

Debating European Identity

BRIGHT IDEAS, DIM PROSPECTS

EDITED BY

Branislav Radeljić



PETER LANG

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I Debating European Identity

Questions such as ‘What is Europe?’, ‘Who is European and who is not?’, and ‘Is a European identity possible?’ are heard regularly. Nowadays, the term ‘Europe’ is often used as a synonym for the European Union, thus to describe the process of European integration, a project that initially characterized the post-Second World War progress in Western Europe. The six signatories of the 1957 Treaty of Rome agreed to work together towards a better future, primarily focusing on economic advancement and political stability. With regard to the founding fathers, they seemed to be convinced about their European project. Later, in his memoirs, Jean Monnet, a chief architect of European unity, noted that ‘the essential thing [was] to hold fast to the few fixed principles that [had] guided us since the beginning: gradually to create amongst Europeans the broadest common interest, served by common democratic institutions’ (Monnet 1978: 522). From an academic viewpoint, the European project is often, quite rightly, viewed as a big work in progress, yet some question the very sustainability of the project. One author described it as ‘an animal in motion’, without ‘fixed’ destination and ‘not something quite separate from and independent of the states that set it up’; while seeing the evolution of the European Community (EC) as a puzzling business and ‘a strange creature, a kind of hybrid’, the author underlined that ‘the world of the Community is full of paradox and irony’ (McAllister 1997: 7–9).

However, it did not take long before the European project advanced to the extent that many peripheral countries wished to develop closer relations or, if eligible, apply for membership of the European Community. At the same time, the Community was continuously faced with growing numbers

of immigrants, from both within and outside of Europe.¹ The *Gastarbeiter*s (as the Germans called anyone coming to work in their country, including citizens of other EC member states but, of course, who were subjected to different regulations) or the *extracomunitari* (as the Italians called anyone coming from outside of the EC), were allowed to come and reside in various EC states on a temporary basis, and many decided to remain permanently in their host country. This aspect became startlingly apparent during the 1973 oil crisis when many European governments offered to sponsor immigrants to return to their homelands, as there was no actual need for

- 1 For example, France became a host country for many Muslim men from Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia looking for jobs. In his study, Esman (2009: 16) classifies them as members of labour diaspora, usually 'undereducated, unskilled individuals of peasant or urban proletarian backgrounds' who migrate 'in search of improved livelihoods and better opportunities for their children'. Although they had decided to migrate alone and support their families back home, soon after, the process of family reunification in the host country followed. This was an obvious indication that they wanted to remain in Europe. The French openly maintained that most immigrants were not part of their society and that they would probably never become so – an attitude that inspired immigrants' growing attachment to Islam. As argued by Esman (2009: 24), more discrimination and exclusion led to stronger emphasis of their Islamic identity: 'They were told by religious leaders, most of whom were trained and imported from their homelands, that religion and government, church and state, cannot, under Islamic law and practice, be separated. Islam, as they preached it, is incompatible with the infidel, amoral, secular cultures of contemporary Europe'. In West Germany, after the erection of the Berlin Wall, the government signed bilateral agreements with Turkey in 1961, Morocco in 1963 and Tunisia in 1965, all of them permitting the entry of cheap labour. One scholar underlined that while the foreign workers were needed to sustain high rates of growth and keep jobs in Germany, the newly introduced *Gastarbeiter* programme had no single intention to offer settlement to the guest-workers (Hollifield 1992: 218). Contrary to expectations, they brought their families and became permanent settlers. The immigrants gathered at their homes and practised their religious values. For the Germans, this publicly invisible realm in the 1960s meant that the nature of exile Islam was rather quiet. More importantly, as summarized by Ezli (2007), Germany 'had conceived of immigration exclusively as working migration in which an ever fluctuating and always renewed population of workers would be involved. The cultural, and thus religious, dimension of immigration was not deemed important enough to warrant any special attention.'

them. This policy was not successful and, as illustrated by Milton Esman (2009: 27), the post-1973 development in France faced ‘very high rates of unemployment, approaching 50 percent, produced sentiments of resentment, isolation, and powerlessness’ and resulted in ‘a street culture with the familiar accompaniment of drugs, violence-prone street gangs, petty crime, and hatred of mainstream French society’.

Thus, in addition to addressing a new set of economic problems, the Europeans realized that the initial ambition to shape the Community based on ideas that were primarily congruent with Roman Catholicism (the founding fathers of the EC – Konrad Adenauer, Alcide de Gasperi and Robert Schuman – were all Christian Democrats and devoted Catholics) was likely to encounter serious obstacles.² Aware of the circumstances, the heads of state or government of the nine member states of the EC met at the Copenhagen European Summit in mid-December 1973 to discuss the ongoing challenges and to suggest solutions. In fact, it was at this meeting that the representatives decided to introduce the common concept of European identity into their foreign relations. Accordingly, this chapter elaborates on the ideas following the introduction of the concept and its accommodation within both official EU and academic discourses.

Origins

At the Copenhagen European Summit of 1973, the representatives of the nine member states of the European Community justified their decision to introduce the concept of European identity as a necessary step in order ‘to achieve a better definition of their relations with other countries and

2 As Checkel and Katzenstein (2009: 14) put it, ‘the historical foundations of the European Union are undeniably Christian-Democratic, a capacious political tradition that accommodates temperate offshoots of conservative political Catholicism as well as a social Catholicism’.

of their responsibilities and the place which they occupy in world affairs' (European Communities 1973: 118). At that event, the Declaration on European Identity was released, consisting of three sections: The Unity of the Nine Member Countries of the Community, The European Identity in Relation to the World, and The Dynamic Nature of the Construction of a United Europe. The first section of the declaration briefly acknowledged the existence of selfish behaviour that had undermined relations between European countries but, more importantly, stressed the capacity of the nine member states of the Community to 'overcome their past enmities' and therefore adopt the idea of unity as 'a basic European necessity to ensure the survival of the civilization which they have in common'; accordingly, the Nine agreed to preserve their national cultures, the principles of representative democracy, the rule of law, social justice and human rights, all perceived as fundamental elements of European identity: 'The diversity of cultures within the framework of a common European civilization, the attachment to common values and principles, the increasing convergence of attitudes to life, the awareness of having specific interests in common and the determination to take part in the construction of a United Europe, all give the European identity its originality and its own dynamism' (European Communities 1973: 118–19).

The second section of the declaration served to assure the non-member states that 'European unification is not directed against anyone, nor it is inspired by a desire for power'; in fact, the representatives stressed the relevance of close relations with the others: while relations with the Mediterranean, the African countries and the Middle East deserved greater cooperation 'over the establishment of peace, stability and progress', the relations with the United States of America had to be preserved due to the 'values and aspirations based on a common heritage' (European Communities 1973: 120). Finally, the third section briefly explained how the Nine understood the future development of a European identity. According to them, it 'will evolve as a function of the dynamic construction of a United Europe' and by becoming such a powerful tool, the Europeans 'will strengthen their own cohesion and contribute to the framing of a genuinely European foreign policy' (European Communities 1973: 122). Thus, European identity was imagined as a strong construct that would

complement and sustain the economic and political aspects of European integration. However, from a contemporary perspective and with the benefit of hindsight, it would seem that the Nine were overambitious in their plans.

Although the three sections of the declaration tried to bring some rather contrasting points together, they did not offer any clear idea regarding how to achieve a common, supranational or European identity. For example, the nine representatives viewed a common European civilization as an ideal powerful enough to dominate the existing diversity of national cultures within Europe, but still did not suggest any strategies. In addition, the Nine wrongly argued that European unification and consequent development of a European identity were not directed against the non-member states, even though it had already become clear that being a European state outside the European Common Market was highly frustrating.³ Finally, what seems most surprising is that the Nine limited themselves and their ideas to the then participating members only, thereby excluding any thoughts about the future composition of the Community and how, if enlarged, European identity might develop differently.

Since 1973, although the European Union has continued to enlarge and promote the relevance of European identity, there have been various points at which its overall aims and future were brought into question. In the meantime, it also became clear that the aspiration to form the European Community on ideas that are mainly corresponding to Roman Catholicism was going to face various challenges. Aware of the puzzle, the Europeans insisted on further strengthening of European identity, seeing it often as a powerful tool to face the presence of Islam. The successive waves of immigration and the proliferation of Muslim associations in France and Germany in the 1980s (Union des Organisations Islamiques de France, Fédération Nationale des Musulmans de France, Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland, Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion), fostered the relevance of Islam to the extent that it became

3 For example, for a detailed analysis of the EC's discriminatory approach towards the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, see Radeljić (2012).

‘an agent in the discourse of action or reaction’ (Kastoryano 2004: 1238). Such a performance made a clear division between the two identities, European and Islamic. In this respect, the 1989 headscarf affair in France, when three girls came to their public school wearing headscarves, served to demonstrate that Islamic identity in the EC was still in the process of construction. According to one analysis, the outcome of this event challenged the relationship between the state, religion and public opinion, as ‘[m]obilizations around the headscarf issue have strengthened the leadership of Islamic associations as representatives of a community taking shape around Islam’ (Kastoryano 2004: 1240).

In the early 1990s, while writing about Europe and, more precisely, the situation characterizing the immediate post-Cold War period, Jacques Derrida (1992: 6) observed:

Hope, fear and trembling are commensurate with the signs that are coming to us from everywhere in Europe, where, precisely in the name of identity, be it cultural or nor, the worst violences, those that we recognize all too well without yet having thought them through, the crimes of xenophobia, racism, anti-Semitism, religious or nationalist fanaticism, are being unleashed, mixed up, mixed up with each other, but also, and there is nothing fortuitous in this, mixed in with the breath, with the respiration, with the very ‘spirit’ of the promise.

Indeed, the European continent witnessed simultaneously processes of integration (Germany) and disintegration (Yugoslavia) of states, powerful enough to question the very essence of European unity, especially given that those who strongly advocated integration at home decided to support disintegration abroad. However, since then, the enlargements of the European Union have demonstrated that the frontiers of Europe can shift and that some states and regions that at one point in the past were excluded from debates of European enlargement may be granted EU membership status.

The discourse about the other(s) in Europe was very present during the break-up of the Yugoslav federation. Some authors noted that the wars in Yugoslavia ‘shocked the civilized West’ (Lucarelli 2000: 1) and encouraged an endless debate about the Balkans as a region: ‘The very word “Balkans” conjures up images of intrigue, war, and human suffering on a scale abhorrent to Western society. To some people, the Balkan countries

lack a clear Western orientation and carry far too much cultural baggage to belong in the European club. Western leaders refer to the region as the back door to Europe, the Balkan powder keg, or Europe's doorstep. What these euphemisms hide is, perhaps, the wish that the Balkans were located anywhere other than in Europe' (Gerolymatos 2004: 4). Even though European policy-makers tried to address the wider European public and to justify their involvement in the Yugoslav crisis and consequent decisions to terminate the existence of the singular Balkan state, the public paid more attention to their national representatives rather than their EU equivalents. In terms of the overall situation in Brussels in this period, one account offered a rather damning indictment, stating that '[a]ll the talk about creating in the minds of citizens, a sense of loyalty and attachment to the EC is not worth much now, given that the new total structure will be as obscure as the Holy Roman Empire ... One may be called upon to die for the EC in war, but will not be able to say quite what one is dying for' (Allott 1992). In fact, contrary to the enthusiasm of the Brussels elite, the 1992 Maastricht Treaty showed that the Europeans were not very convinced about the new Union and their position within it. Soledad García analysed *Eurobarometer* surveys and concluded that a large majority of respondents in member states prioritized their national identity over their EU identity: 'One of the reasons why European Union identity is relatively weak, appears to be dissatisfaction of citizens concerning information from the Commission and their national government ... Equally discouraging has been the decreasing proportion of respondents who recognized benefits from European integration or who thought that membership is a good thing' (García 1997: 204).

Since the early 1990s the EU's position towards the previously mentioned European otherness has significantly changed, as Slovenia, the ex-Yugoslav republic, and Romania and Bulgaria joined the Union in 2004 and 2007, respectively. These enlargements confirmed that Western Europe, once imagined as an unreachable region of the European landmass, was no longer at such a distance. The consequent Berlin Declaration marked the fiftieth anniversary of the signature of the Treaties of Rome and while proudly listing European successes of the previous decades, stressed the EU's ambition to preserve 'the identities and diverse traditions of its Member

States' (EU 2007). Nevertheless, the participants admitted that we, as Europeans, are facing 'major challenges which do not stop at national borders' and used the term 'European Union' as a response to these challenges, but referred to 'Europe' in order to mark a common future (EU 2007). However, is European identity capable of addressing the above-mentioned challenges? In her analysis, Montserrat Guibernau (2009: 287) correctly warns that nation states sometimes 'employ the EU as an excuse for action or inaction within the domestic arena and, sometimes they even refer to the EU as a scapegoat, thus fuelling nationalism and reinforcing national identity' – an approach that is even better explained if we take European identity as a 'non-emotional identity, in contrast with the powerful and emotionally charged national identities of our time'. In addition, as pointed out by some other writings, '[a] European identity ... cannot be based on any one language, as most national identities are. A European identity is also not based on any clear borders, a capital, or a pre-existing state with long-held symbols and institutions' (Robyn 2005: 8).

Identification with Europe and European Identity

Many Europeans struggle to identify with Europe as a whole, but see themselves as French, German or Italian, or even prefer to limit themselves further, to a particular region of their own country. This tendency has become even more obvious after the 2004 enlargement of the European Union. In one of his studies, Jürgen Habermas questions whether a European identity in such circumstances is necessary and whether transnational civic solidarity is even possible. In his view, the 2004 enlargement represented an immediate challenge for the Union, as it was obvious that 'active political interventions will be necessary to bridge the gaps in socio-economic development between the old and new members' (Habermas 2006: 69). The discrepancies between the old, pre-2004 members, and new, post-2004 members 'will aggravate conflicts over the distribution of

the scarce resources of a comparatively small EU budget, conflicts between net contributors and net beneficiaries, core and periphery, old recipients in Southern and new recipients in Eastern Europe, small and large member states, and so forth' (Habermas 2006: 70). In order to minimize the existing concerns, Habermas perceived the European Union Constitution as an instrument which, while deepening integration, strengthening decision-making processes and reducing democratic deficit, could be 'a vehicle for forming a European identity, if [the governments] accepted an admittedly risky and unavoidably time-consuming change in their accustomed way of doing business, and if they involved the citizens themselves in the process of shaping the constitution through referenda' (Habermas 2006: 71). As we witnessed, the involvement of the citizens resulted in the rejection of the Constitution in France and the Netherlands, in May and June 2005, and led to the creation of the Treaty of Lisbon in December 2007. However, what appears more indicative is the fact that the Union will not succeed in transforming into a political community characterized by its own (European) identity due to the lack of a common language, tradition and history.

With regard to transnational civic solidarity, Habermas warns that it 'cannot be produced *solely* through the strong negative duties of a universalistic morality of justice', but through open national arenas in which 'a self-propelling process of shared political opinion- and will-formation on European issues can develop above the national level' (Habermas 2006: 80–1). In this view, national differences – language, tradition and history – are of secondary relevance, whereas priority is given to the citizens of Europe, who while taking an active part in European affairs, will focus more on a common European benefit, rather than the national one. However, this involvement largely depends on the institutions of the EU that are responsible for providing space for the genuine citizen participation in public life. Here, Habermas (2006: 81) insists on the relevance of building mutual trust and, as he puts it, 'increasing trust is not only a *result* but also a *presupposition* of a shared process of political opinion- and will-formation' and, therefore, 'the path to a democratic deepening of the Union and to the requisite mutual networking of national public spheres can only proceed via such an already accumulated capital of trust'.

Later, Habermas (2009) continued to discuss the matter, insisting on the link between intellectuals, who have often been excluded from debates about the future of Europe, and the public, when exchanging views about existing concerns such as the global economic conditions, demographic trends and the clash of Western society with the Islamic world. For example, he talks about potential risks as religious communities are capable of influencing the public sphere of secular societies: 'They can influence the formation of public opinion and will by making relevant contributions, whether convincing or objectionable, on key issues' (Habermas 2009: 64). In order to prevent discords and conflicts, Habermas is in favour of greater inclusion and tolerance regarding minorities. Once acknowledged, tolerance will become a norm for a well-functioning political community where both diversity and freedom to become active participants in the greater community are appreciated.

With 2008 earmarked as the European year of intercultural dialogue, the European Parliament and the Council agreed that 'a fundamental step is promoting the participation of each citizen, men and women on an equal footing, of each member state and of European society as a whole in an intercultural dialogue, in particular through the structured cooperation with civil society. It contributes to creating a sense of European identity, by embracing differences and shaping the various aspects of belonging to a community' (EU Council 2006). Later, the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue confirmed some of these notions and further clarified: 'If there is a European identity to be realized, it will be based on shared fundamental values, respect for common heritage and cultural diversity as well as respect for the equal dignity of every individual' (Council of Europe 2008). In this way, intercultural dialogue was seen as a mechanism to manage 'multiple cultural affiliations in a multicultural environment. It is a mechanism to constantly achieve a new identity balance, responding to new openings and experiences and adding new layers to identity without relinquishing one's roots' (Council of Europe 2008).

Nonetheless, official documents and conclusions about the year of intercultural dialogue did not say much about European identity.⁴ I identify three possible reasons for such omission. First, the multicultural environment can hardly generate identity balance at the EU level. As already noted, the concept of European identity was introduced when European officials realized that having an exclusively Christian democratic polity was not possible and that an unexpected influx of immigrants of non-European descent needed to be addressed. Some post-Maastricht debates concerning Muslim headscarves in Europe have reconfirmed that culture is part of identity, capable of affecting identity balance.⁵ This is where the main dilemma emerges: if the advocates of a European identity favour cultural diversity, then where are the problems with headscarves coming from? In his study, Anthony Smith sees culture as a relevant point of departure and notes that cultural identity is connected to national identity but, more importantly for our analysis here, underlines that a collective cultural identity incorporates three distinct features: a shared *continuity*, shared *memories* and a common *destiny* (Smith 1992: 58). These features, taken individually or as a group, represent an ever-growing challenge within a substantially enlarged EU, thus being much more difficult to deal with today than they were in the 1970s or 1980s.

A second possible reason for largely overlooking the notion of European identity during the year of intercultural dialogue is concerned with the very nature of the European Union. Every new enlargement adds new layers to identity formation, thus further challenging and complicating work that is already in progress. The enlargements of 2004 and 2007 are particularly indicative of this trend: the EU welcomed some countries from Central and Eastern Europe, simultaneously provoking a re-emergence of well-rehearsed debates about their backwardness.⁶ Therein it is only Western Europe that is seen to be marked by fully democratic societies, while the

4 See EU Council (2008a). In addition, see EU Council (2008b).

5 On the headscarf issues, see Joppke (2009), Klinkhammer (2006), Wallach Scott (2007).

6 On the backwardness debate, see Chirot (1991), Janos (2000), Wolff (1994).

rest of the continent is yet to go through transitions (or Westernization), often encouraging an exclusionary institutional approach. Smith's study lessens this gravity by believing in the European 'family of cultures' and the different involvement and contribution of its constituent parties: although 'Europeans differ among themselves as much as from non-Europeans in respect of language ... territory ... law ... religion ... and economic and political system ... *as well as* in terms of ethnicity and culture', still 'there *are* shared traditions, legal and political, and shared heritages, religious and cultural. Not all Europeans share in all of them ... But at one time or another all Europe's communities have participated in at least *some* of these traditions and heritages, in some degree' (Smith 1992: 70). Smith is right to argue that differences and efforts did manage to bring the parties together at some point in the past in order to enjoy mutual benefits of collaboration and peaceful coexistence. However, these ideas are still dominated by the term 'shared' and not 'common' and it is this missing transfer that provides space for further questions about the possibility of having a common European identity. In fact, while thinking about the nature of European integration, Smith himself insists that

[i]t is important here to distinguish between families of culture and political or economic unions. The latter are usually deliberate creations; they are consciously willed unities, rationally constructed sets of institutions, the kind of frameworks that some European states are trying to hasten and others to delay. Families of culture, like a *lingua franca*, tend to come into being over long time-spans and are the product of particular historical circumstances, often unanticipated and unintentional. Such cultural realities are no less potent for being so often inchoate and uninstitutionalized. Thus the sentiments and identities that underpin the Islamic *umma* or community of Muslims are no less significant than any official Islamic social and political institutions. (Smith 1992: 71)

Achieving a common European identity is much more complicated than creating a political or economic union. Apart from requiring more time and effort, the responsibility for a common identity lies in the hands of the EU citizens, thus it is the French, the Swedes, the Bulgarians and many more who are expected to ignore or at least put on hold their national identity for the sake of a common European one. At the same time, this

process would be even more problematic for large non-Christian minorities, many of whom have struggled with policies of acculturation, assimilation and integration within the host society. Often, these minorities prefer to continue cultivating their own, imported identity and therefore would have to go through two phases of identity formation, a first one focused on the acceptance of the national identity of the host country and a second one focused on the switch from a new national to supranational, thus European identity. In his 2009 book, Christopher Caldwell questions whether Europe can be the same with different people in it. He argues that the initial idea of a united Europe did not take immigration into consideration: in the 1950s and 1960s, 'European tolerance of other cultures was sincere, particularly among elites, but not even they anticipated that such tolerance would mean the establishment, entrenchment, and steady spread of a foreign religion on European soil' (Caldwell 2009: 91). Indeed, for a long time, Europeans were busy with their ever-expanding European project, primarily inspired by economic cooperation and further progress, whereas religious aspects of the Community were ignored. As noted earlier, Muslims were allowed to come to Europe based on various bilateral agreements, but as soon as their help was not needed, the host countries across Europe expected them to leave. Although this did not happen, Caldwell notes that even 'when Islam became Europe's main religious problem, almost nobody dared to say so' – an aspect that gains even fuller relevance when thinking that the importance of Islam in Muslim communities in Europe seems to be on the rise: 'In France, 85 percent of Muslim students describe their religious beliefs as "very important", versus 35 percent of non-Muslims. In Germany, too, religiosity is more widespread among Muslim immigrants than among natives – 81 percent of Turks come from a religious background, versus 23 percent of Germans' (Caldwell 2009: 161, 143).

A final possible reason why the year of intercultural dialogue did not come with any serious discussions of European identity has to do with solidarity and tolerance. I agree with William Sweet's separation of the two terms: while tolerance 'suggests the existence of important differences among individuals (as in the notion of religious tolerance)', solidarity 'implies that what differences exist among the individuals concerned are not important – that there is a recognition of common interests, and

a willingness to engage in actions with others, even if it involves sacrifices on our part' (Sweet 2003: 216).

However, answering two questions – 'How far should tolerance go?' and 'Is solidarity possible?' – is not an easy task. In regard to the former, the present European Union obviously struggles with tolerance. For example, apart from seeing the *burqa* as a symbol for 'the repression that women can suffer in Islam' and a threat to 'security, sexual equality and secularism', some European governments would like to see it banned, although 'banning it altogether would be an infringement on the individual rights which their culture normally struggles to protect' (*The Economist* 2010: 18). Such an approach shows that these governments are ready to express intolerance towards their Muslim minorities. In regard to the question of solidarity, without a good record of tolerance, it is impossible to achieve solidarity on a large scale and across the different barriers that characterize the enlarged EU.

Following the 2004 enlargement of the European Union, the Brussels officials optimistically noted that 'if the countries are to grow together into a viable political union, the people of Europe must be prepared for a European solidarity. This solidarity must be stronger than the universal solidarity ... European solidarity – the readiness to open one's wallet and to commit one's life to others because they, too, are Europeans – is not something that can be imposed from above. It must be more than institutional solidarity. It must be felt by Europeans as individuals' (Biedenkopf, Geremek and Michalski 2004: 9–10). This sound statement suggests that the concept of European solidarity rests heavily on the willingness of the citizens of Europe. Contrary to the intolerance that is often caused by official decisions, thus from above, solidarity is expected to develop and strengthen as a grass-roots phenomenon. This discrepancy is due to the fact that notions of (in)tolerance are primarily relevant for discourses about the relations between 'original' Europeans and European otherness, whereas solidarity is mainly embodied in discourses about cooperation amongst the original Europeans only. Still, even this kind of solidarity can

be questioned by looking at how, for example, Italians perceive a growing influx of Romanian nationals.⁷

Thus, the path towards a European identity faced various obstacles from the very beginning. Talks about tolerance, the first link in the chain, are often dominated by discussions of different acts of intolerance that further complicate the viability of European solidarity. This solidarity, as correctly warned by Tzvetan Todorov, is a true prerequisite for the European identity project. However, in his assessment of the situation across the enlarged EU, Todorov notes that '[n]obody wants to die so that customs barriers can be lowered, and nobody willingly parts with some of her income if she doesn't feel she has anything in common with those who will benefit from her contribution. Now the European peoples do not have the impression that they have a common democratic life; so everyone simply looks after herself' (Todorov 2010: 186). These words do not strengthen the concept of European solidarity, but rather point out its limitations. As he goes on to suggest, 'solidarity cannot come into being without the people feeling a sense of solidarity for each other, and this feeling comes in turn from democratic participation, from the common choice of a destiny' (Todorov 2010: 186).

Conclusion

In his remarkable account, Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission, defined a united Europe as a 'grouping that is unique in the density and quantity of its commercial exchanges, a comparative oasis

7 See, for example, Kington (2007); 'Immigrant Crime Poisons Italy-Romania Relations', <<http://www.euractiv.com/en/enlargement/immigrant-crime-poisons-italy-romania-relations/article-179703>> accessed 30 May 2011; 'EU: Italy Targets Romanian Immigrants with Plan to Suspend Schengen', <<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,RFERL,,ITA,,482a97a31,o.html>> accessed 30 May 2011.

of monetary order and even of financial equilibrium, and a considerable reserve of internal growth. It possesses a demographic, historical and cultural wealth, homogenous even in its extreme diversity, which, doubtless, no other region of the world can claim' (Delors 1992: 17). Apart from acknowledging the dominance of the economic dimension in the process of European integration, this definition indicated the existence of strong ties that link all Europeans and dominate existing diversities. Accordingly, the idea of 'united in diversity' became the official motto of the EU in 2000. As clarified, '[i]t signifies how Europeans have come together, in the form of the EU, to work for peace and prosperity, while at the same time being enriched by the continent's many different cultures, traditions and languages' (EU 2012).

In contrast to the official optimistic pronouncements and wishes, academic scholarship has continued to question the entire notion of European unity and of a common European identity. While some of the available opinions have continued to believe that '[a]ny attempt to reduce contemporary Europe to a single idea is bound to fail' noting that 'Europeans differ about almost everything imaginable' (Rose 1996: 2), others have decided to give European identity a chance to flourish: 'In reality, identity resides not in diversity itself, but in the status accorded to it. In this way, a purely negative and relative trait is transformed into an absolute positive quality; difference becomes identity, and plurality unity ... In this sense, European unity can be assumed by the European Union and contribute to the reinforcement of its project' (Todorov 2010: 180).

As outlined throughout this chapter, since the introduction of the concept of European identity in 1973, Europe has been exposed to various challenges, economic, political and social with the potential of questioning the essence and survival of such an ambitious concept. Economically, in times of crisis, the overarching power of European identity is often ignored, with states being concerned more with their individual or intergovernmental performance, rather than their commitment to supranational ideals. In fact, the 2008 financial crisis has reconfirmed the differences in capacities and implemented approaches between richer and poorer EU members. Politically, it is not entirely clear how the concept of European identity is supposed to advance further if the states that are expected to promote it

do not share the same, or at least similar, standpoints with regard to crucial issues relevant for EU stability. For example, the discrepancies characterizing the official rhetoric of individual EU member states about the independent status of Kosovo (with twenty-two members who recognize it vs. five who reject it) have contributed to the delay of the overall settlement of the Kosovo question. Finally, in the field of social dilemmas, and this is where the concept of European identity seems to have been mainly considered and evaluated, numerous questions with regard to Europe's capacity to accommodate and tolerate different cultures and religions have continued to dominate academic and non-academic debates alike. Although the growing influx of Muslim immigrants from the Balkans into the EU during the mid-1990s did not face any serious obstacles and Turkey was officially granted candidate status for EU membership in 1999, the debates about the growing presence of Islam in Europe (largely initiated in the 1960s when Muslims were welcomed to rebuild the post-Second World War Europe) and its impact on European identity have remained highly polarized.

The fact that we are not talking about Europe in terms of the United States of Europe, but rather in terms of the role and goodwill of individual EU member states has made the existing attempts to promote European identity in every possible form – no matter whether by various European representatives and respective official documents or the public – open to speculation and, depending on occasion, abuse. With this in mind, the question of whether the European elites, European citizens and European others will ever manage to speak with a single voice remains a valid one.

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13 Conclusion

Since the introduction of the concept of European identity in 1973, by the then nine member states of the European Community, the European continent has transformed considerably. To begin with, the integrationist project has advanced to an extent that the number of European Union (EU) member states has tripled. Understandably, such a development was largely possible due to the end of the Cold War and collapse of communism, providing the countries of Central and Eastern Europe with an opportunity to embark on their transition paths, a process that eventually resulted in accession to the EU. As Jacques Derrida suggested in the early 1990s, 'it is necessary to make ourselves the guardians of an idea of Europe, of a difference of Europe, *but* of a Europe that consists precisely of in not closing itself off in its own identity and in advancing itself in an exemplary way towards what it is not, towards the other heading or the heading of the other, indeed – and this is perhaps something else altogether – towards the other *of* the heading, which would be the beyond of this modern tradition, another border structure, another shore' (Derrida 1992: 29).

Thus, while the Western and Central Eastern European countries were proud of being in a position to talk about integration and European unity, the only non-aligned country in Europe – the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia – was faced with a crisis, wars and break-up. At this point, the Brussels administration was involved in the promotion of further integration of the European Union as well as in the disintegration of the Yugoslav federation, by recognizing Slovenia and Croatia as independent states, in January 1992, in order to protect them from the increasing Serbian aggression. Later, in 1999, the majority of EU member states supported the, in their view necessary, air strikes against the Serbian regime, to stop it from perpetrating further crimes against the Kosovo Albanians.

Once the conflicts in Yugoslavia had ended, the Europeans presented a set of initiatives providing assistance and insisting on democratization and Europeanization as prerequisites for EU candidacy and membership, at some point in the future. By expressing its interest in the Western Balkan region, the Brussels administration has tried to convince us that Europe should work towards greater unity and that the unpleasant decisions and acts carried out throughout the 1990s should not represent an obstacle to such a process. In addition, we can argue that the decision to grant EU membership to Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 confirmed the EU's commitment to the Balkan region.

The fact that those parts of Europe once considered remote can become part of the European integrationist project, and thus actively involved in the whole European identity complexity, confirms that European identity is a work in progress, largely depending on EU citizens; as one author puts it, "identity" has acquired a twofold nature. On the one hand, it is not merely or solely contingent on convention, tradition and the past, but has assumed a future-oriented purview and experimental dynamic. On the other, citizens of the EU as they pursue these experiments are continually parsing the nature of cultural affinity and difference as they participate in the creation of a vast, multiracial and multicultural Europe' (Holmes 2009: 52).

Deepening the Context

Generally speaking, enlargements of the European Union are often accompanied by uncertainty with regard to the willingness of the newly acceded member(s) to continue with democratization and Europeanization processes, and this has been particularly relevant in the 2004 and 2007 rounds. As might have been expected, the two rounds are also discussed in the context of European identity and the East–West divide. While relying on a historical perspective, Holly Case (2009) insists that European identity

derives from national experience and, therefore, the opposition between East and West is a false concept. Moreover, it can be argued that, with further enlargements of the EU, European identity will become even more obvious, regardless of the institutions of the EU: '[A] crisis of legitimacy looms among "old" EU member states as it becomes increasingly clear that elite European institutions neither attract the interest nor share the views of the majority of the population' (Case 2009: 130). On the other hand, Neil Fligstein is more sceptical about overall progress:

Now with enlargement of twenty-seven countries, a whole variety of people are entering the EU without a history of interacting with their counterparts across countries. The middle and upper-middle classes of what was formally Central and Eastern Europe do not necessarily feel affinity with the Western European project. There is already evidence that many of them feel ambivalent about their future in the EU, and their positions on Europe and having a European identity more closely approximate those who are sceptical than those who are optimistic (Fligstein 2009: 157)

With this in mind, the parties involved in the European identity project should be very careful when it comes to whether the final outcome is expected to be positive rather than negative.

In order to minimize the potential risks of admitting new, non-Western, states into the European Union, the Brussels authorities introduced the so-called Copenhagen criteria, in 1993, noting the following: 'Membership requires that candidate country has achieved stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for and protection of minorities, the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union. Membership presupposes the candidate's ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union' (EU Council 1993). More relevant for us here, the concept and relevance of European identity was mentioned in the Presidency Conclusions only once¹ – a decision that could be justi-

1 According to the Presidency Conclusions, '[t]he European Council welcomed the Commission's report on progress in the Uruguay Round to date. It underlined the need for the Community to continue to play an active part in achieving further

fied by looking at some more recent understandings and limitations. For example, according to Marion Demossier (2007: 53),

it is necessary to distinguish European identity from Europeanisation. The concept of a European identity can be easily dismissed as an elusive and contradictory creature; it can even be regarded as utopian. However, European identity can also be defined as a political tool operationalised by various policies, decrees and programmes created by European institutions with the aim of developing a new sense of collective and political identity among the peoples of Europe (with a strict definition of belonging to a new political space, i.e. the European Union). It could also be defined as a new, hybrid form of transnational and cultural identity that is evolving progressively and might become the platform for future political allegiance. At this stage, only a minority of people – the elites, national expatriates within Europe and students educated in a European context – would belong to this category.

Thus, while taking into consideration what a European identity is expected to be – a political tool – and the spectrum of responsibilities it is supposed to be capable of addressing – various policies, decrees and programmes – we realize that the construction of such an identity can also be a top-down process in which various elites use European institutions to promote its hybrid nature amongst the peoples of Europe. However, the existing gap between the institutions and the peoples, who are highly uninformed about EU affairs and decisions, represents a serious matter of concern. In their official appearances, members of the EU elite tend to advocate a stronger European identity as well as initiatives fostering diversity at the same time, but without really questioning to what extent such an arrangement would be possible, if at all, given Europe's current social fabric.

However, at this point, we can identify some of the dominant dilemmas that can clearly question the ideal of European identity. First, the relevance of national identity is still very strong across the European Union and it is difficult to predict the extent to which the postmodernist understanding of the nation state and national identity will succeed in becoming the dominant perspective. As Fariba Salehi summarized it:

progress while preserving the European identity throughout the negotiations' (EU Council 1993).

The most powerful modern institution that homogenizes and standardizes identity is the nation-state. The nation-state is a gigantic culture industry. A postmodern critique of the nation-state offers a radically different reading of the nation-state, by describing it as an apparatus of power that produces mega-narratives of identity in the name of 'people'. A postmodern theory of the nation-state deconstructs the nationalistic amount of the nation-state, and anchors the question of 'national' identity in the locus of the 'other', and in so doing erases its totalizing boundaries, challenges the political and ideological manoeuvres that assume an essentialist core in the imagined communities, and argues for the hybridity and ambivalence of national identity. (Salehi 2001: 252)

Apart from existing EU member states and their national pride, identity issues of prospective members deserve attention, as well. For example, the break-up of Yugoslavia represented an opportunity for the newly established states to foster and promote their own identity that had been suppressed before the state crisis and consequent wars. Thus, Kosovo, to name just one, might find it difficult to understand the value of replacing its own identity with a European identity, even if it could benefit from such an upgrade.

Second, so far, we have seen that many Europeans struggle with tolerance and solidarity and, in fact, their views have continued to challenge the prospect of Europe's multicultural dimension. Accordingly, without knowing whether there will be any significant progress in generating tolerance and solidarity across the European Union, discussions about European identity and European citizenship are highly speculative. Although, in 2004, EU representatives seemed confident when saying that 'Europe's identity is something that must be negotiated by its peoples and institutions ... so that European values, traditions, and conceptions of life can live on and be effective', they have not managed to bring the two sides closer together (Biedenkopf, Geremek and Michalski 2004: 8).

Future enlargements are likely to accentuate the questions of tolerance and solidarity, thus negatively affecting the construction of European identity. Adrian Favell examines the three kinds of migration that have inevitably contributed to the concept of European identity: first, the current or traditional 'ethnic' immigrations of non-Europeans into European nation states – 'immigrations [that] have visibly put black, brown, and

yellow faces in white Europe' (2009: 174); second, the emergence of new intra-European 'elite' migrations supported by European free-movement laws which date back to the Treaty of Rome in 1957 (2009: 177); and third, the flows of East–West migrants – a 'generation of new Europeans [who] are ambitious, dynamic movers ready to get what's theirs from the West, while benefiting from ease of mobility back and forth from West to East' (2009: 183). All these waves of migration have contributed to the European mosaic; still, having in mind that there are some Europeans who would like to restrict (im)migration, the author correctly questions what the situation will look like one day when the EU₂₇ (or very soon EU₂₈) becomes EU₄₅ or EU₅₅.

The migration question is even more relevant when one considers that if Turkey, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Kosovo become members of the EU, then its Muslim population will amount to over 100 million. According to one analysis, '[a]fter Maastricht [1992], Catholic social doctrine was widely embraced – encompassed by the principle of subsidiarity – to guide intellectually and regulate institutionally the cognitive meanings and political exigencies of a pluralist Europe' (Holmes 2009: 63). Thus, a valid question to think about here is whether the Brussels decision-makers are ready to face a more obvious presence of Islam in the EU. For example, in one scholar's view, 'the accession of Muslim countries and the rise of far right mobilization and violence, can only be addressed effectively under a broad consensus among its members. Across Europe, however, the citizens are split regarding its cultural identity and social model' (Medrano 2009: 106). This split is accentuated even further by the fact that immigration and the Islamization of immigrants in the EU is regulated by the individual member states, not the Union. In fact, obvious differences between Germany and the Netherlands in relation to the legal status of Islam represent an additional challenge to the idea of European identity.²

- 2 In Germany, the state and religious institutions are not separated; while the Jewish community, the Catholic Church and the Protestant Church are all recognized by the state, Islam is not. In the Netherlands, the state and religious institutions are separated; the Dutch system allows all religions to establish their own institutions, including Islam.

Third, as alluded to in the previous dilemma, the fact that the European Union does not speak with a single voice is an added difficulty. Back in 1997, Soledad García understood this trend as a result of different economic and political interests that were not sufficiently explained to the citizens: 'This is due to the fact that there is considerable ambiguity in national governments' agendas attached to Economic and Monetary Union which shows them unwilling to appear responsible for the hard choices that need to be made' (García 1997: 205–6). More importantly, as García rightly predicted, the 2004 enlargement increased the 'elite ambiguity, since there seem to be many antagonistic groups in the societies of these countries with often incompatible goals, which extends to their incipient civil societies' (García 1997: 206). Given the present circumstances, the increasing national and regional differentiations are likely to continue and further question the success of a supranational European identity.

Finally, while recognizing both intergovernmental and supranational approaches to policy-making, European Union representatives recognize their own reservations with regard to future integration of the Union in general. It is this flexibility that may determine the nature of European identity: while the first approach indicates that the national governments have little interest in deepening 'integration by shifting power from their own national to the federal level as long as the status quo seems to be secure', the second approach suggests that 'as soon as the alternative to the status quo is the end of the integration and as soon as it is not about the failure of a specific policy or a specific treaty but about the EU's very existence, even decisions to abandon one more aspect of the cherished national sovereignty might be acceptable as the lesser evil' (Pelinka 2011: 27).

The above-outlined dilemmas become even more alarming if discussed in the context of the 2008 economic crisis. The crisis, although labelled as economic in its nature, has also affected the EU's political and identity achievements. As revealed by the 2011 *Eurobarometer* poll, Euroscepticism was generally on the rise, meaning that the respondents found it significantly easier to identify with their own nation state rather than with the EU. Still, when asked who they would see as capable of addressing the crisis, the majority of interviewees listed the EU first, followed by their national authorities – a feeling that could be associated with their disappointment

with local leadership (*Eurobarometer* 2011). Later, the EU continued to report about growing Euroscepticism. However, as insisted by Jose Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission, ‘we have to be clear and honest: it was not Europe that has created this crisis: this crisis was created either in the financial markets, irresponsible behaviour or some times at national level: by unsustainable debt’ (*Euronews* 2013).

A Way Forward?

The post-2008 period has been characterized by a number of valuable initiatives (Council of Europe 2013; European Commission 2012), as well as scholarly accounts, addressing questions closely related to European unity and identity, and proposing steps to be taken with regard to the overall European integrationist project (Bayley and Williams 2012; Checkel and Katzenstein 2009; Habermas 2012; Hayward and Wurzel 2012; Lucarelli, Cerutti and Schmidt 2011; Risse 2010; Sükösd and Jakubowicz 2011). For example, Jürgen Habermas’s *The Crisis of the European Union: A Response* – a book that complements his 2009 title, *Europe: The Faltering Project*, in which he addressed a number of issues of crucial relevance for the future of the European Union³ – claims that Europe is now more than ever a constitutional project. Such a claim has to do with the challenges posed by the recent EU crisis that has clearly confirmed the existence of some alarming differences amongst the EU member states that will further erode solidarity. As Habermas puts it, ‘[g]iven the unprecedented gravity of the problems, one would expect the politicians to lay the European cards on

3 In his 2009 work, Habermas focused on the decreasing involvement of intellectuals in debates regarding the future of Europe – a serious lack that could affect future policy-making, the presence of Islam (securitization, potential risks, greater inclusion and tolerance), the power of the Lisbon Treaty (which actually does not solve the European problems he identifies) and, lastly, the potential of the public sphere to get involved and contribute to official decisions.

the table without further delay and to take the initiative in explaining to the public the relation between the short-term costs and the true benefits, and hence the historical importance of the European project' (2012: 6). The problem is that the politicians, even though aware of the issues, do not seem ready to lay the cards because of their own fear that if they start encouraging greater supranational solidarity in the time of crisis, such an attempt could be seen as a threat to state sovereignty and thus their own careers. Moreover, EU institutions have continuously struggled to convince the public that something of a supranational character is likely to perform better than a national entity (for example, the differences in overall characteristics and performance between Germany and Greece). Accordingly, 'the expansion of communication networks and horizons of perception, the liberalization of values and attitudes, an increase in the willingness to include strangers, the strengthening of civil society initiatives and a corresponding transformation of strong identities can at best be stimulated through legal-administrative means' (Habermas 2012: 46).

Although Habermas offers some great ideas, he seems to underestimate the relevance of willingness. It can be said that back in the 1950s when the European Coal and Steel Community was launched, the six founding states made a huge step forward, followed by a number of great achievements. However, some of the later crises, including the current one, have showed that the Community's (or Union's) future can easily be questioned and it is the member states that actually question it. To put it simply, why should Germany continue to bailout Greece and, more importantly, how can the German government justify its decisions to a German public that sees the Greeks as highly problematic? Furthermore, even if EU institutions were granted greater power over the member states, this might only generate greater frustration and thus even less willingness to cooperate.

For Habermas, there is a range of possible scenarios to consider. For example, he claims that the euro is capable of deciding the fate of the EU, as the euro zone members 'will have to choose between a deepening of European cooperation and relinquishing the euro' (Habermas 2012: 122). Also, he insists on additional laws and thus a more binding nature of inter-governmental agreements as well as greater participation of European citizens in the decision-making processes (2012: 130–1). Again, here, the media

play an important role: 'On the one hand, the politicians allow themselves to be enticed by the gentle pressure of the media into short-winded forms of self-promotion. On the other hand, the programming of the media lets itself become infected by this impatient occasionalism' (2012: 136). When applied to the concept of European identity, we can agree that Habermas's concerns are powerful enough to affect its progress. As we have witnessed, economic concerns are likely to penetrate political and social dimensions of the European project, putting some of them, including European identity, on standby. The problem is if their status does not change to active within a reasonable period of time; then, there is a risk that even the previously achieved progress will require revisiting. But what seems most disturbing is the disconnection between the EU elites and the peoples of Europe, thus between the rulers and the ruled, with the former often presenting themselves as the only competent ones and the latter sharing a feeling of irrelevance.

When assessing the situation surrounding the signing of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992, Derrida noted that 'Europe takes itself to be a promontory, an advance – the avant-garde of geography and history. It advances and promotes itself as an advance, and it will have never ceased to make advances on the other: to induce, seduce, produce, and conduce, to spread out, to cultivate, to love or to violate, to love to violate, to colonize, and to colonize itself' (Derrida 1992: 49). With such multi-tasking ability in mind, it is rather difficult to imagine a Europe that is incapable of finding a solution to the growing scepticism about its own being and thus future, while sticking to its aims and objectives that have, on various occasions, resulted in right decisions.

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