building the kind of legitimacy, accountability, and even democracy on which stable governance might rest.

There is an old-fashioned ring to Singh's claim that diplomacy might serve as the best means of "resolving international conflicts" (p. 280) and even as an ideal form of global governance (p. 291). The notion that the very processes of diplomacy could act as a "civilizing" force on states and other actors—to use the terms of an older discourse of global governance—is common to much writing on the topic in the first half of the last century (e.g., see Sir Ernest Satow, *A Guide to Diplomatic Method,* 1917). The contemporary version of this argument relies less on ideas of civilization and more on what might be called the "stickiness" of those "networks" that draw in and hold actors into processes of negotiation. The old and new enthusiasts for diplomacy remain vulnerable, however, to the charge that there continues to be very little to prevent powerful actors from eschewing communication in favor of outright coercion, and that civilizing processes and networks do little to prevent such behavior. Singh is acutely aware of this problem: He rightly notes that negotiation works best where power is diffused—but how it might be addressed in a system of ever more concentrated power remains unclear.

The Invisible Constitution of Politics: Contested Norms and International Encounters. By Antje Wiener. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. 264p. $99.00.
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— Frank Schimmelfennig, *Center for European Politics, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich*

For the past decade, Antje Wiener has been at the forefront of constructivist theorizing on international norms, European integration, and constitutionalism beyond the state. In her work, she has put forward a radically nonreified concept of international norms, which she regards as subject to context-dependent (re)interpretation and political contestation. *The Invisible Constitution of Politics* puts these ideas to an empirical test. It also tackles a highly topical real-world challenge for the European Union. Here, social interactions and political authority have expanded beyond the state to such an extent that constitutionalization has firmly established itself on the political agenda. At the same time, however, it is a politically contested process in which different constitutional principles for the EU confront one another—see, for example, the failed referenda on the recent treaty revisions.

What is the "invisible constitution"? Wiener distinguishes among three dimensions of norms: their formal validity (e.g., through the ratification of legal documents), their social recognition (e.g., in social practices implementing the norm), and their cultural validation, which she describes as the "active component that reflects and constitutes the meaning that is actually in use" (p. 6). These meanings attached to constitutional norms, which form the cultural background of a constitution (often without the citizens being aware of it), comprise the invisible constitution. In Wiener's view, it is this constitution that poses the biggest problems for constitutionalization beyond the state: Even if governments succeed in agreeing on formal rules, the meanings and interpretations attached to them may vary substantially and spur contestation. It is the purpose of this book to make this invisible constitution visible, that is, to reconstruct and map the "meanings-in-use" of European constitutional norms.

The study is designed as a comparative discourse analysis of norm interpretations in three areas of EU policy—the Schengen policy of free movement of persons, enlargement, and constitutional politics—by two groups of nationals (British and German) in three contexts (two domestic, Berlin and London, and one transnational, Brussels). This setup allows Wiener to study how meanings vary according to the context of interaction (national or transnational) for groups with the same cultural backgrounds. She formulates four theoretical expectations for this constellation. According to the "national identity" expectation, the British and the Germans will attach different meanings to European norms regardless of the context in which they interact. By contrast, the "liberal

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community" hypothesis assumes convergent meanings across all contexts. The "layer-cake" assumption expects elite convergence at the transnational level, and the "rules-in-practice" assumption favored by the author expects divergence between capitals and Brussels for the same national groups.

On the basis of 53 interviews with academics, journalists, and policymakers (10 for each national group in Brussels, 20 Berliners, and 13 Londoners), Wiener concludes that Berliners and Londoners attach different meanings to European norms—mostly in line with national political culture and divergent ideas of Europe. In Brussels, however, meanings are more diffuse (without actually converging), and differences are blurred. This finding is in line with the rules-in-practice assumption and is used to generate a working hypothesis as the core result of the study: "In the absence of all-encompassing transnationalisation, international politics is constitutive for more rather than less diversity. International encounters are therefore expected to generate conflict and contestation" (p. 195).

Unfortunately, the analysis suffers from a number of problems that make it difficult to sustain these conclusions. First, it is unclear whether the discourse analysis really taps the meanings of *norms.* In contrast to constitutional politics, the connection between Schengen and the citizenship norm, or enlargement and the norms of democracy and the rule of law, is not straightforward. Many keywords used to analyze the responses have only weak or unclear links to these norms (e.g., compliance, fairness, inclusion, integration, wealth export, and finality in the enlargement case). The results, therefore, often seem to reflect meanings or evaluations of *policies,* rather than meanings of norms. To be sure, the meanings of policies may also be colored by distinct cultural backgrounds, but they are not necessarily *normative* meanings and do not necessarily reflect contested *norms.*

Second, the study works with an extremely low number of observations. Displaying the results as percentages and talking about 10% or less as "a few" (p. 104) is misleading if 10% is actually a single respondent. More troubling is the use of these numbers for the opposition-deriving exercise from which the qualitative conclusions are drawn. In the case of the Berliners, almost no connotation is based on a majority of respondents; sometimes utterances of just one or two respondents are taken as representative for the entire sample (e.g., pp. 135–36, 141, 146). In general, small or insignificant quantitative differences are inflated to represent categorical national divides; sometimes, however, the results are simply turned upside down. In the enlargement case, Wiener describes Londoners as "quite happy with the reference to the European Union as a club that works based on the principle of fairness" (p. 131), although more Londoners (and as many Londoners as Berliners) are concerned with "compliance" than with "fairness." Moreover, in contrast with the rules-in-practice assumption, the differences between British and German Brusselites are more pronounced here than those between Londoners and Berliners. Across all issues, the only conclusion one can safely draw from the numbers is that British Brusselites hold more diffuse views than do Londoners.

Even if one accepted the empirical conclusions for a moment, they would not necessarily support Wiener's theoretical assumptions and working hypothesis. For one, the study does not take self-selection into account. We simply cannot know whether the more diffuse meanings held by Brusselites are a result of their transnational interactions or of prior, less "national" attitudes, which in turn made them more likely to go to Brussels. This mechanism and the resulting bias have long been diagnosed and confirmed in studies of international socialization in Europe—but, unfortunately, the book ignores them completely. Finally, the pessimism of the "working hypothesis" appears unwarranted: Whereas international politics may lead to a contestation of meanings embedded in national political cultures, it also makes these meanings more diffuse and, thus, less likely to lead to conflict.

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