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Was ist eine Europäerin / ein Europäer? Überlegungen zur europäischen Identität und "Visionen für Europa" im Zusammenhang mit der EU-Erweiterung
What is a "European"? Reflections on European Identity and "Visions of Europe" in the context of EU-Enlargement

Zusammenfassung:

Auch wenn die Frage, was ist Europa beziehungsweise woraus besteht eine europäische Identität, schon lange Thema von Diskussionen und Debatten gewesen ist, so wird die Angelegenheit zunehmend weiter verkompliziert durch die anstehende EU-Erweiterung und den EU-Beitritt von Ländern, die aus unterschiedlichen Gründen ihre jeweils eigene, komplexe Beziehung zum Rest Europas haben. Jeder Beitrittskandidat stellt nicht nur eine spezifische, individuelle und auf seine Weise einzigartige Erweiterung des europäischen Mosaiks dar, die die Idee einer Europäischen Konföderation mit neuartigen Herausforderungen konfrontiert. Hinzu kommen noch die Faktoren einer jeweils sehr besonderen Geschichte im 20. Jahrhundert sowie die damit



verbundenen Unterschiedlichkeiten, die beide noch größere Herausforderungen mit sich bringen. Betrachtet man das Thema im weiteren Sinne als eine Ost-West-Angelegenheit, mit einer jeweils unterschiedlichen Geschichte, Erfahrungen und Empfindlichkeiten, so treten für beide Seiten Fragen auf bezüglich ihrer Identität und Zugehörigkeit. Während in Westeuropa danach gefragt wird, ob jemand primär europäisch oder deutsch, französisch, spanisch etc. ist, so gibt es in den Beitrittsländern eine zusätzliche Ebene, nämlich die Frage, ob man "westlich" oder "östlich" ist. Und da Europa bislang normalerweise als „der Westen“ identifiziert wurde, war ‚Europäer zu sein‘ gleichbedeutend mit ‚westlich zu sein‘. Wie wirkt sich die Ost-Erweiterung auf diese Identität aus? Wird "Europa" nicht wie früher als strikt "westlich" betrachtet? Werden "östliche" Länder durch ihren Beitritt nicht nur

„verwestlicht“ sondern auch „westlich“? Wird Europa pluralistischer werden und Ost und West innerhalb eines größeren Mosaiks umfassen? Oder verschwinden solche Ost-West-Unterschiede und werden zu bloß geographischen Bezeichnungen? Und die wesentlichste Frage: Wie wird die Dialektik von Identitäten und Unterschiedlichkeiten in diesem neuen Kontext realisiert?

**Von „außerhalb Europas“, über das "andere Europa", zum "neuen Europa":
Übergangsländer nähern sich einer europäischen Identität.**

Diskussionspunkte:

- Stimmt es, daß das "alte Europa" Aspekte des "neuen Europas" übernehmen und integrieren wird als zusätzliche Elemente, die das Mosaik verbessern und seine Identität transformieren werden? Oder wird das "neue Europa" sich anpassen und die dominierende Identität des "alten Europas" annehmen müssen?
- Die Identität des neuen Europas ist mehrdeutig. Ist es so, daß angenommen wird, die Beitrittsländer seien europäisch oder doch nicht wirklich europäisch? Wird manchmal gedacht, daß sie sowohl europäisch als auch nicht-europäisch sind? Oder vielleicht, daß sie potentielle Europäer sind, die erst mit dem Beitritt zu Volleuropäern werden? Oder gar daß sie erst nach dem Beitritt und des darauf folgenden Entwicklungsprozesses zu Europäern werden?
- Ist eine "europäische Identität" Voraussetzung dafür, Teil der Europäischen Union zu werden, entweder im Sinne einer schon bestehenden Identität oder einer noch zu erwerbenden? Ist die Tatsache, daß die Erweiterungskandidaten an der Schwelle des Beitritts stehen, auch ein Zeichen ihrer (zumindest) latenten oder potentiellen europäischen Identität? Oder wird zukünftig die EU-Mitgliedschaft nicht unbedingt etwas über Identität aussagen, sondern lediglich über eine spezifische politische und wirtschaftliche Bündniszugehörigkeit? Was wären dann die Auswirkungen von einer solchen Situation auf den Begriff einer europäischen Identität? Bedeutet Europäisierung bloß das Erreichen von bestimmten Merkmalen – wirtschaftliche, menschenrechtliche, usw. – oder birgt es auch eine Art von Identitätsbegriff?

What is a "European"?

What is a European? The question of what Europe is, and what constitutes a European identity, not to mention whether there even is a European identity as such, has long been the subject of intense discussion and debate. This discussion, always complicated if not at times fraught, is becoming even more complex with the pending EU-Enlargement and the introduction into the EU of countries whose relation to the rest of Europe has, for various reasons, not been uncomplicated. Not only are the candidate countries specific, individual, and in their own ways unique additions to the European mosaic — representing yet new challenges for the notion of a European confederation — but the

additional factors of a very particular history in the twentieth century, and the accompanying differences this represents, introduce greater challenges still.¹

One of the primary challenges is precisely this issue of European identity, in the dual sense of the identity of Europe, and the identity of Europeans. That is, in addition to the various economic, socio-cultural, and political "fits" that must take place for some manner of integration of the new member countries into the existing European landscape, there is also the question of how these new countries will somehow reflect, embody, influence, incorporate, or counteract the "European identity" — particularly given their perception and status throughout much of the last century as "Other" to Europe.

Often seen in broad terms also as an East-West issue, with different respective histories, experiences, cultures, and sensibilities, this issue raises questions for both sides of the "divide" about identity and affiliation. How will the candidate countries, considered until recently as "the Other Europe," or perhaps not Europe or European at all, integrate into a "European identity"? Such issues of European identity and whether or how one is European are far from settled in Western Europe, raising issues of primary identifications and affiliations, represented for example by questions about whether one is first European, or first German, French, Spanish, etc. How are the parallel questions with respect to the accession countries (whether one is first European, or Hungarian, Czech, etc.) further complicated by the additional dimension of whether one is "Eastern" rather than "Western"? Does it help to be at least in some respects "westernized" or "western-oriented"? To be sure, given these latter dynamics, coming from the Central European countries, traditionally more ambiguous with respect to the issue of East-West, places such countries in a different position in many ways than countries which are further east, or south-east.

Furthermore, to the extent that Europe was conventionally identified as being the West, or that being European was seen as equivalent to what is conventionally understood by "Western," how does the introduction of "Eastern," or even "Central European" countries affect this European identity? Will this East-West distinction still hold, or continue to be meaningful? If so, will "Europe" no longer be seen as strictly "Western"? Do "Eastern" countries become not only (further) westernized, but "Western" following accession? Or will Europe become more pluralistic, encompassing East and West in a larger mosaic? Or again, will such distinctions of East and West disappear, or become merely geographical distinctions? And most fundamentally, how will the dialectic of identities and differences be realized in this new context?

¹ Among the recent discussions concerning European identity on the eve of Enlargement is the series of colloquia held by the Council of Europe in 2001 and 2002, entitled "The Council of Europe Colloquy on European Identity," and projected to result in the drafting of a "Declaration on European identity." Materials from these Colloquia can be found on the Council of Europe website at: <http://www.coe.int/portalT.asp>.

Identities and Differences: Framing the Issues

An important issue underlying such questions is, to be sure, what might be meant or understood by "Eastern" and "Western" (and hence, once again, the ambiguous status of Central European countries). I will not even attempt to answer this question here; relying instead on the customary conventional usages of these terms, with respect to the CEE and to EU-Enlargement. If it is difficult enough to specify sometimes what is understood by "Eastern Europe" in distinction from "Western Europe," the question of "Eastern" or "Western" identity is even more complicated. Because even though to a large extent this latter is fundamentally connected to the former, it does not always have to follow that an "Eastern" country has an "Eastern European" identity, whatever that might mean. But to the extent that it is customary in many quarters to speak of a given national identity, or a regional identity of some sort, it might also be possible to speak somehow of an Eastern European identity — all the while keeping in mind the dangers of essentialism or homogenization associated with such claims — not to mention the complexities of related issues of nationality and citizenship.

Clearly East-West are not just geographical designations, but importantly historical, political, cultural, and religious markers as well. But as I noted above, even without this additional dimension, the notions of European identity, and who is European, have long been debated.² Various approaches to this question include attempting to identify the markers of a so-called shared European identity. Such markers have included concepts of a shared cultural heritage, or shared ideals, not to mention a set of shared values, such as in the notion of "Europe as a community of values," and stated more formally in various EU documents. More recently, as many have noted, politicians often discuss their "vision of Europe" in terms of a correlation of Europe with the actual or potential European Union.³ And in many cases, these visions are underpinned by a certain "idea of Europe," for instance with respect to particular notions of democracy or market economy.⁴ Yet has also been pointed out, "Europe" should not be confused with the European Union.

² This occurs of course in many arenas, and not just in terms of the candidate countries. Around the time of the introduction of the Euro, for example, and the resistance in England to adopting this currency, the debate often took the form of whether or not the English were "really" European, or England was really part of Europe; thus at the least reinforcing the geographical notion of Europe as the European continent.

³ Hilary Footitt, *Women, Europe and the New Languages of Politics* (London/New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 108.

⁴ Hilary Footitt, *Women, Europe and the New Languages of Politics*, p. 108.

At the same time, we have to be very cautious of postulating such shared identities, or even shared markers of identity. As many theorists and commentators have pointed out, there are risks and dangers in talking about a shared or common identity, that may or may not be genuinely inclusive, or reflect the identities, of the entire group, however that group is constituted. Differences and distinctions can be a double-edged sword: on the one hand, the basis for rich diversity and pluralism; on the other, often interpreted as deficiencies and justified as the basis for inequalities and hierarchies. In the latter respect and in terms of the question of identity, the additional question of "whose identity?" has to be posed, and the issue of whether a shared identity is truly a democratic identity to be addressed; given that even with the best of intentions, when it comes to such issues, the "shared" identity is often the superimposed identity of the dominant group or groups, with an accompanying overlooking or homogenizing of specific identities or particularities. So while with respect to many issues a more democratic process might be possible with the aid of various mechanisms, when it comes to issues of identity, it becomes, once again, much more complicated. And the question of "whose identity," and possible attendant hierarchies, is also, once again, focused more sharply with the issue of EU-Enlargement and candidate countries who have often been constituted as outsiders to mainstream European identity.

A further consideration, and one which I can also only mention here, is the difficulty of defining "identity" as a concept. It is not just notions like "European identity" which are difficult to pinpoint, but the very concept of identity itself which can prove extremely resistant to definition. Hence approaches that focus on identifying particular markers of identity, such as political identity, a shared cultural heritage, a community of values, or in terms of EU accession, particular markers designated as goals to be attained for accession — economic, legal, human rights, etc. But the question would seemingly still remain as to what precisely an identity is; a question sharpened by the context of accession, and identity issues associated with accession. For the candidate countries, will a "European identity" follow upon the attainment of such economic, legal, or human rights markers, or is there some sort of underlying identity concept; one that indeed defines such markers as "identity markers"? For what I suspect is that while our concepts of identity include such aspects and markers, we also hold beliefs about our identity — however vague and undefined — that are not captured by these markers, but somehow go beyond them in a more fundamental, almost existential, sense.

Is an identity only the sum of its parts, the sum of its markers, or is it more? Are there different kinds of identity markers, for example, existential vs. sociological or political ones, as some of the above discussion suggests? How might all of these more theoretical considerations be reapplied once more to the issues of identity and the EU candidate countries? In the last section, I will

conclude by simply sketching out a series of final reflections and questions related to these issues of identity and the EU candidate countries and accession. These questions both summarize the various preceding reflections, while pointing towards further points of discussion.

From outside Europe, to the "Other Europe," to the "New Europe"

- With respect to the recent language about "Old Europe" and "New Europe," is it the case that "Old Europe" will adopt and integrate facets of "New Europe," as new ingredients that enhance the mosaic and transform its identity? Or will "New Europe" have to adapt to and acquire the more dominant identity of "Old Europe"?
- Is "European identity" a prerequisite for being part of the European Union, either in terms of an already present identity, or one acquired later? Is the fact that the accession countries are poised to join the EU a sign of their (at least) latent or potential European identity? Or in the future will being part of the EU not necessarily indicate anything about identity, but rather simply a particular political and economic alliance? Does becoming "Europeanized" mean simply the attainment of certain markers — economic, human rights, etc. — or does it entail some kind of identity concept? Or when we talk about people being Europeanized, is it merely, for example, an economic concept? And what would be the implications of this situation for the concept of European identity?
- The ambiguity of New European identity: Is it the case that the accession countries are indeed considered to be European, or not really European? Or perhaps not yet European, but *potentially* European, becoming fully European upon accession? Or even subsequently, as the Europeanizing process unfolds in the period following accession? Or perhaps, most ambiguously of all, are the "New European" countries at one and the same time both European *and* non-European?