

A CULTURAL UNITY FOR THE COMMON EUROPEAN PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses the impact of the process of European integration on the cultural unity of the European Union (EU). The most powerful outcome underpinning the international significance of the EU has been the establishment of a remarkable set of institutions, together with the political practices above and beyond the tradition framework of the nation-state. This has given an impression that the EU has developed into a fully functioning political system. Certainly, the shape and structure of the Union has been determined by a distinctively multicultural character, with still a strong continuity of traditions, whilst in reality it displayed highly homogenous countries. In piecemeal fashion, the road to a common European culture, along which the Union seems to travelling, has closely associated with the formal and less formal aspects of the system of its institutions. There is a sense of a commitment of the institutions of (national) governments of the member states to the EU system that is yet to be attended. In cultural terms, the upshot of such a commitment necessitates to elaborate the process of European integration. This is a sophisticated way of looking at the evolution of the EU system in an enlarged Europe brings with it a corresponding European political culture.

Keywords: European Union, culture, integration, modernisation

Jel Classification: H70, N40, N44

ORTAK AVRUPA PROJESİ İÇİN KÜLTÜR BİRLİĞİ

ÖZET

Bu makale Avrupa bütünleşmesi sürecinin Avrupa Birliği'nin (AB) kültür birliği üzerinde yaptığı etkiyi analiz etmektedir. AB'nin uluslararası önemini destekleyen en güçlü sonucu siyasi uygulamalar ile birlikte ulus-devlet geleneği ötesinde ve üstünde dikkate değer bir dizi kurumların kuruluş olmasıdır. Bu, AB'nin tam olarak işleyen bir siyasi sistem haline geldiği bir izlenim vermiştir. Elbette Birliği hâlâ güçlü bir süreklilik gelenekleri ile birlikte, ayırt edici şekil ve yapısını birçok kültürlü karakteri belirlemiş iken gerçekte son derece homojen bir ülke görünümündedir.

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Görünüşte adım adım ortak bir Avrupa kültürüne doğru alınan yol kurumlar sisteminin resmi ve daha az resmi yönleri ile yakından ilişkilidir. Üye (ulusal) devletlerin henüz katılacağı AB sisteminin kurumlarına bir bağlılık duygusu vardır. Kültürel açıdan sonuçta bu kararlılık Avrupa bütünleşme sürecini ayrıntılı incelenmesini gerekli kılmaktadır. Bu genişlemiş Avrupa'daki bir Avrupa siyasi kültürüne karşılık gelen AB sisteminin evrimine entellektüel yönünden bakılmasıdır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Avrupa Birliği, Kültür, Entegrasyon, Modernleşme

Jel Kodları: H70, N40, N44

INTRODUCTION

Considerable debate has surrounded the idea of a European common culture. It is a matter a complex interaction between norms, habits, attitudes and dispositions of political actors in a contemporary Europe. Reflecting on the process of European integration, there can be no doubt that a certain degree of diversity is unavoidable in supranational Community building. The basic appeal lies precisely in reducing cultural differences that are an impediment to the European integration.

In any of these senses, cultural differences meant an impediment to European integration and had to be reduced. Such thinking led to the development of 'identity-creating arguments' based on the idea that there could be 'better' or 'worse' within the European context. From this perspective, there is a shift towards pluralist society. The problem is how to explain and understand the European culture that principally mirrors a series of steps. Therefore, it is important to explore the impact of integration on the level of cultural unity, thereby linking the issue to the broader problem of achieving political cohesion within the context of a heterogeneous multi-national community.

1. FORGING A COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

In its broader sense, the European political culture has been shaped, when the EU has evolved uniquely as the result of concrete political (as well as economic) steps. The effort to unify Europe has helped to consolidate more than a half-century peace. When a faith devoutly to be wished originated rebuilding Europe after devastating World War II Jean Monnet's statement of 'the newly founded the European Community (EC) we should start with culture' did hold the boundaries of European culture (Schlesinger

1999:2). What ought to be interpreted for such a wording draws upon not only economic policy, but on the Community values, with culture envisaged as the supreme goal. As a strategy of self-representation and a device of power, Europeanization is fundamentally recognizing territoriality and peoplehood, the two principles of group identification that have shaped modern European order. It is the result of a new level and intensity of integration that has been a reaction to the destruction of this century's first and second world wars and the collapse of the cold-war division of Europe into East and West (Borneman and Powler 1997: 1).

With the establishment of the European Communities in the 1950s, a lot of the thinking about the economic integration invariably was coloured by a 'spill over' into the realm of politics. What had evolved here was a Declaration on the European Identity which was signed by the EC member states in 1973. This was translated into a democratic practice, when the declaration reaffirmed their communalities including the rule of law, human rights, social justice and economic progress. A striking assertion of the importance political culture was actually a matter of protection of the democratic credentials.

It might be that a similar point emerges with respect to the idea of a 'People's Europe' which appeared with some frequency throughout the 1970s and 1980s. However, the difficulty of building or rebuilding a common culture was underlined by most Community members, notably Germany, Italy and the UK. A major conflict existed between the desires of member states and the greater part of their populations held on to their national and in some cases regional identities. This highlighted a number of shifts pointing to the declining national pride and confidence.

Following the collapse of Communism in 1989, the homogeneity thesis became a pivotal factor pushing the EC to enact tougher on immigration laws. Consequently, European identity became identifiable and meaningful, as European institutions and the law articulated commonly held values beyond and often in opposition to, the extent of 'national interest'. They impacted on a growing number of collective sub-identities within their purview (Mayer and Palmowski 2004). The events of 1989 were greeted enthusiastically in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The countries from this region become part of the overall European culture as there was an evidence of a self-proclaimed appeal to the EC's Maastricht summit in October 1991. It is obvious that the range of cultures, identities and languages which is linked to the enlargement process must allow scope for change. It would be more accurate to say that such ranges make the political project a multicultural one on a scale never previously attempted in post-

enlargement period. The Eastern enlargement, which has made an already diverse Community even more diverse with respect to modernization level and culture (Delhey 2007: 273).

Concerns, for instance, have been raised about the extent to which multiculturalism encourages groups to seek advancement through cultural or ethnic assertiveness, rather than struggle for social justice (Heywood 2007: 218). In European context, the flame of multiculturalism had its failure as major migratory process has made the challenge even greater. This account is broadly consistent with multicultural societies. This raised the question of how multiple societies relate to each other, when different cultural identities, traditions and histories are forced to live next door to each other. Indeed, multiculturalism has been criticised because it helped to retained traditional belief that regularly posed threat to certain ethnic groups in the member states. With many forms of multiculturalism, it became difficult to reconcile different interests.

Partly, it was because the political traditions – established the political institutions – shaped ideas. A legal basis of the EC's cultural policy was given by Treaty on European Union in 1992, provided a substantial stimulus for future initiatives. As the Treaty envisaged, certain rights and entitlements granted to the EU citizens in order to be commonly shared by the member states. With regard to the creating 'an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe', exclusion was applied to the non-members. The values of democracy, human rights, market economy, the welfare state and cultural diversity that are central to the EU integration have become constitutive for the EU. The absence of such values implied that the Union could not function effectively.

Gradually, the EU itself has grown stronger as it expanded from a group of six to twenty-seven countries. The process of mutation is evidence of the dynamic character of the EU as the numerous countries have dragged their heels about the joining the Union. The CEE countries had previously fallen within the sphere of influence of the Soviet Union. Possible further expansion is currently on the agenda for other countries such as Turkey, Bosnia, and Serbia. Additionally, the Copenhagen summit in 1993 required all candidates to comply with the accession criteria. In particularly, they were expected to participate in the construction of European policies and policy identities within the context of legal harmonization.

While certainly wishing to construct a culturally United Europe, which mirrored the definition of a set of common values and a common identity for the member states in 2004, the inclusion of the CEE countries blurred the

core values of so-called ‘Europeanness’. In fact, in the 2000s, the European institutions insisted upon the candidate countries of CEE to transpose *acquis communautaire* in its entirety without any possibility of the opt-out clauses, which were characterized by a blend of the strong restrictions on the transition period.

In important respects, Turkey as an accession country since 2005 is very different from the existing member states, despite it declared its membership aspiration in 1964. Its membership has given rise to more complicated questions about Europeanness and the largest Muslim member state of the EU. As the EU now reaches the geographic boundaries of what is generally accepted to be ‘Europe’. A shared history as well as a commitment to values enshrined in the Copenhagen criteria, and even some outside them, is being used, whether openly or not, to judge applications (Garner *et al* 2009: 312).

It is generally accepted that the EU is a forum for constant interplay between its members, cultures, and identities and thus should play an active part in the promoting European values. In 2000, three community cultural programs were merged under the Culture2000 program which was extended to run until 2006, with a total budget of €240 million. Such a programme aimed to promote creativity and disseminate culture and support the Europe-wide cooperation between cultural organizations, institutions and representatives of the member states. This could only be done by supporting the dissemination of European culture both within and outside of the EU. As a further initiative, a new Culture2007 program was proposed by the European Commission for the period 2007-2013, which focused on mobility of both artists and works of art and intercultural dialogue as a way to enhance cultural cooperation. It should also be pointed out that the draft Financial Perspective adopted by the European Council in December 2005 showed no real growth in the budget for the period 2007-2013, only a stabilisation of existing levels of spending in the field of internal policies aiming to make European ‘citizenship work’ including culture, youth programs and the audio-visuals (Bozoki 2007: 5). This is despite the fact that the Commission proposed an increased budget of over €400 million. These issues were always presented much more in terms of costs and benefits for the member states.

It is equally important to note that the process was made more crystal by an International Agreement on Cultural Diversity of United Nations in October 21 2005. The Agreement underlined the importance of every kind of strategy and measure adopted by the governments to ‘protect cultural diversity’. It established the background and the framework for a common

EU culture policy. The goal for the EU should be the creation of a common European cultural space (Melandri 2005: 3).

By now it has become obvious that the cultural policies in Europe are very relevant, both at national and European level. There is more than one way towards an appreciation of the theme of European culture. What is particularly interesting is that European culture proved instrumental quite literally in the sense that culture contested field of power. In this regard, mass tourism and immigration has acted a stimulus for the development of a European type of society. It is reasonable to suggest that the cultural hegemony of a European standard against the foreign labour force has worked in the direction of changing the strand of national identities. This is because a concerted effort has been devoted to overcome the existence cultural differences between the EU member states.

2. UNITY IN DIVERSITY

One of the prominent features of modern politics has been growing recognition of the significance of cultural differences within society, often portrayed as ‘identity politics’ or the ‘politics of difference’ (Heywood 2007: 212). In fact the creation of European identity proved to be decisive for the development of European uniqueness, defined as ‘unity in diversity’ (Schlesinger 1999: 2). Against this viewpoint, Nurgent (2003) argued that the implicit in the European situation is the recognition of the multiple identities and this is a key reason why the EU system so often creaks. There are, after all, many divisions and differences between the peoples and governments of the current member states: divisions and differences based on language, religious background, political ideology, and – above all – national and cultural histories, identities, and interests (Nurgent 2003: 502). There is clearly some scope of embodying the concept of multiculturalism alongside cultural integration. By its very nature, this pertains to the Europe being rather a political club with common rules for all its members.

People feel a sense of belonging to Europe in general, while feeling no attachment to the EU at all – and *vice versa* (Risse 2004: 169). Yet, legally there is no such thing as Europeans. Less than 10% of the populations in Greece, Portugal, Ireland and Spain (and a different category – in Denmark) think of themselves as only or primarily European (Economist 1995: 46). While there are differing constructs of the EU itself there are yet more disparate constructs and concepts of what a common European culture is and should mean, whether it is desirable, and how it may be achieved. The EU, as an active identity builder, has successfully achieved identity hegemony in terms of increasingly defining what it means to belong to ‘Europe’. The EU

membership has significant constitutive effects on the European countries' identities. European countries are increasingly defined as the EU members, non-members, or would-be members. Their status in Europe, to some degree, also in worldwide depends on such categories. There is no way that European countries can ignore the EU. In addition to this, EU has achieved identity hegemony in the sense that 'Europe' increasingly denotes the political and social space occupied by the Union (Risse 2004: 169).

Arguably, the EU system is not always product of the widely shared view. The Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe in 2004 comes into this. The results of both French and Dutch referendums in 2005, which reflected the rejection of the European Constitution, have clearly revealed the distance that lies between the construction of the European institutional project and the existence of a common European identity. This may eventually lead the EU citizens to share the political and institutional aims. Only the construction of a common European cultural identity may help the citizens in bridging this gap. And this is why the construction of a common European cultural identity that can represent something unique and new is not just the sum of 25 or 27 or 30 'partial' cultural identities. It is something much more complicated that has to be interpreted as a process the citizens can go through if their roots are well grounded in the past, but their hearts and minds are heading towards a new future. Europe is, in other words, 'a state of mind' (Melandri 2005: 2).

To elaborate this point further, a cultural unity is the key to political stability. Therefore, it is difficult to assume that the EU decision-makers will take no account of culture. Perhaps it is nothing less than the source of the EU's success. A Constitution for Europe (2004) as the bedrock of political integration has created a fresh impetus with regard to the values of pluralism as well as the institutional mechanism of the Union. First, the draft Constitution traditionally provided the system of separation of power, constitutional decision-making and the protection of civil rights liberties. Second, it set up a new political identity of the EU. By this way, it reflected the moral basis for a new Europe. This is despite the fact that attempts to ratify the Treaty resulted in failure. These concrete benefits may gradually form European identity that is not to be found solely in the past. It is precisely at this juncture that European countries are integrating.

Quite apart from this, although the EU could hardly be perceived as a sovereign power, it is nevertheless portrayed as a safe haven, curbing all nationalist animosities and protecting the member states from regress to an earlier state of ethnically defined politics and traditionalism (Priban 2005:

147). Historically, the conflicting orientations and preferences systematically has led to ‘louder reaction’ in some member states with regard to the crisis of national identity. In its part, the problem is that several separatists in Italy, Spain, Ireland and France determine upon independence (ie., the Scots and Welsh in the UK). Also, the reassertation of national independence of Eastern Europe clearly illustrates that the federations are coming apart within states such as Czechoslovakia – split into Slovakia and the Czech Republic – and Yugoslavia. This does imply the real political challenge and the paradigm should be reversed. The existence of the EU framework has contributed to step by step building Europe, but actually distorted balance of political forces in the member states. It takes a particular insight to suggest that should the EU strengthen its centre, the nation-state might be weakened. As the EU comes closer to unification, pressure is starting to build in some member states.

It should also be noted that the decisions of the EU institutions affect the lives of millions of Europeans since the member states are obligated to a legal system over which they have only partial control. As a result, people are now not obligated to mobilize in national solidarity against a foreign authority. The mere fact is that the human condition in a changing world overruled nationalism. Instead, there is an adherence to a common European culture on the grounds of uniformity and stability. With the linguistic diversity and custom, Europe embedded in the movement of nations. It is, perhaps, not surprising that the new media has drawn people much closer than ever before.

After all, the EU’s Europe’s ‘deepening’ and ‘widening’ processes have created the economic and social challenges. An enormous amount of this goes on the global role that Europe has to play on the international stage. In this sense, an important plank of the Eastern enlargement of 2004 is concerned with an attempt to redefine the shape and the spirit of the Union together with its propensity to create a federation with more 30 countries in the 21st century. Before the enlargement, most EU-15 countries seriously envisioned a supra-nationalism. This is in line with the community project of European integration. It is easy to see the unity vision, with its aspiration of a common currency, common foreign policy and even a common president. In particular, most member states replaced their national currencies by the euro. All of these add to the complexity of the task.

3 FUTURE OF A COMMON EUROPEAN CULTURE

In the last few decades, the European culture has developed the greatest fascination. The main motivation behind moves to promote or create a common European culture and identity appears to be the view that differences in culture and identity result in reducing support for further European integration. Hence there is a need to try and reduce or remove them (Field 2007: 244). That is as it should be, the importance of attitudes, values and belief is that they have no affinities with unity accounts. There is in fact an agreement about the vital role that values and beliefs play in promoting the stability, as well as survival of the regime. There appears to be an emerging consensus among commentators that its new identity has to embody a process of reconstruction and exchange, with highly unpredictable results.

Given that, the main change is that the creation of new social and cultural linkages by the EU as an actor on the global stage. In some ways, this can be seen as a diversionary tactic. It is widely accepted that the EU as neither a common market nor a super-state. One might hope that Europe is capable not only of introducing a common currency, but also of resolutely defending common values against xenophobia and populism. A federated European commonwealth is emerging that is capable of formulating and forcing through obligatory basic values. But, most likely, Europeans will continue to defend their national peculiarities despite Europe, acting outraged at every attempt by the EU partners to ‘teach us from the top down’ (Krzeminski 2000: 4).

It might be appear that it cannot simultaneously be the case that the EU citizens pay close attention to the European politics and popular participation that are not both desirable and effective. And yet what distinguishes the EU as a policy arena is that it rests on a kind of civic culture. But there is some evidence that is consistent with view of existence of all the pitfalls of national egoism. As the rejection of the EU’s newly establish Constitution in French and Dutch referendums demonstrated, the public opinion does exercise an influence in at least setting the boundaries in which the member states comply with the EU norms. There may be more attachments to ‘Europe’, which is strongly correlated with the support for the EU’s institutions and policies. Similarly, less attachment is readily considered as a symptom of the significant opposition among the EU citizens to the process of European integration. Thus, one may assume that a European legal order of constitutionalism will unlikely to survive without a domestic support. The

limited enthusiasm about the European integration could endanger institutional reforms and thereby further integration.

Problems quickly emerge when identity goes hand in hand with the issue of homogeneity both in terms of cultural and religion practice. It might assist towards a deeper understanding and appreciation of the nature of debate by looking more closely at Europe simply as a ‘Christian tradition’. Although the ‘clash of civilizations’ thesis expects liberal values to be ordered according to countries’ religious traditions, with Western Christian the most supportive and Islamic the least, only for tolerance of minorities values is this pattern found (Dixon 2008: 1). It should initially observed that Islamic religion is of enduring significance that is becoming a major political issue, in contrast to secularized and modern culture of Western European countries. This has, of course, been the forefront of the political debate which may remain so for a very long time.

Beyond its enormous practical complications, the critical point lies in the shortcomings of these collective identities in enlarged EU. Diversity matters, and so too does size (Garner *et al* 2009: 303). Therefore, the future member states should not dilute such – frail – identities. Turkey is currently the only ‘Islamic’ candidate. Seemingly underlying perceived cultural differences between Turkey and the EU derive from the belief in the incompatibility of Islam and liberal-democratic values such as democracy, rule of law, and minority or human rights. The idea of a pluralist society should seek to take pains not to exclude any religion or culture – now includes more than 70 million Muslims. This raises the question whether the days of Christianity is becoming a minority faith in Europe. It is at this juncture that one may speculate about the most profound implications for the genuine EU identity. This is immediately understandable: admitting predominantly a Muslim country may end the prospect of building a ‘European common home’. It is not surprising that this is a major concern, especially for those who aspire to create a federal Europe.

The European political culture may be deeply flawed. The European leaders attract an enormous criticism, when they are trying to strengthen a kind of ‘Christian self-defence ethic’. The best can be said is that the European citizens are more likely stand on the edge of an Islamic onslaught on Western society. The Euro-sceptics say that the EU is becoming some kind of bureaucratic super-state, treating culture as a mere supermarket for traditional values, whilst the Euro-enthusiastic claim that the social shock connected with the consolidation of the EU would allow less-advanced societies to integrate into this ‘better Europe’. Their formula is simple: whatever cultural tradition or national identity does not survive in a United

Europe apparently is not vibrant enough, and what does survive will shine brightly (Krzeminski 2000: 4).

On a more modest interpretation of what might constitute a sense of European identity, things do seem to be changing. In this sense, the link between multiculturalism and the global economy helps us to explain why the EU leaders should endorse these changes. Basically, the aim of taking such a stand is to give visibility to values and economic development normally marginalized by their predecessors. This provides the EU with a great opportunity. In order to resolve issues regarding who should be part of the EU and where should the borders of the EU be, the EU could find a solution that seems appropriate given a particular identity or role, or a solution. This appears 'right', or 'just' according to standards that are not dependent on a particular cultural identity (Sjursen 2002: 502). There exists a dire need to establish a collective identity. This is because immigration threat is proceeding towards the EU. As long as this trend continues the EU will never be 'just us' as Christian Europe. An extensive reception of traditions from the third countries will likely to erode values in Europe.

On the face of it, it would almost be natural, and, in any event, very tempting to change the character of national cultures. There is, after all, the globalization of the economy coupled with the onset of multinational corporations as the key development in the vocation of Europe. Surface to say here that a search for new solutions, as the EU is currently doing, can be seen as political responses to the challenges of globalization. This kind of attempt does not mean that the EU would abandon its model of social cohesion. Rather, the EU surrenders its social model which will likely provide stability and welfare for its citizens. The companies that were once source of the patriotic pride falter or are get taken over. Simply, this points to culture change in Europe (i.e., transformation), with regard to the evolving relations between European countries. Changes in each country are usually explained by the emergency of the electronic media. So, pronounced the recent integration in fact that one may even question how distinctively Europeans will be seen in another decade.

Literature on the political culture and political socialisation suggests that political systems work best when they are unwritten by a robust set of belief values and norms. There is little evidence of a coherent EU political culture. Thus, the dilemmas for proponents of European integration is how best to create such a culture. The dilemma is sharpened by the obvious observation that each member state of the EU possesses its own political culture (Axford *et al* 2002: 108). The most significant ingredients towards European Project are undoubtedly multiculturalism and cultural integration. Since the 1990s,

the EU's institutional building process has much owed to the growth of multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and the search for a common European cultural identity - might actually shape Europe more strongly than any other devices. An essence seems a promising way to play a positive role on the global arena. Europe has to look within and beyond its borders. A common European culture can both foster the activities of the EU institutions, as well as the policy-making in the EU. Differences in opportunities, in behaviour and constraints that arise from being involve in multi-level and multi-layered process are pretty clear. It is less clear, though how the EU system would create its own cultural identity.

The development of a common European culture is likely to prove much harder to guide and direct than the development of common political institutions and economic arrangements did. The economic integration may also be possible in the face of diversity. However, pro-Europeans worry about three things. First, there is the concern that mass allegiance to (or indeed understanding of) the project of integration will not be forthcoming without a vibrant sense of cultural belonging. Second, they fear that the lack of an EU political culture disables the development of a fully functioning participatory political system. After all, authority undeniably is drifting away from national governments to the European level. Yet, public engagement with this 'Europeanisation' of governance remains primitive to say the least. Third, some economists worry that the lack of a common European identity means that the emerging European economy will continue to mean that 'European consumers do not feel European in a political or legal sense, so that 'the weakness of our collective European identity is both a source and a symptom of deeper commercial malfunctioning (Axford *et al* 2002: 108).

Simply the part of appeal is to create cultural unity for the common European project. But one has to go beyond that. The EU citizens are building a new European civilization, so far successfully, rooted mainly in European Christian culture. If nothing else, there is enough support, for instance sending soldiers to be killed for a European common and security policy. Prior to joining the EU, the CEE countries were confronted with the increasing resistance to changes, when they showed willingness to 'return to Europe'. Most countries are the nearest culturally, but also in the progress. They are beginning to make on the road to democracy, the rule of law, and a market economy. Such developments will likely to render the process of Europeanization. This is particular true for transferring policy competences and the adaptation of EU-institutional framework. The EU systems as a whole may be structured in such a way as to people identify Europe with the EU. This will be a good way of making sense of idea of a remarkable achievement of cultural unity in the long run.

CONCLUSION

As study has demonstrated, there are many problems about a common European culture and yet some of the insights underlying it will continue to reduce support for further European integration. Genuinely, the main motivation for the creation of a common European culture and identity is to seek changes the profiles of the EU's institutions and policy process. The progression of EU cultural policy has pointed to an EU hegemony, so far. To the extent that the cultural unity exists and it has, at the very least, an external power source and stimulus for advancing political modernization. At the same time, norms, attitudes and dispositions of the member states are shaped by the process of European integration.

The study has focused on the fact that the EU faces a double challenge. On the one hand, the EU should promote multiculturalism and an open-minded, tolerant approach to every cultural identity within Europe. On the other hand, it should aid construction process by fostering a new common cultural identity. Diversity notwithstanding, the importance of differences in culture and identity is a basic concern, and hence approach should allow scope for removing differences. There is a need for a new founding myth for a united Europe.

As study has shown, the European culture is inextricably linked to the evolution. The spirit that for years has animated the European project strived for further integration. Apart from anything else, the increasing number of the EU member states will likely pose a considerable challenge to its governments concerning the nature of European idea. While the EU has retained its cultural distinctiveness, it has suffered from the problem of how precisely to translate this idea into practical action.

The study has concluded that the development of a greater institutional and policy-making capacity is still far from creating a mechanism, which may eventually enable the member states to speak with one voice. So, forging a collective identity is proved to be a difficult task. The construction of a European cultural identity is an important part of this general effort. The future of Europe is blatantly vague. The only future for the conception of a European identity lies in coexistence with ethnic and religious minorities.

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