



# Ankara

# Avrupa

# Çalışmaları Dergisi

*Common European Identity Myth or Reality?*

**Katerina SARAFEIM**

*The Borders of Europe Geography and Immigration*

**Thomas Christian HÖRBER**

*Turkey's Accession to the European Union:*

*Does Culture and Identity Play a Role?"*

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*Siyasi Kriterler Açısından Yunanistan, Polonya ve*

*Türkiye'nin AB Üyelik Sürecinin Değerlendirilmesi*

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*Topluluk Hukukunda Özel Kişilerin Dava Açma*

*Hakkının Gelişiminde Avrupa Topluluğu Adalet*

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*Türkiye-AB Bütünleşmesi Sürecine İlişkin*

*Karşılaştırmalı Analiz: ERM2 İçin Yol Haritası*

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## COMMON EUROPEAN IDENTITY: MYTH OR REALITY?

*Katerina SARAFEIM\**

### **ABSTRACT**

*This article addresses the question of whether a common European cultural identity really exists. Firstly, it discusses two main forms of the definition of European identity, namely a European cultural identity composed of intellectual and political constructs and a pre-existing and single mass European identity clearly distinct from each several cultural otherness. The former tends to regard the EU as a single multiethnic and multicultural entity whose identity was imposed above by various agencies while the latter takes as given the existence of a common European identity and is in belief that the present unification of Europe has resulted from this self-existing identity. On the basis of this discussion, the article focuses especially on the critical issues surrounding the creation of a common European identity, such as what foundations, ideas and values such an identity is to be built upon, what the Europeans should do in order to be European, how they act to build a common European identity and how the EU itself can unambiguously identify common ideals of the European peoples. Its conclusion is that any formation of a common European identity whose characteristics transcend all boundaries must take Europe as a discrete historical category and build up a common base, a genuinely continental space within which both commonalities and differences of individuals can be balanced.*

**Key Words:** *European Identity, European Union, Integration, Europeanness, European Citizenship.*

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## ÖZET

*Bu makale, ortak bir Avrupa kültürel kimliğinin gerçekten varolup olmadığı sorusunu temel almaktadır. Öncelikle, bu kimliğin tanımına ilişkin iki farklı izah üzerinde durulur: Entelektüel ve siyasi fikriyat temelinde oluşan bir Avrupa kültürel kimliği ile geçmişten beri varola gelen tekil ve ortak bir Avrupa kimliği. Bunlardan ilki, AB'yi çoketnili ve çok kültürlü tekil bir birim olarak görme eğilimindeyken ikincisi ise, ortak bir Avrupa kimliğinin varlığını verili olarak alıp Avrupa'nın mevcut birleşmesinin bu kimlikten doğduğu düşüncesindedir. Bu tartışma temelinde makale, ortak bir kimliğin dayanacağı temellerin, düşüncelerin ve değerlerin neler olduğu ve Avrupalılar'ın Avrupalı olmak için ne yapması ve nasıl hareket etmesi gerektiği ile AB'nin kendisinin ortak Avrupa ideallerini nasıl tanımlayacağı gibi ortak bir kimlik yaratılması konusu etrafında dönen birtakım kritik meselelere odaklanır. Sonuçta, tüm sınırları aşan ortak bir Avrupa kimliğinin oluşumu, Avrupa'yı kendi başına bir tarihsel kategori olarak alıp bireylerin farklılık ve benzerliklerinin birarada bulunduğu sahiden ortak bir alan bina edilmesinden geçmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Avrupa Kimliği, Avrupa Birliği, Bütünleşme, Avrupalılık, Avrupa Yurttaşlığı.*

Europe is seen by some as an ideal rife with danger, in the sense that each nation has its own history and tradition and that all European states have economic and cultural differences. Every time, then, that the question of the creation of a supranational community of European citizens arises, these different cultural traditions are brought up and cited by many as an impediment to its formation. Often, too, the established distinctions between the Europe of North and South, the Europe of East and West, the Europe of Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox are invoked as further obstacles to unity.

The definition of "European identity" assumes two main interpretive forms. The first is based on the idea that "European cultural identity, and by extension the institutional formation of a European unity, is composed of intellectual and political constructs whose referents lie in the process of the generation of today's nation-states and which are aimed at reducing the European Union to a single multiethnic and multicultural state entity with an historic dynamic"<sup>1</sup>. The arguments that develop in support of this point of view disparage the myth of a single mass European identity.

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<sup>1</sup> For these two interpretative camps, see Giorgos Kokkinos, *Αναζητώντας την ενότητα στην πολυμορφία- Οι αντινομίες της ευρωπαϊκής πολιτικής κουλτούρας και η ιδέα της ευρωπαϊκής ενοποίησης* [Seeking unity in diversity. The antinomies of European political culture and the idea of European unification], Metaichmio, Athens 2000, ch. III *Σπερματικές μορφές της Ευρωπαϊκής Ενοποίησης: Θεσμικές πρωτοβουλίες στην πορεία για μια εναλλακτική ευρωπαϊκή πολιτική ουτοπία- Θεωρίες της αφύπνισης και της κατασκευής της ευρωπαϊκής ταυτότητας* [Seminal forms of European Unification: institutional initiatives on the way towards an alternative European political utopia. Theories of the awakening and construction of the European identity], p. 125-129.

In the first place, the European continent is distinguished by cultural heterogeneity and diversity. The identity of the European citizen balances between, on the one hand, ethnic, religious and linguistic particularities and, on the other, a consciousness of a European cohesion and solidarity. At the same time, all the attempts that have so far been made to unite the European states were the result of veiled nationalist strategies ultimately aimed at creating a European identity imposed from above by various agencies, and in that sense were by nature coercive. Unification was one pole of an axis whose dynamic opposite was the cultural entrenchment of the several ethnic identities and the devout preservation of their cultural traditions, thus stressing cultural discreteness and autonomy and the concept of multiculturalism and respect for ethnic and cultural difference.

In the framework of a European integration that proceeds from the need of the European peoples for collective self-determination and is the product of political will, the European idea has developed along five axes: geographical position, Christianity, the oneness of European culture, a shared history and the ideal of a single political entity. Insofar as neither cultural unity nor the accommodation of the cultural conflicts between the peoples of Europe forms the cornerstone of European particularity, but this is on the contrary rooted in the continent's cultural diversity, this diversity must be strengthened and extended, respecting cultural individuality and diversity. At the same time, however, respect for cultural individuality must not bar reciprocal communication between cultural identities. The essential precondition for the functioning of the European Union as a political community and a supranational organisation is the constitution of a fundamental and cohesive basis secured by a broad spectrum of political, social and cultural rights.

The second interpretation takes as "given the existence of a common European cultural identity, which is allegedly clearly distinct from each several cultural otherness. In other words, it approaches Europe as a self-existing historical entity, as a 'community of culture and history', which assumed consciousness out of historical necessity in order to play its mandated historical role"<sup>2</sup>. In this light, the processes leading to the economic and political unification of the European states, which fall into four separate phases, are the result of this pre-existing identity.

In the first phase, the nations of, primarily, Western Europe became aware of their geographical, racial and cultural oneness. In the context of this awakening consciousness, the West was held in higher esteem than the inferior "Other".

The second phase spans the period from the end of the Great War to the signing of the Treaty of Rome (1957). The catastrophic consequences of two world wars, in conjunction with the relegation of Europe to the status of a secondary player on the world scene, fed the first organised efforts at co-operation between the European states.

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<sup>2</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 124-129.



The third phase began on 25 March 1957, when the Treaty of Rome established the European Economic Community, and ended on 7 February 1992, with the signing of the Maastricht Treaty. This date marks the launching of the Single European Market and the conversion of the European Economic Community (EEC) into the European Union. This period was distinguished by its vigorous efforts towards the objective of economic unification and a supranational political organisation.

The fourth phase of this process began with the signing of the Treaty of Amsterdam (1 May 1999), which expanded the parameters of the Maastricht Treaty. The chief characteristic of this phase has been the intensity of the efforts made towards achieving the political unification of the European states. This is a process that is based on the one hand on supranational integration and on the other on respect for the cultural diversity of the member states<sup>3</sup>. This is manifest in the attempts of various European leaders to reorganise the European Union, with the establishment of a common foreign policy and a common security policy, as well as with the reinforcement of the democratic character of the EU's institutional instruments.

Is it, however, possible to write a "common history" of the "common European home"? Illuminating here is the reply of a journalist from the Novosty agency of Moscow who, when asked some time late in 1989 what he thought were the boundaries of the "common European home", said that, obviously, Siberia must be included since it was as Russian as Russia itself. As for the Caucasus and Central Asia, he added, given that Europe was considering admitting Turkey to the Union he could not see by what principle the people of the Caucasus or Turkmenistan could be excluded.<sup>4</sup>

This example underlines the artificial character of any sort of demarcation or classification. Today, the re-ordering of the states of Eastern Europe dictates a geo-historical analysis of the European space. This is a necessity that applies to the entire continent, Central, Western and Southern as well as Eastern Europe. The Basque Country, Flanders and Sicily, to cite only a few examples, are today experiencing conflicts that are not being addressed effectively.

With regard to the formation of a common European identity, it is worth remembering the position of former Czech President Vaclav Havel<sup>5</sup>, who noted that the European Union reposes on a broad spectrum of values, rooted in Antiquity and the Christian religion, which together constitute the foundation of the institutions that we today call modern democracy and urban society. This system of values has its own clear foundations, regardless of whether or not this is accepted by people today. It cannot,

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<sup>3</sup> By "supranational integration" we mean: 1. the concession of the sovereign rights of the Member State to the supranational or intergovernmental decision-making centres of the European Union, and 2. the substitution of national characteristics.

<sup>4</sup> For the Russian journalist's reply, see the extracts from *Le Monde Diplomatique* in the Greek edition of *Manière de voir*, vol. 5, Athens, September 1994, p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> Vaclav Havel's views on the "European identity" were expressed in his address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 8 March 1994.

consequently, be said that the European Union lacks a spirit of its own, which inspires all the principles on which it is based. This spirit, however, is not immediately discernible. It is hidden behind the mountain of the economic, monetary and administrative system of the Brussels bureaucracy. And in the end, many people may gather the impression that the European Union is nothing more than endless economic transactions that form the elements of a well constructed and smoothly running economic system.

That is why former President Havel argued that the European Union's most important duty is to furnish an answer to a question that has come to fore in recent years, that of the concept and definition of the "European identity". And despite the undisputed importance of the Maastricht Treaty, he does not think that the European Union will acquire enthusiastic supporters, or patriots who will consider this complex organism their birthplace, their homeland, or part of their fatherland. And if this conjunction of states aspires to preserve itself within the diversity of its peoples, it needs to be based on stronger bonds, on something more than mere rules and regulations. Havel would welcome an endeavour to institute a charter that would define precisely the ideas and the values upon which the European edifice is built. If all the citizens of Europe realised that the European Union is not a bureaucratic monster out to restrict their autonomy, but simply a new type of human community that in reality aims at expanding their freedom, only then, in Havel's view, will the European Union not have to worry about its future.

Thus, one of the European Union's chief goals and policies is to identify and formulate the "common ideals" of the citizens of Europe, all those ideas and values that constitute the "cultural community" of the peoples of its member states. One of the thorniest questions tormenting the European Union is that of the definition of the "European identity", and specifically of the "European nationality"; another is the problem of establishing the boundaries within which it will hold sway. In recent years the concept of European nationality has been approached via that of "cultural nationality", it having been realised that it will never be possible to build a European political community that is not based on the cultural diversity of its member states and, insofar as this is possible, on the creation of a cultural unity.

Cultural nationality is a broad concept, open to various interpretations within Europe. Soledad García proposes the following definition: it is, she says, "a series of essential rights, which ought to make possible the development of more flexible and pluralistic ways of expression and lines of communication"<sup>6</sup>. And she adds that: "if we accept diversity and multicentrism as hallmarks of European culture, the question that arises is how we can make pluralism of communication feasible and what official and

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<sup>6</sup> See Soledad García, "Εἰδῶλα τῆς Εὐρώπης" [Images of Europe], **στο Ἑλληνικὴ Πολιτισμικὴ Ταυτότητα καὶ Ἑυρωπαϊκὴ Ἐνοποίηση** [Greek Cultural Identity and European Unification], Greek Centre for European Studies, Athens 1993, p. 131.

unofficial networks are most likely to promote citizen participation in the European political and social community”.<sup>7</sup>

In order to be “Europeans” we must be aware of what we have in common, the common origin we share, our identity as Europeans: we must, in other words, cultivate a sense of self-knowledge. This is a precondition for preserving what we hold to from past and present, for shedding what we condemn or merely disapprove, in order to shape, all together, our European identity and build, as citizens of Europe, a better future.

As T. S. Eliot pointed out, it is essential that we be well aware of what culture means, that we fully understand the difference between the material and the spiritual organisation of Europe. If the latter should die, then what would remain to be organised would not be Europe, but merely a mass of human beings speaking different languages, with nothing in common. Eliot further notes that it would be impossible for a “European culture” to exist if the different countries had become isolated from one another or had all become identical. “We need diversity in unity; and not in the unity of organisation but in the unity of nature”.<sup>8</sup> When we speak of “European culture”, we mean the common elements that can be found in the traditions of the different nations. And as is natural, the cultural traditions of some states are more closely linked than others. Eliot refuses to draw a dividing line between East and West, between Europe and Asia, because he does not see the culture of Europe as an aggregate of unrelated traditions and values that happen to occur in the same region.<sup>9</sup>

Today, almost 50 years after the signing of the Treaty of Rome, we cannot speak of a European homeland in the sense of a national homeland and of the emotions and self-denial that this arouses in the citizens of each state. Europeans look at Europe in a different way in relation to their own country. They do not see in it the national symbols that refer to a specific underlying cultural foundation, nor does it awaken in them the intense and incontestable sentiments of patriotism and defence of national interests. And this is precisely the weak point of the European Union, its inability to form a validity of such scope.

The cogent efforts being made by Brussels to create a cultural nationality go hand in hand with the legitimate desire to strengthen regional consciousness and regional institutions in the ultimate aim of strengthening European unity and stability. The fundamental argument in this case is that “faced with the centrifugal ethnic forces at work today in Eastern Europe under the various nationalist banners, the regional dimension can offer a new means of integration, alongside the national and

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<sup>7</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>8</sup> When Eliot speaks of “culture”, he means the way of life of a specific people that lives in a specific place. This culture may be observed in its art, in its social system, in its manners and customs, in its religion. See T. S. Eliot, **Notes toward the Definition of Culture**, Plethron Publications, Athens 1980, p. 151.

<sup>9</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 153.

supranational organisations. Regional consciousness should not be treated as a relapse into a pathological expression of ethnic awareness, but on the contrary as a movement towards a more dynamic form of economic and cultural integration”.<sup>10</sup>

Europe is experiencing a remarkable upsurge in both new and traditional cultural currents, which are working with agencies in the fields of education, the arts and the media, their aim being to preserve the cultural heritage and the cultural characteristics of the states and to conserve and disseminate them within the borders of an enlarged Europe. European regional policies are being shaped to strengthen local/national cultural networks, because the new Europe must be built within the framework of the cultural diversity of its member states. Only in this way will each partner feel that it is playing an active role in the construction of a “European community of nations”, where through its cultural diversity it will help shape a European identity.

The real problem facing the European Union today is this: how, after integration/unification, and to what degree, will its member states, and particularly the smaller and weaker ones, retain their independence and their sovereignty, and how and to what degree will the states preserve their national identities, their cultural wealth and their diversity. The greatest difficulty here lies in the demarcation of the boundaries between nation-states and the European Union, the accommodation of both the national and the European interest. This has been the Achilles heel of all the plans, initiatives and movements for European unification. It is characteristic that all the discussions on the position of the “nation-state” within the framework of a broader multinational entity have taken place in a climate of vigorous confrontation.<sup>11</sup>

The opponents of European unification argue that the process of integration eats away at the link that exists between the individual and his national identity, because unification is sought not as a mere international union, the redoubling of individual national sovereignties, but as a supranational union, that is, as integration that undermines these national sovereignties. In the framework of the European Union, emerging alongside the citizen of each nation-state is a new quality, that of “European citizen”. And it is in this concept that some see the denial of the national sovereignty that constitutes a component of the nation-state. On the other hand, no solid “European cultural identity” can yet be discerned upon which one could establish the quality of “European citizen”. The result is the development of a dialectic with a series of questions relating to the so-called multicultural nature of the European Union.

Widely held by “Eurosceptics” is the view that those who talk of an integrated, unified Europe that simultaneously safeguards and respects the several national identities seem to have forgotten that these are chiefly political identities that were

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<sup>10</sup> Soledad García, “Εἰδῶλα της Ευρώπης” [Images of Europe], στο Ελληνική Πολιτισμική Ταυτότητα και Ευρωπαϊκή Ενοποίηση [Greek Cultural Identity and European Unification], Greek Centre for European Studies, Athens 1993, p. 132.

<sup>11</sup> For the harmonisation of nation-state and European identity, see William Wallace, “Rescue or Retreat? The Nation-state in Western Europe, 1945-93”, *The Question of Europe*, p. 21-50.

shaped historically in the shadow of the nation-states and, consequently, that any process that undermines the latter would also affect the former. They take as given, in other words, the infringement (or levelling) of national identities.

They are thus led to other questions having to do with the fluid and still indeterminate concept of the “European citizen”, in which this quality is based, not on participation in the several nation-state identities and no longer on an ethnic identity, but on the European identity currently under construction. This “European identity” is taking shape through, *inter alia*, a clash with national identity, since (they argue) the completion of the first presupposes the enfeeblement of the second. And, moreover, as it grows it paralyses the energetic, cohesive, internally structured dimension of national identity as supreme identity. For national identity, being directly linked with the familiar nation-state, can preserve a coherent meaning, whereas the somewhat overwhelming size of the European Union hampers the formation of a cohesive European identity.

There are, however, many who believe that this model of the intangible European citizen, who is still absent from the European scene, has already begun to decompose the connective tissue that has historically linked the quality of citizen with national identity. This deconstruction of the connective tissue of national identities and the historically shaped quality of citizen can lead to the loss of the sovereign role of national identity against other identities (e.g. religious, social, professional).

For all those who think that European integration automatically means the loss of national identities, the ambiguous concept of the “European citizen” acts as a catalyst<sup>12</sup>, accelerating the diffusion of identities, the dissociation from national identity and the development of complex relations with the European Union. The quality of “European citizen” can provoke a geographical expansion that leads to a dissolution of identities. What is at once interesting and at the same time precarious about the concept of the “European citizen” is that it will no longer refer to a concentrated and homogeneous sphere of political power, but will transcend the boundaries of the nation-state and operate within a broader, and perhaps undefined, political sphere. Thus, the quality of European citizen may be seen as a step towards a new perception of politics that is at once within and beyond the concept of politics defined by the nation-state.

Of course, the leaders of the European Union have made considerable efforts to reverse the negative attitude of those who are opposed to the formation of a federation of states. For this reason the European Commission has contributed to the construction of a European society founded on culture and reposing on the cultural diversity of the different countries through the creation of European structures, programmes, exchanges

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<sup>12</sup> The term ‘catalyst’ is used by Petros Theodoridis in “Όψεις της ευρωπαϊκής ταυτότητας- Προβλήματα και προοπτικές στη διαμόρφωση των πολιτικών ταυτοτήτων” [Aspects of the European identity. Problems and prospects in the formation of political identities] in the journal *Ελληνική Επιθεώρηση Πολιτικής Επιστήμης* [Greek Political Science Review], vol. 10, November 1997, p. 182.

of students, teachers and researchers, promoting the free movement of people and programmes. It also invokes the political and economic benefits that derive from the creation of a federation of European states.

The catalyst here has been the role of the champions of European integration, who consider as exaggerated and historically unfounded the positions of those who speak of the emergence of a new European nationalism, even if it is one that does not exclude non-European immigrants. This is why they counter-propose models of a “supra-national” or “post-national”<sup>13</sup> European identity. The first reactions to the creation of the new European nationalism arose within the ranks of the left-wing intelligentsia and were linked in some cases to the exclusion of the states of Eastern Europe and the peoples of the former socialist camp from the process of European unification and in others to respect for the traditions bestowed upon Europe by European thinking and the Enlightenment.<sup>14</sup>

What, then, is the role of a “European identity” and images of a common past? Are they important from a political point of view, and what do they in essence consist of? Is it the feeling that we are one? Or that we are not complete strangers? Or should this not be the question at all? Is the determinant dynamic that through which “Europe” is defined as opposed to “not Europe”? Or rather, that through which the construction of Europe is directed towards a set of inherent values and principles? Where does this lead us in the end as concerns Europe-related “perceptions” and “programmes”? What ideas about Europe are developed, and what becomes of the idea of the “European idea” and the idea of a history of the European idea?

There are in Western Europe arguments in support of, and others challenging, the idea of the construction of a European Political Community, with common values and a common identity, a Europe capable of creating a sense of community among its citizens. First of all, this sought-after sense of community has perhaps come to be identified most powerfully with the European Community, so that the states that are not members of it tend to feel to some extent that they are not part of Europe. Secondly, these arguments address questions like whether there is any common ground with regard to identity and cultural borders? This raises the question of “who” we are and “who” we want to be. Are we acquiring more homogeneity with regard to our social and cultural values? Or is our goal the “large family that gathers together after its

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<sup>13</sup> The term ‘post-national’ European identity is used by I. K. Hassiotis in *Αποζητώντας την ενότητα στην πολυμορφία: Οι απαρχές της ευρωπαϊκής ενότητας από το τέλος του Μεσαίωνα ως τη Γαλλική Επανάσταση* [Seeking unity in diversity: The beginnings of European unity from the end of the Middle Ages to the French revolution], Paratiritis, Thessaloniki 1999. See also *The Idea of Europe: Problems of National and Transnational Identity*, ed. Br. Nelson – D. Roberts – W. Veit, New York, 1992.

<sup>14</sup> For the historic roots of European unity, see Alberto Dou, *Europa, Raíces y Horizontes*, Madrid 1994, p. 19 ff., J.L. Abellán, *El reto europeo: Identidades culturales en el cambio del siglo*, Madrid 1994.

differences”, as Voltaire put it?<sup>15</sup> How important are nationality, democratic institutions and a body politic for the creation of a sense of identity aimed at developing loyalty to a political community? What difference does someone who was born elsewhere feel at living in Europe today? Can we imagine that the concept of a cultural good will one day have a European sense? Or is it more realistic to work for a common political culture, recognising national and local traditions in art and literature, and in historiography and customs?

The object of the notional European edifice that began to be constructed in the post-war period was to create a European identity that would assimilate the prejudices of attachment to national identities in the name of which the two world wars were supposed to have taken place. Today, the economic and monetary union of the member states marks the achievement of a process begun in 1951, but at the same time reveals the weaknesses of the “notional European edifice”, both on the level of its initial conception and on that of its realisation.

Many people think that the resistance that has emerged within the various member states is a sign that there is little likelihood of the awakening of a shared European memory like those underlying the nationalisms of the nineteenth century and able to support the construction of the European Union as a new collectivity that will liberate its citizens from the shackles of their national social entities and their borders.<sup>16</sup> Naturally, nor can the removal of geopolitical discontinuity turn the European Union into a European collectivity. It can, however, create new external frontiers, enclosing the European identity within a continuously expanding, through the accession of new members, but always geographical, referent. Such a European identity would tend to legitimise the unequal relations within the interior of the European Union and produce within its exterior ambit new rivalries and hierarchies.

Europe is a name that refers to an old, shared descent, to a geographical and historical reality that draws its name from Greek antiquity, the frame of a geographical territory that tends to coincide, through successive accessions, with that of the European continent, and a European ideal that seeks the possibility of amalgamating national and cultural histories in one “common place”. This place does not have the metaphorical breadth of the “West”, of “Western thinking” or the “Western world”, but is delimited within an idea of lesser scope: that of geographical “Europe”. Thus, the map of the European Union is restoring the continuity of an older descent, entrenching within its geographical borders a European collectivity and identity and the legitimate heirs of a spiritual and cultural heritage.

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<sup>15</sup> Soledad García, “Είδωλα της Ευρώπης” [Images of Europe], στο **Ελληνική Πολιτισμική Ταυτότητα και Ευρωπαϊκή Ενοποίηση** [Greek Cultural Identity and European Unification], Greek Centre for European Studies, Athens 1993, p. 104.

<sup>16</sup> For the attitude, for example, of the Greeks to the creation of a common European identity see Roy Panagiotopoulou (1997) “Greeks in Europe: Antinomies in National Identities”, in the **Journal of Modern Greek Studies**, vol. 15, p. 349-370.

The true essence of Europe would therefore be “supranationality” (of Christianity, of the Roman legacy, of the ideas of the Enlightenment, of the welfare state) and, at the same time, the form of structure, the dynamic of the rivalry, the exchanges and the mutual challenge of the different cultures. Apart from the “common funds”, what is shaping Europe is the form and mutual relations that make it a kind of perpetual motion, an edifice that is continuously under construction. Hence the historical lesson that “Europe is generally considered much less as resistance to related cultures and much more as an internal optic, a relation between its different parts, a competition.”<sup>17</sup> A competition, certainly, but one that obeys forms of organisation of an interior pluralism that we find again in the notion of “harmony” among nations.

Today, the 25 – or 27, with the entry of Bulgaria and Romania into the European family – are heading towards the construction of a Europe that is an economic powerhouse (following the monetary unification of most of its members) but is very likely to end up in what Claude Cheysson has called the “impotence of over-enlargement”. In other words, there is a risk that, with the enlargement that became a reality on 1 May 2004, the leaders of Europe may see that the European Union they envisioned is nothing but a simple free trade zone. A Union that is “broad, ever broader, incapable of any ambition, stripped of all democratic control”.<sup>18</sup> And this, the former Foreign Minister concludes, “is not the Europe we need”.

From the legal and political aspect, Europe has thus far been nothing more than a set of nation-states working in co-operation. The federal façade created by the economic unification of most of its member states still rests solidly on the several national governments. With the accession of a further 10 countries, political unification has become even more difficult. In a speech to the German parliament in June 2000, French President Jacques Chirac admitted that the “question of founding a European State does not arise and consequently political unification is not an objective in the near future”.<sup>19</sup> German President Johannes Rau told *Die Welt* (September 2000) that, while he was strongly in favour of a “new European federal order”, it was nonetheless “absolutely essential that national identities, national traditions, as well as historical and national particularities be preserved”.<sup>20</sup> Tony Blair, in Warsaw, on 6 October 2000, rejected the idea of political unification as the basis for the European State. Meanwhile, the progress of the European Constitution had been halted by the resounding *Noes* opposed to it by the people of France and the Netherlands. It is worth noting that the presidents of France and Germany use the term “Constitution” to mean not the creation of a set of European institutions but simply a “Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Citizen”.

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<sup>17</sup> See Jean-Marc Ferry and Paul Thibaud, *Discussion sur l'Europe*, Calmann - Lévy, Paris 1992, particularly the chapter ‘La vraie nature de l'Europe’.

<sup>18</sup> See Claude Cheysson, «Η ανεπιτυχία μες στην υπερδιόγκωση», *Le Monde*, 27 April 1994.

<sup>19</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

<sup>20</sup> *Op. cit.*



Another issue that kindles serious dissension among the European partners is the possibility of the admittance of Turkey to “the fragile European Union”, as former French President Valéry Giscard d’Estaing called it.<sup>21</sup> The arguments in favour of Turkish accession focus on the insult to the Muslim world of refusing to accept the country as a member of Christian Europe, in conjunction with the danger of fomenting a clash of civilisations and a conflict between East and West. The arguments on the other side stress the weakness of Turkey’s claim to membership of the European family and centre on the tiny fraction of the country’s territory that belongs geographically to Europe, the huge size of its population, its low levels of economic and social development, the existence of a large Turkish-speaking community living outside the country and the possibility of Europe sharing a border with Syria, Iraq and Iran.

It could be counter-argued that the EU’s worries about admitting Turkey are incompatible with the process of enlargement and the accession of 10 new member states in May 2004 and of Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007. In reality, however, the cases are quite different, and have nothing to do with negative fears, prejudices and passions. As President d’Estaing shrewdly noted, “future talks with Turkey should not focus on accession, but on expanding the nature of the links that the European Union should be forging with its large neighbours”.<sup>22</sup> This is the only sure way not to endanger the “fragile edifice” of the European Union, which is going through a period of adjustment to the new institutional and economic circumstances following its recent enlargement.

Of interest in this respect is the view of Olli Rehn, EU Commissioner for Enlargement, who, speaking of the enlargement process in an address organised by the Hellenic Foundation for European & Foreign Policy, noted that “our (the Commission’s) perception of integration focuses on the functional capacity of the union and not on geographical criteria”,<sup>23</sup> and stressed the importance of applying the “principle of conditionality”. The Commissioner also referred to the examples of Bulgaria and Romania, which confirm this policy. He described the enlargement of the European Union as one of the most important tools for European security, and stressed that EU intervention in the Balkans was the only way to secure stability and development in the countries of that region. With regard to Turkey, the EU has a unique opportunity to influence the development of that country, and its policy ought to be fair and unwavering: as he said, “we must give Turkey the chance to prove that it meets the criteria for accession” but remain unwavering in our stringent application of those criteria.

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<sup>21</sup> See Giscard d’Estaing, “Η ένταξη της Τουρκίας, βάρος στην εύθραυστη Ε.Ε.” [Turkish accession, a burden on the fragile European Union], *Eleftherotypia* newspaper, 25/11/2004.

<sup>22</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> Dr Olli Rehn gave a talk on “Europe’s next transformation: Enlargement and the future of the EU” at an event organised by ELIAMEP on 20/10/2006, in the Kranidiotis Amphitheatre in Greece’s Foreign Ministry building. For the full text of the lecture see the ELIAMEP website at <<http://www.eliamep.gr>>

Greece's position on the issue of future enlargements was formulated by Premier Konstantinos Karamanlis in a foreign policy debate in Parliament on 2.11.2006:

"It is a fact that the recent major enlargement has sparked serious questioning. One fundamental problem is that of how far the Union can expand without this having a negative impact on its cohesion and effectiveness". Moreover, the European Union was not, and never will be, a "closed set" of countries. The EU was and is first and foremost a community of states and peoples, based on common principles and values; a community whose basic goals are stability, peace, security and the prosperity of its peoples. Greece's answer is, therefore, clear: we want a European Union that is both large and strong. On condition, of course, that the countries that join it are truly ready to do so and will apply the *acquis communautaire*.

At the same time, Greece has a strong interest in Southeast Europe. More concretely, Greece's strategy is rooted in promoting a European neighbourhood of peace, development and prosperity, a neighbourhood in which borders will be inviolate, and respect for minority and human rights, religious and political freedoms, and Democracy will prevail. With these goals in view, Greece encourages the European prospects of her neighbours, and supports their efforts to adapt to European models. In addition, Greece welcomes the entry of Bulgaria and Romania into the European family at the beginning of the year. This is of particular interest to our country, since it effects our geographical linkage with the European Union.

With regard to the process of Turkish accession, Greece has supported and continues to support her neighbour's assimilation to Europe, in the conviction that this path holds out new prospects for peace and co-operation. A Turkey that has gradually adapted to the *acquis communautaire*, to the principles and values of the European Union, can better serve her own people and her neighbours.

Greece, therefore, desires the continuation of the processes of her neighbour's adaptation to the European *acquis* and prerequisites, and firmly maintains that full harmonisation means full accession. However, both the pace and the final outcome of Turkey's European progress now depend on Ankara.<sup>24</sup>

Clearly, the European Union was founded on the diversity of its member states, but with all the unifying elements that work towards the establishment of a common European identity as connecting links. Europe, therefore, does not foster the clash of civilisations, but is in favour of multiculturalism. It needs, however, to create a suitable institutional, political, economic and cultural framework if it is to avoid the travesty of the United Nations. It must also efface the scepticism of its citizens with regard to further enlargement, for this is a process that is proving more destabilising than unifying. Consequently, there can be no enlargement of the European Union towards the East if the infrastructures of economic prosperity and political stability are not first

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<sup>24</sup> See the Hellenic Ministry of Foreign Affairs, <[www.mfa.gr](http://www.mfa.gr)>

secured. As Giscard d'Estaing has asked, "how far will this advance go, of a Europe that has not yet organised itself, that is minimally effective in practice and that is witnessing a decline in the political participation of its population?"<sup>25</sup>

In the perspective of the vast cultural spaces of Asia and the Americas, Europe is a sphere of small cultural compartments, local, regional, provincial, national. Is it, however, only this variety, this multiversity, that is deemed European? What we need is to seek the principle of European organisation in the present, not in the past. Europe is a complex (which etymologically means a weaving together) whose fundamental characteristic is to bring the greatest diversities together without confusing them, and to bind contrasts together in a solid whole. What is required is a careful examination of the Gordian knot that is Europe, an artefact in the creation of which so many political, economic, social, cultural and religious components have played their part, in a unique blend of conflict and solidarity. For this, as Edgar Morin has pointed out, we can "draw on the historical principle that links the European identity to change and transformation. It is precisely the vital need to preserve its identity that now demands a new transformation of Europe."<sup>26</sup>

As Amin Maalouf has very astutely pointed out,<sup>27</sup> most states have both local and language problems stemming from the presence of immigrants. Meanwhile, problems are being generated within, which have not yet become acute but will be exacerbated by the continued enlargement of the European Union, since it will be necessary to organise the "common life" of twenty or thirty countries, each with its own history, its own language, and its own reservations.

Maalouf wonders what the countries forming the European Union will be like in fifty years' time. Will they constitute "a federation or confederation, unchangeably united, or are they more likely to have disintegrated? Will their Union have expanded towards Eastern Europe, towards the Mediterranean? And what will be the limits to that expansion? Will it embrace the Balkans? The Maghreb? Turkey? The Middle East? The Caucasus?"<sup>28</sup> Many things in tomorrow's world will depend upon the answers to these questions, among them the relations between the different civilisations, the different religions, the Hebrew, the Christian and the Muslim worlds. Whatever the future of the European edifice, whatever the form of the European Union, whatever the nations constituting it, there is one question that Maalouf is asking today that he thinks will continue to be asked for many generations to come; and that is, how to handle the multiplicity of languages, now numbering in their dozens.<sup>29</sup>

In many other sectors we unify, we order, we dictate norms one after the other. In this one area we hesitate. In all likelihood it will not be long before we have, in addition

<sup>25</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> See Edgar Morin, *Penser l'Europe*, Gallimard, Paris 1987, p. 85.

<sup>27</sup> See Amin Maalouf, *Les Identités meurtrières*, Okeanida, Athens 1998, p. 205.

<sup>28</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 183.

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 184.

to a single currency, a unified system of law, a single army, a single police force, a single government. "Dare we, however, attempt to jettison the most minuscule language, and straightway there will break out the most impassioned and uncontrollable reactions. In order to avoid the drama, we prefer to translate..."<sup>30</sup> The only possibility is to entrench linguistic diversity and implant it into our mores. "Just think about it; it's quite simple: it is obvious that today everyone has to speak three languages. The first is the language of his personal identity; the third is English. Between these two we ought necessarily to be promoting the use of a second language, which each individual would choose freely for himself, and which would often, but not always, be a European language.

Preserving the linguistic identity of each nation is a necessity if it is not to be alienated or lost, so that we do not compel its speakers to reject it in order to gain access to everything that today's culture offers. At the same time, encouraging linguistic diversity is the only option for anyone who wants to belong to a community that is more than a nation-state.

Europe as a whole, in the degree that it is tending towards its unification, needs to conceive its identity as a set of linguistic, religious and other constituents. If it does not accept each element of its history and fails to make clear to its future citizens that they can be fully European without ceasing to be Germans or Frenchmen or Italians or Greeks, then quite simply it will not be able to exist as an entity. Constructing Europe means building up a new perception of identity: first and foremost of the identity of Europe, secondly of the identity of the countries that compose it, and thirdly of the rest of the world. Maalouf argues that since "we are adherents of an entity like the United Europe, we cannot but feel some degree of kinship with all the elements that compose it. Of course we retain special links with our own culture, and some sense of responsibility for it; but slowly we weave relations with the other constituents of our new country". He uses the following example to illustrate his view: "when a Piedmontese feels himself to be Italian, he will necessarily take an interest in the history of Venice and Naples, even though he may continue to have a particular affection for Turin and its past. In the same way, the more an Italian feels himself to be a European, the less indifferent he will be to what goes on in Amsterdam. This may require two or three generations to come to pass, and in some cases it may take even longer".<sup>31</sup>

We may therefore say, with regard to the components of the "new European identity", that Europe constitutes a discrete historical category, being a composite historical reality whose moral, religious, cultural and political characteristics are those bestowed upon it by the histories of its peoples thus far. These characteristics transcend older boundaries, not only geographical and religious but also national (ethnic, political and cultural), at least those that were shaped and established on the basis of historical developments to date. Just as the existence of certain values common to the whole (or

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<sup>30</sup> *Op. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 210-213.

almost the whole) continent can create in a person the sense that he belongs to one cultural whole, so too the differences in language and culture within it prohibit any distortive classification. Only the patient building up of a common base, a truly continental space, will allow us in the future to transcend, without denying them, the identities expressed today by Europe's nations, states or otherwise and, consequently, to translate into reality the ancient utopia of the unity of Europe. If, therefore, we wish to build a single Europe, we must at the same time preserve the individuality of its nations. This means that the preferable option is that oriented towards a federal Europe, based on a broader social and cultural fabric. This is a lesson that we may draw from History, in order to avoid repeating past mistakes.