

# Enlargement of the EU and Struggle to Coexist with Cultural Others

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## Introduction

Arab Spring, which began in 2010, brought about large numbers of immigrants, crossing the Mediterranean Sea and pouring into the European Union. As a result, a great confusion arose in both Italy, which turned into a main point of entry for immigrants, and the neighbouring France. On the Italian island of Lampedusa, the frontline of the migratory flows, shortage of facilities that could accommodate migrants as well as political and administrative confusion caused by issuing humanitarian temporary residence permits to large numbers of people left migrants frustrated, producing chaos and public disorder. The crucial point here seems to be the fact that basic to this chaos is the problem of cultural differences between the south of the Mediterranean Sea (North Africa) and the north (EU) as well as identity conflict, which might hinder tolerance of those differences and peaceful coexistence.

Moreover, this issue did not emerge suddenly during the Arab Spring but rather has escalated rapidly since immediately after the oil crisis of 1970 when Western European countries like France stopped accepting foreign workers from Arab and other countries. For a long time the Western world has been internalizing the matter.

The problem with a large influx of immigrants and refugees is that if they are accepted as new members of the community, processes of culture contact, cultural resistance and acculturation will inevitably occur. Both host society and migrants experience acculturation and their coexistence results in a common identity that leads to changes in the society. However, as political history of Western Europe since 1970 has shown, it is not an easy process.

Not only changes in society after a rapid increase of immigrants and refugees cause an alteration of identity due to accepting new members. The same phenomenon occurred to a different degree after the enlargement of the EU. The question is to what extent this change is possible and what institutional adjustments are necessary to enable this process. This paper will try to examine the internal creation of a new identity due to acculturation and cultural contact with new members in regard to the concept of identity as well as the cultural phase underlying European integration in the context of culture contact, friction and coexistence with (potential) new members that have increased on the EU's external borders.

## I. Types of cultural frictions arising in the EU

The following section will study the existing types of cultural frictions arising in the EU.

One type covers frictions occurring within the EU. Firstly, it includes the problem of ethnic regions: regions with minority languages and cultures. As of January 2014 the EU comprises of 28 countries with 24 official languages. However, languages like Spain's Catalan and Basque, France's Breton and Corsican or Great Britain's Scottish have not been included. Regions using such minority languages have been repeatedly demanding preservation and development of concerned languages from central governments; occasionally resorting to terrorist-like violent actions. Secondly, there is an internal immigration problem concerning especially immigrants from outside of Europe. Frictions occur mainly with immigrants from Arab and Islamic circle; concrete examples being Arab immigrants from North

Africa in France or Turks living in Germany.

Another type of frictions occurs on the borders and externally, due to management of Middle East and North African immigrants' entry to the EU among others. In June 2004 a resolution to create VIS (Visa Information System), which would allow member states to share visa information, was adopted. The system prevents individuals whose visa application to an EU state had been rejected from submitting a visa request to another member state. Moreover, VIS made it possible to detect fraudulent visas or check backgrounds of illegal residents. Next, in May 2005 FRONTEX (European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union) was established. FRONTEX started to operate in its headquarters in Warsaw<sup>1</sup>. Policies on area entrance management system tackle the issue of deportation of illegal residents as well. Concrete measures are collected in "Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament on a Community return policy on illegal residents" formulated by the European Commission in October 2002 and in "Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals"<sup>2</sup> presented in September 2005.

Additionally, European Pact on Immigration and Asylum adopted in 2008 mentions a "comprehensive partnership with the countries of origin and of transit". However, what can be observed there is the system that shifts responsibility for the EU area entrance management onto candidating countries and their immediate neighbours. Under the name of "encouraging the synergy between migration and development", the task of guarding the EU's external borders is forced on those countries in return for political and financial support (Morice et Rodier 2010, pp.16-17). Moreover, management of immigration through embassies and consulates located in immigrants' countries of origin is largely gaining importance whereas the EU borders are shifting to more remote areas and control over them is continuing to externalize (Wihtol de Wenden 2013, pp.70-71).

Third type of frictions relates to reactions to the EU new member states. Accession of 12 Eastern European countries came into effect in 2004 and 2007; Croatia joined in 2013. These countries, once communistic in the Cold War era, underwent democratization and in result, after meeting the Copenhagen criteria, were granted a membership. It can be said that there was a certain prior understanding among member states about the accession of those 13 countries. That is to say, they are geographically located in Europe and belong to Europe historically and culturally as well. However, there was a common feeling that after having been temporarily alienated by a political wall during the Cold War, they, in a sense, returned to Europe. This situation differs clearly from the current discord over the accession of Turkey.

However, even though in Eastern European EU member states European unity is presented symbolically as originating from the European value system and the end of the Cold War, behind this unity lies the problem of multiple ethnic relations and cultural frictions. Examples include German minority in Hungary and Poland or the case of Slovenia and Croatia which share a common history of being one country under former Yugoslavia, which failed to deal with the problem of multiethnicity (For example, McGarry and Keating 2006). Enlargement of the EU presents a challenge to achieve both increased diversity and the sense of unity; two essentially contradictory trends at once.

As shown above, when talking about cultural frictions arising in the EU both the growing internal multiculturalism as well as reinforcement of external borders and "externalization" of border management can be observed.

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1 Council Regulation (EC) No 2007/2004 of 26 October 2004 establishing a European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 349, 25/11/2004, pp.1-11.

2 COM(2005)391 final

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2005:0391:FIN:EN:PDF>, access: 26 November 2013.

## II. The meaning of EU enlargement

### II-1 EU enlargement and cultural phase

The end of the preceding paragraph briefly mentioned EU enlargement and this passage will investigate the matter further.

The meaning of EU enlargement can be approached from various points of view, including political and economic perspectives. Politically, overcoming the Cold War division and creating a political community founded on the value system of democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights leads to an enhanced presence of the EU, or rather member states, in the international politics. From the perspective of economics, economies of scale point to the significance of overall economic growth and development due to the expansion of the market. For both politics and economy maintenance of the EU internal stability is of the biggest importance.

Hence, what could be said from the point of view of culture? Preamble of the Lisbon Treaty states that Europe is “united in diversity” and Article 3(3) of the Treaty provides that “It shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity, and shall ensure that Europe’s cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced”. Thus, according to the fundamental principles of the EU, growing diversity brought by the enlargement appears as a positive aspect.

However, if negative concerns over political and economic consequences brought about by intercultural contact (i.e. concerns over public order or employment) are taken into account, it is clear that the perception of threat from potential cultural others is being on the rise. So to speak, culture, being something that needs to be protected, it itself becomes a source of threat. In other words, it could be said that the pursue of “cultural security” and “securitization of culture” appear simultaneously.

### II-2 Formation and reinforcing strategies of European identity

This section will focus on the formation of European identity and strategies reinforcing this identity. The question of identity was first raised in the Declaration on European Identity published in December 1973 at the EU summit in Copenhagen (Kraus 2008, p.43). After that, in the beginning of the 1980s, when the scope of integration advanced from economic to political integration, measures that would form and reinforce European identity through educational and cultural policies were being developed. One example includes the European Capital of Culture initiative started in 1985. In the field of education, proposals such as introduction of a “European dimension” into primary and secondary education curricula and increase of mobility through Erasmus programme oriented at university students can be mentioned (Kawamura 2007).

Having undergone aforementioned processes, European identity was popularized and established among EU citizens. However, EU enlargement challenges the understanding of European identity from a static point of view. “Unity in diversity” stands as EU’s principle and this diversity increased due to the enlargement process. For this reason it can be said that EU expansion poses a challenge to a static European identity and a more dynamic understanding is needed.

According to the results of Eurobarometer opinion poll conducted among EU citizens in 2008, factors most crucial to the formation of European identity are as follows: 1) single currency (euro) (40%), 2) democratic values (37%), 3) history (24%), 4) success of European economy (23%), 5) culture (22%), 6) geography (17%), 7) European flag (15%), 8) Unity in diversity motto (12%) (multiple-choice poll, up to 3 answers allowed). As the euro currency is part of everyday life its symbolic meaning is understandable but democratic values coming in 2<sup>nd</sup> demonstrates an important point. Eurobarometer offered a following analysis: “Some 37% of European citizens then mentioned democratic values as a key element of the European identity. It should be borne in mind that in order to join the European Union today candidates must satisfy not only the conditions for the adoption of the euro (in the medium term) but also a certain number of democratic values” (Special Eurobarometer, 303, p.34).

In the situation when EU enlargement continues and culture underlying the EU diversifies, analysis of the foundation of European identity indicates the difficulty to point out a static factor forming the identity core. In contrast, Checkel and Kaztenstein suggest a valuable viewpoint that European identity can be understood from the perspective of “projects”, “processes” and “contexts”. While negating a simple dichotomy of nationalistic tendencies on the local level and cosmopolitan ones on the European level, they recognize European unity or EU enlargement as political projects and on this account perceive concrete unifying processes as serving a function of connecting EU citizens together. Moreover, they identify the context the EU was put in, i.e. what kind of unity is being demanded or what is needed in order to overcome obstacles the EU is facing in a specified point of time. Their conclusion is that policies and trends created in regard to those questions is where the core of European identity lies and manifestations of European identity are visible (Checkel & Kaztenstein, 2009a & 2009b).

Related to this argument is the study of the EU’s public sphere and politics by Díez Medrano. He looks from the perspective of whether the idea of “EU as a project” gains support and points out the consensus over the project between European political elites on one hand, and the scale of the gap between EU citizens on the other. Disparity between old and new members of the EU is mentioned as well. Here, the analysis indicates that, rather than focusing exclusively on the single market, it is multi-level governance reflecting varied expectations that fits into the EU image and structure (Díez Medrano 2009, p.106). From the perspective of EU citizens’ identity, static understanding of the EU is difficult and a dynamic angle is suggested.

Those arguments brought up by Checkel and Kaztenstein as well as Díez Medrano, which are all in accordance with the constructivist perspective, indicate a dynamic approach to understanding European identity and contribute to the analysis of characteristics of the EU as a political community that is different from the state.

### III. Culture underlying EU political legitimacy

The previous section tried to identify the foundation of the European identity and indicated that, while it does not have any static form, the key to approach to it might lie in democratic values. It can be observed that during the process of enlargement, the cultural diversity of the EU grew even further and the need to find a unifying element exceeding cultural barriers emerged.

“United in diversity” is EU’s basic principle. In other words, political legitimacy is confirmed by the emphasis on the preservation of cultural diversity. The important point here is to what extent diversity should be accepted. Does it entail recognizing national diversity solely or embracing ethno-regional diversity as well? Furthermore, should immigrants from outside the EU be subsumed here as well? The real problem is that, as non-Europeans (and saying Muslims instead would not be an overstatement here) are approaching the outer edge of the EU, religion has become a point at issue in regard to the European identity (Byrnes & Katzenstein 2006).

For instance, it could be assumed that the accession of new member states to the European Union would mean accession to the Schengen area as well; however, the dispute over Bulgaria and Romania proves otherwise. Bulgaria and Romania joined the EU in 2007 but as they did not complete preparations to join the Schengen area, the transition period till the end of 2013 was established. Hence, once the transition period is over in January 2014 both countries were to become full members of the Schengen area but France expressed a strong opposition. On September 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, French Foreign Minister Fabius explained that there is a concern over insufficient border management in both countries, which might harm the rest of the Schengen zone<sup>3</sup>. Here, in the context of France’s opposition, the growing apprehension over Syrian refugees passing Turkey and entering the zone via Bulgaria (*Le Monde*, 9 octobre 2013) can be pointed out. Nevertheless, the concern is not only about the rapid increase in the number of immi-

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3 “La France ne veut ni de la Roumanie ni de la Bulgarie dans l’espace Schengen” [http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2013/09/30/paris-oppose-a-l-entree-de-la-roumanie-et-la-bulgarie-dans-l-espace-schengen\\_3486989\\_3224.html](http://abonnes.lemonde.fr/societe/article/2013/09/30/paris-oppose-a-l-entree-de-la-roumanie-et-la-bulgarie-dans-l-espace-schengen_3486989_3224.html), access: 3 December 2013.

grants and refugees, but rather, what is implicitly apprehended is that in case those individuals arrive in France, they would bring with them their Islamic culture (*Le Monde*, 31 decembre 2013). “[Bulgaria and Romania] are not yet fully-fledged members of the Schengen area; border controls between them and the Schengen area are maintained until the EU Council decides that the conditions for abolishing internal border controls have been met”<sup>4</sup>. Regarding these regulations the following indication has been expressed repeatedly: “both Bulgaria and Romania fulfil the criteria to apply in full the Schengen acquis, further measures were implemented which would contribute to their accession. Still, the Council has not yet been able to decide on the lifting of control at the internal borders to these countries”<sup>5</sup>. Then at the Council meeting of Justice and Home Affairs on December 5-6<sup>th</sup> 2013 the decision of full entry into the Schengen framework of both countries was postponed<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, at the following meeting of the European Council on December 20<sup>th</sup>, where the issue of migration flows was raised, means to prevent a tragedy like the one in Lampedusa where a boat with around 500 African immigrants on board sank causing many casualties were discussed. As a result, prompt implementation of concrete counter-measures proposed by a Task Force of the European Commission commencing with the reinforcement of border control in the Mediterranean with FRONTEX was emphasized. However, there was no reference to the accession of Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen zone at the meeting<sup>7</sup>.

In reference to the above-mentioned case, it is important to note that recent years showed more emphasis put on the linkage between internal order and external security. The Internal Security Strategy of the EU adopted in March 2010 states that the influx of people into the Union and concurrent questions of supervision of illegal residents and crime constitute the main factor inducing insecurity. Consequently, according to the document, the border management of EU’s outer edges is of extreme importance. It insists that internal security and external security are inseparable and the impact brought about by the influx of illegal residents must be dealt with in such a context (Council 2010, pp.26-30). France’s opposition towards the accession of Bulgaria and Romania into the Schengen area can be viewed like this dispute within the EU from the perspective of cultural frictions on one hand and security guarantee aspect on the other.

EU’s basic principle of emphasizing and securing cultural diversity, and cultural frictions occurring due to the growing cultural diversity, which is closely related to the problem of security guarantee, endorse “securitization of culture”. In other words, according to the EU model culture has been “something that needs to be protected”, however, recently it has manifested itself as a “source of insecurity” as well. Consequently, it might be said that culture carries a responsibility to achieve both “liberty” and “security” (van Munster 2009, p.21). In case when within the process of removing external borders and ensuring “liberty” of human mobility and interaction, a situation threatening peaceful coexistence occurs, culture is used as a control valve and a mean to protect internal “security”.

While looking at the continuing promotion of “Unity in diversity” and an ongoing accession of Eastern European states, following points related to the connection between culture and politics in the EU can be discerned. Firstly, culture plays a role in creating and maintaining shared value system. Secondly, there are strategies aimed at maintaining a “secure” space with “liberty” through securitization of culture. Culture gives legitimacy to politics. In the first case culture supports politics in the abstract forms of a value system and ideals. On the other hand, in the second case culture is not a vague and difficult to grasp issue but due to securitization it becomes a main point at issue in politics. Administrations which adopt concrete political actions to deal with the “factor threatening security” achieve legitimacy because of culture.

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4 The European Union, “The Schengen area and cooperation” <[http://europa.eu/legislation\\_summaries/justice\\_freedom\\_security/free\\_movement\\_of\\_persons\\_asylum\\_immigration/l33020\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/justice_freedom_security/free_movement_of_persons_asylum_immigration/l33020_en.htm)>, access: 3 January 2014.

5 For example, Fourth bi-annual report on the functioning of the Schengen area, 1 May - 31 October 2013, Brussels, 28 November 2013, COM(2013)832final, para.3.5.

6 The Council of the European Union, Press Release, 3279th Council meeting, Justice and Home Affairs, Brussels, 5 and 6 December 2013.

7 European Council Conclusions, Brussels, 20 December 2013, para.41.

Thus, it is possible to say that along these two directions European identity is forming and strengthening through “projects”, “processes” and “contexts”. If the culture underlying EU unity is viewed from the perspective of identity based on coexistence, it is conceivable that through political “projects”, “processes” and “contexts” providing a secure space manifesting both democratic and liberal values, EU citizens’ support towards the EU will increase.

## Conclusion

This paper examined the way culture functions within the EU politics in the process of enlargement. It can be said that culture functions in different contexts: 1) as “something that needs to be protected”, 2) as “ideals and value systems” which confer legitimacy to the politics and 3) as a “source of insecurity” which brings together both liberty and security. In today’s European politics and society where “cultural diversity” increases due to a large influx of Muslim and Eastern European immigrants in particular, the subject of internal and external coexistence presents a severe challenge to the development and maintenance of European unity.

Regarding security guarantee, while clarifying the intention to make internal public order and external security policy coherent, it can be observed that in this process European identity based on “projects”, “processes” and “contexts” has been strengthening.

Furthermore, it could be said that on the one hand European identity has the potential to form a common “security culture” (including internal public order). Consequently, in times of the Eurozone crisis, Arab spring or similar incidents, it might reinforce internal unity even if only on the elite level.

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