As one distinctive factor shaping national interests and inclinations in foreign and security policy, the concept of historical domestic construction may relate to other theoretical approaches in international relations and foreign policy in a variety of ways. With respect to constructivist thought in these areas, this book emphasizes a particular kind of domestic construction that is tied to a particular source: dominant interpretations of the meaning and implications of historical experiences. This formulation of historically constructed elements of national role and purpose connects to other strands of research and theorizing about roles and national role conceptions (NRCs), but also diverges from them. Historical domestic construction is compatible with classical realism’s frequent emphasis of the importance of history and of domestic politics. With various other realist and liberal approaches, furthermore, it may be complementary or competitive, or connect with particular strands in these intellectual traditions in other ways. Its relationship with the factors, historical forces, or causal connections prominently emphasized by other intellectual perspectives in international relations and foreign policy analysis thus is not uniform, but depends on the specific research question and the particular analytic focus. Employed by themselves, as in the present study, historical domestic constructions may provide answers to a certain set of political questions and historical outcomes, but will reach their limits with others.

Historical domestic construction and constructivism

Both aspects of the construction of national role and purpose emphasized here—the historical and the domestic—closely relate this book’s
approach to social constructivism generally.¹ This study stresses the importance of one specific kind of politically consequential construction, with a specific location, drawing from a specific source: history. In particular, this formulation seeks to contribute an aspect of temporal and historical depth to constructivist thought,² emphasizing the significance and the implications of historical experiences, self-adopted historical legacies, and prevalent interpretations of the past’s meanings for national role and purpose in international affairs in the present. Such constructions, this study holds, provide considerable explanatory leverage and opportunity for comparative analysis. But such elements of role and purpose do not spring instantaneously from political leaders’ minds, or somehow appear in historical or temporal voids. They carry the mark of history and of time.

Historically conceived constructions of self, role, and purpose can exist independently and fairly isolated from various sorts of international contexts or external relations—and from other domestic factors of interest and policy. Conjured relative to the national past and its dominant meanings, major role and purpose ingredients are actor-based aspects of role and identity that exist in addition to or instead of systemic position or social enmeshment, or various other possible types of domestic construction and institutionalization that are not tied to history and interpretations of its meaning. More than the international or transnational realms, or pockets of these two spheres of political and social interchange, the domestic level is the main locus of memory and interpretation of national history—no matter whether in specific instances the key elements of domestic historical construction are predominantly held among the main units and offices of the

¹ Influential works of social constructivism in international relations and foreign policy include Kratochwil 1989; Katzenstein 1996a; Ruggie 1998a; Wendt 1999. For social constructivism’s theoretical roots and philosophical underpinnings, see Ruggie 1998b; Searle 1995. Adler 2013 offers a recent overview of constructivism in international relations broadly. For a forward-looking overview of constructivist thought and the study of foreign policy in particular, note Kaarbo 2003. For works in the constructivist vein broadly on international relations, foreign policy, or regional integration in Europe, among others, see Johnston 1995; Christiansen, Jørgensen, and Wiener 2001; Abdelal 2002; Parsons 2003; Schimmelfennig 2003; Katzenstein 2005; Checkel 2007; Krotz 2007; Johnston 2008; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Risse 2010.

² On history and time, in this spirit, see, for example, Koselleck 1979; Braudel 1980; Koselleck 2000; Pierson 2004.