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The formation of a European identity in jeopardy? - The impact of Turkish European Union accession negotiations

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International Relations

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Abstract

The following research report will look at efforts that have been made by EU elites to forge a European identity since its inception. In this light, this research report will evaluate whether there has been steady support for a European identity among EU elites and EU citizens in the different EU member states and thus assess whether the possible accession of Turkey into the EU, a Muslim country, has jeopardised its formation. This research study will be explained by investigating various theoretical traditions on how national identities emerge within the nation-state model and show that Constitutional Patriotism is the approach that EU elites have decided to take in identity formation at the EU level.

Declaration

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

Declan Shine

22nd of May, 2009.

Signature:

Preface

The following research report is primarily about identity formation at the EU level. It is mainly concerned with assessing whether it is warranted to preclude a country's application for EU membership based on cultural differences. Hence, Turkey was chosen as a case study because for the first time in enlargement, EU elites and EU citizens tried to preclude membership of a country into the EU on the basis that the applicant country did not have the same 'identity' as the rest of the EU members. Furthermore, Turkey was even accused of being a threat to the burgeoning European identity which was posited as a valid reason to proscribe its membership aspirations. This research report thus limits itself to looking at how an identity has evolved and been framed, how other candidates have been deemed eligible for EU membership and whether cultural affiliations played any part in integrating previous countries into the EU.

This research report looks at how EU elites and EU citizens alike have perceived a European identity all along and how attached they have been to it. The research assesses whether there is any truth to the argument that Turkey is too different culturally to be part of the EU and a European identity. This research report will also show the kind of criteria that EU elites and EU citizens set for Turkey and how they deem Turkey's eligibility for membership. It shows how this has changed and why this might have occurred.

This research report is about identity formation at the EU level. It is not about Turkey as such, nor is it an in-depth analysis of Turkey's domestic political and economic problems which have stymied its accession into the EU.

As of now, the EU consists of 27 member states. This research report limits itself to the responses and reactions of 4 of these EU member states to the question of Turkey's possible accession into the EU. This was deliberate because in three of these countries, Austria, Germany and France, the public and political sphere is evidently against enlargement to Turkey, whereas in Britain, the political leadership is for enlargement to Turkey. Hence, the focus was on ascertaining how attached they were to a European identity and assessing whether their reasoning for trying to preclude or support Turkey's membership, had something to do with protecting a European identity from Turkey which they thought was in jeopardy. The purpose of selecting these four EU member states is also to assess whether the way in which their national identities burgeoned at the national level, affects the degree of affiliation that they harbour towards a European identity at the supranational level.

My primary intention was to illustrate that a European identity has not always been based on ethnic lines since it was first introduced, rather it had been recently reformulated by some EU member states from a civic to an ethnic identity. By illustrating that a European identity has always been based on civic values up until the last enlargement in 2007, I hoped to dispel the rhetoric on European identity being based on cultural affiliations and a shared heritage. Hence, the purpose was to show that it was unjust and unfounded to redefine an identity as a means to preclude Turkey's membership into the EU on cultural grounds.

Acknowledgements

The present work would not have been completed without the help of a number of people. First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Ms. Natalie Zähringer. Given the massive undertaking of trying to conceptualise the different theories which explain identity formation, she helped me disentangle, reconcile and understand the various approaches. She devoted most of her time and effort to help me understand the main issues involved in identity formation and how to apply them to the present study of this research report. Furthermore, she constantly followed my progress and encouraged me in times of difficulty and especially when the research seemed to have come to a standstill. She encouraged me to research the concepts more thoroughly and when I presented my ideas to her, she often guided me and made sure that I did not stray from the topic and this helped me stay focused and committed. Therefore, I would like to express my deep gratitude to her for her patience, understanding and encouragement throughout the process of conducting research.

I dedicate this present work also to my family in South Africa, especially to my loving father, for his undying support and encouragement throughout all these years. This research report would not have been completed without the help of my family who have constantly backed and encouraged my choice of topic for this research report and I would like to express my thanks to them for their emotional support.

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List of Abbreviations

Alliance for the Future of Austria (BZÖ)

Common Agricultural Policy (CAP)

Christian Democratic Union (CDU)

Christian Social Union (CSU)

Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC)

Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP)

Draft Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe (DTECE)

Deutschmark (DM)

Eurobarometer (EB)

Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)

European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC)

European Community (EC)

European Court of Justice (ECJ)

European Economic Community (EEC)

European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA)

European Resistance Movement (ERM)

European Parliament (EP)

European Union (EU)

Federal Republic of Germany (FRG)

Freedom Party (FPÖ)

Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)

Justice and Home Affairs (JHA)

New Member States (NMS)

People´s Party (ÖVP)

Single European Act (SEA)

Social Democratic Party (Germany) (SPD)

Social Democratic Party (Austria) (SPÖ)

Treaty Establishing the European Community (TEC)

Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe (TECE)

Treaty of European Union (TEU)

European Union of Federalists (UEF)

United States (US)

World War (WW)