

## **THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY-BUILDING DISCOURSES IN THE EU**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

When considered in general, concept of identity is based on the person's individuality, his/her sense of self and his/her feelings and thoughts about himself/herself. It is noticed that there are plenty of definitions concerning identity but it is not a concept on which everybody is agreed. Identity formation's being the subject of many scientific fields of study, the definitions' showing differences according to what fields of study they were made and many dimensions of this notion's are being discussed in different aspects can be shown as the primary reasons for this. Definitions of identity are considered to be helpful in distinguishing an individual or a group from other individuals of groups. Accordingly, identity is formed of the sum of the similarities among those possessing this identity and of the points where they are distinguished from the others. When examining the EU's efforts to create common identity, the following can be observed; to create the dynamics to bring the EU people together and to arrange the environment to be able to create a dynamic identity peculiar to the EU. In this regard, the European Union, within the scope of various projects, has set goals such as introducing the European peoples to each other and encouraging them to learn their languages. The efforts of the EU occurs around the understanding of multiculturalism and cultural pluralism.

The countries constituting the EU has a common historical experience that provides a common legal, political and cultural heritage. When considering the case in terms of peoples of Europe, it is observed that the European people are in the state of a dialogue with different cultures of the World and as well as their official identity, they completely move away from this identity and head towards quite different identity preferences and belonging. Many specialists involved in making familiar the bond between national identity and national independence discuss the fact that the creation of European integration will not suit to the national identity, it can be regarded as a threat to national identity and thus it will be difficult to succeed in this process.

While there are pessimistic views regarding the formation of a common European identity, there are also optimistic opinions considering the fact that the European identity can be compatible

with national identities and also some theoretical approaches with respect to creating a common identity.

The purpose of this study is to examine the theoretical approaches and discourses with a view to forming the EU common identity and to deal with the debates on this matter. This study is made up of 4 titles except Introduction and Conclusion parts. In the first title, the formation characteristics of the notion of identity are studied in general. On the other hand, in the second title, where the process of Europeanness and at this point the issue of identity are discussed, the link Europeanness with the issue of identity is covered. In the third title, different views aiming at creating a common European identity are included and the problems about this issue are discussed. In the final title, theoretical approaches are covered aiming at harmonizing national identity with the European identity.

## **2. IDENTITY CONCEPT, BUILDING AND THE PROPERTIES**

Several definitions were made for Identity concept but no consensus was reached as one search the literature. Constitution of Identity, an important aspect in the daily life, is the search field of several disciplines, its definition varies according to defined fields and depending on this, it was observed that the concept is discussed in several ways. Dorby Identity was used by referring to individuality, personality, emotion and ideas (Güvenç,1993:2). Identity cannot form outside the public environment and one can not mention about non public entity Identity's. Course of possessing an identity is not a process for an individual to perform by himself rather a process with the others or against others, thus it is a process which occurs in social environment (Yurdasev, 1997:98). Identity overlaps at certain degree with a person's individuality, his behavior, motivation and his interests, and Identity is a perception of the differences of the entity by others and identity is a constitution with cognitive, emotional, complex, and mental characters (Bilgin, 1996:182). In term of context, identity consists of an individual life style such as multi dimensionality, belief, attitude, Standard of judgement which correspond to the individuals social position and status at both cultural and dwelling environment (Güvenç:3).

In general we can say that identity concept forms the fundamental basis of social life. This reflects that identity is social phenomenon. Since identity is a feature and definition of an entity, an individual can be recognised with his identity.

Identity is social phenomenon and forms a description, thus it is evident that identity phenomenon consists of two parts. Individual known with his identity or individual who owns an identity called "identity acquirer" Legislating "identity acquirer" or who provides identity called "identity provider" (warranter). Therefore, identity composes from "identity acquirer" and "identity provider"

(Yurdasev: 19). State of belonging occurs when an individual feels to involve into a social group. In here the key point is; Although society defines the individual with an identity, if the individual does not feel belonging to the society then we cannot say that he does possess that identity at all (Aydın, 1999:21).

As seen from all these definitions, the fundamental basis of the identity is to differentiate an individual or a group from the rest of the society. In this perspective, this situation defines individual or groups specific facts and on the other hand defines the points which are different than the rest. Thus, identity is the sum of differences and similarities. The role of others in the formation of identity can also be seen at the identity unit nomenclature. Identity unit nomenclature is generally given by others or when compared with others. For example, the word “English” does not belong to Britains, it was given by Romans. By the same token the words “Turk” and “Fin” were derived from Chinese and Swedish respectively (Yurdusev:21). As seen from these examples, someone else existence is necessary to define state of belonging.

Another fact for identity concept is consciousness of the identity existence. Conscious fact appearance is due to the existence of objective facts. Humans common identity possession means that they share a common thing. Another opinion that highlights the importance of conscious facts is; even though objective facts do not exist, belief that they exist will help formation of identity (Wintle, 19996:5-6). Another feature of identity is its complex structure. Because of this structure, identity continuity and dynamics and its multiple aspects adds multiplexity to the identity concept. In another word, an individual may have more than one identity and in general humans have more than one identity. In this respect, an individual identities, possessed or obtained later on are in an interaction network. Example can be given to identity defined as social identity, such as family, ethnic group, country, nation etc. Thus, an individual may possess more than common social identity For example; being a country citizen and being a representative of an ethnic group. All possessed identities have hierarchy depending on the external conditions. According to this external conditions one or more identities may become important (Maalouf, 2004:17).

But during the identity proliferation and definition there are both objective and subjective elements. Objective elements are the properties which are shared by social identity unit members; symbol, myths, language, religion, ethnicity, geography, life style, history, values, tradition, custom, and etc. The process of internalization of objective elements bears subjective elements of the society. In another words identity unit members must have common properties and as well as subjective consciousness for belonging to that identity unit (Smith,1997:56).

In this perspective, presence of objective sharing causes the presence of subjective to an extent consciousness. Because if the individuals do not share anything, it is not expected from them to

share a common identity consciousness and belonging notion to the society. Thus, objective elements and subjective consciousness form the component of identity composition.

Identity concept elicits political and cultural identities especially at society with several identities or organisation such as EU. The first think came to mind about cultural identity is “ethnic identity” concept. Ethnicity concept can be defined as a social group’s race, language or national identity. Originally comes from Greek Word “ethnos” and in Greek the Word represents human identity such as tribe or race but not a political group.

Ethnic identity is an identity which originates by authentic cultural system’s structural motives type rather than individuals society common cultural elements. Decrease in national identity dependence increase search for other identities and effectiveness becomes important.

Effectiveness, with another approach, can be categorised in two different way; political and cultural. The first one points political activity or intelligence of a group in the ethnicity frame and the other point’s dependence to other cultural values or applications. Common property of both group is the groups conscious for the diversity (Kellner,2001:20).

While “ethnos” word was used for atheistic or pagan differentiation at the ancient Greek, the Word used to differentiate between race properties between XIV. and XIX. centuries. As the racism increased during The World War II, this word used for second class people. People that are not originate from Jewish, Italian, Irish, and Britain were called second class and the meaning of the word ethnicity became negative and even pejorative. Ethnicity meaning turns to a different meaning at 1960’s social anthropology. At this term, ethnicity was used to explain the relationship between people who find themselves different and the rest of the society (Entwell, 1997:237).

As seen one of the elements to form identity proliferation is “the other” and this is essential. Because, another relationship is necessary in the formation of community and groups. In other words ethnicity tends to discriminate the others. But obtaining an identity process is both inclusive and discriminative.

When we check the national identity we can see these; Nation-government formation process tool national identity formation is a product of modern life. In other words, in this period government identity and citizens identity overlaps. According to Smith, national identity has several key properties (Smith:60);

- Common historical land or native country
- Common public culture

- Justice and law system for all individuals
- Common economy

As in the formation of identity, national identity formation conscious plays a key role. In general, all national identities form under nationalism. At the level of identity, nation can be accepted as the result of nationalism.

Formation of a nation depends on effective people and to their decision. Elite people in the city coin the idea and further supported by the people as seen from the examples of the history (Erikson,1993:105).

Nation-government was born as a concept and phenomenon by revolutions at the beginning of XVIII. Political events at this period prevented understanding of common origin, language and history. In other words, the notion of belonging to the same community was established and as a result modern society was born. According to Habermas, nation-government phenomenon developed in three ways at the historical process. The first one was occurred by development of nation concept at north and west Europe existent governments. Political structure at this region had turned into nation-government structure. England and France were examples to this first one. The second one was the ones at middle and the east Europe. Government was established from nation as seen by the frontiers; Italian and German models. A conscious about nationalism via propaganda was used to form nation-government. The third nation-government formation was occurred aftert. The World War II. After the war, colonisation politics disappearance formed independent governments at Africa and Asia.

At European perspective, collective identities was formed by official ideology specially nationalism at modern Europe. But after The World War II, nationalism was lost and people reacted to the idea. The reason for this is the nationalism role at the broke out of the war and its demolition.

### **3. THE PROCESS OF EUROPEANNESS AND THE ISSUE OF IDENTITY**

Being the smallest continent of the World, Europe accomodates many different countries, religions and races. As known, in consequence of the wars having taken place among the countries in the European continent for a long time, the Europeans sought for ways of building up a unity in peace. However, the phenomenon of creating a unity in Europe gained speed with the domination of the process of industrialization towards the end of the 18th century. The issue of identity and the emergence of models analyzed over identity in Europe date back to quite a long time.

The idea of Europe, in the early pre-modern eras, was always put forward through the other discourses and the most important of them were the “Christendom”. In other words, the “European Identity” as an ethno-cultural and political project came true before what was told about the formation of an idea of Europe. However, the identity created in this period cannot be called the “European Identity” in real terms because it never focuses on the idea of Europe itself. When the idea of Europe arose, it was placed in the notion of Christendom, which emerged concurrently with the notion of “Occident” that sustained the idea of Europe. “Occident” and the Western notions shaped in this direction maintained the continuity among the Hellenism, Christendom and the idea of Europe (Delanty, 2005:82).

In short, the European identity is described with Christianity until the modern times. Even though Europe reflects a value to some extent, it is clear that this is a value nested with Christianity. Europe is either a geographical term the borders of which are never remarked for certain, or it the other name of the Christian country. Islam’s being the most dioristic “the other” and its continuation, though decreasing trends, in the modern period led unavoidably to the fact that Christianity is one of most fundamental elements in the European identity (Yurdusev:38).

In modern period Europe, the most distinct common societal identity among the others is the nation-state. The phenomenon of nation-state and national identity put the priority of religion out of site and became the most distinct determinant of the social identities in creating common identity., emergence of nation-states played a role in the embodiment of modern period European identity. However, another phenomenon which developed during this process and which was as crucial as the notion of nation-state was that the anthropocentric rational order instead of God-centered religious order became dominant in Europe in the Middle Age (Yurdusev:40).

As it is known, what made Europe secular is the movements of Renaissance and Reform in the XV. and XVI. centuries, of the revolutions taking place in science in the XVII. century and of the Enlightenment movements that started in the next century. In consequence of all these developments, the idea of Europe had societal, cultural and political meaning belonging to itself apart from Christianity.

However, the point not to be missed out is that Europe did not give up Chiristianity because of their becoming secular. Of course, Christianity did not have its former central position, but it can be said that Christianity is just a significant component of European identity.

Another improvement that had an effect on the formation of European identity in the modern times is the overseas expansion of Europe. Expansion of Europe in the period that started with the age of discoveries encapsulated almost all over the World thanks to Colonialism. In the creation of modern European identity, the effect of other societies, that is to say those outside of

Europe, is a situation not to be ignored, as well as the effects of nation-state, becoming secular and the overseas expansion. Delanty promotes the idea that European identity is defined by the differences from the other rather than the common elements that are embraced. According to Delanty, language, religion, geographic base and history do not constitute sufficient identity components for the whole Europe. Europe, as an esthetical category, only exist at elite level. Thus, European identity and the basis of consciousness of Europeanness are closely related to racism and imperialist mission of Europe (Delanty:72).

As a unity of supre-identity, Europe was already formed in the 19th century, but this does not mean that Europe was in an exact unity and integrity. Unity and integrity existed at elitist level, in certain fields and against others. This period was an era in which nation-state was its peak with the establishment of the unity of Germany and Italy. It can be said that it was the Turkish identity that was the most effective among the “others” which Europe perceived as threat for them to be able to define its own identity and to pave the way for the unity and integrity (Yurdusev:68).

Concept of Europe first gained a historical basis following the French Revolution. The improvements in the wake of the Revolution were explained as “historical obligation”, and many theoretical and abstract thoughts up to that period were transformed into historical concepts one each. However, the understanding of a single Europe was not introduced. Everybody’s definition of Europe has continued to be different (Boer,1995:68-69).

XIX. century is the period in which the notion of national sovereignty came to be formed instead of traditional sovereignty. The fact that the nationalist ideology which emerged after the French Revolution and became strong in time rejected the existence of a power over the sovereignty of nation-state shot down the efforts of building a federal unity. The steps taken to that end were transformed into nationalist movements in time (Bozkurt,1995:105). It is observed that in the period from XIX. century to the 1.st World War, a process was experienced which built and at the same time dstroyed the sense of Europeannes.

#### **4. DISCOURSES INTENDED FOR CREATING THE COMMON IDENTITY OF EUROPE**

When examined in general, “building a European identity” particular to the EU became an obligation along with the proceeding of political integration process. Problem of the EU has been to create the dynamics that can throw the EU peoples together and to open the way for the environment in which a dynamic identity particular to Europe can be built. What was made to establish this environment, on the other hand, was manifested, within the framework of various projects, with the targets such as introducing the European peoples with each other and

encouraging them to learn their languages. These efforts within the EU are shaped within the frame of multiculturalism and the understanding of cultural pluralism.

The issue of identity, which many factors and variables at different and changeable levels constituted and which is a complex phenomenon, is a subject discussed a lot today. Nowadays, there are plenty of questions in Europe that are to be answered and are the object of interest about identity. Is there a European identity beyond the nation-states and the national identities included in them in Europe? Do the Europeans possess a strong feelings and consciousness of Europeanness against those not from Europe? or is it possible for belonging of Europe to materialize beside the national belonging?

The matter of European identity has become a disputed issue within the Union by the different political and social groups. Each group thinks that the idea of European identity contains various understandings, reflects different meanings and is composed of different facts. The issue of European identity is dealt with by the scientists, politicians and people with the ongoing debates about the future of Europe.

In order to bring into realisation grand collective projects in ethically sensitive policy fields, a political community needs not only rational agreement, but also some enthusiasm among its members. Indeed, it needs strong public support at least in the initiation phase of a new collective project. Without a 'collective identity' beyond the borders of the national communities as common ground for common future projects, European efforts to institutionalise common political solutions, procedures, and sometimes very expensive commitments might fail. Obviously, there is much public, political, and scientific interest in questions of European identity formation(Kantner, 2006:4).

With its plans to expand particularly towards the East, the EU discusses the importance of borders and identities and reviews the criteria of regional development in multi-level Europe in its political, economic and cultural future. Europe questions the borders of its identity not only geographically but also for socio-culturally and politically. In the Fifth European forum, Fisher's statements, the former Foreign Secretary of Germany, of "the expansion must stop at one point" emphasize that cultural criteria are important as well as the political and economic ones in the EU and European identity is discussed as much as the borders of Europe (Balkır, 2000:817).

If one is to make an assessment considering whether Europe and supra-identity of Europeanness bear the characteristics that make the nations a nation, it is seen that Europe and supra-identity of Europeanness is not strong at all, while many factors such as common ideology, mythology, common heritage are known to exist in Europe at any rate. Because, Europe possesses a common historical experience that provides itself a common legal, political and cultural heritage, even

though there are problems with the partner concerning language, geography and religion (Nezihoğlu, 2000:872).

When considering how Europe is defined in the widest sense, it is observed that it is regarded as a geographic, political, cultural, historical and economic region. However, the definitions about Europe based on different characteristics and arising differently from each other, nonetheless, reveal the structure of Europe's history which is full of dilemmas.

E. Morin characterized Europe as follows; Europe was built on a heritage which accommodates legitimate force and brute force, democracy and oppression, spirituality and materialism, norm and golden mean, wisdom and myth altogether. Europeanness was shaped by political actors throughout the history in order to be able to create a common pulse. For this reason, "Europeanness" virtually identified with the tension between the exclusion and inclusion of "the other" (Vardar, 2003:33-34).

Facing enormous challenges while lacking strong support among the European citizens, the European Union is vulnerable to unpredictable stress. Hence, some research on European integration deals with two crucial questions: how much pressure can the community tolerate in order to persist and what does the family hold together in times of scarcity, conflict, danger, and threat? Looking for answers to these questions, a multitude of publications stress the need for societal cohesion among the people. The gradual emergence of a sense of community among European citizens is said to be a means of overcoming centrifugal tendencies due to the increased heterogeneity of today's European Union of 27 member states and nearly 500 million people (Kania, Karalewski, 2009:5).

As for identity, there are two different approaches including the Western view and Eastern school of thought for the understanding states and people and values. Western view advocates the idea that the existence of common institutions and political structure in the nation state is a sufficient element enough to hold citizens together. The eastern model, on the other hand, focuses more on the ethnic ancestry and cultural bonds. Here, it is observed that the components such as folk culture, traditions, habits and religion have become more prominent. Sometime, blood relation is added to these components (Smith, :324).

When considered this point of view, perhaps the following can be asked; What sort of consequences can be confronted with if the components of Eastern understanding are taken into consideration for the EU? Frankly speaking, the components of Eastern understanding clearly points out that there is no such a structure in the EU. In the Western view, on the other hand, the question of how a common area and a common political community arise? According to them,

Europe is not a continent as the early geographers said but is a peninsula and sub-continent belonging to Europe and Asia (Pocock, 1997:306).

The question as to the definition and limitation of the political groups is the primary topics that are difficult for the EU. Accordingly, who is considered to be from Europe? According to the Eastern understanding, the elements gathering the community cannot be in question for the EU and such thoughts should be restricted from now on. According to Anthony Smith, the national identities have clear advantages when compared to a united European identity. Because, national identities are much more widely accepted, and the thought of European identity is for the time being away from this understanding even though it is more popular. Before anything else, national identities are tried to be clamorously restored in most parts of the European continent by means of ethnic thoughts. In addition, these issues are much more triggered with the investigation of myths, memory, symbols, cultural heritage and ethnic structures (Smith:327).

## **5. THE THEORETICAL APPROACHES INTENDED FOR THE HARMONIZATION OF NATIONAL IDENTITY WITH EUROPEAN IDENTITY**

The subject of European identity exhibited its development in a two different ways. On the one hand, theoretical and normative approaches focused on the definition in the light of experimental tests and behavioral information of the concept of European identity. On the other hand, there are a number of empirical approaches which were developed mainly by sociologists and social psychologists but which lack the essential theoretical and methodological back-up (Strah, 2002).

When examining the theories regarding the emergence of European identity, it is seen that there are 3 main tendencies. These approaches take different sources as reference in defining the EU. These are (Jimenez et al., 2004) ;“cultural”, “instrumental” and “civic” theories. The common problem among these 3 theories arises from the relationship between the identities of Europe and the national citizens. At the end of 1980s, the EU produced some policies aiming at creating European identity. In F1 article of MA, the Union refused to use the term “federal” with this expression when the principal of subsidiarity was introduced. In many countries, “cultural theory” in the concept of identity was deemed as a potential threat for the creation of European identity, national identities and loyalty of citizens. Indeed, in the early 1990s, national identity was exploited by the political elites in order to justify the protection and sovereignty of their countries. Many specialists involved in making the bond closer between the national identity and national independence discussed that the formation of European integration does not suit with national identity, it could be considered as a threat for the national identities and therefore it would be difficult to succeed in this process (Höjelid, 2001). While there are these pessimistic views related to constituting European identity, there are also the opinions pointing out that European identity can be compatible with the national identities. Some authors believe that

national and local interests will become weaker owing to the globalization of economy and communication. Those supporting such kind of interpretation draw the attention of the universal values such as human rights, protection of civil freedom, social rights and democracy to their capturing the national borders. Other analysts consider the EU integration as an effective instrument for the solution of multi-faceted problems which require complex coordination, control and practice in order to make the nation-state more influential and realize its targets (Milward, 1992). Some are of the opinion that the potential development of European identity will hinder the citizens' idea of having more than one identity at the same time. Those who are against this idea, on the other hand, think that people can possess multi-identities depending on the different individual rights as it happens in the example of multi-centered circle (Weiler, 1999).

After all of these discussions, the following are seen when considering the “Cultural Theory “in the rise of European identity (Osterud, 1999).The scientists favoring the Cultural Theory promote the idea that in the creation of the European identity, forming or not forming the identity based on the same factors such as common cultural heritage, language, symbol and emotional bond/tie is not necessary.

The below-mentioned hypotheses were put forward with respect to cultural theory (Jimenez et. al.,2004);

National identities are based mainly on “cultural” factors. The European identity is not based on “cultural” factors.

\*European identity's not having “cultural” background made this identity weaker than the national identities.

\*If cultural identity is challenged in the formation of European cultural identity, citizens' attachment to national identities is stimulated.

\*Therefore,(a)citizens will not be able to develop a strong national identity at the same time or will not have European identit, (b) in the countries where majority of the population is made up of cultural identity ,citizens will have double identity or lesser degree or (they) will embrace the European identity.

A second set of scientists supporting the “Instrumental Theory” in the formation of European identity advocate that European identity is consciously calculated based on personal interests. Some of them believe that instrumental factors will play an effective role for the definition and reinforcement of identity. According to this theory, the more the people see their countries incompetent/insufficient in terms of decision-making power in the international context, the

more strongly they identify themselves with Europe. Besides, the more citizens are pleased and appreciate the results of the EU policies, the more they feel themselves European. In compliance with the identities' understanding of fayda-maliyet, citizens of the countries where social security system is insufficient, which have weak economic power and in which democratic norms/rules are not strong enough feel themselves more European.(Kaltenhaler ,2001)

The following hypotheses are put forward based on “Instrumental Theory (Jimenez et al, 2004);

\*Both national and European identities are based on the thought of “instrumentalism”.

\*Over the European identity, although “cultural” and “pertaining to people” factors play a significant role, it is essentially and mainly “instrumental”.

\*The citizens whose national identities are weaker develop stronger European identity.

\*The citizens in these countries may greatly have/possess double identity or their national identities are weaker than their European identities.

Theory of “pertaining to citizen” in the formation of European identity is based on the following hypotheses. In theory, the development of identities is emphasized within the framework of sharing the culture and common belief by reaching consensus within the scope of peaceful, political norms/ rules. (Mancini, 1998)

The hypotheses in the theory of “pertaining to citizen” are as follows (Jimenez et.al., 2004);

\*Whatever the elements constituting the identities are, European identity will be based on the elements of “pertaining to citizen”.

\*A European identity adjusting to the elements regarding the citizenship will not be weaker than national identities. Therefore the existence of demos of a stranger European people will be possible.

European identity and national identities are compatible with each other. Because these are conceptually different, they cannot be evaluated in the same frame. This difference includes a different thought of loyalty. As known, national identities were formed under certain historical, socio-economic and political conditions. The European identity is on the other hand, at the stage of establishment.

In sum, in this theoretical approach, it can be said that people specify their preferences between national or European identity according to the principle of (benefit-cost). However, the idea of “instrumentalism” for the European identity is more convenient in the long run, while it is seen

that the national identities as opposed to this are based on the cultural factors in main. The meaning of this is that one should not conclude that “Instrumental “factors are not important for the national identities. What is wanted to be revealed is that at the European level, the idea of “Instrumentalism” is much more important. Another significant result from the research is that it is doubtful for each identity based on different thoughts to transfer the citizens’ loyalties arising from nationalism towards European level, whether that identity shaped with the concerns” pertaining to citizen”.

When the theory of “Pertaining to Citizen” is assessed in terms of identity ,it becomes apparent that a European identity shaped with the concerns “Pertaining to Citizen”is out of question. In this case, the idea that the national identity which is the first hypothesis of “pertaining to citizen” theory will be based on this theory was rejected.

One can ask the following questions after suggesting how these identities will be associated to each other; Are these two identities at the same direction and in the same order? The analyses carried out reveal these/they are perceived at different levels. Accordingly, when national identity is regarded as an internal circle, the European identity becomes an external circle surrounding it. As a general conclusion, it can be concluded that European identity is compatible with the national identity when the resultant findings are articulated to each other.

## **CONCLUSION**

The concept of identity, which is the research field of many scientific disciplines is discussed in many respects because of its being multidimensional and since the definitions made show difference according to field in question. The fact that the most significant component of identity is “the other “and it is a social phenomena reveals that it has a content symbolizing the life style of an individual such as belief, attitude and value judgments.

When considering all of these characteristics of the notion of identity, it is obvious that to create a common identity in the continent such as Europe, where there are ethnic origins, religions and cultures different from each other, is not an easy matter.

When the idea of Europe is evaluated in terms of today and former period, the most important difference is the meaning attributed to the concept of Europeanness. Prior to the emergence of nation-state, Europeanness was called/referred to the different notions such as Hellenism, Christianity, Civilization and Enlightenment. With the emergence of nation-states, it can be said that the the idea of Europe has been at the period of regression.

In today's world it is observed that as for the European identity, numerous cultural and political components such as democracy, human rights, and rule of law are included and emphasis is placed on these concepts/terms.

The most distinct characteristic of the studies carried out within the institutional structure of the EU with respect to creating a European common identity is that they are conducted making use of the nation-state model.(common flag, common currency, the EU anthem, etc)

When the phenomenon of European identity is considered to be associated with the EU process, its focal point is formed of the possibility and legitimacy of a "European identity" which is opposed to the existing identities. It is matter of curiosity whether Europe can create a European identity in this new period or not and how this will affect the national identities. As a matter of fact, for all that integration of Europe is associated with the issue of identity, this process does not require for a common culture and homogenous identity to be shared by nations of Europe. First of all, what the EU desires to form is a political Europe-what is needed for this is to develop a political identity.

When examining the approaches regarding the European identity and national identity, it is seen that national identity and European identity are based on the different theoretical levels. Accordingly, when the national identity is viewed as an internal center surrounding it. Thus, it can be said that these two identities will show compatibility, because they bear meanings at different levels.

At the perceptual level, the contradiction between the European identity and the existing national identity may seem to be in appearance rather than being a reality. In fact, when it is considered from the point of accepting a pluralist understanding and of the fact that a nation is a rationalist integration of common norms and culture on a common territory, the contradiction between can be reduced.

Today, while the lack of the EU's political identity continues, the theme of "unity in a variety", which is tried to be formed in the EU paradoxically exhibits an understanding that helps develop the political identity of the EU.

In consequence, the EU seems to have the potential of being able to dissolve the internal borders with a natural dynamic, while establishing the external borders, and of building a European identity that is peculiar to itself and which creates civilian social dynamics within itself.

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