Heiko Walkenhorst
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THE CONCEPTUAL SPECTRUM OF EUROPEAN IDENTITY - FROM MISSING LINK TO UNNECESSARY EVIL

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The Conceptual Spectrum of European Identity:
From Missing Link to Unnecessary Evil

Heiko Walkenhorst

Department of Politics and Public Administration,
University of Limerick,
Limerick, Ireland.
www.ul.ie/ppa/Politics/
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Abstract

European identity is a politically relevant concept. The study of European identity, however, suffers from its conceptual overstretch. Aiming to facilitate the use and operationalisation of European identity this article provides five distinct models of European identity that shape the political and academic debate on the future of Europe. Starting from a macro-theoretical perspective, existing political and theoretical contributions are placed within an original spectrum of European identity approaches. In an empirically based approach the models are explained by their variation in development, aims, issues, processes and methods of identity construction. An important finding of the analysis is that European identity models do not stand conceptually alone but are embedded in more general approaches of European integration.

Introduction

The failure of the ‘Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe’ may be one of several indicators that political integration in Europe has reached its limits. As a result, academic interest in the idea of European identity could have been expected to diminish. Increasing political, economic and cultural heterogeneity in Europe, partly a consequence of enlargement and the prospect of a multi-speed and multi-governmental European integration process question the relevance of the concept. Hence, a number of political scientists have argued that the enlarged EU will fail to lay the basis for a ‘pan-European identity’ (see e.g. Dobson and Weale, 2003). Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that the attractiveness of this socio-political concept per se has not suffered from realist, intergovernmentalist and state-centric accounts of European integration (see Buonanno and Deakin 2004; Hooghe and Marks 2008). Indeed the idea of a European identity remains politically salient and continues to touch upon the very sensitive issue of the self-understanding and future shape of the European Union. Nowhere was this enduring significance more apparent that in the debates of the ‘Convention on the Future of Europe’ (28 February 2002 - 10 July 2003; see data provided further below). To be sure, European identity is a politically relevant concept that demands academic attention, both theoretically and empirically. Research, however, suffers from considerable conceptual overstretch. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to provide a typology of five different identity models, which facilitates access to meaning, interpretation
and operationalisation. The categories found result from systematic empirical research and theoretical reasoning. As it turned out, these different models were easy to identify as they tended to be used in distinct contexts.

The structure of this article enfolds as follows: The first part identifies the problem, i.e. conceptual overstretch. The second part explains the methodological approach. Starting from a macro-theoretical perspective, existing political and theoretical contributions are placed within an original spectrum of European identity approaches. In an empirically based approach the models are explained by their variation in aims, issues, processes and methods of identity construction. An important finding of the analysis is that European identity models do not stand conceptually alone but are embedded in more general approaches of European integration. The conclusion justifies why this discrimination is needed if the research community is to enter a more constructive debate about the theoretical foundations of European identity and its empirical manifestations alike. The article aspires to contribute to a more differentiated, structured and conceptualized use of the term European identity.

**Conceptual overstretch**

Studying and researching European identity is problematic. As an academic concept it bears many uncertainties. Indeed, there are very few scholarly articles on European identity that do not emphasize the vagueness of the term, its problematic uses and its contrasting meanings. As an idea, European identity has become an obvious gap-filler in public discourses, and it leaves open a myriad of options for interpretation and misinterpretation. This is rooted in the discovery of European identity as ‘missing link’-metaphor for intensified and coherent integration in the early 1970s, when the European Community (EC) was searching for a unified image on the international stage. The EC Conference in Copenhagen (1973) officially introduced the term with its conclusion about the ‘European identity in the world’. Later, the concept became a standard part of an intra-community debate on a ‘Peoples Europe’ (Tindemans 1976). In this context, European identity increasingly appeared in official and semi-official documents of the European Community and especially of the European Commission in the 1980s and early 1990s (see e.g. Kostakopoulou, 2001). Typically, contemporary references to ‘European identity’ are linked to its ‘need’, usually illustrated by the meaning ‘we need a European identity’. From this perspective, European identity becomes the key to political integration, as it promises long-sought after solutions to fundamental problems of European integration, including:

- the provision of a lasting, cross-generational basis of *public support*. A stable European identity is expected to replace the fading permissive consensus for the ongoing process of deepening and widening;
in terms of a political vision for the integration process (the so-called ‘finalité politique’);

In sum, creating a collective European identity is expected to close the notorious
democratic and legitimacy deficit between the European Union and its member
societies. It is nothing less than ‘the missing link’ to enduring and successful
European integration. To be sure, the lasting attractiveness of a European identity
benefits from its conceptual flexibility, imprecision and ambiguity. A precise
definition of what a European identity entails (values, norms), what it encapsulates
(geographically, socially) and how it could be achieved (politically, economically)
seems unnecessary if not impossible given the multitude of existing national and
regional identity structures. More importantly, the idea of European identity does
not refer solely to a state-related concept of integration. It carries fewer
controversial connotations than ‘European federalism’ or ‘United States of Europe’,
allowing less specific approaches towards European integration like multi-level
governance. Because it is vague and is kept vague, it is politically safe.

Herein, of course, lies the academic dilemma; despite the intensive scholarly
attention that European identity has received over recent years, we are not
necessarily closer to a more certain understanding of the concept, let alone its
empirical testability. Often enough debates on European identity do not
differentiate sufficiently between different understandings as depicted in ‘Europe’s
identity’, ‘cultural European identity’ or ‘identity amongst Europeans’; depending
on historical, political, social or normative understandings of European identity we
need to acknowledge the existence of different contexts, theoretical frameworks and
political realities. European identity has never been a single or unified concept and
mixing its different connotations will only lead to further confusion.

In the following, European identity will be treated as an academic concept. Goertz
(2007: 1) describes concepts as ‘some of the main building blocks for constructing
theoretical propositions.’ He explains: ‘Propositional logic involves the proper
manipulation of symbols. For this to have usefulness in science these symbols need
to be given substantive content’ (ibid). In both quantitative and qualitative research
concepts are being used extensively, with different purpose, though. Opposed to
theorists who deal with non-mathematical and substantial concepts, empiricists
seek finding good quantitative measures (Goertz 2007: 2). Both groups broadly
agree, however, that concepts are necessary frameworks to organise observations or
variables. To be sure, using concepts in social science research is never straightforward (Heywood 2000); often, conceptualizations are contested (Motyl 1992) or vary over time (Clegg 2001). In order to make concepts academically useful, they need to be meaningful, distinctive and measurable. This process of operationalisation translates an abstract theory into a form that can be tested empirically (Sanders 2002). Conceptual indifference or conceptual overstretch leads to flawed operationalisation which in turn produces incorrect empirical results (Sartori 1970).

Methodology

This article offers an empirically based typology of five different European identity models. For the purpose of this study, the ‘Convention on the Future of Europe’ documents proved to be the most suitable data set. With its more than 2000 documents the European Convention Documentation Centre (ECDC - http://european-convention.eu.intlsearch.asp?lang=EN) covers the whole range of contemporary positions on the European integration project. Among the dossiers 386 originate from Convention members directly, whereas 1264 contributions came from NGOs, the business community, religious groups, think tanks, representatives of local and regional organizations (European Convention Secretariat 2003). The significance for the research design stems from the fact that not only academic accounts of European identity were included in the analysis but also public views as long as they were considered politically relevant for the European integration process. Despite its failures to meet the high expectations (see Magnette and Nicolaïdis 2004) there is no doubt that the Convention marks a historical event in the history of European integration as it for the first time created a Europe-wide public forum upon its fundamental issues. Hence, this data collection provides a timely snapshot, a unique opportunity for a cross-sectional analysis with the aim of exploring the significance, use and understanding of European identity in the political discourse on Europe.

Using the ECDC search engine, frequency content analysis revealed that about 10 per cent of all Convention documents include ‘identity’, totalling 204, including written contributions and speeches.’ On this basis, the salience of the subject is comparable to other issues of contemporary concern. The issue of ‘participation’, for example, featured in 401 documents, ‘legitimacy’ featured in 278 documents, ‘democracy’ featured in 244 documents and ‘nationalism’ in 98 documents. For the more complex qualitative part of the analysis the selection of contributions with ‘identity’ was narrowed down to 136, reduced by the section ‘documentation’ which mainly contained revised amendments to the treaty text but not political statements. Only in a few cases documents addressed non-collective identity issues such as ‘identity cards’ or ‘identité professionelle’, which were excluded from the
sample. In the course of the analysis it was decided not to use a simple word count but to use a combination of qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Each document score was scanned upon the term ‘identity’ and the context it was being used in (national, regional, historical, political-legal, international, non-identity. i.e. even when a document contained the term ‘identity’ ten times, it only received a ‘1’ in the data sheet when it addressed only one of the identity models). When a text discussed more than one identity concept each was counted as a separate case. Thus, the total number of cases, 380, exceeds the number of documents found in the data set (204). After screening all contributions that addressed European identity these were categorized along their specific references such as ‘European history’, ‘values’, ‘religion’, ‘culture’, ‘republicanism’, ‘legitimacy’, ‘democracy’, ‘representation’, ‘social sphere’, ‘International/global level’, ‘multiculturalism’, ‘transgovernmentalism’ and ‘future’. In order to generate a truly simple, general and comprehensive typology these subcategories were again grouped into broader frameworks, upon we then selected the five European identity models. Almost half of the contributions use ‘national identity’ (176) as a reference point, whereas 39 specifically addressed ‘regional identity’ concerns. Of all European identity models (165) the political-legal version appeared most frequently (40%), followed by the cultural-historical (28%) and the international (26%) model. The social (2%) and post-identity variants (4%, represented by ‘multiculturalism’) played only a minor role during the Convention’s deliberations.

The approach taken in this article cannot claim to solve the ontological and epistemological puzzles of European identity as a concept per se. We necessarily bypass typical problems confronting European identity studies, which lie — ironically enough — within the notions (or meanings) of ‘identity’ and ‘European’ as social constructs (see Pollack 2001). The study provides an analysis of contemporary interpretations of European identity. Despite making some references to the evolution of the debate the historicity of the term is largely neglected. Typically, there are basic methodological limitations of assessing collective identity formation and construction processes as largely unobservable phenomena (see Smith, 1992; Strath, 2002). These limitations make empirically

1 The search terms were shortened (‘identit*’, ‘democrati/demokrati*’, legitima*’, ‘partici*/partizi* and ‘nationali/nazionali*’) in order to cover documents not only in English but also French, German and Italian language.

2 These figures shall only justify the organization of the suggested identity models. The quality of the Convention contributions and their ideological positioning are planned to be assessed in a different research design.

3 For ‘identity’ see e.g. Brubaker and Cooper 2000; for ‘European’ see e.g. Schlesinger 1992. For the purpose of this paper it was decided to use the term in its broadest sense and without further specification (such as EU, European integration process, Western Europe, continental Europe).
testable hypotheses difficult to establish but not impossible, as various authors have demonstrated (see for example Herrmann, Risse and Brewer 2004).

The conceptual spectrum of European identity

European identity has assigned functions in different theories of (regional) European integration. Whereas the significance of collective identity construction is undisputed in (national) state building processes, no general agreement exists on its significance in supra- or transnational integration processes. Macro-level accounts of regional integration reveal two key dichotomies in this respect: the first is about the desirability or necessity of constructing a collective identity; the second is about the possibility or plausibility of actually achieving such an identity. Existing theories on (European) regional integration thus treat European identity as a necessary or redundant condition and, at the same time, as a possible respectively impossible objective.

The question of European identity is not explicitly addressed in (liberal) intergovernmentalist approaches, which focus on state interest and reject ideas of supranational entrepreneurship and loyalty transfer per se (see Moravcsik 1998). Neo-realism necessarily follows suit; but without its own specific account of integration (Collard-Wexler 2006) one can speculate, on the basis of Waltz’s (1979) logic, whether a supranational union would benefit from a supranational identity as this might promote its unity as an international player. Among those theories where identity matters, sociological (Wendt 1999) and constructivist approaches (Christiansen et al. 1999) assign the highest salience to identity issues, and both regard the formation of a collective identity as desirable and possible. Neo-functionalism predicts a more gradual path towards identity construction and formation (see Risse 2005), and so do sociological institutionalist approaches (see Stone Sweet et al. 2001). Since post-modernist approaches not only reject intergovernmentalist approaches but also reject concepts of nationalism and collectivity, we can consider them as theories that generally accept the possibility of identity construction whilst dismissing its desirability.

When turning to meso-level theories of European integration, a clearer pattern emerges. European integration theory is typically reactionary and context-dependent. Consequently, European identity approaches carry a strong historical element in their theoretical reasoning. Following the re-launch of European integration in the 1980s, European identity received increased scholarly attention within the social science community. The first academic articles on European identity appeared shortly after 1990 (Schlesinger 1992; Smith, 1992; Habermas 1992, Delanty, 1995), focusing mainly on the concept’s historic-political and/or sociopsychological roots (see e.g. Ahrweiler 1993). Over the following years more
Empirically based case studies appeared, providing national and regional perspectives (see contributions in Strath 2000). More recently, the concept has found its way into the normative-theoretical discourse after the so-called ‘normative turn’ in integration studies (see Cederman 2001). Primarily concerned with the end-product of European integration, scholars have started to search for desirable forms of political collective identity on a supranational level. Whereas ethnically based identity models were soon dismissed (Kostakopoulou 2001), current debates explore new forms of collective identity from normative-ontological perspectives. In their theoretical review Buananno and Deakin (2004) have identified primordialist/essentialist, modernist, postmodernist and post-nationalist schools. Meanwhile, an empirically based typology of European identities was presented by Mayer and Palmowski (2004) who distinguished between historical, cultural, constitutional, legal and institutional types of European identity. However, their typology, though welcome, neglects international and sociological formations of European collective identity.

At this point, it should be made clear that this article distinguishes between ‘models’ and not ‘identitisms’, because the idea of European identity hardly forms an independent concept of European integration by itself. At this point, it should be made clear that this article distinguishes ‘models’ of identity-related integration and not the manifold forms of European identity, which do not form coherent and independent concepts of European integration by themselves. On the contrary, it is almost always employed within a consistent framework of related issues, instruments, mechanisms and ideas, even when these contexts remain hidden. As a theoretical module, European identity can occupy certain roles or functions; e.g. as a pillar for a European democracy, as a transmitter for public opinion and interest, as a link between politics and society, as a vehicle from nationalism to supranationalism, as a tool for EU legitimacy or as an end-product of a successful integration process (alternatively to a territorial state system). European Integration theories that deal with identity issues carry distinctive internal logics, expressed in the direction, process, method and conditions of identity construction or formation.

Overall, this paper identifies five models of European identity on the basis of their characteristic features, in particular their aims, attendant issues and process, and their method of construction. Each model also takes distinct political and academic forms, and these are identified. As the analysis will show each of the European identity models relies on specific theoretical, methodological and normative assumptions. The five models are:

1. Historical-cultural identity — This model of European identity refers to a perceived common European past with cultural roots and common values. Politicians use this concept in order to signal a historically grown
Europeanness. Academics, such as politico-historians apply a primordialist approach.

2. Political-legal identity — In order to bypass the ethnic dimension in European identity, politicians favour a republican reading which is based upon citizenship, representation and participation. The academic debate looks at the issue from the perspective of democratic theory and legitimacy.

3. Social identity — The sociological variant of European identity focuses on the popular basis of politics. In the political arena this approach is often referred to as a ‘people’s Europe’ approach. The academic approach is based on communitarian and constructivist theories.

4. International identity — In terms of social collectiveness, this is probably the weakest interpretation of European identity. When politicians use it they mainly indicate the need for a more united image of the EU in world politics. In political science, this interpretation is typified by governance or regime approaches.

5. Post-identity commonness — this model strives to avoid the identity-trap. Political models are inexistent. Political philosophers discuss this question on the grounds of post-modernist and postnationalist theories.

The ordering of the models follows a loose inherent logic. Although there is no strictly chronological line of development, starting with the historical cultural model each novel framework clearly responds to shortcomings in the previous one (a partial exception being the international identity model). These shortcomings are a common feature of the European identity models presented, except the post-identity model, which eventually acknowledges the incompatibility of ‘identity’ and ‘integration’.

I. Historical-cultural European identity

The historical-cultural model of European identity is based on the premise that there is a missing or forgotten historical consciousness of being European among Europeans. Advocates of this model highlight the significance of a common past for the successful continuation of the European integration process. The political use of historical European identity is often linked to the Enlightenment as one of the (probably few) ‘truly European’ achievements. Historical European identity refers back to a commonly perceived pre-national or pre-modern past, when political and intellectual elites across Europe shared the same cultural, linguistic, philosophical and religious framework. Here, European identity is interpreted as having once existed but as being nowadays lost, and this forgotten sense of ‘Gemeinschaft’ needs to be recovered or re-constructed. In this respect the historical European identity model follows the methodology of classical nation-building and historicity. European history is selected through the filter of commonalities in order to
construct the image of homogeneity and common origin. It embodies the myth of continental unity with common traditions, values and achievements. In the academic world, political theory produced a wide range of proto-national European identity studies with considerable overlap to sociology and history. The search for ‘European-ness’ divided scholars into those who defend the existence of a historical European identity (see e.g. Parsons 2003), and those who deny it (see e.g. Delanty 1995). The theoretical shortcoming of the so-called primordialist approaches (Buonanno and Deakin 2004: 84) is the lack of a transnational historical experience in the relatively early stage of European integration which itself would need to become a historical process before social bonds grow into a common social reality (see Smith, 1992). The political use of European identity is reflected in manifold speeches and dossiers on European integration. A typical example is Vaclav Havel’s speech ‘About European Identity’ (1994). In Havel’s words:

The European Union is based on a large set of values, with roots in an antiquity and in Christianity, which over 2000 years evolved.... Thus it cannot be said that the European Union lacks its own spirit from which all the concrete principles on which it is founded grow.

It appears, though, that this spirit is rather difficult to see. Under Havel’s guidance a subsequent ‘Charter of European identity’ was drafted, with passionate calls for the European Union to strengthen its federal structure and to establish strong education and cultural policies. The process of re-inventing the European tradition would be one of identity politics with a particular focus on Europeanized education in schools. Initiatives of this kind have been strongly promoted by the European Commission which initiated the multilingual European history book, the establishment of European teacher training programmes and the planning for a European Curriculum.

During the European Convention, discussions on the historical model of European identity occupied a great deal of time, as it embodied the spiritual and cultural foundations of Europe many were searching for. Accounting for 28 percent of the contributions to European identity, these typically conservative accounts of European integration discovered the roots of ‘European-ness’ in the humanist values of the liberal- democratic writings surrounding the French Revolution, which even found their way into the preamble of the ‘Draft Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe’:

Drawing Inspiration from the cultural, religious and humanist inheritance of Europe, from which have developed the universal values of the inviolable and inalienable rights of the human person, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law [...] (European Council, 2004: 3).
One of the most controversial debates in the European Convention arose from the question of a specific religious European heritage, namely Christianity. For example, Elmar Brok, chair of the European People’s Party (EPP), supported a reference to a Christian God (Brok 2005) as did the then Italian Deputy Prime Minister Gianfranco Fini, who promoted the European Union as a ‘community that shares a Judeo-Christian heritage as its fundamental values...’ He stated: ‘We must make more explicit the roots of European identity, which we see as part of the value of the Christian religion’ (cited in Castle 2003). Fini’s position fell in line with the Vatican delegation who strongly demanded a historical-religious testimonial: ‘All European history and the progressive awakening of a common identity carry the print of Christianity, highlighting the close relationship between Church and Europe’ (Vatican Press Office 2003). The political purpose of this conservative reading of historical European identity is to define ‘European integration’ as a geographically restricted and culturally defined project. Applicant states like Turkey would find it difficult to justify their place in this community. Therefore, the majority of the Convention rejected the Christian reference in the final document (Economist 2003).

II. Political-legal European identity

The logical problem with the historical model is obvious: A religiously, culturally or even only geographically defined European identity inhibits Article 49 of the Treaty of European Union (TEU) which states ‘any European State which respects the principles set out in Article 6(1) may apply to become a member of the Union’. Without further specification of ‘European’ the EU has deliberately opted against any organic membership restrictions by setting formal rules. Hence, the alternative to a historical definition of European identity is that of a political European identity.

As one of its prime advocates Jurgen Habermas claims: ‘Our task is less to assure ourselves of the common origins in the European Middle Ages than to develop a new political self-confidence commensurate with the role of Europe in the world of the twenty-first century’ (1992: 12). The non-ethnic and culture-free model of European identity is expressed in references to democratic values and practices, such as constitutionalism, republicanism, citizenship, civic-ness, representation and participation. The argument against the historical model is that prevailing nationalism in contemporary Europe makes supranational identity construction impossible (see e.g. Smith 1992). What is more, critics point to the procedural similarity to nation-building processes (Kostakopoulou 2001), which is seen to be incompatible with a process of integration that neither provides for a geographical frame of reference nor for an ethnos in the proto-national sense (Lord, 1998). The political-legal model was the most frequently discussed — as probably the most realistic (Mayer and Palmowski 2005) — version of European identity in the European Convention (accounting to 40 percent of the contributions). In their
commentary on a treaty draft Tomlinson and Maclennan, for example, welcome that ‘emphasis is placed on political identity, rather than cultural or ethnic identity’ (2003, p. 17).

The political-legal European identity model defines the European Union as a civil power which has its roots in the classical-liberal tradition of equality and law. The structural openness of this model allows for a higher degree of inclusiveness where new members enter the community on an equal legal basis and under judicial protection. The key feature of this approach is the concept of European Union citizenship which was introduced in the Treaty of Maastricht in 1992 and further developed in subsequent treaty revisions. During the European Convention the connection between citizenship and constitutionalism was repeatedly highlighted, which, according to Weiler (2002) reflected the European legal tradition of citizenship as a manifestation of a constitutional principle. The dilemma of European citizenship, however, is its qualitative dissimilarity to national or state citizenship. EU citizenship does not carry the same legal, social and symbolic features, and it only creates an additional layer of norms and rules to existing ones. As a result, EU citizenship is suffering from people’s ignorance, absence of socialising factors (such as EU citizenship education) and limited range (see Dunkerley et al. 2002).

Due to its instrumental and legal weaknesses, political theorists have doubted the legitimizing power of EU citizenship (see e.g. Schmitter, 2001). Although it provides EU citizens with rights it does not impose obligations. Thus, as Dunkerley et al. argue, ‘it does not create any direct relationship between a European citizen and the Union, a condition at the heart of the idea of citizenship’ (2002, p. 22). Essentially, the political-legal identity model is centred on the question of legitimacy. Theorists of European integration largely support the strong correlation between collective identity and legitimacy (Bellamy, Bufacchi and Castiglione, 1995) despite the fact that this link originates from models of nation-building (Kostakopoulou 1997). Therefore, it is only from a state-oriented perspective that the EU suffers from a genuine legitimacy deficit (see e.g. Scharpf 1999). As comparisons between national and regional integration processes have become increasingly questionable (Van Kersbergen 2000), various new forms of supranational and non-identity based legitimacy have been explored (see e.g. Dobson and Weale 2003).

A tool in understanding European identity as a political-legal concept was provided by Habermas who introduced the notion of constitutional patriotism. The EU constitution as an embodiment of shared democratic values and rights, he

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4 This is reflected in the Amsterdam Treaty Article 9 (1) ‘1 (“Citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship”).
proclaimed, would eventually lead to a stable European civic identity (Habermas 2001, see also Weiler 2002). But even modern (democratic) identity construction relies heavily on welfare state provision to assure political stability through popular support and social harmony. Because social structures are rather fragile, changeable and contestable constructs, collective political identities need permanent governmental maintenance to balance out various centripetal or centrifugal forces within society (Miller, 2000). And even without a strong historical orientation, the model of legal political identity would need to be implemented by some kind of EU identity politics, especially with respect to education (see Miller, 2000). As it turns out, there is no governmental consensus at the member state level. Furthermore, in the absence of welfare politics, EU identity politics can be expected to go largely unnoticed (Flora 1999). Evidently, it is still the member state that holds the monopoly on identity politics in the EU because it possesses the central control on the various identity formation instruments and institutions. Overall, the political-legal model of European identity displays the limits of community-building (Lijphart 1979) as well as identity-building (see MacClancy, 2000).

III. Social European identity

The shortcomings of the two models so far identified have naturally triggered searches for alternatives. The practical dilemma of the political-historical model of European identity is obvious: The European tradition of universalism, tolerance and secularism cannot be limited to EU citizens only, since it would exclude minorities and discriminate against immigrants living in the EU (Kostakopoulou 2001). One alternative to both the historically and politically constructed European identity models has been provided in the form of the social model, which diminishes the role of the elites and largely removes the political-legal and institutional dimension. Social identitists generally criticize political accounts of European identity construction on the grounds of its ‘thinness’, i.e. the negligence of the complexity of collectivization processes, including conditions, constraints, processes of education, socialization, recognition and social transactions (see e.g. Taylor 1994).

The political use of the social European identity model originates from the stagnation in the 1970s. During the so-called ‘stagnation phase’ of European integration, the EC showed signs of ‘Eurosclerosis’ and ‘Europe-tiredness’. Politicians referred to European identity creation as a socialising tool with the potential for constructing a lasting cross-national solidarity. Used in this way, European identity reflects the idea of a non-hierarchical social framework which merges the political aim of an ‘ever closer union’ with that of a ‘people’s Europe’. The European social identity model was thus the response to repeated claims of a distanced, technocratic and elite-driven European project, which had failed to create legitimacy ‘from below’.
As a model that assigns politics an inactive role the social European identity model, quite unsurprisingly, did not form a significant part in the European Convention deliberations (2 percent). There were, however, some notable exceptions. Under the heading ‘The European model of society’ the European Economic and Social Council (EECS) explained its position:

The EESC expects the Convention to redefine the European Union’s constitutional foundations. This new definition will (i) be marked by a balance between cultural diversity and political unity and (ii) allow the European model of society to develop while at the same time fostering socio-cultural identities (Sigmund, Frerichs and Briesch 2002: 1).

The problem with European social identity is not so much the fact that it cannot be constructed by political means; pro-integrationist actors generally welcome grass-roots movements with a European dimension that would reinforce the emergence of a European consciousness. Rather, the predicament is the lack of legitimizing power for the European institutions and supranational decision-making (see e.g. Cederman 2001). Some voices, however, challenge this view (see Risse 2002). Statistical analysis (e.g. Eurobarometer data) has found no convincing evidence for an existing European identity which could provide for a legitimizing framework, but some researchers claim to have found signs of favourable conditions for creating such an identity and some evidence for the beginnings of an emerging supranational identity (see e.g. Lutz, Kritzinger and Skirbekk 2006).

From the theoretical literature we learn that the social variant of European identity is drawn from classical sociological (Parsons 1969) and socio-psychological (Tajfel 1981) concepts of collectivity. Framed in this way, European identity refers to the ‘thick social glue’ between European societies and, unlike the historical and political models, is an anti-rationalist bottom-up model. Durkheim believed that it was not up to the state ‘to create this community of ideas and sentiments without which there is no society: it must be established by itself, and the state can only consecrate it, maintain it, make individuals more aware of it’ (1956: 81). The recently emerged school of social constructivism in European integration studies has fused political identity construction and social identity formation into social constructivist conceptualizations of social identities (Risse 2004). Here, structural contexts, systemic processes and strategic practice interact and result in the existence of an external out-group (the ‘other’) and, more importantly, the emergence of a collective social identity. Theories of the mutual constitutiveness of social structures (Wendt 1994, 1999), intersubjectivity (Adler 1997) and communicative action (Habermas 1981) are at the heart of social constructivism. European social constructivists naturally consider European identity as highly relevant for
European integration (Risse 2004). The theoretical challenge is now to identify the parameters for a successful European identity formation. According to Habermas:

[T]he artificial conditions in which national consciousness came into existence recall the empirical circumstances necessary for an extension of that process of identity-formation beyond national boundaries. These are: the emergence of a European civil society; the construction of a European-wide public sphere; and the shaping of a political culture that can be shared by all European citizens. (2001: 16).

For the time being, the European continent is a multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-national space which has not yet provided a public sphere for substantive transnational communication.

IV. International European identity

Unlike the three models described so far, the international European identity model presented here does not refer to the social or public dimension of European integration. As a system-oriented model, its main reference point is the extra-European environment, i.e. the international or global level, at which the European integration process has struggled for long to present a coherent image (see Manners and Whitman 2003). The trajectory of this model, therefore, does not predict a collective consciousness among Europeans as a social whole, but instead depicts the creation of an organisational identity on the international stage, similar to Wendt’s notion of ‘corporate state identity’ (1994: 2). Policy-wise, the model relates to neither identity politics nor social welfare provision, but it does relate to foreign policy and security considerations. External European identity is usually referred to as ‘Europe’s identity’ or ‘the identity of Europe’ in a political-territorial sense, as stated in the 1973 ‘Document on European identity’ or, more recently, in the Maastricht Treaty preamble. According to the latter, the EU aims to implement a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence, thereby reinforcing the European identity and its independence in order to promote peace, security and progress in Europe and in the world. Article b summarizes the objectives of the state community, which is to assert its identity on the international scene, in particular through the implementation of a common foreign and security policy including the eventual framing of a common defence policy, which might in time lead to a common defence.

Maastricht was the first time that ‘identity’ was mentioned in a primary EU legislative document. Even then, the idea of European identity entered the EU treaty texts only as a ‘light’ version, not surprising given the British government’s strong opposition to the inclusion of any state-related terms, notably federalism (see
Johansson 2002). External European identity must therefore not be confused with a social collectivization tool as it only translates an EU ‘image’ or ‘face’ into the language of sociology. This becomes more apparent when looking at the process of identity construction. The external model represents homogenization solely as occurring at the structural, policy and elite level with the aim of enhancing international recognition. During the European Convention deliberations this aspect was highlighted on the question of the Union’s international legal personality (accounting for 26 percent of all contributions). Here, the political and theoretical predicaments of the international European identity model become visible: The highly polycentric and pluralist structure of the EU has made collective action on the international stage difficult and often impossible, rendering the EU only partially as a security provider and unified international actor.

V. European post-identity commonness

The last model of European identity presented here is one that comes closest to the notion of ‘unity in diversity’ in Europe. This model is the ultimate attempt to escape the ‘European identity trap’ by dropping the notion of identity altogether. Following the logic of an ‘unnecessary evil’, Niethammer (2000) rejects the use of identity in the European context for its inherent potential for exclusion, violence and war. Hence, the post-identity model reflects a post-national and post-modern philosophy which is tailored for an age of ‘global flattening’, where ethnical, economic and cultural differences increasingly disappear. Political theorists have come up with a variety of post-identity, post-national and post-modern formulations which basically all share the desire to escape the theoretical identity puzzle. Among these approaches are post-materialist citizenship (Duchesne and Frognier, 1995), multi-identitism (Kritzinger, 2001), utilitarian and civic identity (Lord, 1998), post-nationalism and supranationalism (Lacroix, 2004), or ‘cosmopolitan-communitarianism’ (Bellamy and Castiglione, 2004). All these approaches serve as replacements for the strongly exclusive concept of identity. During the European Convention, only a handful of contributions (4%) referred to a post-identity model. In most cases it was represented through the term ‘multiculturalism’ or ‘European multicultural identity’, which was suggested by the former Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz (2002). On the question of how to integrate immigrants into the European Union, a Convention member asked:

Is the objective to be multiculturalism pure and simple, or should some core element of the national culture of the country in which the immigrant is settled guide the integration process? Should such a “core culture” include European as well as national elements? (Bruton 2002, 13).

Evidently, even within the post-identity model, a political dilemma remains. That is, the post-identity model which would suit the regional integration process in
Europe has no historical blueprints. Political mechanisms need to be invented and new political tools tested. Until today, the European Union has no road map or master plan for its future development, for its future shape and for the role the European societies involved are expected fulfil.

**Conclusion**

This article identifies five models of European identity as they appear in both political debate and theoretical discourse. These models follow their own internal logic and provide a distinct understanding of European identity according to its role, form and connotation. The comparison of these models displays variations along aims, issues, processes and methods of identity construction, each based upon its own set of conceptual understandings. These models show that especially in the political realm the conviction prevails that a European collective identity is necessary for the success of continued European integration. The analysis of contributions to the European Convention demonstrates favouritism for the political-legal model, which denotes a republican reading of European identity, followed by considerations of historical-cultural and international accounts. The attractiveness of European identity for the current discourse in European integration is explained by the flexibility of the concept, as it allows for non-state visions of Europe which still entail a high degree of political legitimation. In this respect, European identity serves as both a perfect mortar for more concrete integration models and as a political vision, which includes the people in Europe.

Political theorists are necessarily more cautious about the term European identity than political practitioners. Scholars tend to emphasise the fact that identity constructions are unavoidably linked to homogenization and exclusion. Therefore, the evolution of theorizing about European identity shows increased distancing from national identity constructions up to the point where the identity notion becomes abandoned. Instead of treating European identity as the missing link in integration theory, it has increasingly been regarded as an unnecessary evil. Clearly, it is important to note differences between political and theoretical uses of European identity models. Although both groups discuss the same models, the ramifications of their discussions can be quite different. Whereas political actors are more concerned with issues of practicability and power, theorists care more about theoretical soundness and consistency. Nonetheless, both political and theoretical assessments have produced logical or practical dilemmas, which were referred to as predicaments, shortcomings or puzzles through the course of this article.

As long as ‘the search for community goes on’ (see Schlesinger 1992, 317) the idea of a European identity will remain a central reference point for debate and research. The typology of various models presented here is intended to help structure this
debate and allow a more precise operationalisation of European identity, which, in the current discourse, suffers from conceptual over-stretch. By opting for a degree of maximum generalization, the authors want to make sure that no distinctly new models of European identity will appear outside their typology; rather, as depicted in figure 1, it is expected that models and theories will be further specified (e.g. between historical and cultural), combined (e.g. political-legal identity and international European identity) and accordingly systematically tested and explored (e.g. the EU representation at the UN, enlargement, the EU constitution), both empirically and theoretically.

Figure 1 shows the core models in the central pentagon. Their combination on the second level identifies neighbouring approaches and conceptual overlaps (‘model variation’). Here it is demonstrated that the models are not mutually exclusive as the typology outlined in this paper already depicts. Related issues within the outer circle surround the concepts; neighbouring approaches share common features without, however, being exclusively linked to each other. Naturally, this enumeration is exemplary rather than exhaustive, considering the plethora of political concepts at hand.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Spectrum of European Identity
So, what is the academic use of this typology? Surely, this approach has its clear limitations. First of all, the article cannot claim to have exhaustively clarified the concept of European identity altogether. Secondly, it only lists the core models of European identity without looking into its manifold possible variations. Thirdly, the European Convention data only allows a momentary snapshot, neglecting the historical development of the concept itself. Limited space prevents this article from engaging in these highly relevant questions, therefore, this is what future studies must explore. What the typology does is to enhance the Über-concept’s academic usefulness, meaningfulness, distinctness and measurability. Scholars and students interested in European identity are invited to use it as to organise their methodologies, material or data resulting from case studies. Debates on European identity must take into account that different understandings exist and combine the existing models with utmost caution. For academics, the typology allows existing European identity models be linked to general European integration theories in order to view findings in a macro-theoretical perspective. On the micro-level, the linkage to selected issues in figure 1 allows the researcher to include other political concepts without having to inflate European identity beyond recognition. The distinction between political and academic uses of European identity may help to stimulate further empirical research and theoretical explanation. Clearly, more work needs to be done here, especially with regards to political ideologies. Furthermore, the description of deficiencies of European identity models in this article will help to refine further conceptual reasoning. Finally, new European identity approaches can be placed within the proposed spectrum without risking further fragmentation in the academic discourse. In short, the typology presented here should be used as a guide to European identity studies.

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