

## THE POSSIBILITY OF MULTICULTURAL PRACTISE DURING THE AGE OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES IN LINE WITH ARAB SPRING

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### Abstract

Globalization, postmodern culture and the progress in the transportation and communication enforced to increase the multicultural living within the world, especially in Europe. Nevertheless Europe has a trouble in managing to give the representation for the different cultures because of many reasons in last decade. After the global financial crisis suffered in 2008, Europe faced with huge economic problems. During this period of time, the rebellion and upheavals against the dictatorial regimes we witnessed in Middle East, called as Arab Spring, led to the revenge of the existing regimes and eventually civil wars. As a result of these civil wars, the immigrant issue come to the European agenda. The main problem was not merely the flux of the immigrants into Europe but their cultures they bring together. The European officials envisaged that the different cultures of Middle Eastern refugees may distort the cultural harmony in Europe. This fear has been called as Islamophobia, xenophobia and sometimes as racism because of the popular protests in European streets. In this article, I will attempt to elucidate the multicultural practice of Europe and its potential to include the different collective identities with theoretical perspective.

**Keywords:** Perception, Immigrant Issue, Multiculturalism, Arab Spring, Collective Identity.

## ARAP BAHARINA PARALEL OLARAK KOLEKTİF KİMLİKLER ÇAĞINDA ÇOKKÜLTÜRLÜLÜK PRATIĞİNİN İHTİMALİ

### Öz

Küreselleşme, postmodern kültür ve ulaşım ve iletişim alanında yaşanan ilerleme, başta Avrupa olmak üzere tüm dünyada çokkültürlü hayatı yaygınlaştırdı. Ne var ki, Avrupa son yüzyıllık zaman diliminde farklı kültürleri temsil etme ve birarada tutma hususunda geççok nedenden dolayı ciddi sıkıntılar yaşamaya başladı. 2008’de yaşanan mküresel mali krizden sonar Avrupa büyük ekonomik problemlerle yüzleşti. Bu dönemde, Orta Doğu’da diktatöryel rejimlere karşı gerçekleştiğine şahit olduğumuz ve Arap baharı olarak adlandırılan isyanlar, hali hazır rejimlerin çıkarttığı iç savaşlarla karşılık buldular. Bu iç savaşların neticesinde, göç ve göçmne olgusu Avrupa’nın gündemine oturdu. Temel sorun göçmenlerin Avrupa’ya akını değil, beraberlerinde getirdikleri inanç, din ve değerlerdir. Zira Avrupalı yetkililer inançlarını Avrupa’ya taşıyan göçmenler yüzünden Avrupa kültürü ve ahanginin bozulacağından endişe duymaktadırlar. Bu korku ve endişe kendini bazen İslamofobi, bazen yabancı düşmanlığı ve bazen de Avrupa sokalarına yansıyan ırkçılık ve faşizm olarak tezahür etmektedir. Bu makalede, Avrupa’nın çokkültürlülük pratiğini ve bu pratiğin farklı kültürleri bünyesinde barındırma potansiyelini teorik boyutlarıyla birlikte ele alacağım.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Algı, Göç Olgusu, Çokkültürlülük, Arap Baharı, Kolektif Kimlik.

### 1. ARAB SPRING AS A SOURCE OF EMERGING A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

Uprisings, upheavals, riots, rebels, protests, challenging resists so-called revolutions and transformations we witness in Arab world since December 2010 is called and stigmatized as social movement in general meaning in world-wide media. In this sense, social movement can

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be defined as collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities, powerholders, or cultural beliefs and practices. These movements are conscious, concerted, and sustained efforts by ordinary people to change some aspect of their society by using extra-institutional means (Goodwin and Jaspers 2006: 3). Some of these movements have looked for opportunities to claim new rights while others have responded to threats or violence. Movements have regularly had to choose between violent and nonviolent activities, illegal and legal ones, disruption and education, extremism and moderation, sometimes they may use more spontaneous actions such as riots. On the other hand, a revolutionary movement is a social movement that seeks, at minimum, to overthrow the government or state.

The term “Arab Spring” was chosen over “Maghreb Crisis”, since it does not allegorize an ideological indoctrination. Albeit words such as crisis or conflict are commonly used by the media and by many politicians, they are easily perceived as being biased (Harari, 2011: 27). Speaking of a “crisis” in that context conveys the impression of a purely geopolitical point of view and is most likely perceived as very cynical by the people that are directly affected by oppressive regimes. While the term “protest” may not reflect the full scale of the political transformation process, the term “revolution” implies that the overthrowing of the authority is yet accomplished. In the light of the smoldering civil war in Libya, an overhasty conclusion. Albeit the upheaval of Zienel Abidine ben Ali was successful, political struggles continue in Tunisia. In Libya, the protest movement turned into a bloody civil war, where the heinous crimes of Muammar Muhammad Al-Gaddafi triggered a military intervention by NATO.

In December 2010 the protests in Tunisia set the park for what would become a conflagration of the whole Maghreb region. An unprecedented event, which has the power to transform the political structure all over the Arab world. For people living under constant repression, the reaction of Western countries is of utmost importance, since their effort can help to overcome the suffocating diktat of despotic regimes.

As a matter of fact, the wave of political activism that started in southern Tunisia in December 2010 has now reached all parts of the Arab world, from Morocco in the west to Oman in the east. The fate of these popular uprisings remains in the balance, but it is already clear that they have produced the most dramatic changes in the region since the end of the colonial era in the middle of the 20th century. The “Arab Spring”, however, is a seasonal misnomer (Brown, 2011: 63). Since the removal of the Tunisian and Egyptian dictators in January and February 2011, protest movements have stirred but have not flowered. Uprisings in Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria have all led to military confrontations of varying intensity, but the regimes are still in place (except the rulers in Libya and Yemen). In Libya, only NATO intervention has prevented Colonel Muammar Qadhafi’s regime from reimposing its writ over the entire country following a rebellion in February in the eastern city of Benghazi. Bahrain’s uprising has been stamped out with Saudi assistance, and the efforts of a more liberal wing of the royal family to foster a constitutional monarchy disowned. The Syrian regime is mercilessly crushing a popular uprising, and digging in for prolonged resistance to Western diplomatic and economic pressure.

From this perspective, it is important to appreciate that the transformation of Arab world is probably still in its early stages. To talk about “revolutions” is exceedingly premature. So far its most dramatic achievements are the overthrow of the elderly rulers of Egypt and Tunisia. However, the basic structure even of these regimes remains intact. For example, Hosni



Mubarak may no longer be Egypt's president but the army is still firmly in command. There is also a concerted push back against the protestors by regimes such as Bahrain, Yemen, and Syria often with the support of regional players such as Saudi Arabia.

## 2. COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

The concept of collective identity is used in many discussions by outsiders, who refer to real and assumed characteristics of groups or nations (the outside view) and to the ways members of groups and nations define themselves as being different from other collectivities (the inside-view).

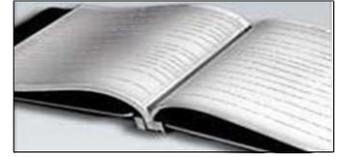
We must keep in mind that the use of the concept of collective identity in relation with collective entities, such as ethnic groups, nations, regions and religious communities, is rather recent. The International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, published in 1968, only refers to the concept of personal and psychosocial identity (Ericson, 1968: 61). Erikson defines the individual identity as a subjective sense of a continuous existence and a coherent memory.

To this he adds that the concept of psychosocial identity is even more evasive, because it comprises at the same time subjective and objective characteristics and individual and social ones. This concept of collective identity has come to the fore during the last twenty-five years, replacing concepts with a dubious character, such as 'race' or 'racial groups' by 'ethnic groups' and ethnicity. Ethnic identity, following the definition of Roosens, is: 'a feeling of belonging and continuity-in-being (staying the same person through time) resulting from an act of self-ascription and/or ascription by others to a group of people who claim both common ancestry and a common cultural tradition' (Roosens, 1995: 30). Here we observe already an opposition to the concept of religious identity, as most religious identities are not connected with a claim to common ancestry and connect belonging to the collectivity with a different set of criteria, such as the acceptance of a specific body of ethical, moral and religious rules and religious beliefs and often, but not necessarily, with the acceptance of a religious mission to accomplish.

Another major problem that is connected with the use of the concept of collective identity is the observation that members of a group or community may consider their collective identity as a reality. As such, they demonstrate a way of holistic thinking, which generally is very strong in fundamentalist movements. Ideas about collective identities are part and parcel of collective representations.

We organize the world around us mentally with the help of one or more collective representations. The ideas about our collective identities – and those of the Others – define our place within this more embracing collective representation of society, and even of the world we live in. When I speak of an identity as based on an inside-view, I start with the observation that each idea of a collective identity is always based on distinctions between 'us' and the 'Others'.

What do we mean when we speak about collective identities? Collective identities are strongly tied to the concept of collective representation. Collective identities: 'are the means whereby people define a sense of themselves and others through using different markers, such as cultural features. Identities refer to what people conceive themselves to be, to which collectives they belong' (Verkuyten and others, 1995: 17). Collective identity refers to the



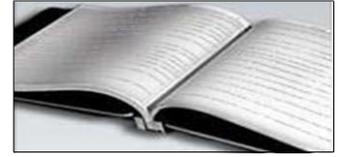
ways a group sees itself as different – but also as similar – in comparison to other groups. Collective identity is anchored in the consciousness of the members of a group. In this definition of collective identity, it is the inside-view that prevails: the members of a specific group who define themselves as such.

In this case, we could speak about the group consciousness in the sense of a consciousness of belonging to a social class, a religious group, a nation, an ethnic group, a professional group etc. But let us stretch the concept not too much. Collective identity in the sense we use it here, is strongly determined by the habitus, the tendencies acquired by the members of a group before coming of age. The members of the group have been ‘invaded’ by the culture of their group before competing structures, except for biological conditions, were present. This is what Freud called ‘the primacy principle’. Later collective identities, especially after growing up, have been grafted on the former, such as professional identities or collective identities related to voluntary associations, which are joined as adults. Habitus plays also a role on this level, because the tendencies acquired in the first period of an individual’s life, tend to influence the selection processes later on, such as those related to preferences for certain artistic and professional activities.

Collective identity means that the members of a group have an awareness of certain differences that exist between them and those who do not belong to that group. So the concept of collective identity refers to imageries about social and cultural characteristics, habits and physical appearances of the Other and, consequently, of the self (Milton and others, 2005: 78). This awareness of differences – real or imaginary – is connected with a consciousness of belonging to that group and of exclusion of those who do not belong. This awareness of differences and this sense of belonging may be very weak and in that case the idea of opposition to the Other may be totally absent. In many cases, however, the collective identity goes together with the idea of opposition: the types of behavior and the values and norms of the Other are incommensurable with ‘our’ characteristics as group members. This opposition is often expressed in a stereotypical way. Such stereotypes about the Other are part of the inside-view of the members of a group, but they represent, in fact, paradoxically, an outside-view on the Other. Those collective stereotypes are often far removed from the self-images of the groups that are ‘described’ by those stereotypes. Collective stereotypes are ‘frozen’ images of the Other, which are not susceptible to change when confronted with facts about the Other, which are contradictory to the stereotype.

Especially national stereotypes show a stubborn resistance to change and are to a high degree demonstrations of ignorance. The situation is often even more complicated when members of different groups interact with each other and opposed stereotypes collide. It follows from what I said that collective identities are far from value-free. The Other is not only different, but also inferior in one or more respects. This sense of superiority vis-à-vis the Other often is strong in closed communities or societies. We can learn from many cultural anthropological studies that many ‘primitive’ tribes, now and in the past, consider themselves to be the center of the world and often refer to themselves with a concept that signifies: ‘we, the human beings’. An important implication of this is that the members of neighboring tribes are not considered to be fully human.

The Other has different habits and customs and often speaks a different language. In small societies, characterized by a common life-style, the individual is almost completely

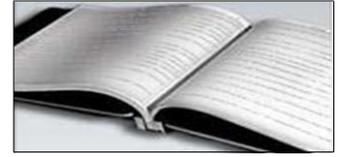


determined by that culture. Dumont observes that the relativistic thought, which recognizes that behind the customs, the ideas, the behavior and the symbols of the Other a human being is hidden, who in spite of many evident differences has many characteristics in common with us, is something that is slow to develop in human history, as is the individualist way of thinking. 'In the traditional holism humanity merges with our society, the strangers are devaluated as, at best, imperfect beings – for the rest, all types of patriotism, even the modern variants, are colored by this sentiment' (Dumont, 1983: 119). Ethnocentrism and xenophobia accompany the holistic thought. Collective identities are a source of holistic thinking, a way of thinking in which groups (nations, peoples, social classes, etc.) are regarded as real entities, which are considered to be more than the sum of their parts. They are unique configurations with a specific spirit. In many cases groups with a strong collective identity have a strong consciousness of their past. Such a past is generally a mixture of facts and myths.

The collective identity of a group has, seen from the inside, a collective level – the group can be characterized by its identity, which is manifested by the allegiances and the behavior of its members. It has also an individualistic level – a member defines his/her own identity, partially or sometimes totally, in relation to his belongingness to the group. In other words, the collective identity implies the feeling of the members of the group of attachment to it. They have feelings of solidarity with their group. In fact, the sense of being different as a member from non-members is enhanced by the use of stereotypes about the Other. So these stereotypes are functional for the cohesion of the in-group. Their use demonstrates an emotional and affective commitment to the group. In this context, we should not forget that the bearers of a collective identity in many cases show a strong need to exteriorize their (collective) emotions and attachments by rituals, symbols and commemorations of events that have marked the community.

Pareto dedicates to this need, in his analysis of the residues of group life, the totality of the third category of residues, called the 'need to manifest his sentiments by exterior acts' (Pareto, 1968: 1089-1112). This need also can manifest itself in the destruction of objects that symbolize the Other as an opponent (Dresch, 2005: 41). So the Taliban of Afghanistan started in 2000 the destruction of many, sometimes very ancient, statues of Buddha, because these symbols of Buddhism were considered to divert the attention of the people of Afghanistan from the only true religion as manifested in the Koran. Iconoclasm is a favorite activity in periods of revolutionary change, as is demonstrated by the iconoclasm of the symbols of the Catholic Church during the Reformation, the destruction of Chinese cultural heritage during the 'Cultural Revolution' and the destruction of socialist symbols after the downfall of the Soviet Empire. The need to exteriorize attachments is also demonstrated by the showing in public life of symbols of one's allegiance, such as the cross, the chador (the veil of Muslim women), and the national colors.

The concept of collective identity is also related to the idea of totality, not only in the sense of the holistic conception to which I referred earlier, but also in the sense that the group, encompasses and dominates all other differences within the group especially when it concerns large entities such as nations (Hatina, 2007: 112). This conception of totality may be related in some instances to the conviction of the members of a group – a nation, a religious community, a political party etc. – that their life chances are strongly or even exclusively dependent upon the achievements of the group to which they belong. Sometimes, the idea of collective identity may go together with the idea of a mission, the idea that the group to which one



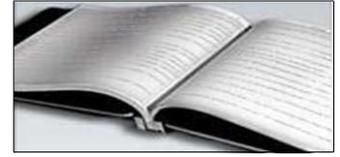
belongs has played an important role in the development of the world, that it is the bearer of new values or that it has the mission to restore old values in a world that is corrupted by ‘materialism’, that it is chosen to accomplish the will of God or that its role is the liberation of the oppressed.

Collective identities necessarily make distinctions between insiders and outsiders, especially in Middle East (Milton and others, 2005: 91). Nevertheless, some of the outsiders may be considered by the members of a group as potential members and they may try to convert them. Inside the group some members are leaders, other members are followers and still other members may be marginal. Depending on the nature of the collective identity and on the specific interactions with the social environment, a collective identity can be relatively open or closed. When the group is competing with other groups to obtain scarce means, such as ‘souls to be saved’ or potential members to contribute to their cause and not to the goals of a competitor, the dividing-lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’ are often drawn in a rigid way. Another possibility is that a collective identity is imposed on a certain category of individuals.

That is the case when persons are seen by the insiders, according to their criteria for selection, as (reluctant) members, because of their ‘racial’ or religious heritage. But it is also possible that a group (a society) forces certain of its members to comply with a specific identity in spite of the fact that many of them do not have the aspiration to be defined by that imposed false identity. Such was the case in Nazi-Germany, where a rigid and closed identity from which no escape was possible, was imposed on persons with a (partial) Jewish origin. In this way imposition of rigid dividing-lines between ‘them’ and ‘us’ were the opening of a process that did lead to a total exclusion from public life, even from life at all.

### 3. OPEN AND CLOSED COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

Every collective identity implies, I repeat, that a distinction is made between outsiders and insiders, between ‘them’ and ‘us’. In most cases this distinction does not necessarily mean an opposition. It may simply be that the Others speak a different dialect or language, or prefer kinds of food that we abhor, and drink wine instead of ‘our’ beer. But even when the distinction goes deeper, in the sense I elaborated earlier in this text, the collective identity can be relatively open. We can participate in circles and groups with different collective identities without experiencing problems. As such, most of us have developed in democratic societies personalities with multiple identities. Of course, there are groups with collective identities that do not accept certain categories of outsiders, or accept them only after a long training or initiation rites (‘rites de passage’) (Ahrari, 1996: 67). This does not mean that the members of such relatively closed circles or communities do not participate in other groups and do not contribute to the political, cultural and social life of the society in which they are embedded. Nevertheless, some types of collective identities are constructed in such a way that the members of groups, which share these identities, may provoke serious problems in a democratic society, because they act against fundamental principles of a democratic order, such as the respect for the individual freedom of all citizens. In which cases are groups with a specific closed identity likely to create problems in a democratic society? Problematic collective identities in an open society will have the following main characteristics:



1. The members of the group (religious community, ethnic group, minority culture, etc. hypostatize their identity, that is, they treat it as a real entity with an internal structure that separates it sharply from other cultural entities (cultural realism).

2. They present their collective identity as a collectivity that determines totally, or at least to a very high degree, all groups and individuals that are considered to be part of this identity. They have a collectivistic way of thinking or a catasopic approach. A catasopic approach is one in which the most encompassing entity – here the collective identity – is in the forefront, and from this vantage-point one is looking down upon the smaller units, which are comprised within it. Moreover, the position of the smaller units on their lower level is interpreted as being a function of the higher level, that is, all their characteristics are derived from the higher level.

3. The members of the closed collective identity neglect in a systematic way the social and cultural changes of our times. It is as if the hypostatization or reification of the collective identity forbids the analysis of historical developments. Only one interpretation of the past is accepted, an interpretation that is considered to be functional for the group and that legitimizes its existence. 4. The individuals, who consider themselves as belonging to the collectivity with the closed identity, or who are considered by the Other to belong to it, are imprisoned within this framework. They do not have choices, which are not a function of this collective identity.

Such a way of organizing social and cultural life can be destructive for the society in which groups with these identities develop, as can be illustrated by many historical and present-day examples. The differences with the 'Others' are, when one follows this type of reasoning, unbridgeable and unchangeable. There is no common denominator. The closed collective identities are incommensurable with other identities. Hence, a free circulation of ideas and arts, an ongoing dialogue between representatives of different collective identities, such as religions, cultures or ethnic groups, do not make any sense within this perspective. The rise of fundamentalist movements, being religious ones or not, as reactions to modernization, exemplifies this role of closed collective identities.

#### 4. THE SPIRIT OF THE PEOPLE (THE 'VOLKSGEIST')

Modern, open societies are multicultural ones, and this multiculturalism often has enriched society in the past – and it still does. The newcomers in the modern societies develop in most cases 'multicultural personalities' in which the cultural or ethnic background of their country of origin is only one of their points of reference. As such, they were, and are, not really different from the majority of the population they entered as immigrants. However, the present discussions about multicultural societies focus on a type of society that is multicultural in a different sense: the coming society is envisaged as one in which 'cultures', 'ethnic identities' and 'foreign lifestyles' are seen as durable, distinct elements in the national landscape (Raymond, 2003). This change necessitates, it is argued by some, an accommodation of the national institutions to this new situation. This need for adaptation is based on the idea that all cultures are equal and have, consequently, the right to be there as collectivities. In such discussions, the idea of collective identity plays a major role. In fact, with this debate we are returning to the old debate between historicism and universalism that



started in the 18th century when Johann Gottfried Herder coined the concept of ‘*Volksgeist*’ in opposition to the ideas of the Enlightenment, emphasizing in this way the uniqueness of each culture. Universal concepts, such as Reality and Truth do not exist; all norms and ideas originate within a specific cultural context upon which they are dependent. They can only be understood within this specific context.

Here we are confronted with radical opposition of historicist thinking to the rational and universal tenets of the Enlightenment (Herder, 1784). This concept of *Volksgeist* did have a strong impact on the development of Europe, more specifically on the relationships between France and Germany, as the concept implied a radical different relationship between individuals and their society and state. Today, we could translate this concept of *Volksgeist* with the concept of the collective identity of a people, a concept that emerged in the political debates and in the social sciences since the beginning of the eighties of the 20th century. In a modern society it is perhaps feasible, but certainly not acceptable for most of its citizens, to organize the major institutions on the basis of this type of collective identity. It would lead to a type of Apartheid, a situation that runs counter to the idea of cultural exchanges and cultural enrichment. I have given my arguments against this solution in the preceding section.

However, when the concept of a relatively open collective identity is used, a modern society can certainly be a multicultural one when it avoids in its policies nasty pitfalls in dealing with the claims of some groups to have specific rights as collectivities, which would curtail the fundamental rights of individuals and, moreover, those of the other members of the society. This is the case when official policies commit the fallacy of the wrong level. With this concept, I want to indicate that during debates about the multicultural society, groups (e.g., ethnic minorities) are treated as realities with a specific collective identity to which individuals are subordinated, instead of conceptualizing groups as gatherings of individuals, who define themselves as belonging to a group with a specific identity (İnaç, 2004: 34). In a modern society each individual has normally different opportunities to belong to several groups with different identities. This problem is a very tricky one, so I will try to elucidate it at some length. Many collective identities may coexist and persons belonging to groups with different identities do not experience specific difficulties in social life because of that. On the contrary, in many cases the fact that one belongs to several groups with different identities and having as such a multiple identity, enriches life and provides many cultural and intellectual stimuli.

A second prescription is the need to be aware of the role of the double distortion in intercultural relations. In intercultural relations, double distortions are unavoidable when we agree with the observation that all members of a nation or cultural unit whatsoever do not perceive reality as it really is, but always filtered and interpreted by collective representations. These collective representations are not just a pair of glasses that can be changed at will, because they are deeply anchored, as I said earlier, in the habitus of the members of the group. It is evident that in intercultural relations all the parties concerned have their own ways of looking at reality and of judging on the basis of their respective identities. In intercultural exchanges, both within a nation-state comprising units with different cultural traditions or between collectivities belonging to different nation-states, this distortion operates. Information supplied by both parties is reinterpreted and in most cases, does not have a perceptible influence on the distorted view on ‘the Other’. On both sides the parties concerned



may cherish the idea that they have a ‘true’ picture of the Other and that the ‘Other’ is seeing them in false or distorted way.

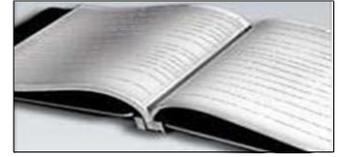
The problem is in many cases that one or both parties are really convinced that their collective representations of the ‘Other’ have a high validity. Even collective stereotypes may not be recognized as such by those who apply them to the ‘Other’: in their view the stereotypes about the other are not considered as stereotypes, but as accurate descriptions of the ‘Other’. In a particular relationship between two groups or cultures, this distortion may be strongly out of balance. To give an example: the collective stereotypes of Europeans about the Arab world are analyzed by researchers with much fervor, both by Europeans and Arabs. But the other way round is quite different: an almost complete absence of studies of Arab stereotypes about the European world. Is this an effect of modernization, as the European world is more ‘modernized’ than the Arab one?

In the European world there are more persons with ‘multiple identities’, who understand the mechanisms of distortion and who are willing, at a conscious level, to change their images of the ‘Other’, while this is much less the case on the Arab side, where researchers are willing to study the distorted views of the ‘Other’ about their world, just to prove that their own views on the European or Western world are ‘distortion-free’? (Dumont, 2001: 58). This situation is likely to be the result of the fact that several European nations have been colonizers and their distorted views on the Other must be the result of this because they had to find ‘good reasons’ for their exploitation, while the ex-colonized do not have valid reasons for a distorted view (Boëtsch and others, 2001). So the latter see reality as it really is. Here a parallel can be discerned with the Marxist view that states that only the proletariat, as the victim of capitalist oppression, can see through the veil of bourgeois ideology and so perceive the world as it really is, while the bourgeois can only have a distorted view of reality, handicapped as they are by bourgeois ideology and, of course, by their economic interests.

## CONCLUSION

We must not forget that many persons, claiming to belong to a specific group with a collective identity, can obtain certain privileges from society at large, such as political privileges when they are being acknowledged as being ‘representatives’ of their ‘community’ or of their religious organization, or receiving subventions to organize specific activities, which are considered to be expressions of their ‘culture’, etc. Analyzing the many claims of persons and groups to respect their collective identity, we perceive quickly that those claims are as void as the claims of the persons, who belief in the existence of the national identity.

The great difference between the national identity claims and the claims to respect ethnic, cultural or religious identities is that in the latter case many persons, not belonging to the groups that claim a specific collective identity, bestow a high confidence on these identity claims. The sources of this high confidence seem to be in many cases a romantic view on the Other, mingled with nostalgic ideas about ways of life that in Western countries have been lost in the process of modernization. Another source is without doubt the fact that several immigrants show a strong tendency to exaggerate their views about their own culture as a well-organized totality, or their views about the importance of their ‘ethnicity’. Feelings of inferiority in comparison with the European nations can easily lead to such exaggerations. But



that does not mean that those collectivistic claims have to be accepted as valid and tenable statements. This Eurocentric perspective is the reason why the immigrants are not allowed to include into the European continent.

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