



A POLITICAL ENTITY NEEDS A COMMON IDENTITY? THE CASE OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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Introduction:

Strengthening European Union (EU) citizens' identification with the process of European integration, particularly EU institutions and policies has become one of the major challenges facing the policy maker within the Union. The creation of a common and unify European identity in which European citizens consider the EU that is identical to their social, cultural, political, economic norms and values is critical for the long-term integration of the EU. The increases in the diversities of European societies because of migration and globalization made policy maker and political actors in various levels both on- local, national, regional and the EU- to come in conclusion that there is need to address the issues of common identity and citizenship as one of the means to prevent social conflict and disintegrated societies with the Europe. The need to create identity politics which means that there is an attempt to form a collective identity by redefinition of attachments and loyalties which will aim to enhance a consciousness of being European, hence, forming long lasting forms of social and political integration (Latcheva et al 2012: 235).

Decades ago, this issue has become a more pressing than before for policy makers among others. Earlier in history of humanity, answers to questions like who am I? and sometimes who are we? were very often sought in not only in religion, mythology but also in philosophy. In this modern industrial society, national identification has become the cultural norm. Although the nation and national identity are dominant, human beings have multiple identities. European people like to be identified with one single cultural entity such as common language, even though there is common law, single currency, flag and anthem of the EU within the member states. The most important issues about this European identity is that there are national identities before the creation of European Union, can the identity of the EU sweep away the national identities of the member state? To answer this question, the following questions will be address in this essay, the questions such as Is there any European people? What is to be European? Can the European identity be created? How? The aim of this essay is to engage with such debates and to evaluate the relationship between national identity and European identity.

Can identity be Created?

Recently, the issue of identity has become the subject of discussion within the scholars in the field of International Relations. Also, studies around European identity has been developed totally in two different directions with little contact between them. There has been several theoretical approaches and standards which aimed only in the definition of the concept of European identity, yet unproven empirically with public opinion data (David 2003: 135). In fact, if there is no specific meaning of identity, it will be difficult thing to discuss what European Identity is. Primary, the concept of identity is related to individuals to describe the association and relationship with one specific community. However, an individual cannot be alone without being associate with a specific group and communities in society and this form of association will have impacts on their identities.

What do we mean by national identity and how is it constructed? Based on the modernist approach, they claim that nations are modern constructs, that nationalism preceded the creation of nations, and that nationalism is primarily a political ideology concerned with power and the modern state (Cinpoes 2008: 4). National Identity is collective identity that gives allegiance to the nation rather than individual or societal identity. The conceptual meaning of nation in this context is an elusive one which can be compare to community of equal individuals who share the same set of common values (Anderson 1991: 6). There is some degree of cooperation and agreement among analysts in this field that membership in the nation contains an objective and subjective dimension (İnaç, Ünal 2013: 225). The subjective dimension has to do with mass education, territory, a claim to sovereignty and the most important one is equal legal rights and duties. Hence, the subjective dimension of the culture refers to a common culture which unites the members of the society together. Therefore, a nation is the community of people of common values that share the sense of common history and culture, while state is regarded as a legal entity that has authority, power and possesses both the internal and external sovereignty over all its territory also its citizens and is constituted in the form of laws (Cinpoes 2008: 4).

However, belonging to a specific country has a great impact in accepting, reinforcing or weakening of the other identities such as the social identity. This means that, a country's identity will be used to determines the social identity of such country, on the other way, it also goes with national, ethnic religious and class which

based have a great impact in making other identities. The emergence and developing a European identity do not imply a transfer of identity or loyalty from the national to the supranational level, such theories assume instrumental and cultural (David 2013: 136). Therefore, National identity remains high and remains one of the links to the nation's and make stronger than the link with Europe. When it comes to European identity, the existence of a strong national pride is the most important one than any other identity.

The attempt to define European identity today must start from the critical interpretation of the great historical processes that created modern Europe, analysing the dialectic between change and persistence and the alternation of openings to other worlds and closures within their own geographic and ethnic borders, reconstructing the sequence of struggles, first of all between the supranational entities of the pope and the emperor, and the national and local entities such as the city republics and the nascent sovereign states, and then among the various national states that clash with continental political hegemony, examining the great fractures between centre and periphery, state and church, city and country, bourgeoisie and proletariat along the troubled path towards and through modernity (Alberto 2017: 7).

The concept of the national and that of regional identity has been the subject in which many scholars' debates; this topic has been used both as an exogenous and as endogenous dimension with various analytical frameworks. Therefore, the concept of European identity may be expressed in different meanings by many authors. Some scholars in the field of International Relations coined it to be cosmopolitan orientation, others call for the development of a post-national constitutional patriotism, while some talk about it as the cultural values of Europe (Latcheva et al 2012, 236). Generally, past studies conducted on this issue addressed the conceptualisation and determinants of personal national or supra-national identification and the relationship between such personal identifications and all forms of political participation, trust and exclusionary reactions generated towards out groups such as immigrants and ethnic minority.

For over 50 years now, European Union policy makers have tried to tighten the economic, political and cultural integration within the EU and with member states. Since the beginning of the establishment of the European Parliament, the gaps of participatory advantages for non-governmental organisations as stated in the Economic Community (EC) white paper on Lisbon Agenda and European governance, European institutions have not only been involved in the co-ordination of political and economic growths towards European integration but also in the development and implementation of a joint European identity.

One of the main motivations promoting European identity is making sure there is everlasting peace on the Europe as a continent and to strengthening support for policy making on the European level. From this angle, it can be deduced that identity politics have a very clear legitimating function. In the process of integration of the European Communities, identity building had been fostered by membership, the external projection of an EU identity, the appropriation by the EU of the concept of Europe, and the cement provided by the founding values and the addition of EU symbols to Europe's forest of symbols (Laffan 2004: 75). Because of this above reason, the concept of European identity is sometimes related to some other relevant concerns of the EU policy development. For example, trust and support of EU institutions and active involvement of EU citizens in all the project of European integration.

Are there European People?

The question of who the Europeans people are is one of the most important questions in the field of International Relations that need to be answered when it comes to the issue of EU and European identity. Based on the facts and evidence, it has been suggested that Europeans are from the different highest socio-economic groups in society of different European states. These people include the managers, professionals, owners of businesses and other white-collar workers. They are actively involved in different aspects of business and government activities, they travel frequently within Europe and sometimes live in other European countries for a period (Fligstein et al 2012: 109). These people create and engage in long-term social relationships with their colleagues both in their schools, offices and houses, sometimes with their employer, the firm they work for or suppliers, customers or for those who work with government parastatal. They speak their own language and learn new language in so that they could integrate on time with their new society also for easy communication for their official job. Europe-wide business and professional associations were created in the year 1986 in which professional people gather on a regular basis to discuss matters of mutual interest within the group (Fligstein 2008). Students of European states who travel across borders for either studies, internship, tourism and sometimes jobs are more likely to be more European. Scholars of the same field and people who share the same interest in the same academic field will be interested to travel for academic discussion or seminar in another European state.

However, identification with the EU has been seen as one of the most important prerequisites of sustaining the EU as a political entity and lending it greater popularity than it is enjoying presently since European identity constitutes a core concept of scholar and political debate as well as opinion polls and European research programs like Eurobarometer (EB), the International Social Survey Program (ISSP) and European Value Survey (EVS), it is very important to constantly regularly assess and adapt its conceptualisations and its measures.

There are different theories of integration which can be used to explain identity. These theories of integration include cooperation, federalism, neo-functionalism and functionalism and the impacts on the European Identity. Based on these theories and their roles played in the establishment of EU, it will be used to explain how these theories help to unify the people of Europe and Identity was created. Intergovernmentalism emphasises the roles of the nation state in the integration. It argues that the nation state is not becoming outdated due to the European integration. Also, the national governments of the member states are the principal actors in the process of European integration, and instead of being weakened by it, some of their sovereignty was mandated to the EU, they rather become more powerful by the process of integration (Hatton 2011: 1). These supporters of this theory argue that the periods of radical change in the EU as when the all the member states have common and shared goals. In addition, the roles of national governments cannot be underemphasised and the negotiation between them in the process of integration.

How Can Identity be Created:

Furthermore, neo-functionalism in its approach to integration in Europe causes the spill-over effect with the transfer of loyalty from the national level to the European level is basic to the system (David 2013: 136). This theory emphasises about the integration when it comes to the area with low politics which are very relevant in the other fields of study. Trade between two states such as the creation of ECSC which was created to foster good relationship between Germany and France, so that there could be good relationship between those countries. Economy also has the higher potential to further integration which will lead to greater integration that will help to create not only integration but as well create the European State. The basic idea of this is that integration in a common trade area leads to common market which will cancel all the barriers to the movement of goods and people within the zone, this leads to single market.

However, all the above does not create European identity, and there are many reasons why unify identity cannot be created. One of the challenges facing the creation of such identity is fear of attacking national identities of European state. When comparing Europe with nation like United States of America, Europe is a multinational and cultural nations with different languages and dialects. The idea of creating unitary identity will be very hard and wrong, because no nation wants to forgo its national identity instead of that, it is better to add something meaning rather than destroy it. Despite the size of each nation in the continent, the different diversity's ethnic will also make it difficult to create the European Identity.

In conclusion, nearly all the member states of EU have different opinions and views on European identity, some preferred to be attached to their national identities rather than another, while some prefer having multiple identities such as national, regional and European identity. For example, some Basques prefer to emphasize on their regional identity while Catalonia prefers having multiple identities. There are no group of people who wants to be recognised with only European identity except some elites in the society. This set of groups are less concerned with the diminishing of their national identity. Therefore, it can be established that the creation of European identity is complex and very difficult to achieve. In terms of national identities, the will to share a common national feature is also important, but difficult to be achieved. Presently that Europe is facing challenges of refugee crisis, there is a tendency that national boundaries may be close. In order to stop and counter these challenges, the present European political project needs to be redirected toward the European common identities which means loyalty and shared commitment of all the social, cultural values and norms.

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