THE LIMITS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION: THE QUESTION OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY

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Özet

Makalede Avrupa Birliği entegrasyon sürecinde karşılaşılan temel sorunlardan biri olan Avrupa Kimliği tartışılmaktadır. Böyle bir kimliğin varolup olmadığı, yoksa oluşturulmasının gerekli olup olmadığı tartışılmakta ve bu süreçte hangi araçların kullanıldığı incelenmektedir. Ayrıca Avrupa kimliği inşa süreciyle ulusal kimliklerin inşa süreci arasındaki benzerlikler ve farklılıklara değinilerek ; Avrupa kimliği, ulusal kimlik ve bölgesel kimliklerin AB içindeki pozisyonu incelenmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Avrupa Birliği, Avrupa Kimliği, Ulusal Kimlik, Bölgesel Kimlik, Avrupa Vatandaşlığı, Ulus-Devlet

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After bad memories of the 2nd World War, firstly common economic communities were tried to be established within Europe like the European Coal and Steel Community(ECSC) or EURATOM. With the Maastricht Treaty, which came into force in 1993, the European Community(EC) was rearranged which was based on 3 pillars and started to be referred to as the European Union(EU). With its evolution from an economic union towards a political union , the question of European identity has been increasingly contested. The enlargement process towards Central and Eastern Europe and especially the candidacy of Turkey for full membership which was accepted at the Helsinki Summit in 1999, made defining the European identity much more complicated.

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The process of European unification was initiated by political elites of the six founding member states. The founding fathers of the EU, had the intention of establishing an 'ever closer union of peoples', which was stated in the preamble of the Treaty of Rome.[1]

The West European integration process in the 1970's and 1980's show that, there are no easily definable limits of integration. Since the Treaty of Rome, the number of issues, with which the Community is concerned has grown enormously.[2] With the Maastricht Treaty, the EU contains main functions of the nation-state which includes; citizenship, taxation, law, policing and border control, education and foreign policy.

On the other hand, the identity question in Europe is closely related with the democratic and legitimacy deficit , European citizenship, European Constitution, increasing importance of regional identities, their accelerating relations with Brussels and the position of nation-states within the EU. According to Wallace, the limits of integration are set by sovereignty, identity and accountability and they will be overcome by qualitative and structural change.[3]

In France, the Front National, the Parti Communiste and the anti-Maastricht elements of the Socialist and the Gaullist parties, which were supporters of the "No" campaign, saw the Maastricht Treaty as the destruction of France as a nation-state.[4] In the referendum of the Maastricht Treaty, Danish people rejected it primarily with the aim of protecting their national identity. A similar response was seen during the referenda on Euro and Amsterdam Treaty. Similar responses can also be seen in the UK, Ireland and Sweden.[5] Especially the Maastricht Treaty ratification crisis showed that, European integration process reached its limits and the emergence of a 'stronger sense of community' is necessary.[6]

So the construction of a political community and European identity in the EU has been a highly contested issue especially after the Maastricht Treaty. It is sometimes questioned, whether such an identity is necessary.

After the Maastricht Treaty, the editors of *Eurobarometer* 38 stated the views of the European publics towards the EU. According to this survey, public opinion was generally against a Europe which threatens national identity ,

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[1] Paul Taylor, **The EU in the 1990's,** Oxford, Oxford Unv. Press, 1996,p.140
[2] William Wallace, **Regional Integration: The West European Experience,** Washington, The Brookings Institution, 1994, pp.58-59.
[3] **Ibid.,** p.86.
[4] Brigid Laffan , "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", **Journal of Common Market Studies,** Vol. 34, No. 1, March 1996, p.89.
[5] John Erik Fossum, "Identity Politics in the European Union", **European Integration,** Vol. 23, No. 4, July 2001, p. 388.
[6] B. Laffan, "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", p.100.

cultural diversity and which centralises everything in Brussels; instead of these, they are in favour of a United Europe, in which national, regional identities and cultural diversity are respected and protected, their national governments having an important role in common decision-making process and sovereignty should be transferred only in policy areas where national governments can not solve problems effectively by themselves.[7] This analysis shows that , people in Europe mostly prefer maintaining their national identity and sovereignty, they support the EU's involvement , when their national governments lack the necessary capacity to overcome that problem by themselves.

A common *European consciousness* is seen necessary for the successful transformation of the EC into a supranational political union. In the early 1990's, the Single Market came into effect, political integration process and promotion of European identity gained momentum. The signals of that could be seen especially with the introduction of *European citizenship* with the Maastricht Treaty. Another important step towards creating European consciousness, was the introduction of common currency(EURO).[8] To be a European citizen, firstly you have to be a member of one of the EU member states. European citizenship is complementary to national citizenship, it does not replace it. So European citizenship depends on national citizenship. This shows that , European identity on the basis of citizenship, also depends on national identities.

On the other hand, there is a growing concern on identity politics in Europe, with the effects of the politicization of immigration, the fragmentation of the post-war order, regionalism and the revival of the extreme right parties.[9] Especially because of the immigrations, most Western European societies have to integrate a lot of people from different cultures into their societies.

Today the differentiation between 'us' and 'them' is seen between natives and immigrants from other EU countries but higher differentiation is made towards immigrants from outside Europe and especially from non-white countries. They are increasingly ethnicized and made 'more foreign'. If exclusion of especially non-European immigrants can not be overcome, European society will have to face important difficulties in developing a post-national entity. If this can not be achieved, the promotion of ethno-racial European identity will probably in the long term strengthen local nationalistic and xenophobic movements.[10] So instead of establishing a common sense of

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[7] P. Taylor, **The EU in the 1990's**, p.158.
[8] Dirk Jacobs & Robert Maier, "European Identity: Construct, Fact and Fiction" in M. Gastelaars & A. De Rujiter (eds.), **A United Europe: The Quest for a Multifaceted Identity,** Maastricht: Shaker Pub., pp.18-19.
[9] B. Laffan, "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", p.100.
[10] D. Jacobs & R. Maier, "European Identity: Construct, Fact and Fiction" ,pp. 20-23.

'Europeanness' for further political integration, this will cause increasing diversities and tensions within Europe.

On the other hand, during the 1980's there was a revival in nationalist populist parties such as in Austria (Freedom Party) and France (Front National) . This tendency shows that part of Western European society still has an exclusive view of national identity. They use the issue of 'immigration' to threaten people that national identities may be challenged by these immigrants or they may cause increase in unemployment in their nation-states. According to workers and poorer people in Europe, there is little benefit in the European integration process. They generally think that, they are negatively affected by the competitive pressures of the single market and the Maastricht convergence criteria.[11]

So all these realities show that, emphasis only on the material benefits of integration will not guarantee continued commitment to the integration process. Because political communities are based not only on material elements, but also on sentiment, solidarity and political cohesion. If political community is to be created within the EU , these kinds of emotional elements have to be used, as we see in the nation-state model. It is based on the existence of a *'demos'* or one people. However Europe can not create a *demos* in the traditional sense. On the other hand, the need to create a "people's Europe" and to strengthen the public's identification with the European project has been debated, since the end of the 1960's.[12]

The EU made conscious efforts to encourage the emergence of a sense of common identity among its peoples. Even in the mid-1960's, there was a belief that it would be possible to establish a sense of European identity which culminates with the emergence of a single nation. To promote the convergence of national institutions, interests and the development of supranational NGO's, the Commission has preferred discussions with the European-level federations till the late 1960's.The *'Adonnino Committee'* was set up in 1985 to deal with issues relating to *'People's Europe'*. The aim of this committee was to search ways of making the symbols of Europe more varied and attractive, with the intention of increasing public attachment to the EC.[13]

The Adonnino Committe put forward proposals about youth exchange, culture, health, rights of citizens, free movement of people, town twinning and symbols of EU identity. This is a process of manufacturing a European identity from the 'top down'. During this process Commission reports referred to Europe's cultural heritage and showed that Europe existed for people and try to convince them about the benefits of constructing Europe. On the other hand, Laffan made a reference to Smith's definition of nation-states as *'imagined*

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[11] B. Laffan , "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", pp.88-89.
[12] **Ibid.,** pp.95-96.
[13] P. Taylor, **The EU in the 1990's,** pp.143-144.

communities' and emphasizes that official policy of the EU is also to construct Europe as an 'imagined community'. Three types of policies are used to show that "Europe exists for the people"; the move from consumer to citizen, the politics of identity and symbols, the creation of non-economic cross-national networks. [14]

Nation-building can be established from above by elites, or from below by social movements. On the other hand, during the identity building process in Europe, the uniqueness of the European experience is emphasized, in terms of history, culture and language to create a European identity by distinguishing between Europeans and the 'others'.[15] The consolidation of the EU and the generation of a *'European identity'* also can be seen as an elite project.[16]

European identity has been tried to be constructed in similar ways that had been used to construct national identities. This process includes using of historical myths and reference to a common Christian heritage , a common political and legal history, going back to the Roman period and the tradition of humanism, showing Europe as a peaceful and democratic project, European elections, using of a common European symbolism like flag, anthem, format of passport etc. For example the European flag, can be seen in public buildings and industrial enterprises. The promotion of European sports events, the encouragement for establishing European scientific networks have been all part of this process. In addition to these, cooperation programs have been developed among different member states in the fields of education, like *Erasmus, Socrates* and also in the field of research etc. So these have increased the relationships and common projects among universities of different member states. However there has not been a widespread use of the right of free movement, having education in a different country and looking for jobs in other member states. But these options have been becoming beneficial alternatives for young citizens of Europe especially for those who have been highly educated. So from this aspect, European identity has been tried to be constructed through the creation of European-wide educational, academic and political fields. On the other hand, public opinions are still mostly formed by the national media. The *Eurobarometer* should not only be seen as a tool of monitoring *'European public opinion'*, but at the same time it reflects the effort for its realization.[17] The Commission's support to *Eurobarometer* reflects this reality.

The Commission also encourages cross-national networks which supports the emergence of a 'European civil society'. Also since the early 1980's, with

[14] B. Laffan, "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", p. 96.
[15] J. E. Fossum, "Identity Politics in the European Union", p. 374.
[16] Montserrat Guibernau, "Introduction: Unity and Diversity in Europe" in M. Guibernau (ed.) , **Governing European Diversity,** London: Sage Pub., 2001, p.27.
[17] D. Jacobs& R. Maier, "European Identity: Construct, Fact and Fiction" , pp.19-20.

the research and development programs, transnational research networks have been established. The regional policies of the EU have promoted the growth of cross-border and transnational linkages between different regions which faced with similar problems. In addition to these, voluntary organizations have increasingly preferred to organize at the EU level.[18] So there has been a highly increasing relationship among different member states at different levels, with the establishment of transnational networks.

On the other hand, the absence of a *'lingua franca'* and also common curriculum which are used in all over Europe, make the emergence of common way of thinking and common attitudes more difficult.[19] With the education policies and exchange programs convergence has tried to be established to a certain extent.

The values like respecting human rights, minority rights, rule of law are mostly seen as common values of Europe and they may be emphasized for a common European identity. But these values are mostly globalised , so they may not be so effective for establishing the basis of the European identity. Also, there is not a general consensus on what these common values are.

On the other hand, with the acceleration of the deepening process of the EU and the increase in regionalism simultaneously, regions try to make direct contacts with the EU, by-passing their central governments, in order to provide more effective access to European decision-making process and to make indirect pressure on their central governments to extend their autonomy. Regions try to influence the EU policies through various means like establishing inter-regional lobbies, inter-regional organizations or offices in Brussels. Some regionalist movements see European integration as providing a roof, within which they can assert their regional identities. Even some of them want to become separate from their nation-state and become a direct member of the EU. They support the idea of *"Europe of the Regions"*. In this structure the nation-states may dissolve in time. According to its supporters, a "Europe of the Regions" would be more democratic, efficient and economically dynamic.[20]

The *'European project'* has been mostly seen also by the member states as a means of strengthening their national identities and as an arena to improve their national interests.

National identity is based on shared myths and symbols. It has a privileged position in the Westphalian state system. But globalisation challenges this system. Especially immigration and mobility have greatly increased ethnic and cultural diversity of most states in Europe.[21] In addition to these, the ongoing

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[18] B. Laffan , "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", p.97.
[19] Josep R. Llobera, "What Unites Europeans?" in M. Guibernau (ed.) , **Governing European Diversity**, pp.188-189.
[20] B. Laffan, "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", p.91.
[21] J.E. Fossum, "Identity Politics in the European Union", p.378-379.

integration process in Europe weakened many of the symbols of national identity, without providing European symbols to take their place.[22] In cultural and linguistic terms, diversity is the main characteristic in Europe. Even in terms of religion, there are three main religious groupings within Christianity which are Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox Christianity. Because of different kinds of diversity within itself, it is too hard for the EU to protect its cohesion. With the eastern enlargement process, European identity question becomes more complex. Especially if Turkey will be included, European identity will have to become more inclusive, so it will have to be redefined.[23] So the definition of European identity is also important because it will also show the geographical limits of European integration.

On the other hand, national identities are still dominant in Europe. The nation-states do not only create boundaries and provide institutions but their priority and dominance come from the common symbols and shared identity. National stories, myths, cultural symbols were used by nation-builders to determine "who are included in the concept of us?" and "who are excluded from us and referred to as them"? The main elements that constituted 'us' are: a historic territory or homeland, common myths , historical memories, common mass political culture, common legal rights and duties for all members, common economy.[24]

According to Smith, "national identities continue to possess distinct advantages over the idea of a unified European identity. They are accessible, well established and long popularised...In each of these respects, 'Europe' is deficient both as an idea and as a process..."[25] *Eurosceptics* are supporters of this idea and they are high in number.

On the other hand, the political power in the EU is still based on national parties and national constituency. There is not a European-level constituency. There are party coalitions in the European Parliament which includes different national party groups. But each national party makes its own campaign . European elections in the mid-1990's were still primarily about national issues and national parties were the main actors.[26] So all these factors affected the continuance of the dominant position of national identity.

According to Laffan, a shared European identity is possible only if it is based on multiple identities. So instead of establishing a 'European people',

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[22] W. Wallace, **Regional Integration: The West European Experience,** p.83.

[23] J. R. Llobera, "What Unites Europeans?", pp.178-179.

[24] A. Smith, "The Myth of the Modern Nation and the Myths of Nations", **Ethnic and Racial Studies,** Vol 11, January 1988, p.14 in B. Laffan, "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", p.85.

[25] A. Smith, "National Identity and the Idea of a European Unity", **International Affairs,** Vol. 68, January 1992, p.62 in B. Laffan , "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", p .98.

[26] P. Taylor, **The EU in the 1990's,** pp.148-149.

coexistence of 'European peoples' should be emphasized. The diversity of Europe has to be protected. According to her, a European identity is not likely to transcend national identities but it may emerge as a weaker form of identity in a hierarchy of identities. On the other hand, for some Europeans, 'Europe' is already part of their identity structure. She also emphasizes that, European identity must be built on the civic dimension of nationality, like European citizenship and Constitution, instead of myths.[27] It is a more realistic way to construct European identity on the basis of civic means. Because European history is full of wars and conflicts. However to construct an identity only on civic basis is a much harder and longer process. The myths and common cultural symbols are more effective and they cause stronger sense of belonging to an identity among the people.

The results of polls which were made by *Eurobarometer* show that, in most of the EU member states, a very small percentage of people about 5% said that, they have an exclusive European identity, while about 50% do not have any sense of European identity.[28]

According to Fossum, the emergence of a European nation-type identity is highly unlikely. But he states that, there are signs of an *'identitive transformation'* in Europe. National identities are becoming more inclusive and there are also signs of an emerging inclusive European identity. On the other hand, he emphasizes that, the member states still have the most important traditional mechanisms for socializing their citizens, like their school systems, military etc. He accepts the dominance of national identities. Especially the effectiveness of national socializing mechanisms are the main reasons for the continuance of the dominant position of national identities. According to him, the EU appears to be in the process of developing a post-national type of identity. For the continuity of this trend, maintaining commitment of institutions to ensure human rights and democracy , the continuance of decline in the ability of nation-states to form national identities, increase in the international developments related to further rights and peaceful cooperation, further strengthening of a European and international civil society are needed.[29]

European identity and national identity are sometimes seen contradictory, but sometimes complementary. Fossum states that, there is not necessarily a *zero-sum struggle* between a national and a European identity. People have always had *multiple identities*. But the European integration process provides more suitable platform for having national and a European identity at the same time.[30] So we can see that , it is highly unlikely that European identity replaces national one. It is more probable in Europe, people having multiple identities.

[27] B. Laffan, "The Politics of Identity and Political Order in Europe", pp. 98-99.
[28] J. R. Llobera, "What Unites Europeans?", p.176.
[29] J.E.Fossum, "Identity Politics in the European Union", pp. 400-401.
[30] **Ibid.,** pp. 375-376.

At this point an important question is that, where will be the position of European identity within the hierarchy of multiple identities?

CONCLUSION

All member states of EU have different point of views about European identity, some are more inclusive, some are totally attached to their national identities, some prefer having multiple identities including regional, national and European. Catalonia may be given as an example of this kind of region, which prefers having multiple identities. Basques generally prefer emphasizing their regional identities. Except some of the elites of the EU, we can not see a group of people who wants to define themselves only with their European identity. They are the main social group, who is less concerned with the weakening of national identity.

Consequently we can say that the creation of European identity is a very difficult and complex process. It may be more probable by emphasizing common future. For national identities , the will to share a common future is also important. Past of Europe had been full of conflicts and bad memories. Although a long way has been covered since the establishment of the EC, it seems that European identity will not replace national identities in the near future. Because nation-states still have the primary socializing mechanisms , like national education system, national army, they have also common languages through which cultural heritage is transmitted to the new generations. Although there has been some Europeanization efforts ,national media has been also much more effective than the Europeanized ones. So national media still have a chance to manipulate the public opinion.

With the effect of the ongoing regionalization and supranational integration processes , it is more probable that peoples of Europe may have multiple identities, one of which is European identity. Thus it is argued here that, if the EU continue to support the principle of *'unity in diversity'* and *multilingualism* on one hand and creating common symbols like EURO, European flag, European-wide sport or cultural organizations , European-wide TV channels on the other, it may overcome the identity question, without eliminating national identities.