**European issue
n°205
16th May 2011**

Disquiet over Identity in Europe: Rising to the Challenge set by National Populism

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ABSTRACT The rise of national-populism in Europe reveals a pervading disquiet over identity to which this political trend offers a "reassuring" vision of national and European identity shaped by history and a series of inherited cultural values. This unchanging identity claims to offer the continent's citizens a bastion of protection against external attack which is blamed for levelling out and making the populations of Europe interchangeable. This vision of identity, which is as attractive as it is deceptive for some of public opinion, draws its strength from the difficulty the EU has in creating a political identity that is constant and complementary to national identity to which Europeans remain fundamentally attached. Given the operation launched by the European national-populist parties to win over the peoples of Europe a means must be found to dismantle their idea of identity via criticism of its ethnic substrata and the natural aspect on which it is based; a vision of the European Union that is proud of itself, of its heritage, of its work and of its political values, which make it so distinctive, has to be given value. Only a Europe that accepts itself for what it is and for what it is not, will succeed in forging a European consciousness.

INTRODUCTION For several months the debate over multiculturalism has come to the fore again in Europe after successive declarations made by some of Europe's leaders who point to the failure of this model of cultural co-existence within European society. Whether it was Angela Merkel, David Cameron or Nicolas Sarkozy [1], they have all spoken of the role played by multiculturalism in the collapse of society and the threat this poses to the original identity of European nations. This accusation reveals the present disquiet over identity caused by demographic developments in an ageing continent affected by immigration that now almost exclusively comes from non-European countries [2]. It also shows that the leaders of Europe intend to take hold of a topical debate that has been monopolised by the national-populist parties for far too long.

This political trend that rallies parties on the European far right has focused on the theme of identity after anti-communism ceased to be the centre of its narrative in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet bloc; this forced it to define a substitute ideology and to bring its rhetoric in line with the international 1990's trend of national awakening. Now national-populist parties stand as the defenders of national identities in the face of "cosmopolitan globalism" and "the Leviathan" in

Brussels. To refine their rhetoric they emphasise the "substantial" nature of identity, challenging all types of identity building processes and portray the individual as one locked into several spheres of identity. Hence national-populism offers a tangible view of national and European identities, with supposedly protective virtues; this might explain the power of persuasion this narrative has over some people who are worried about on-going developments and who are sensitive to a rhetoric which gives value to belonging to an ethnic community the roots of which lie in a common culture and territory. In the face of this discourse that pleads for a Europe of identities and which stigmatises the European Union's predisposition to create it what alternative should the latter put forward in terms of identity?

I. THE NATIONAL-POPULIST IDEA OF IDENTITY

National-populism distinguishes itself by its narrative on the imminent extinction of Europe's identity which the re-publishing of Jean Raspail's novel, *Le Camp des Saints* [3] in February 2011 bears witness to thereby revealing that it is a shared fear. In the face of this threat national-populism offers a view of identity which

1. Various dailies observed this discourse held between October 2010 and February 2011. See notably: "Angela Merkel admits the failure of German multiculturalism" Le Figaro, 17th October 2010. http://www.lefigaro.fr/international/2010/10/17/01003-20101017ARTFIG00129-angela-merkel-admet-l-echec-du-multiculturalisme-allemand.php ; "David Cameron :Europe must wake up to counter Islamist extremism.", Le monde, 5th February 2011, http://www.lemonde.fr/europe/article/2011/02/05/david-cameron-l-europe-doit-se-reveiller-contre-l-extremisme-islamiste_1475497_3214.html; "Sarkozy: multiculturalism, a failure", Le Figaro, 10th February 2011, http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2011/02/10/97001-20110210FILWWW00731-sarkozy-le-multiculturalisme-un-echec.php

2. On this subject see J-C Victor, V. Raison and F. Tétard, Le dessous des cartes 2. Atlas d'un monde qui change, Paris, Tallandier, 2007. Europe appears as the leading contient in terms of immigration welcoming 1.4 million people each year (against 0.9 million in North America).

3. J. Raspail, Le Camp des Saints, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2011 [1st edition 1973]. The author tells the story of the invasion of the European continent by immigrant masses from the Third World who are attracted by its wealth, and announces the disappearance of the continent's original identity.

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is closed to foreign influence and designed as a bastion that protectively envelopes the individual.

1.1. From the definition of national identity according to ethnic criteria …

The national-populist's "vision of the world" is based on a naturalist idea of human existence which sees the latter as a product of nature and sees the individual as a being who fit into several natural concentric communities according to the principle of hierarchical affinities included in the theory of nationalist Charles Maurras [4]. Beyond the family, the community and the region, the nation is designated by this school of thought as the ultimate sphere of human organisation which provides it with an identity from which it can never be separated. Nick Griffin the leader of the British National Party (BNP) explains that the feeling of belonging as well as the allegiance and loyalty to a nation that this triggers off are natural reactions and not the result of any learning process [5]. However since the nation is seen as a community based on ethnic roots, built on a shared history, culture and territory and on a process of hereditary transfer whereby one inherits a nation and does not choose it, national identity is considered as being eternal and unchanging. Consequently identity is fragile and under constant threat of change from contact with others. Hence national-populism believes that the nation is the privileged context for the development of populations guaranteeing them security and protecting their identity by acting as a protective membrane against the outside. This is why they think that the nation must be totally sovereign since this will provide it with the means to maintain the independence and identity of its members.

Moreover the perception of the nation as the only legitimate political community is a direct result of national-populism's naturalist ideas, which by assimilating the nation to a natural and not to an historical development automatically grants it rights that are superior to other political entities, such as the European Union and other international organisations which are seen as superficial structures that have no real substance to incite popular feeling and acceptance. In the eyes of the national-populist the latter are but empty shells void of any affective base; they have no links with the territories in which they work and so cannot be the

source of any identification process. According to the far right Voltaire's idea whereby every human being is above all "*a citizen of the universe*" is an infringement of the natural laws that are supposed to govern humanity. This is why the National Front in France believes that the "*nation is the only conceivable political community, which means that it is the only one to exist in reality, the only one that can exist and the only one that should exist*" [6]. However should we not rather agree with Michel Foucher when he says that "*fundamentally identities are constructed*", which means that it is easy to create mythical theories which lead us to believe that they are our natural heritage [7]?

1.2. to that of European identity.

From this standpoint although the nation is seen as the only sovereign political community it is not however the final sphere to which the individual belongs, since there are wider circles that intersect and bind him with other major areas of civilisation and help shape his identity. Hence beyond their respective national ties the people of the continent also belong to the area covering European and Western civilisation [8]. The declarations of several national populist parties illustrate this, like those of the Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC), which in spite of its extreme hostility to Switzerland's integration into the European Union does state that it identifies with "*Western, Christian culture which is the base of our identity and our life together*" [9]. The same applies when the BNP speaks of the people native to the British Isles, it denominates the "*English, Scots, Irish, Welsh as well as all of the other populations of European descent which have come to settle in past centuries and which are now fully integrated into British society* [10]".

National-populists see identity therefore in ethnic and not political terms; identity in this case is based on essentialist considerations [11] which are the result of the cultural unity of the continent, of a long history based on alliances and common battles against the invading foreigner [12]. This identity which is founded on the heritage of Classical Antiquity, Christianity, Humanism and the Enlightenment has given Europeans a series of values that distinguishes them from the rest of the world, enabling them to stand out as a civilisation that has been blessed with specific characteristics. The Progress Party in Norway believes

4. C. Maurras, Mes idées politiques, Paris, Fayard, 1937, pp. 257-258.

5. BNP Manifesto 2010: http://communications.bnp.org.uk/ge2010manifesto.pdf (p.21).

6. A. Bihr, "La nation dans le discours du Front national", in Le crépuscule des Etats-nations, Lausanne, Page Deux, 2000, p. 131.

7. M. Foucher, "Pour une géopolitique des identités en Europe", Comprendre, n°1, 2000, p. 350.

8. The term "civilisation" in the eyes of national-populism means a group of individuals who share the same culture, the result of a joint history. Applied in Europe and the West the term may seem simplistic in that it is easy to distinguish within these entities, distinct "sub-cultures". On this subject see Lucien Febvre speaks of a European « community of civilisation » that results from a merger in the Middle Ages of Nordic and Mediterranean components. L. Febvre, L'Europe. Genèse d'une civilisation, Paris, Perrin, 1999.

9. UDC's Political Programme:http://www.svp.ch/display.cfm/id/101397(p. 120).

10. BNP Manifesto 2010, op.cit., p. 21.

11. European identity is the focus of a political debate in which two trends compete: whilst the essentialist school promotes the ethnic and cultural substrata in any identity the constructivist school places more value on the construction of identity, political culture and shared interests. On this subject see F. Cerutti and S. Lucarelli (ed.), The Search for a European Identity. Values, Policies and Legitimacy of the European Union, London, Routledge, 2008.

12. National populists believe that the territory of the European Union covers the area of Christian expansionism in the Middle Ages. For a more detailed presentation of what European identity means for the far right see M. Balent, "L'Union européenne face au défi de l'extrémisme identitaire", European Issues n° 177, Robert Schuman Foundation, July 2010 : http://www.robert-schuman.eu/doc/questions_europe/qe-177-fr.pdf

that the values to promote are "*those of the tradition and cultural heritage of Norway and the West, that are based on a Christian, Humanist vision of life* [13]." According to national-populism it is this set of values that makes Europe a distinctive civilisation, at the crossroads between the heritage of the Alexandrian Empire open to the East, the Roman Empire and the "Pax Romana", the Germanic Holy Roman Empire and the Christian West [14]. The national-populist therefore believes that the homogeneity of European identity is a result of the harmony of cultural values and the territory in which these have their roots. This "homogeneous identity" gives rise to natural links between European nations and justifies, according to the Hungarian party, Jobbik, a strengthening of relations between nations that are united "*by a common culture and heritage*" [15].

However defined like this cultural identity is totally opposite to the political identity which the leaders of Europe are trying to promote and for whom Europe is primarily defined by political values as expressed in the European Treaties, such as freedom, democracy, the respect of Human Rights – which aim to unite all of the States which share them. Whilst this political identity is based on a legal foundation and "constitutional patriotism" as defined by Jürgen Habermas [16], cultural identity reflects a rather more romantic vision of Europe and is not based on universal principles but on particularist, affective presuppositions.

We have to add that at this point that the type of European cultural identity fostered by national-populism is a mythicized vision of Europe in which countries stand united after centuries of history and struggle to counter a common enemy. For Jean-Marie Le Pen the names which have led to the creation of Europe are "*Marathon, Salamis, Lepanto, Poitiers, Tolbiac, the Catalaunian Plains*" [17]. However although it is possible to identify periods of European unity when a common culture was formed, as in the time of the Crusades, when the Christian West united under one religion and one language rallying to free the Holy Land from Muslim domination, or during the Enlightenment when a literary and philosophical Europe emerged helping to spread the continent's cultural aura, we must not forget the periods of fratricidal war and division. As Pierre Manent reminds us culture has divided Europeans more often than it has united them. This is the case with religion, placed by anthropologists at the heart of any culture. "*Modern European States were also built, possibly first and foremost, to overcome religious division*," he adds [18]. Moreover "*European discoveries of a universal nature were not the result of a united Europe, of a Europe comprising political unity, on the contrary they emerged from a Europe divided into rival nations*" [19]. In addition to this it is not certain that European culture is specific to the continent and it would more accurate if we spoke of a "pan-Atlantic" culture to quote Frank Pfetsch, since the US and Europe both share the same roots [20]. Finally it seems that all identities are based both on real facts and on a collective vision, as analysed by Benedict Anderson, with regard to the nation, which strengthens individuals' sense of belonging and consequently their identity [21]. But however artificial this "imagined European community" might be it is clear that since this definition abandons the notion of a Europe based on political identity, it cannot be dissociated from the power these ideas of identity have in convincing a share of European public opinion. The study of this provides the proof.

II- THE UNION'S CITIZENS AND IDENTITY

Polls undertaken by the European Commission in the 27 Member States show that citizens still have a rather positive view of the European Union in spite of the crisis ongoing since the autumn of 2008 [22]. The legitimacy of this area also goes unchallenged since European citizens are aware of what unites them and of the common interests they share. 53% of those interviewed in the spring of 2008 believed that the 27 EU Member States share common values. Moreover 37% (in comparison with 44% of the opposite opinion) believe that these values are specific to Europe and to Europeans and therefore are not systematically inclusive of the entire Western world [23]. Hence European identity makes sense for part of public opinion.

However another Eurobarometer survey dating back to the spring 2006 shows that citizens felt more attached to Europe (63%) than to the European Union (50%), a distinction that leads us to believe that for some of them it is not so much the institutions and European policies which lead to an identification process but rather a sense of belonging to the European continent as a territory and to its civilisation. In all events this

13. Progress Party of Norway's programme: http://www.frp.no/no/Andre_sprak/Franais/Principes/

14. J-M. Le Pen, "L'Europe sera impériale ou ne sera pas", Europe. Discours et interventions, Paris, Group of European Right, 1990, p. 123.

15. Jobbik Programme: http://jobbik.com/en_pol_foreign.html

16. J. Habermas, "Citoyenneté et identité nationale. Réflexions sur l'avenir de l'Europe", in J. Lenoble and N. Dewandre, L'Europe au soir du siècle. Identité et démocratie, Paris, Esprit, 1992. See also J. Habermas, Après l'Etat-nation : une nouvelle constellation politique, Paris, Fayard, 2000.

17. J-M. Le Pen, "L'identité européenne", Europe. Discours et interventions, op.cit., p. 144. Via the founding battles for European identity mentioned here by the man who was the leader of the FN for nearly forty years it is quite easy to see that the "Muslim" (through images of Persia, Ottoman and the Moor), is still in his opinion the main enemy against which the European community was built.

18. P. Manent, "L'Europe et l'avenir de la nation", Cours familier de philosophie politique, Paris, Gallimard, 2001, p. 110.

19. Ibid., p. 111.

20. F. Pfetsch, "La problématique de l'identité européenne", in G-F. Dumont, Les racines de l'identité européenne, Paris, Economica, 1999, p. 270. We should note that this argument is relativised by Bruno Tertrais who points to the "profound differences" between Europeans and Americans notably with regard to religion, violence and what is expected of the State and even the way matters are dealt with in the world. See B. Tertrais, Europe/Etats-Unis : valeurs communes ou divorce culturel ?, a Robert Schuman Foundation Note 2006.

21. B. Anderson, L'imaginaire national. Réflexions sur l'origine et l'essor du nationalisme, Paris, La Découverte, 2002 [1ère éd : 1983]. The author believes that nations are communities that were imagined and naturalised in modern times under the influence of the linguistic unification of States and of historians who have built a genealogical history of the nation that is uncreated and immortal.

22. M. Balent, "Public Opinion and the Crisis: what impact will it have on the European Union?", in T. Chopin and M. Foucher (dir.), The State of the Union 2011. Schuman Report on Europe, 2011, Editions lignes des repères, pp. 41-47.

23. Eurobaromètre Standard 69. Survey undertaken between 25th March and 4th May 2008 amongst 27, 161 people aged 15 and over in the European Union. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb69/eb69_values_fr.pdf (pp. 6 and 10). We might say at this stage that the

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attachment is still far below that admitted by citizens with regard to their nation [24]. Therefore Europeans believe that there is no competition between various senses of belonging; at the very most they acknowledge dual identity, both national and European, however their feelings for the nation always outrank any other affinity. This situation is the result of a dual process.

2.1. The European Union's feeble power of identification.

Since 1992 national-populism has seen European policy as a "predatory" enterprise that is grinding up nations into a federal, soulless structure. Initially supportive of the European project it now portrays the European Union as an "infernal" process in which the "European vacuum feeds on nations and their institutions" and "sucks in centuries of history, abbeys and forest, fields and farms" [25]. As it speaks of the European "void" in opposition to the protective, caring function of the nation national populism reveals its refusal to give any credit to the European Union and consequently to admit that it might be able to provide an identity reference to the detriment of the nation. UDC leader, Oskar Freysinger's recent proposal to take the European flag down from all Swiss public buildings [26] is symbolic of this trend. The European Union's feeble power of identification is often commented by observers to the point that it has become a recurrent argument to justify the lack of European citizens' enthusiasm for the EU. Some think this deficit is a result of the Union's identification with universal political values and not exclusively European ones. Pierre Manent explains this using the example of democratic culture: "*democratic customs are not enough to define European identity positively. If this were the case then all democratic countries would be EU members by right starting with Japan and Australia*" [27].
But this weakness can be associated more specifically with the difficulty experienced by the community institutions and Member States in forging a European consciousness. Hence the community institutions are regularly criticised as being distant, abstract and even anti-democratic thereby explaining the low rates of interest they generate. The results of a Eurobarometer survey undertaken some months before the European elections in June 2009 show this: 62% of those interviewed admit that they did not know the date of the

next European elections and 53% said they were not interested. Hence Europeans show a lack of knowledge about how these institutions work. To the question about whether the Members of the European Parliament were elected directly by the citizens only 53% answered 'yes', 36% believed that MEPs sit together as nations and 20% thought that each Member State had the same number of MEPs [28]. Finally the bureaucratic aspect of the European Union whose diplomatic nature is also criticised strengthens the citizens' idea that it is an organisation controlled by the elites, disconnected from the populations' expectations. This explains why the European Union finds it hard to trigger a positive identification process. The national-populists have understood this using it to strengthen their anti-European argument; they accuse the European elites of being the accomplices of globalisation defining them as "technocrats" who obey the rules of international capitalism and whose aim it is to "spread its ideological, political message [29]." In order to highlight this so-called 'imposture' on the part of the Community National Front leader, Marine Le Pen has denounced "the Europe of Brussels" which she accuses of having usurped the name of Europe "*by semantic imposture" and of having perverted "the marvellous idea of European 'entente', substituting it with a technocratic, totalitarian project that is detrimental to our interests* [30]." The True Finns leader, Timo Soini, who won 19.1% of the vote in the general elections on 18th April in Finland also rejects the idea of the Federal European State or the "*United States of Europe*", and yet he approves of cooperation between European States [31]. According to national-populist discourse since the European Union committed to greater transfer of national competences towards federal instances with the Maastricht Treaty, it cannot be the source of an identification process since its goal is no longer European but global.
Finally the difficulty experienced by the European political project in nurturing European consciousness may also be linked to the idea of the "imperfect" even "incomplete" European citizenship to the point that some question the reality of a "Europe of citizens" that is said to exist only via the Eurobarometer surveys [32]. Created by the Maastricht Treaty in 1992 European citizenship was from the very beginning designed to be "a complementary citizenship", which according to the

24. Eurobaromètre Standard 65. Survey undertaken between 27th March and May 1st 2006 amongst 25,193 people aged 15 and over. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/ archives/eb/eb65/eb65_fr.pdf (p. 72).

25. J-C. Martinez, "Maastricht, le désespoir et la prière", Présent, 22nd May 1992.

26. "Oskar Freysinger ne veut plus du drapeau européen sur les bâtiments publics", La Tribune de Genève, 17th February 2011, http://www.tdg.ch/ suppression-drapeau-europeen-oskar-freysinger-trompe-cible-2011-02-17

27. P. Manent, "L'Europe et l'avenir de la nation", Cours familier de philosophie politique, op.cit., p. 109.

28. "The Europeans in 2009", Eurobarometer Special 308. Survey undertaken between 16th January and 22nd February in 31 European countries. http://www.europarl.fr/ressource/static/ files/Eurobarometre/EB71_Elections_ Synthese_analytique_FR.pdf

29. J. Roberto, "Bruxelles arrose ses clients aux frais des contribuables nationaux", National Hebdo, 2 November 1999.

30. Investiture speech by M. Le Pen, FN Congress in Tours, 16th January 2011, http://www.frontnational. com/?p=6295#more-6295 (pp. 5-6).

31. On this subject see the study by C. Deloy for the Robert Schuman Foundation: "General Elections in Finland- 17th April 2011", http://www.robert-schuman.eu/ doc/oee/oee-686-fr.pdf

32. On this subject see the terms used in the debate in Ph. Aldrin, "L'Union européenne face à l'opinion. Construction et usages politiques de l'opinion comme problème communautaire", Savoir/Agir, n°7, March 2009.

Treaty on European Union "complements national citizenship and does not replace it" [33]. Hence without returning to the issue of the political values on which European citizenship is based we have to admit that it only exists formally at present and is still weakly rooted in the individual consciousness. Moreover "cosmopolitan law" which according to Jean-Marc Ferry, defines European citizenship by granting the citizens of Europe with transversal rights, has for the time being not succeeded in dissolving the consubstantial link between the nation and citizenship [34]. Finally according to Marie de Cazals European citizenship lacks one vital feature – that of conferring nationality. For the time being the "*national referent" is inevitable because "the acknowledgement it procures in terms of identity is undoubtedly the strongest foundation on which political power can base itself*" [35]. However does this not reduce the values included in the Treaty on European Union as well as real European achievements that are equally markers of identity? Is the euro not one of Europe's most concrete achievements just like the European flag that flies alongside the national flags on public buildings and which remains the best known symbol of Europe (95%) [36]?

2.2. The Predominence of National Identity

However opinion polls are unanimous on this: the bond with the nation is still prevalent amongst public opinion and the national comes ahead of European identity in the affinity ranking set by citizens. In addition to finding strength in the Union's difficulty in forging a community "we" this special bond is also the result of the very nature of most European States that were initially shaped on an alliance between the nation and democracy since this was able to emerge using the national body as its base - hence the "*modern democratic regime is inseparable from its national form*" [37]. In this way Pierre Manent explains the mistrust and anxiety caused by European integration "*that is foreign to the life of European populations*" and the strength of the idea of "Europe-civilisation" considered as being less restrictive and more familiar [38] to the detriment of "Europe - body politic". In this way history notably, but not exclusively, explains the continuation of national responses in Europe and the difficulty in forging a European public space. The integration achieved by the Member States

over the past 61 years and the theory of the "cosmopolitan paradigm" which supposed that the Union would provide an adequate response to the phenomenon of economic globalisation [39], have not led to the disappearance of what Sigmund Freud called "the narcissism of small differences" [40]. Various examples illustrate this such as the organisation of the election of MEPs within a strictly national context, which means that the European people are the sum of national electorates, the acknowledgement of 23 official EU languages and the States' refusal to relinquish their Commissioners. Ivo Gabara and Lorenzo Consoli, who studied the internal functioning of the European Commission putting forward the idea of an internal "*fragmentation of cultures*", believe that national responses are increasing as the "European ideal" created after the Second World War and the "horrors of war" grow dim in both the collective and individual memory [41].

The special affection for the national context can also be explained by the fact that in the opinion of the European States which were built on a national base [42], the nation is still "*a community of passions, representation and interests*" the source of its cohesion and its strength of motivation. This affection finds it roots in the nation's components – ie its territory, its historically unifying memories and shared cultural and political values. One of the strengths of national-populism lies in this since it has understood the necessity to share memories and a culture in order to forge a collective consciousness. Its insistence on describing the nation as a natural, living element so that it can compare it, over dramatically, with a supposedly artificial, soulless European Union that has no history, finds its source in this technique. The BNP for example bases its entire programme on "*the preservation of our culture, heritage, and identity*" adding that "*our national character and native institutions are a precious heritage which reflect our origins and are an expression of blood*" [43]. In this way the rise of the True Finns can also be explained in a country that only has 3% of foreigners but whose leader has succeeded in convincing some of the electorate by defending "Finnish-ness" and the homogeneity of national culture; he notably stigmatises the 10,000 Somali refugees for their inability to integrate, pointing to the threat he says they represent for the Finnish culture.

In this context although national-populism admits to the

33. M. de Cazals, "Citoyenneté européenne, droits politiques et démocratie", Le Banquet. Revue du CERAP, n°22, September 2005, p. 351. These are the terms exact used in article 9 Title I, of the Treaty on European Union modified by the Lisbon Treaty. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/ LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:200 8:115:0013:0045:FR:PDF

34. In J. Lacroix, La pensée française à l'épreuve de l'Europe, Paris, Grasset, 2008, p. 81.

35. M. de Cazals, "Citoyenneté européenne, droits politiques et démocratie", op.cit., p. 356-357.

36. Eurobarometer 67, June 2007, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/ archives/eb/eb67/eb_67_first_fr.pdf

37. P. Manent, "L'Europe et l'avenir de la nation", op.cit., p. 102.

38. Ibid., p. 106.

39. J. Lacroix, La pensée française à l'épreuve de l'Europe, op.cit., p. 62. The author believes that Europe's political legitimacy justifies separating the national idea from the democratic idea because othe origins of modern republicanism is not so much the nation but « any political structure that enables individuals to enjoy freedom and to pursue projects alone in a community," p. 63.

40. This expression was used by Sigmund Freud in 1929 in his work Civilisation and its Discontents, Paris, Payot.

41. I. Gabara and L. Consoli, "Europe: le retour des caractères nationaux" Limes, n°2, 1997, p. 25.

42. At this stage we should remember that construction on a national basis does not concern all European countries, notably Germany and Belgium.

43. Political Programme 2010 of the BNP, op.cit., pp. 44-46.

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existence of a European identity common to the continent's populations this is simply a transposition on a far greater scale of the national idea of identity. It is an extension of it and does not compete with it. European identity is then neutralised, providing no political legitimacy to the space it claims to encompass and consequently it has no sovereign power. To the national-populist this is more a "strategic" identity designed to justify the alliance of European States to defend their common interest vis-à-vis the rest of the world and drawn up as a protective shield for the national identities it brings together. Hence for the national-populist there is no contradiction between its defence of the exclusivity of the national context and its identity on the one hand and the existence of a European identity on the other. How can the European Union defend itself against this targeted attack and dismantle the national-populist idea of identity? Does its credibility rest by definition on a specific identity?

III. WHICH EUROPEAN IDENTITY SHOULD BE PROMOTED?

The European Union's difficulty in forging a collective identity comes from its difficulty in defining itself and clarifying its goals since the end of the Cold War deprived it of a common enemy – the USSR –which it had used to build its future. Since then the European project seems to have lost its constancy and its ability to offer Europeans the guarantee of a joint future, a message which enlargement only helps to confuse even more. To re-create a common future the European Union must imperatively define the area which it covers and assume more convincingly the cultural and political values that are the foundation of its cohesion in contrast to those which are foreign to it. It has to defend its own vision of identity by stressing that this is necessarily the result of history and the product of integration in order to relativize the idea of the "eternal, unchanging identity" put forward by the national-populists.

3.1. Define the limits of Europe
According to Régis Debray, the author of an essay entitled "*l'Eloge des frontières*," (In Praise of Borders) a people is defined as "*a population, together with its limits and its story tellers*" insisting that it is impos-

sible for a population to excel if it cannot define itself. Hence in his opinion Europe "*has failed to take shape*" because "*it does not dare to find out, and it has even less inclination to say where it starts and where it tends*" [44]. This harsh criticism illustrates the dilemma set by the issue of the European Union's external borders which is poisoning present debate over the development of the community project and impeding the identity building process which cannot do without references to a precise territory [45]. Since the countries of Central and Eastern Europe joined the European family, soon to be followed by those of former Yugoslavia, in line with the desires of the Founding Fathers of Europe, the enlargement policy has constantly led to European leaders avoiding the obvious as seen in the opening and continued negotiations on Turkey's accession and with those that may be launched in the future over the accession of countries like Ukraine and Moldova. Indeed European law is ambiguous in this respect since the Treaty on European Union stipulates that "*any European State can ask to become a Member of the Union*" without however defining what a European State is [46]. This institutional vagueness adds to the national-populist parties' rhetoric and contributes to the weakening of the European project which has no territory since its external borders are constantly being pushed back. Moreover the unlimited extension of the European territory has a pernicious effect, as Pierre Manent points out, because, "*the more nations there are in the European Union the more those waiting on the doorstep perceive their exclusion as an unbearable affront*" [47].

Therefore it is important to resume the "forbidden" debate over the limits of the European Union in order to provide meaning again to the idea of a European territory and its borders. Firstly this would mean setting the divide between the Member States and those who are likely to join the Union on the one hand and on the other deciding with which countries various types of partnership might be envisaged as an alternative to membership. The reference to a continent with "natural" borders may be the first criteria in setting this limit. Indeed Europe is not a continent with unlimited borders – it is a geographically delimited area - by the Mediterranean in the South and by the Ural in the East - which automatically excludes Turkey, only

3% of whose territory is in Europe and the capital of which, Ankara, is in Asia. Geographical identity is not enough to turn Europe into a truly political community however. A community such as this cannot take shape without a "transcendent" project that is based on accepted cultural and political values.

3.2. Recreating a European vision and accepting the foundations of its identity without denying the building of identities and ethnic groups.

The European Union would gain by accepting more of its origins to avoid looking like a microcosm or a melting pot of cultures and religions. In this respect it has to be admitted that in 2003 when President Jacques Chirac maintained that "*Europe's origins are as much Muslim as they are Christian*" and when he refused to include any reference to Europe's Christian roots in the preamble of the European Constitution the following year in the name of secularity, collective points of reference were confused and the national-populists successfully used this to build their anti-European rhetoric. Hence it is urgent to re-iterate what Europe's real roots are and to accept what the present French European Affairs Minister, Laurent Wauquiez calls the "*the Europe of bell-towers*" by giving value to a Europe which finds its source in "Hellenism, Roman civilisation and above all Christianity" [48]. This reminder which should help redefine European identity to make it specific cannot however ignore the values that are set out in the Treaty on European Union which was drawn up via a democratic Convention [49].

It also seems appropriate to relativize the national-populist idea of European identity which is seen as a heritage, by remembering that is always a product of History. Indeed identity is also the product of "*a construction that is punctuated by political strategies led by the elites, by connections with history and memory and citizens' perceptions that were formed at school.*" However the construction of identity refers to identification processes, to a community based on law (identity-citizenship) providing content to European identity which cannot be exclusively historical or cultural. In addition to this if the "*quest for European-ness*" is pursued to excess it might lead to the building of an opposite process ("*identity-otherness*" thereby enhancing the cultural dimension of Europe),

which leaves the way open to xenophobic discourse and responses [50].

The ethnic reality of nations and even more so that of Europe, as it is put forward by national-populism, can also be contested. According to Thierry Ménissier, ethnicity is rather more "a projection" into the past and the future designed to legitimate a national political project; it is also the result of "*intellectual interpretation*" [51]. Moreover ethnic considerations can weaken the Nation-State in that they flourish more within an infra-national context and lead to value being given to a Europe of regions rather than a Europe of nations. Finally it has to be admitted that the perception of European identity put forward by national-populism as an extension of national ethnic based identity is simplistic and even deceptive.

To conclude the definition of a collective European identity implies a return to the European ideals as defined by one of the Founding Fathers of Europe, Robert Schuman, who described it as a democratic project of Christian origin since it is "Christianity which has taught us that all men are equal in nature, children of the same God, saved by the same Christ" [52]. This Christian project immediately implies a strict separation of power, making a clear distinction between "*what belongs to Ceasar and what belongs to God*" [53] to the point of believing that the intrusion of religion in the public area is contrary to the original European project. It is by accepting and asserting these historical details which distinguish it from other geopolitical areas and by developing its civic aspects that Europe will recover its political credibility and give rise to a common consciousness. However European identity federated around a collective vision must not appear as a threat to the existence of national identities that are it components. Again this means a return to Robert Schuman's original project which intended to rise above the nation "*not to diminish or absorb it but to provide it with a greater, higher range of action*" [54]. A reorientation of this kind will make it possible to reconnect with the aspirations of European citizens who are attached to the nation and the identity it provides and who approve of the European project in so far as it appears as a protector and the origin of real achievements in a world in which size influences power. The European Union must therefore give value to its successes in the internatio-

48. L. Wauquiez, "Assumons l'Europe des clochers !", Le Figaro, 7th February 2011, p. 18.

49. See for example the preamble to the TEU which mentions "that attachment to the principles of freedom, democracy and the respect of human rights and fundamental freedom and the rule of law." The preamble also says that it wants to deepen the solidarity between their peoples while respecting their history, their culture and their traditions, and work towards "human dignity" . http://eur-lex.europa.eu/fr/treaties/dat/12002M/htm/C_2002325FR.000501.html

50. Y. Bertoncini and T. Chopin, Politique européenne. Etats, pouvoirs et citoyens de l'Union européenne, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2010, pp. 85-88.

51. T. Ménissier, "Identités ethniques et politiques dans la construction de l'Union européenne. Quelle identité civique à l'ère du postnational?", op.cit., pp. 85-86.

52. R. Schuman, For Europe, Nagel, 2010, p. 45.

53. Ibid., p. 48.

54. Ibid., p. 24.

55. On these subjects see the articles by Jean-Dominique Giuliani, Chairman of the Robert Schuman Foundation, available on his site http://www.jd-giuliani.eu/index.php . On the idea of "Poweful Europe" see for example his article on "Europe en Marche" published in April 2011 2011 http://www.robert-schuman.eu/doc/actualites/ouestfrance-18042011.pdf.

56. See for example the IFOP poll on "les Français et les révolutions dans les pays arabes" published on 27th February 2011 in Ouest-France. It highlights that the French believe (81%) that the migratory threat is the main consequence of revolution ahead of economic and social progress (69%) and democratic developments (65%). http://www.ifop.com/media/poll/1414-1-study_file.pdf

nal arena and be more involved externally. It now has to think of itself as a power able to solve major international issues and to show this [55]. The assertion of this complementarity will weaken the national-populists' rhetoric which stigmatises the community project accusing it of digging the grave of national identities.

CONCLUSION The future of identity is an acute issue in Europe and recent polls show how much this is of concern to public opinion [56]. The fear of identity being challenged as borders open plays into the hands of European national-populism. The latter latches onto evident anxiety within public opinion; in an attempted response it suggests that certainty can be re-created via the promotion of a national identity which assimilates the national community to an "Ethnos", rejecting those who do not belong to this inherited community or those it believes cannot melt into it.

Given the national-populist offensive that encourages withdrawal into national identity and the attitude of European citizens who are more aware of what unites them when they perceive an external threat, European leaders would gain a great deal if they adopted a firmer attitude in defending European cultural and political values that are part of the founding treaties; in this way they will rekindle the pride of the peoples of Europe and initiate the rise of a sense of belonging. Pervading anxiety over identity should convince the European Union of how urgent it is to develop its values and its work to show the need for a European consciousness.

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