El Espacio Europeo: "Una familia de naciones". La Europa intercultural vs. la identidad europea

The European Space: "A family of nations". Intercultural Europe vs. european identity

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RESUMEN

El objetivo de esta investigación es debatir sobre la noción de identidad europea. También nos preguntamos si nos enfrentamos a una Europa multicultural o una Europa intercultural. Aquí hacemos hincapié en el hecho de que las grandes son Naciones multiculturales, que supieron armonizar sus diferencias culturales y lograron construir su identidad nacional sobre la base del diálogo intercultural. El trabajo tiene en cuenta que el multiculturalismo supone la coexistencia de culturas en el mismo espacio, su interacción no es obligatoria, y requiere al mismo tiempo tanto tolerancia como diálogo. Estas características permiten a las culturas coexistir, y enriquecerse mutuamente, lo que les lleva a un compromiso aceptable y constructivo, que requiere, sobre todo, la reciprocidad.

Palabras Clave: Identidad Europea, unidad en la diversidad, tolerancia**.**

ABSTRACT

Our research aims to debate on the notion of *European identity*, which has been used in three different forms in the last half-century. We also question whether we face a multicultural Europe or an intercultural Europe. We emphasize here the fact that the great nations -recognized as such in history and which made history– are multicultural nations, they knew to harmonize their cultural differences and managed to build their national identity on the basis of intercultural dialogue, increasing their spiritual wealth by peaceful and wise confrontation of different ways of living.

We also keep in mind that multiculturalism implies the coexistence of cultures in the same space, their interaction not being mandatory, while in the case of interculturality the dialogue is decisive, requesting at the same time *tolerance*, this characterizing the way cultures coexist, thus representing a critical condition towards their enrichment due to their coexistence, being the art of an acceptable and constructive compromise, which requires, above all, *reciprocity*.

Keywords: European identity, unity in diversity, tolerance.

90

1. INTRODUCTION

Europe has always played an important role in the global economy, politics and history. Europe is not only to be regarded as a geographical or political notion, but it also includes a series of concepts, including the concepts of different European Institutions, those of every person who lives in Europe and the concepts of the rest of the world. These concepts have numerous and distinct interpretations, but they all share the same essence –Europe is our common home, a joint property. In fact, Europe has always been the stimulus for the evolution of civilization, but also for revolutions, and, unfortunately, for World Wars. Nowadays, the so-called "old continent" has a very new look. This new look is owed to diversity, development and change, a diversity which can be traced back in history, and which led Europe (over the centuries) to closely inter-relate with other continents. Europe would not be the one it is today, if there had not been for the wealth brought by the variety of people and cultures living here together.

2. WHO/WHAT IS EUROPE? WHO ARE THE EUROPEANS?

In an attempt to define Europe, one may find this a difficult task. Europe is more or less a diffuse geographical area –settled by different peoples who have made history, and who have defined their identity; it is also represented by interpretations of history, cultures, identities, visions, constructs. And the clash of interpretations, the clash of stereotypes, the fight to include or exclude have marked centuries of European history.

The idea of European space, which designates a certain geographic, political and spiritual area, has existed for several centuries. The European construction, meaning the conscious process of forming an economic, politic and institutional union, exists for only a few decades. The present process of European construction began in the context of global bipolarity, after the Second World War. This process, including Europe's place in the contemporary world, its role and nevertheless its identity, relies on evolution, during which the idea of a European unity has been confirmed in numerous initiatives and projects.

Europe is (as it has become over time) a continent of intercultural awareness. If one thinks of its history, one can easily notice that it has always been a multicultural area and an area of conflict. Edgar Morin[1] once said that our historical memories have in common nothing but division and war, the sole common heritage being only mutual enmities, and that our community of destiny stems not from its own past but it is the future that requires this. Thus was born the idea of setting up a conscience or a sense of common destiny starting with the future.

The European construction has pursued since 1951 "to replace the century-old rivalry between the nations with a merging of their basic interests", aiming "since then towards a common destiny", fate that pursued the same objectives -peace, economic and social progress, democracy and human rights, followed by freedom, equality and social justice, social cohesion and environmental protection, as well as sustainable development and fundamental social rights.

With regard to the continental level, the inter-European relations (set up by the globalization tendency) often bring about reactions of certain cultures. The European Union and its expansion are directly reported to this situation. And if taken into account the political, judicial, economical and historical background as well as the psychological one of different cultures or cultural environments, one can easier acknowledge the tensions which arise inside a political or an economic system, a system which is desired to be united. Or, in the case of Europe, there is above all to be added another difficult phenomenon: the European cultures, with a considerable number of their representatives, move and bring about a less stable balance than it once was in a certain area. Moreover, the representatives of non-European cultures move towards and into Europe, becoming the cause of additional lack of balance.

The European integration (the construction of a united Europe) is not a fantasy exercise, but one vital attempt designed to provide sustainable security for both halves of Europe. The main way to stabilize security is the use of power to export its own way of living. In other words, it is about the building of the *Greater Europe*'s common identity based on a single set of values and compatible institutions integrated in a unified management system designed at continental level. The European process is therefore a matter of power and culture. Who has the power to transfer to others their own cultural-identity paradigm increases the power required to strengthen their own security. Viewed from this angle, the *acquis communautaire* is, in fact, an identity *acquis*.

2. TOGETHER IN DIVERSITY – MULTICULTURAL EUROPE

Today we live in an era of such rapid change end evolution that leaders (either economic or political) must work constantly to develop the capacity for continuous change and frequent adaptation, while ensuring that identity and values remain constant.

"United in diversity" is the motto of the European Union. This motto is a first-rank priority and an absolute necessity for us to be able to tackle the challenges of our century, rather than merely a beautiful yet empty phrase. It describes the idealistic picture of a unified Europe which preserves national and cultural identities in many aspects with a shared European notion.

Unity is always a political and institutional phenomenon, whereas **diversity** usually is ideological and cultural. I deeply believe that the only ideology that can be adopted in the long run by humanity as a unifying principle is the ideology of human rights and its defense. Of course it takes all sorts of individuals and societies to achieve that goal. Hostility is fuelled each time when an alien religion, political doctrine, or culture is imposed on people. Therefore, the only form of unity is a political commitment to defend a set of values without which our diversity becomes a mere fragmentation, not to say parallel existence. In our case, Europe is simply unthinkable without our standing for human dignity and fundamental human rights. Europe is also unthinkable without alternative visions of how to be a human being and dissenting opinions for which you are not exposed as an enemy of your society, and which do not make you open to the charge of treason. Yet our unity in terms of a single culture as, supposedly, our only raison d'être is a dangerous folly of nationalism. We can share a culture insofar as we can practice it freely.

Through the EU, Europeans are united in working together for peace and prosperity, and the many different cultures, traditions and languages in Europe are a positive asset for the continent. With Member States stretching from Finland to Malta and from Bulgaria to Portugal, daily interaction among people of different cultures is a reality for EU citizens. In a recent Euro-barometer survey, 83 percent of respondents in the EU Member States said that they value the benefits of intercultural contacts, and 65 percent reported interacting with at least one person of a different religion, ethnicity or nationality than their own in the week prior to being questioned. Additionally, nearly three-quarters of EU citizens believe that people with a different background (whether ethnic, religious or national) enrich the cultural life of their country. Young people, people with the highest levels of education and those living in cities are more likely to consider cultural diversity an asset.

The recent much debated topics include the impact of migration on intercultural, inter-religious and intercultural dialogue in the media. Europe's cultural dynamism and diversity is closely linked to its role and influence in the world. The EU is not just an economic powerhouse; it is also an unprecedented and successful social and cultural project.

Europe and the European Union with its 27 Member States is a prime example of a region with a culturally diverse population. This diversity is the result of ethnic and linguistic minorities created by centuries of wars and forced or voluntary migration. Europe, with its wealth of different languages and complex historical roots, has been forced to come to terms with the cultural and social aspects of its diverse population.

The concept of European cultural diversity and identity is built on two distinct and almost contradictory ideas: on the one hand the diversity of cultures, and on the other the assumption of a shared history and common "roots". These two ideas are reconciled

in the European Union's "unity in diversity" motto. This implies that each country's culture is, and should remain, "diverse", while simultaneously maintaining bonds with other European countries, represented by common values and a common cultural heritage. In recent years, the "unity in diversity" motto has had to face several new challenges presented by the societal and economic manifestations of globalization. These manifestations include the successive enlargements of the EU, new migratory flows, and the greater mobility of single markets. They also include increased interactions with others through trade, travel, the use of telecommunications and the Internet, international education, and general leisure activities.

The phenomenon of immigration is perhaps the greatest challenge. Today more than five percent of the resident EU population is non-EU Member State nationals. Multiculturalism is present in almost all the countries of the EU. However, since the late 1990s, official policies concerning multiculturalism in Europe have been met with increasing opposition. Multiculturalism itself has become the focal point of a political ideological debate. Critics allege that as a model it has failed, that immigrant minorities remain "outsiders", and that they are not participating in the civic and social life of the host country.

In order to deal with these challenges, various initiatives for intercultural dialogue have been launched at different levels. It is important to inspire people to actively get in touch with other cultures, and thus contribute to an environment of tolerance and mutual respect. Inter-cultural dialogue cannot be implemented from above −a bottom-up approach is essential, and civil society must play its part. Key focuses are minorities and immigrants who need to fight against social exclusion. Responsibility for inter-cultural dialogue should be shared by all.

The EU has decided to make 2008 the "European Year of Inter-cultural Dialogue" to show the importance it places on this issue, the objective being to promote inter-cultural dialogue to assist EU citizens in acquiring the knowledge to enable them to deal with a more open −and more complex− environment and to benefit from the opportunities provided by such a diverse and dynamic society. People living in the EU should become more aware of developing an active European "citizenship" open to the world, respectful of cultural diversity and based on the EU's common values.

When one thinks of multiculturalism one thinks of a term used to describe societies, especially nations, which have many distinct cultural groups, usually as a result of immigration, this can lead to anxiety about the stability of national identity, yet it can also lead to cultural exchanges that benefit both cultural groups. Whether or not one takes it to be positive or negative depends upon ones interpretation, given certain economic and social backgrounds. Multiculturalism requires that all cultures should be open, self-critical, and interactive with their relations with each other and whatever ones

interpretation of multiculturalism is, it is important to remember that to understand it is to appreciate that it means many different things.

If one takes a look at the surface of Europe one can say that it appears to be a multicultural society, after all 'Euro-land' is made up of different countries, each having their own distinct languages, customs and traditions. The recent expansion to 'Euro 27' bridges the gap between Western and Eastern Europe, Europe being a sort of 'melting pot' in which customs and traditions are shared. One can see religion as another factor making Europe multicultural; Music being another factor, for example, popular music from Italy is also just as common and popular in France and Spain, just as much as it is in its country of origin. Eating habits being passed from country to country. Culinary delights being bought and sold all across Europe. Another strong factor in that Europe is a multicultural society is the Euro, the single European monetary system,

The idea of Europe being a multicultural society is merely just an image trying to portray Europe as multicultural. It is this 'image' that is the idea of Europe; the idea being the main goal of what Europe should be, cultures coexisting peacefully and harmoniously. When one looks into the deep heart and inner soul of Europe one can see that this image is a long way off and far from being achieved, in fact this image of the 'idea' of Europe is nothing more than a delusion that the governments of Europe are trying to achieve, by many numerous strategies such as introducing the 'Euro' and uniting east and west.

4. EU CITIZENSHIP – SOCIAL CHANGE AND THE EU CONSTITUTION

European Citizens are not a fantasy, quite far from it. In fact, the sooner we realize that our European commitments help our country to get rid of its limitations or to move to a higher level of intellectual and cultural dialogue with other European countries, the better for our country. In a way, it is a call to return to the roots of modern Europe, namely, to the ideals of Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe where a joint devotion or dedication to a certain set of values and ideals was able even to overcome enormous political animosities. Symbolic European citizenship and citizenry date back to the days of Thomas More and Erasmus; the same applies for the Republic of Letters set up by Voltaire and other philosophers yet enthusiastically joined by such people as David Hume, not to mention their great German successor Immanuel Kant.

It may seem that European humanists and philosophers preceded and anticipated the political and economic architects of present Europe, that is, the founding fathers of the EU, such as Robert Schumann and Jean Monet. All this was possible only trough the aforementioned symbolic European citizens. The only question is how to translate that symbolic citizenship into self-activating political citizenship of present Europeans.

The definition of what the EU is engages the relationship of organization, territory and individuals. To define the emerging Constitution of the European Union in the field of citizenship, justice and security is to seek the parameters of an emerging state. The definition of state involves a territory, people and a political administration exercising authority. Just as deliberate uncertainty surrounds the territorial extent of the EU, so also it touches its people; the matrix between territory and people is implicit in the differentiation between citizens and immigrants.

The choice of the State to allocate citizenship to one individual and to withhold it from another is an essential element of state sovereignty. It is a means of defining belonging and exclusion. The creation in 1993 of citizenship of the Union, premised on nationality of a Member State, brought an important dimension to the essence of the concept.

At the core of the European Court of Justice's judgment is the principle of equality between citizens. In a Union of 27 Member States where the citizens of the Union enjoy their status as such only by virtue of their nationality of a Member State –though an increasing number of them enjoy the nationality of more than one Member State– how can the essential element of their citizenship in liberal democracies –that of equality– find its expression?

In the EU there is a shifting territory where a treaty has many constitutional characteristics (including the creation of citizenship) but continues to call itself a treaty. How the citizen controls and interacts with those in power and the limitations of powers in their regard –is one of the central objects of constitutions. Several situations may illustrate the intertwined nature of citizenship, territory and the right to equality, showing also reluctance (to some extent) of (some) Member States to come to terms with the transformation of the EU to an area within which the meaning of citizenship and its essential element (equality) –are subject to new social settlements.

T.H. Marshall[2], the British social scientist, examines the constituent elements of belonging which are central to the idea of citizenship. According to Marshall, citizenship is composed of three distinct elements:

1. CIVIL: the rights necessary for individual freedom, liberty of the person, freedom of speech, thought and faith, the right to own property and conclude valid contracts, and the right to justice;

2. POLITICAL: the rights to participate in the exercise of political powers, as a member of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body;

3. SOCIAL: from the "right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in society."[3]

Marshal underlines the security of civil rights by the people, and finishes with the social rights. If a comparison is made with citizenship of the Union, leaving aside the fact that key rights attached to it accrue only in the situation of migration and not within the state of nationality, the first step towards the acquisition of citizenship rights in the EC Treaty was in fact social, the right to equal treatment in social security, the corollary right to freedom of movement in the Treaty (Art. 40 EC)[4].

The relationship of citizenship and freedom (in the form of freedom of movement) is essential to EU law. From the establishment of the European Economic Community with the entry into force of the ECC Treaty, freedom of movement of persons was among the objectives. The object of abolition of obstacles to the free movement of persons was particularly pointed out[5].

EU free movement rights were legislatively "complete" in 1968, though giving effect to those rights was a longer process. As originally adopted, the Treaty referred to individuals as economic actors, and the right to move was designed for those exercising some sort of economic activity; the humanitarian reasons found no direct place in the Treaty, being only inserted later with the Amsterdam Treaty (rather it is the right to work which is central to a right to cross a border, although the type of economic activity is wide, covering most situations).

Consequently, the relationship of the individual and the state was transformed. And so, the space which is being created is one within which rights of entry, economic activity and residence are created for a class of persons defined on the basis of nationality. This can be considered an important shift from the position in international law where only humanitarian grounds give rise to a duty on states to admit non-nationals – however the limitations on the right to entry place is still far from a citizenship right within the meaning of the European Convention on Human Rights.

4. CAN WE SPEAK OF A EUROPEAN IDENTITY?

Europe's identity and its ability to preserve a cohesive society while continuing to embrace the diverse cultural elements of its 27 Member States is mainly based on the intercultural dialogue –which has become a major challenge in our increasingly globalized, yet ideologically fragmented world. In today's European Union, freedom of movement has greatly facilitated dialogue across borders and cultural exchanges are

lively and vibrant. EU citizens benefit from increasingly easy access to cultural goods and activities from a variety of ethnic and linguistic origins.

The point of departure of most discussions on European identity is the idea that a political community needs a common set of values and references to ensure its coherence, to guide its actions and to endow these with legitimacy and meaning. With the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, and the founding of the 'European Union' with 1992's Maastricht Treaty -which gave the European Communities new and stronger competences in a wide range of areas (such as foreign affairs, security and defense), two issues gained renewed urgency: defining the EU's borders and boosting the political legitimacy of the Union in the eyes of its citizens: the 'glue' that unites all Europeans and keeps the bloc together. Europe has managed to preserve a shared cultural heritage. This sense of belonging together can only be based on common cultural values and convictions. On this basis, it is high time EU borders be defined.

1. **Communitarians** believe that a polity can only be stable if it possesses a 'thick identity', anchored in a common history and culture. They emphasize that European identity has emerged from common movements in religion and philosophy, politics, science and the arts. Therefore, they tend to exclude Turkey from the ranks of possible future member states, and argue for stronger awareness of the Christian (or Judeo-Christian) European tradition. For them, 'United in diversity' is taken to refer to Europe as a "family of nations".

   On this basis, they believe it is high time to define the EU's borders. But opponents argue that this view is a form of 'Euro-nationalism' that leads to exclusionary policies within European societies (as regards non-European immigrants) and the polarization of global politics, citing the "clash of civilizations" prophesied by the scholar Samuel P. Huntington as its worst possible outcome.

2. **Liberals and republicans**, on the other hand, argue for a common political culture, or civic identity, based on universal principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law expressed in the framework of a common public sphere and political participation (or "constitutional patriotism", a term associated with German scholar Jürgen Habermas). They believe that cultural identities, religious beliefs etc. should be confined to the private sphere. For them, a European identity will emerge from common political and civic practices, civil society organizations and strong EU institutions.

   'United in diversity', according to this view, means that citizens share the same political and civic values, while at the same time adhering to different cultural practices. The limits of the community should be chiefly a question

Boldea, M., Silasi, G. y Dragoi, I.   **The European Space:**
                                                    "A family of nations"…

of politics, not culture. But the liberal-republican standpoint is often criticized for what is seen as the artificial distinction between the private and the public or the subjective and the universal. Democracy and human rights, according to critics, are not universal values, but themselves spring from specific cultural traditions. Problems related to cultural differences are ignored, rather than dealt with. Furthermore, solidarity and emotional bonds in societies can only result from cultural feelings of belonging together, never from purely abstract principles.

3. **Constructivists** believe that a 'European identity' could emerge as a consequence of intensified civic, political and cultural exchanges and cooperation. As identities undergo constant change, European identity would encompass multiple meanings and identifications, and would be constantly redefined through relationships with others. 'United in Diversity' would mean participation in collective political and cultural practices. It would be wrong and impossible to fix EU borders, in constructivists' eyes.

   This view, according to critics, over-emphasizes the ability of people to adapt to a world in flux und underestimates their need for stability. Too much diversity can eventually lead to a loss of identity, orientation and coherence, and thus undermine democracy and established communities.

Despite the fundamental differences outlined above, there are a number of factors that are seen by most as preconditions for the emergence of a European identity:
1. Politics;
2. education and cultura; and,
3. social and economic cohesion.

So far, the identity of the European Union has predominantly been defined **politically**.

With completion of the EC internal market in sight and economic and monetary union by the end of the decade looking probable, concern about **social and economic** disparities within the European Community has been growing. In the single market, the intensification of competition can be expected to expose the weakness of regions in difficulty, while the transition to EMU will place considerable burdens of adjustment on inflation-prone economies. On the whole, it is parts of the Community which are already disadvantaged. The realization that there may be losers as well as winners from an acceleration of economic integration has prompted demands for more effective policies to ensure that the social and economic cohesion of the Community is addressed.

There are fears that unless sufficient resources are made available to assist the less-favoured parts of the EC, the political consensus needed to sustain the momentum of integration will be threatened. For the period 2007-2013, economic and social cohesion

will have to concentrate more on crucial development concerns in the field of economic growth and employment while continuing to support regions which have not completed the process of convergence in real terms. Structural assistance also remains necessary in geographical areas facing specific structural problems (areas undergoing industrial restructuring, urban areas, rural areas, areas dependent on fishing, and areas suffering from natural or demographic handicaps). Finally, simplification and decentralization of the management of regional policy financial instruments (Structural Funds and Cohesion Fund) will be the watchwords of the regional policy reform for the period 2007-2013.

The critical role of **culture and education** should not be written off, for they still remain the most potent instruments of European integration and cohesion. Universities are much more politically efficient and powerful than we are inclined to think of them. You do not need to be artificially politicized to be political in the deeper sense, that is, immune to moral and political provincialism, and also attentive and sensitive to the world around you. The responsibility regarding the education of a multilingual, tolerant, curious, and liberally-minded European can be put down to the European universities, which can have an enormous contribution to the process of European unification. Many consider that it makes no sense to expect to get the lump in the throat someday on hearing the European anthem or how pointless it is to endeavor to create something like European patriotism. They smear that idea of being at home in Europe as a symbolic space of values and ideas more than anywhere else. Yet the undisputable fact is that European universities provide nearly a perfect framework for such an education.

5. CONCLUSIONS

While working with students we are constantly surprised by how impossible it is to extinguish the human spirit. The human capacity to create is universal. Many years ago, Joel Barker stated that when something is impossible to achieve with one view of the world, it can be surprisingly easy to accomplish with a new one. Several people can point out how critical it is to stay open to different actions and reactions, rather than instantly categorizing people as resistors and allies. No easy task – one has to constantly let go of personal assumptions and stereotypes.

It is only then fascinating to notice how many interpretations the different members of a group can give to the same event –no two people see the world exactly the same way. And it is exactly there, where there is true diversity (either in the society or in an organization) that innovative solutions are being created all the time, just because different people do things differently. When the environment changes and demands a new solution, we can count on the fact that somebody is already practicing the new solution. If the system becomes too homogenous, it becomes vulnerable to

environmental shifts. In other words, diversity lies at the heart of the society's ability to innovate and adapt.

Our society is filled with many intertwining and diverging interests, personalities and issues, that there is no possibility to represent anybody else, no matter how hard we try to understand differences. But there is something we can do –we can listen for the differences. We can invite people to share the world as they see it.

Every change and every burst of creativity begins with the identification of a problem or opportunity that somebody finds meaningful. Once people become interested in an issue, their creativity is instantly engaged; If we want people to be innovative and creative, we must find out what is important to them and engage them in meaningful issues. But today, in our crazed haste, we do not seem to find the time to get to know each other. Perhaps we are just too busy to get to know each other; we have become a society that labels people in greater and greater detail. We know each other's personality types, leadership styles, syndromes and neurotic behavior. We are quick to assign people to a typology and then dismiss them.

The act of listening brings us together. We may not like certain people, or approve of their behavior, but if we listen, we move past the labels. The stereotypes that have divided us melt away and we discover that we want to work together, and as we deepen our relationship we can recognize our mutual interest, and in time maybe let go of many interpersonal difficulties and work around traditional hindrances. People start acknowledging the fact that they need each other and are willing to figure out how to make the relationship work, because they realize this is the only path for achieving their aspirations.

In the Enlargement process building participation is not optional. Leaders have no choice but to invite in everybody who is going to be affected by change. Those they fail to invite into the creation process will surely and always show up as resistors. Let's face it, none of us know what will work inside the network, and none of us are smart enough to design anything for the entire system. It is difficult to understand without asking everybody into the design process. If we fail to encourage unique and diverse ways of doing things we destroy the entire system's capacity to adapt.

A growing number of Member States demonstrate the influence of other countries' ideas in shaping their national policy measures. There is always a risk that the best may be getting better and the worst performers not progressing. There is always a clear need for candidate countries to close the gap that separates them from EU frontrunners. Efforts to exchange good practice must be stepped up. Only in this way can Europe bridge its performance gaps, particularly in the context of an enlarged Europe.

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[3]   Ibidem, pg. 11.

4   Art. 3(c) EC.

5   In part III, Title III, Articles 39-49 – new numbering, due to the entry into force of
         the Amsterdam Treaty.