Identity and the Future of European integration: Crossroads or cul-de-sac?

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Introduction:

The European Union (EU) commenced as a project to integrate the six Western European states in economic and then political and cultural area. The economic dimension of the ambitious project has gone further than the political and cultural dimensions. In the 1970s and especially in the 1980s European politicians became aware that the aim of 'ever closer union' could only be achieved by constructing a cultural and political identity for the Union. The early ideas about the European identity can be found in 'Tindemans Report' published in the mid-1970s and 'A People's Europe' released in 1985, both of which emphasized the importance of a European identity for further integration (Edwards 2000:67). Beginning with the 1990s the EU focused on the question of what kind of values that European identity should encompass. In the last decade, Europe witnessed enormous amount of events that shaped not only Europe itself and its neighbourhood but also the future of idea of Europe and the project of the EU. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc, escalation of ethnic and religious conflicts at doorstep of Europe, intensification of radical and fundamental discourses in politics, dramatic increase in the numbers of immigrants living in Europe, the tension between those immigrants and native Europeans and economic effects of globalization have challenged the European integration process not only in political and economic terms, but also in social and cultural terms.

In this paper, I will focus on the issue of cultural dimension in the European integration. In this endeavour, I will try to advance my arguments on the two contradictory questions: Is the EU at a crossroads, where the Europeans have to choose a way that can lead to a cultural integration, which can eventually facilitate the whole integration process? Or is the cultural dimension of European integration is a cul-de-sac which goes nowhere and which has no ability to mitigate neither the cultural and social tensions within Europe nor the opposition to the European Union. My argument is that the EU needs a cultural

integration apart from economic and political one. However, this aspect of the integration has to be defined carefully due to its sensitive nature. A wrong choice can ruin the entire European project. In order to comprehend the cultural aspect of European integration, first, I will focus on the characteristics of identity and how identity plays a significant role in politics. The second part will give a historical evolution of the European identity in addition to the recent developments such as the constitutional treaty and the discussions revolving around the question of integrating the immigrants and Muslims residing in the European countries. The last part will present a brief discussion on the future of European integration with reference to philosophical debates.

I) Identity and Identity Politics:

The questions of "Who are you?", "Who are we?" and "Who are they?" are the questions that define individuals' identity (Tilly 2003:608). Then, the question is what identity means. Identity is understood as individuals' positioning themselves and others as members of particular groups ranging from nation to gender or to religion. In other words, identity is the result of social interactions. So, first feature of the identity is its social character. Human beings are social creatures, who live in social communities. In most part of their life, individuals are trying to socialize which means adapting to the norms and values of the society which they are part of.

On the other hand, as Mayer and Palmowski (2004) put it "identity is essentially janus-faced: it is as much about differentiation and individuality as it is about commonality" (p.577). In the line of this argument, it is crucial to mention the role of others in the formation of an identity. Others always play an important role not only in the formation but also in the consolidation of an identity. Some characteristics, which are generally considered unfavorable, are attributed to other identities, which in the end strengthens the solidarity and we-ness among the members. Every identity has its counterparts with whom they interact in any kind of way and form. Mayer and Palmowski also indicate that "identities are constructed and mediated constantly and they require acceptance both

within and from without which is a crucial determining factor in the creation of identities" (ibid, p.577).

Identity is also defined as plural. An individual or a group can possess many different identities at the same time. The plural and complex character of identity implies that one can be a European, Muslim and leftist (Caporaso 2005:67). First of all, every individual has a given identity by the conditions that are not under control of him/her. This kind of identity is static and less prone to change or more accurately change is so slow in a way that is negligible. Religion, race and ethnicity are examples of this static, tough and hard-shell identity. This kind of identity is named as primordial identity. On the other hand, an individual exercises a more flexible identity. That identity does not necessarily exist before the birth of the individual. An individual can construct it by himself/herself in accordance with his/her actions and perceptions within the society. Political and civic identities exemplify this kind of identity. In this sense identity formation of an individual is not independent from its political and social environment (see for a comprehensive analysis Anderson 1983).

Identity and identity politics are crucial phenomena of contemporary politics which has been evolving to a more complex and compound structure. Identity politics is a political movement which derives its basic assumptions from the differences and similarities between particular groups. Instead of ideological or class differences, people began to define themselves through their cultural identities. According to some scholars, states or societies fight or cooperate with each other, due to the differences or similarities in their religious, ethnic, cultural and political identities. The most recent and influential example of such works is Samuel Huntington's famous article 'The Clash of Civilizations', in which he divides the world into civilizations that are in conflict with each other because of the diversities between their history, language, tradition, culture and most importantly religion rather than their political or economic systems (Huntington 1993). After the collapse of the bipolar world order new conflicts fed by the ethnic and religious discourses have emerged within countries as well as between countries. Some of them culminated in severe civil or interstate wars such occurred in the Balkans, in the

Caucasus and Africa. Conflicts have arisen in plural and liberal democratic societies, too. Western Europe is also one of the places where problems have emerged because of immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers who are different in religion and ethnicity. These new circumstances are crucial since they are influential on the political preferences of the people. An identity and doing politics with reference to that identity can be important because at the end of the political competition one group will gain the control over the political and economic structures that allocate the resources within a society.

For these reasons, the rise of social and economic problems sharpened the attitudes of people towards migrants who are blamed for the existing problems. In addition to inequalities, Brown argues that the revival of identity politics in the last two decades rested on the radicalization of the political preferences of the people (Brown 2005:192). This indicates that center-left or center-right parties have lost their attraction and cannot catch all the people. Mainly, it is the basic reason behind the rise of radicalism and fundamentalism in the last decades. For this reason, making politics through identity differences became an important factor in today's world.

II) European Identity: Past, Present and Future

In light of these definitions and arguments about identity, we can now proceed to the enduring formation of European identity. In this section the components and features of European identity is initially defined and then the European Union's search for an identity and the future of European identity are elaborated.

II.I) Past[1]:

Examination of the European identity begins with history and geography. European identity is generally composed of Judeo-Christian and Rome-German culture. This encompasses not only religious beliefs but also geographical, cultural, scientific, social and legal values and norms which have been evolving across time and space. Europe did not express a cultural and social entity; it remained geographical term until the spread of

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[1] This subtitle of the section is mainly based on Gerard Delanty's book.

Christianity. Europe in the Middle Ages represented the Christendom (Delanty 1995:22). The influence of Roman culture and Christianity served as a unifying factor in Europe until the modern times (ibid, p.26-32). The role of Christianity began to decline with the Renaissance and Reformation era. Renaissance reinforced the idea of humanism and Reformation questioned the Church's influence on the society and led the secularization or the separation of church and state, which is one of the most important features of contemporary European identity (ibid, p.28). Furthermore, some features of modern European identity can be attributed to the formation of nation-states. Nation-states played a locomotive role in the formation of a European identity (ibid, p.66). Today's map of Europe is the result of nationalism which rose in the end of 18th century. Moreover, the Enlightenment marked the huge impact of science and positivism on the European thought. These scientific and philosophical advancements are crucial milestones for the modernization of European continent and European thinking as well. The idea of progress, spread of civilization and nation-state has been characterizing the European identity since then (ibid, p.69). Beginning with 18th century idea of Europe and concept of Europeanness were widespread among elites (ibid, p.6, p.71). However, this notion of Europe was limited within some elite circles, hence ordinary people were continuing to identify themselves with ethnicity (nation) or religion, which consequently hindered the development of a widespread European identity that could prevail over national identities.

The identity of Europe is not only comprised of such images or values. External factors and the 'Others' have also played crucial role in the construction of the Europe (Delanty 1995) It is more appropriate to ask the question of what Europe is not rather than what Europe is in order to grasp European identity wholly. Europe also rests on differences and rivalries. European culture has been shaped by its rivals or enemies outside the European gate. In ancient times Persians, then Muslims in other words Ottomans in the Middle ages, soon after the Second World War Nazism in Europe, until the end of the Cold war Communism were the Others of European identity (ibid). The Europeans in the era of geographical conquests and colonialism discovered a 'general other' for their identity. According to this new, but Eurocentric view, European civilization is superior to

the Others in every aspect of life. Delanty formulates this worldview as a notion of civilized European against uncivilized barbarians (ibid, p.67). The identity of Europe is based upon the rejection of the characteristics that attributed to the others (ibid, p.89). In accordance with this notion, European claimed that Europe has the right to rule the Others and Others should prefer either staying out of the European borders or respecting to the supremacy of the European identity. After giving brief summary of historical background of European identity we can advance on the identity problems of Europe and especially of the EU with reference to xenophobia and concerns about the rising population of Muslims in Europe.

II.II) Present:

Since the 1980s European integration process has been facing many serious problems and challenges such as growing number of immigrants and rise of xenophobic sentiments among the native Europeans, economic recession, challenge of global markets and severe competition in international trade, and lastly Union's own institutional problems such as democratic deficit, lack of legitimacy and transparency. Schauble and Lamers argued in 1994 that within the EU there was:

> A growing differentiation of interests, fuelled by differences in level of socio-economic development… The economic crisis is one aspect of the general crisis of modern society in the West; an increase in regressive nationalism in almost all member states, which is the product of deep-seated fears and anxieties caused by internal crisis of modern society and by external threats such as migration. Fear and anxiety tempt people to seek, if not a solution, then at least a refuge in a return to the nation-state and all things national; the highly debilitating effect of enormous demands placed on national governments and parliaments by the above problems (Quoted in Edwards 2000:68).

In addition to these problems, Jansen points out three other important difficulties that the EU faces (cited in Edwards 2000:68). The first one is the absence of a consensus on Europe's constitution or its political end. The debate on constitution and the future of Europe is controversial and has potential to generate political turmoil within the Europe as it already did with the French and Dutch's no vetoes to the constitution. Dieter Grimm

(1995) argued that Europe does not need a constitution, because one cannot speak of a European people. In this regard, important thing is to form 'demos'. Furthermore, Europeans with the emergence of some problems began to question the existence of the Union. For most of the people, the EU has been an elite project for the people, but not by the people and of the people. Even though elections for the European parliament has been held since the late 1970s and creation of European citizenship and office of ombudsman with the Maastricht Treaty as a response to lack of democracy and legitimacy in the European institutions failed to alter the perceptions of the Europeans about the EU and the common European identity. The problem is that masses have not embraced the European project as the elites have done. Therefore, nowadays the gap between elites and masses on the future of European project and identity is widening. Fossum (2001) groups the ideas about the future of Europe into four types of scenarios. According to first scenario called as 'Europe of cooperating democratic states':

> The EU as an intergovernmental organization made up of democratic member states. In this scenario, European cooperation is founded on intergovernmental principles, so there is not a need for European identity. The EU is a subsidiary organization in the sense that it deals with those tasks that member states cannot do EU is considered as a tool for the democratic member states in this scenario (ibid, p.384).

The second scenario defined as 'a Europe of resurging nationalisms' perceives Europe as an intergovernmental organization made up of a collection of nation states. This scenario stresses on the uniqueness of national identities and it claims that "the EU is legitimate insofar as it does not challenge the cultural integrity and sense of identity that marks every member states" (ibid, pp.386-87). The third scenario is based on a supranational structure and motto of unity in diversity. It is called as 'Europe of deep cultural diversity'.

> In this scenario, national claims for protection and promotion of difference compete and coexist with regional and group-based claims for protection and promotion of difference. Rather than fostering a dominant or overarching identity the system is marked by diversity awareness. In this scenario EU is polytechnic and multinational (ibid, p.389).

The last scenario called 'democratic rights-based European Union' refers to supranationalism and post-nationalism by which it is underlined that "the EU not only places limits on and constraints national identities but also fosters novel and post-national identity. It depicts the EU as rights-based federal-type entity, which propounds a post-national type of allegiance akin to what has come to be known as constitutional patriotism"(ibid, p.395).

The second problem that Jansen contends is the uncertainties concerning the EU's *raison d'etre* in the post-Cold war era (cited in Edwards 2000:68). Although this argument makes sense at fist glance, the EU has many *raison d'etre* such as making Europe better off and being an example for the whole world and enhancing the role of Europe in world politics as a civilian power. Lastly, Jansen indicates that absence of a consensus on Union's geographical dimension is another crucial problem for the identity of the EU (ibid, p.68). This is the question of enlargement. Enlargement can be divided into two. The first one is external enlargement, which denotes the accession of new countries to the EU, and second one is internal enlargement, which means the increase in population of non-Europeans living in Europe.

First of all, the enlargement of the union has been criticized of distorting the European cultural unity. Especially, the debates have been revolving around the question of Turkey's full membership. In this regard, it is mostly claimed that a country which has a very different social structure in terms of culture and religion comparing to the European one, cannot be the part of Europe. It is argued by some of the authors that Turkey cannot the part of Europe because of the incompatibility of Islam with European secular values, while some others indicate that Turkish political culture and identity is far away from the European one (Hurd 2006). Nonetheless, at that moment the argument that "Europe can be defined as too Christian when it comes to the possibility of imagining a Muslim country as the member of the EU" (Casanova 2004:92) remains true. Although the EU got some different cultures such as Greece, Spain and Poland into itself, for the EU the

prospective membership of Turkey causes greater anxieties among the Europeans about the future of Europe.

Second, the question of immigrants and especially Muslims in Europe causes an identity crisis for the Europeans. Today, Muslims constitute the majority of immigrants in most Western European countries. It is estimated that between 15 and 20 million Muslims are living in Europe and Muslims will comprise at least 20 percent of Europe's population by 2050 (Savage 2004). Muslims have different culture, values and life styles. Savage draws attention to the presence of some different attitudes among Muslims in Europe due to their age, education and social environment:

> To talk of a single Muslim community in Europe, however, is misleading. Even within individual countries, ethnic diversity, sectarian differences, and cleavages within communities arising from sociopolitical and generational splits… The current generation is also modernizing and acculturating to aspects of contemporary European society at a faster rate than the first waves of Muslim immigrants did. Younger Muslims are adopting attributes of the European societies in which they were born and raised. Yet, generally they do not feel part of the larger society nor that they have a stake in it (p.27-36).

This problem is worsened by the attitudes of general public towards Muslims.

> Conversely, even though they may be third-generation citizens, they often are not viewed as fellow citizens by the general public but are still identified as foreigners and immigrants instead. Europe's Muslims, including the younger generation, are willing to integrate and respect national norms and institutions as long as they can, at the same time, maintain their distinct Islamic identity and practices (ibid, p.27-36).

On the other hand, there is a remarkable adherence to Christian values among the most of the Europeans. Although Europe is a secular entity and not based on religious beliefs and values and most of the Europeans are not religious, there is still a considerable amount of Europeans that identify themselves as Christian (Casanova 2004:90). This kind of attitude is defined by Grace Davie as 'belonging without believing' (quoted in ibid, p.88). Furthermore, more significant than this is the ascending of xenophobia in particular

Islamofobia to the surface of society and politics within Europe. Savage calls for attention to a survey according to which "in comparison with people of a different race, immigrants, and Jews, Muslims are the societal group that Europeans least want as a neighbor" (ibid, p.43). Conversely, the secular Europeans perceive Muslims too conservative and not conformable with modern values and European daily life. According to them Islamic traditions are not modern and leads to the rise of fundamentalism (Casanova 2004:98). It can be concluded that Islam is already in Europe but not of Europe (Roy 2005). Muslims are the others of Europe, others of Christianity and others of secular Europeans as well. Although there is a frightening rise of xenophobic discourses and radical solutions for the problem of how immigrants can integrate to European culture, one should not attribute such kind of discourses to whole Europeans. Some other thinkers and politicians believe in more consensual and multilateral solutions. Oliver Roy (2005) argues that Europe can only cope with that problem by considering Islam as one of the religion of Europe (p.364).

II.III) Future:

Most of the literature about a prospect of a European identity is related to how to combine universalism with particularism, and how to balance pragmatism with morality and cultural unity. According to Delanty (2002), there are four competing models of European identity. The first model is related to the universal values such as human rights, justice and humanitarianism (p.347). The definition of Europe consists of these universal values. The second model that is highly related to the first one is named by Delanty as 'European postnational universalism' (p.348). This model defines Europe as a "political-juridical norms and institutions" (ibid, p.348). This model bears resemblance with Habermas's 'constitutional patriotism' which emphasizes the allegiance to democratic values and rights as well as the democratic institutions such as civil society, deliberative politics and constitution (cited in Fossum 2003:322-23). Delanty defines the third model as a 'cultural particularism', which is based on European cultural heritage as well as historical memories (ibid, p.349). This thick cultural model provides solid ground to construct a European identity. However, since it is exclusive it comes with some costs for the future of the European project (ibid, p.350). The last model is called 'European

pragmatism'. In particular, this model is related to the lifestyles which encompasses not only cultural and religious elements but also different way of life and popular culture as well as consumerism (ibid, p.351).

However, Delanty argues that none of the four models does have the potential for providing pluralisation within European societies. This is because he introduces a 'pluralised cosmopolitan identity' (ibid, p.345; Delanty 2005). He defines European identity as an "orientation to the world which has a cosmopolitan spirit" (Delanty 2005:17). In Delanty's words, cosmopolitanism means that "the citizens of one country consider the citizens of another 'one of us'; it means the recognition of living in a world of diversity and a belief in the fundamental virtue of embracing positively the values of the other" (ibid, p.18). Put it more philosophical, cosmopolitanism is a "disposition characterized by a reflexive relation to one's identity", in which Europeanness can be found in "critical and reflexive forms of self-understanding" (ibid, p.18).

In contrast to this cosmopolitan model, Charles Taylor, a prominent communitarian thinker, coined a term 'deep diversity'. Deep diversity is "more than mere ethnic and cultural diversity", according to which "society is marked by the absence of an overarching agreement on *what the country is for";* and secondly "society acknowledges the existence of different collective goals and tries to accommodate these through accepting differentiated citizenship and through allowing collectives to maintain their sense of difference"; and lastly those different groups try hard to "maintain their sense of difference or distinctiveness over time" (cited in Fossum 2003:323). According to this notion, rights or justice are not enough to form a European identity. This is because liberalism is individualistic and in many ways it results in an egoistic approach towards the society (ibid, p.324). What is to be done is to strengthen the sense of community and belonging based on the notion that "society can be organized around a definition of the good life" (quoted in Fossum 2003:324).

Conclusion:

In this paper, I have tried to elaborate on the identity formation of Europe with reference to historical background, current developments and problems and philosophical discussions. As is mentioned in the introduction, the European project is at a crossroads. The further integration is highly related to the formation of an identity. The question is not a choice between a supranational organization and an intergovernmental one. It is not simply a problem of transferring loyalties and authority to supranational institutions. The problem is how to accommodate particularism into universalism and how to find ways to combine pragmatism with morality. In this regard, I think that different models of European identity, no matter they are communitarian, cosmopolitan or constitutional patriotic, can be accommodated into Europe. However, from my point of view, the most important problem for the future of European identity is the gap between European elites and masses. If this gap is widened more, without any doubt this would result in deeper cleavages within the European societies which can make identity formation even harder. I believe that without bridging this gap it is hard to talk about neither a communitarian nor a cosmopolitan identity formation in Europe.

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