

# **Nation and National Identity**

The European Experience in Perspective

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**Voiceless Submission or Deliberate Choice?  
European Integration and the Relation between  
National and European Identity**

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The coming into existence of the European Union can be considered as a large scale experiment in social and political integration with historically unique features: (1) it is one of the largest in terms of the numbers of countries and people involved; (2) it is occurring peacefully, with the voluntary agreement of all participating governments; (3) it involves only states with democratic systems of government. All these characteristics indicate that the process of European integration must be considered as a secular achievement in the last hundred years. Yet, it is also clear that this process shows characteristics which might raise doubts about its success and about the supposedly positive consequences which are expected to flow from it. Given the very different consequences of other large scale experiments in political and socio-economic integration, it is essential to pinpoint potentially problematic consequences. In this contribution, I will focus on one possible reason for outcomes which might not be expected by many of the actors involved in this process. This is the fact that the governments and the people of different European nation states in part expect rather different outcomes from the same process of integration.

This chapter consists of two parts. In the first part, the issues of national identity and European integration are discussed from a more general point of view. For this purpose, the concepts of «nation» and «national identity» are introduced and defined, as well as their relation to «European identity». In the second part, a typology of the different outlooks of the individual nation states and their citizens towards the European Union is developed. Empirical data from different sources, large-scale international population surveys, results of Referenda, official declarations are used in order to show the existence of these differing expectations regarding European integration. In the concluding remarks, the implications of these findings for the further development of the European Union are discussed.

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## 1 National identity and its relation to European integration

### 1.1 The present-day relevance of the concepts of nation and national identity

In recent decades, fundamental transformations have been occurring in the social, economic and political situation of Europe, its nation states and regions. With the *Maastricht Treaty for the European Union* (1992), Western European integration reached a new stage. The full realisation of the «four freedoms» in the market sphere – unlimited exchange and movement of goods, services, labour and capital within the European Union – and the introduction of the monetary union with the common currency, the Euro, at the end of the decade, constitute epochal achievements which will profoundly reshape the future of this continent. In Eastern Europe, the late Eighties and early Nineties brought the downfall of the communist regimes and the removal of the Iron Curtain which had constituted an unnatural barrier running through the heart of this continent. While these historical events have been occurring in Europe, a world-wide process of globalisation has also been taking place which means that private and business travel and tourism, economic relations and transactions, cultural and scientific communication through mass media, Internet and other means, are beginning to embrace the whole world. As a consequence, the autonomy and sovereignty of nation states is being significantly undermined, and many people begin to think about alternatives to this globalisation (Gall 1991; Knieper 1991; Wehner 1992).

In spite of these developments, however, there is no indication that the problems of national autonomy and independence are disappearing from the agenda of Europe and of the present-day world as a whole. The downfall of the communist regimes in the Czech Republic, Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union has led to the emergence of more than a dozen new nation states, some of which were prepared to fight for their independence. But even in Western Europe, movements for more local political and cultural autonomy, or even for the independence and secession of whole regions – in Spain, Belgium, Scotland and Italy – are gaining ground. Strong subnational regions, such as Bavaria and Catalonia, are quite critical not only of their national capitals, but also of all trends toward a new centralisation at the EU-level in Brussels. The process of regional, ethnic and national revival is therefore not simply a remnant of traditional patterns of localism and parochialism, but must be considered as concomitant of the process of modernisation itself. Many aspects of this process lead towards a revival of regional, ethnic and national movements. We can mention here, for example, the expansion of middle and higher education to include larger segments of the general population, the revival by scientists, his-

torians and intellectuals of traditional languages, customs and cultures (which had often already passed out of use); the increasing political education and critical participation (or abstention) of citizens in political affairs; and the growing competition of nation states, regions and cities for industrial investments from multinational corporations (see also van Deth 1995).

I would like to argue, then, that the nation state – in spite of the tendencies which seem to undermine its potential for action – remains one of the most important actors at the level of regional, state and international political affairs. This is so not least because to date, there exists no alternative – a fact which is simply overlooked by proponents of the globalisation thesis (Martin/Schumann 1996). If multinational corporations, financiers, brokers and speculators are able to put whole nationstates and national banks under pressure, they can do so only because no adequate means of international political control of their actions have so far been developed.

Western Europe seems to have responded in an adequate way to these new problems by beginning to integrate the continent into a wholly new kind of economic and political union. In fact, it is the first time in its history that the countries of Western and Central Europe have entered into such a close relationship that an armed conflict between them seems impossible to imagine in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless, I would like to argue that at present, the European political elites have no clear and coherent idea of the ultimate goal of European integration toward which they should move. The integration achievements in economic terms have not been aspired to for their own sake, but primarily for political reasons. Only if Europeans are able to develop a clear concept about the final form of political integration will this provide for long-lasting, fruitful co-operation, a balance of interests between its nation states, and a peaceful role for Europe in the wider world. A very useful tool for helping us to understand these problems is the concept of «identity». Let us look more closely at its significance for the process of European integration.

### 1.2 The significance of the issue of identity for the European Union

The problem of identity constitutes a central issue of the European Union.<sup>1</sup> In the *Maastricht Treaty for the European Union*, the concept of «identity» is mentioned explicitly in the Preamble and in several paragraphs:

1 In this section, I am following closely the arguments in a recent publication by Fleisch (1997: 97ff.; see also Weidenfeld 1985; Delany 1995).

**Preamble:** The undersigned, resolved 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 in Europe and its independence in order to promote peace, security and progress in Europe and in the world, (...) have decided to establish a European Union (...).

**Art. B:** The Union shall set itself the following objectives:  
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;

**Art. R1:** The Union shall respect the national identities of its Member States, whose systems of government are founded on the principles of democracy.

What is «national identity», and what could a «European identity» be? As Pfetsch (1997: 97) rightly observes, all of the above-quoted statements show that the identity concept of the European Union is primarily related to foreign policy, but not to positive self-determination concerning its internal affairs. The same is true for the *Document on European Identity* passed by the Foreign Ministers of the European Community in 1973. In this document, too, the Community is defined primarily in terms of its relation to the other countries of the world. At the centre of European identity are «its common heritage, its own interests, the particular obligations of the community.» It is stated that the Europe of the Nine is conscious of the world-political obligations which spring from its unification, that this unification is not directed against anybody else, and that the European Community will play an active role in world politics. Concerning the evolution of a European identity, the document states (Pfetsch 1997: 98, my translation from German):

The development of a European identity will follow the dynamics of the work of European unification. In their foreign relations, the Nine will be anxious to determine their identity in relation to the other political units step by step. In this way, they consciously strengthen their internal unity and contribute to the formulation of a truly European politics.

This seems to be a rather vague, if not empty definition. And, indeed, its vacuity has been proven in practical experience, which has shown that the European Community and the European Union are still far from being able to follow a determined common foreign policy. Significant examples of this weakness are the passive and dissenting political role which the European Union and its

member states played in two profound crises which more or less directly affected Europe: the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq and the subsequent Gulf war in 1991, and the social and political disintegration and subsequent civil war in Yugoslavia in the early Nineties. In the latter case, the lack of unanimity among the major Western European states – the early recognition of the independence of Slovenia and Croatia by Germany, in contrast to France and England and most of the other EU-states – was directly connected with the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia and Bosnia. In the Gulf war, most European leaders were initially opposed to the all-out military invasion of Iraq by the United States (which, as we know today, resulted in the deaths of over 100 000 Iraqi soldiers, but did not overthrow the dictatorial government of Saddam Hussein).

In both cases, the lack of unanimity among the leading politicians of the member states of the EU has led to a deep disillusionment among European populations about their leaders and about the prospects of arriving at a coherent and efficient policy of the European Union in the face of serious political crises (Arnold 1993; Newhouse 1998: 93 ff.). Thus, in regard to the action potential of the European Union in its foreign relations, we must conclude: Great hopes have been awakened, but little has so far been achieved. Why is this the case? I would like to suggest that this failure is closely connected to the lack of unanimity and precision among the member states over the anticipated ultimate shape of its internal institutional structure. This institutional structure is in turn closely related to the concepts of national and European identity.

### 1.3 The concepts of «nation» and «national identity»

In order to understand the astonishing contradiction between the success of the Union in achieving economic integration,<sup>2</sup> and its profound difficulty in arriving at a common «foreign policy», we have to look more closely at the concepts of «nation» and «national identity». What is a nation and a nation state, and what might a «European nation» be? We can distinguish two main approaches to this concept (see Haller 1996). The first may be called the *ontological-substantivist approach*. This approach posits that we can enumerate a series of

2 If I use the word «success» here, I intend it to denote only the progress towards the realisation of economic and market integration, the introduction of the common currency, etc. Whether or not this economic integration overall can be considered a success, in the sense of having contributed significantly to economic progress, increase of wealth, etc. can only be decided after several decades. At least in one important respect – the high and persistent rates of unemployment in the European Union – economic integration has not been successful. For discussions of the potential negative effects of integration from the economic and political-democratic point of view, see Kohr (1983); Cutler et al. (1989); several contributions to Weber (1991).

attributes which together constitute a nation if they are fully present. Anthony Smith (1991) gives a rather exhaustive list of the relevant components: common history and territory, an «ethnic core», a common culture, a developed and integrated economy, and a coherent constitutional and political system. The strength of this definition is that it clearly indicates all those factors which in fact characterise most nations; at the same time, we can find existing nations which lack at least one of these criteria, and this shows that none of them is indispensable to the existence of a nation.

Against this characterisation, I would prefer to define *nation as a self-chosen object of political identification (a political community) whose members aspire to become politically independent or politically self-determined*. There are three essential elements in this definition: the first is the understanding of a nation as a *political community*, not just as a bureaucratic apparatus or a system based simply on power. The second is the fact that its elites and populations have the will to determine their own fate (see also Heller 1934; Weber 1964: 313, 675; Elwert 1999). A nation in this sense will tend to become an independent state (if it is not yet one), but it can also confine itself to gaining extensive political autonomy within an existing nation state (as, for example, Catalonia has done). Central to this concept of nation is, therefore, a third element, the idea of *legitimacy*: A well-established nation-state enjoys a high degree of approval from its citizens, they are prepared to engage themselves in the political affairs of their political community, and they would even be willing to defend the nation against any attack from outside.

Such a concept of «nation» can be used both as an explanatory, independent variable and as a dependent variable (in this regard, we can speak of differing degrees of nationhood). Thus, a nation is not defined as a more or less clearly circumscribed (ontological) entity, but rather as a social and politically relevant idea (*idée directrice*, as Hauriou has called it) or as a *field of forces* (Krattefeld). The idea behind the general concept of «identity» is that a person or a nation with a strongly developed self-image or identity will behave in a much more consistent and forceful way than one which does not have such an identity (Habermas 1976: 92 ff.). With the concept of national identity, it becomes possible to see how nations can use or even create their own great history, their common language and culture, and their self-preserving economy. It can also be easily understood how nations can establish their claims to independence or their right to continue to exist, even if they seem non-viable from an economic point of view. Again, it can be seen why nations whose pride has been wounded, are able to follow irresponsible nationalist and chauvinistic leaders (Scheff 1994). We can observe and investigate empirically to what extent factors such as a common culture, an integrated economy and the like, can contri-

but to the arousal of national sentiments and, eventually, to the emergence of new nations.

The concepts of «nation» and «national identity» comprise two dimensions which have to be systematically distinguished from each other (see *Synopsis 1*). The first dimension includes three components: cognitive goals, actions or experiences related to the nation, and emotional attachment to a nation; the second dimension concerns the distinction between the micro and macro levels. At both levels, similar issues and questions arise. With respect to the central aims and the self-image of a nation, we can ask, for instance: What kind of self-image is developed and propounded by the political leaders and by the cultural elites of a nation (macro level)? How are these official aims and images reflected in the minds of their populations (micro level)? How are national symbols and ways of thinking transmitted to individual feelings and behaviours (Billing (1995) shows the forcefulness of such processes).

### Synopsis 1: The two dimensions of «nation» and «national identity»

Cognitive component	Component of action and experience	Emotional-affective component
Macro Level «Official» ideas, self-images and aims concerning the nation; perceived economic, political and cultural interests of the nation	Official politics and other actions concerning the foundation, arms and flags, memorial days, etc.) strengthening of the nation	Official symbols of the nation (national holidays, arms and flags, memorial days, etc.)
Micro Level Images and expectations of the individual members of a nation concerning their political community	Nation-related experiences of the individual members of the nation-state	Emotional attachment of the individual members toward the nation

Let us now look at the central topic of this contribution, namely, the question of how the individual European nations and the national identities of their citizens are related to the new potential nation of the European Community.

In so far as this description is true, the feeling of being a member of the Union could well develop among the citizens of the single nation states alongside a continuation of their nation state consciousness (Nationalstaatsbewusstsein). That both feelings can co-exist quite well, or that they could even strengthen each other, is proved by theoretical and empirical sociological considerations. From the theoretical point of view, it has been argued that modern men and women are characterised by their capacity to develop *multiple identities* – identities which, to a considerable degree, they can choose themselves (Simmel 1923; von Krockow 1970). From the empirical point of view, it is a fact that in countries with federal political systems – like Germany, Switzerland or Austria – a strong local-regional identity is combined *positively* with a sense of national pride and identity (Bruckmüller 1996; Haller et al. 1996).

There is no guarantee, however, that national and European identity will go together in such a smooth and conflict-free fashion. A third hypothesis, pointing a *competitive or exclusive relationship* between the two, must also be seriously considered. The main argument in favour of this hypothesis is that a strong national identity can only survive the process of European integration if it is related to continuing and positive political experiences and the provision of services by the nation states to its citizens. If European integration significantly undermines the autonomous action potential of individual nation states, this would in the long run also undermine the attachment of individual citizens to their state. Such tendencies are obvious. They are the other side of the coin of the aforementioned success of integration: the loss of the action potential of national governments; the reduction of national parliaments to the role of mere «state notaries» rubber stamping the decrees enacted by Brussels; the loss of significant national symbols; the trends toward a linguistic-cultural homogenisation of Europe, etc. The thesis of an evolutionary drive towards European integration (Campbell 1994) sees such tendencies as more or less necessary reactions to and outcomes of world-wide processes. National governments, as well as individual citizens, however, might fear such tendencies and therefore oppose European integration.<sup>3</sup>

The central question to be investigated in the following section is therefore: To what extent are national identity and European integration and identity complementary to or competitive with each other? My general hypothesis here is that the more the new European institutions are able to preserve significant action potentials for nation states, or to restrict themselves to the function of

<sup>3</sup> These trends can be perceived most sharply in France, whose language has experienced a secular decline in international usage compared with English. This led the French parliament to enact a «Law for the protection of the French language» in 1994 (Der Fischer Weltatmanach 95: 259).

Three hypotheses concerning the relation between local-regional identities and national identity can be distinguished (Haller et al. 1996: 384 ff.). These hypotheses, which I have developed elsewhere in the context of Austria, can also be applied to the relations between national and European identity.

#### 1.4 Relationships between national identity and European identity

First, there is the possibility of a *neutral relation* between the two. This would mean that European integration will not affect the identity of the single nation states and their citizens. This hypothesis can probably be excluded immediately, since European integration affects both the action potential and the autonomy of nation states at the level of governments as well as the daily lives of their citizens in many ways. It is very significant here that the introduction of the common currency, the Euro, has been motivated explicitly by political considerations. It is expected (and hoped) that a common currency will function as an efficient *symbol* of European unity, and that in so doing, it will strengthen European identity among the citizens of the member states.

The second thesis posits that there exists a *complementary relationship* between national and European identity. This thesis may be considered as the «official doctrine» of the national governments and the EU-bureaucrats and politicians. It is well known that they never tire of swearing to the Europeans that integration will not lead to an elimination of the individual nation states. Rather, it is said, it will only complement national identity and, in the final analysis, that it will even be necessary for the preservation of their independence in a changing world. This is certainly an attractive hypothesis. As long as the constitution of the European Union considers the individual nation states as essential components of its system, these components will not be wholly assimilated into a new super-state. From this point of view, the European Union would have to declare itself clearly as a *state of nationalities* or a *union of nation states* (Nationalitätensstaat) rather than as a new nation state in its own right (on these concepts, see also Francis 1965; Lepsius 1988, 1992; Haller 1995, 1996). Historical research on the emergence of the European Union shows that such an interpretation approximates to the reality. According to Milward (1992: 18), European integration was not an overriding of the nation state but a conscious «creation of the European nation states themselves for their own purposes», an effort to preserve their action potential in a globalised world. Europe can be considered as an *emergent nation* if a nation is not understood as a «close-knit political and cultural unit» – such as Britain, France or Germany – but as «a complex and vast entity, such as India» (Friedrich 1969: 213f.).

cesses in a reflexive way, that is, by taking into consideration the aims of the actors themselves, their historical and structural constraints, and universal ideas and values (see Weber 1964; Lepsius 1988; Haller 1999a).

I start from the assumption that we can identify at least three main interests or motives behind European integration:

- 1) *Economic interests*, particularly concerning economic growth, enlargement of markets, improvement of the supply of goods and services, and the like.
- 2) *Political interests*, which can be subdivided into three more specific interests: (a) the interest in maintaining a lasting peace in Europe; (b) the interest (mainly of the political elites) in an enlargement of the free scope of their political action at home; and (c) the interest (again mainly of the political elites) in the regaining of world power for Europe.
- 3) *Cultural interests* in the preservation of the Christian Occident (Abendland).

In attempting to relate these motives and interests to the specific structural conditions in different European countries and regions and to different social groups, we may begin by distinguishing the following five functions of European integration:

- 1) *European integration as a prop or a crutch* which should help to overcome domestic insecurities, dependencies on other nations, and enduring economic and political problems which cannot be solved by the national political elites within the context of their single nation state alone.
- 2) *European integration as a necessary evil* which is assumed to be unavoidable, given a lack of viable alternatives.
- 3) *European integration as the creation of a new kind of bureaucratized super-state* which must be rejected.
- 4) *European integration as a substitute for a weak sense of national identity.*
- 5) *European integration as a positive vehicle for the realisation of particular economic, political and/or cultural interests.*

My thesis is that strategies (1) through (4) constitute a problematic basis for the development of a stable and enduring European identity. Strategies subsumable under (5) are problematic if they are not declared and openly discussed. A corollary of the latter point is that the more such interests and strategies are in the interests only of particular groups, especially elites (economic, political and cultural elites), the less openly they tend to be discussed. I will come back to these theses at the end of this essay. In the next section, more detailed justifications of these theses are given, together with some empirical evidence concerning the relations between national and European identity.

complementing but not replacing nation states, the more it will be possible for national and European identity to develop in a complementary way.

As a corollary of this hypothesis, we need to investigate the predominant visions of the future shape of the European Union, and their relation to the images and expectations which are entertained by the single nation states. In this respect, I would like to propose the following three more specific theses:

- 1) We can see no consistent or coherent image or vision of a «European nation» among the present-day political elites of Europe. Rather, there exist significant differences in their ideas, both among political leaders and elites in different European nation states, and between different political parties, as well as between the economic, political and cultural elites.
- 2) In so far as such visions do exist, we must say that the actual strategies and behaviours of the political elites do not correspond to them in any coherent way.
- 3) There also exist considerable divergences in the visions about Europe among leaders and elites on the one side, and the populations at large on the other side (see also Bach 1993; Giesen 1993; Puntschner-Riekmann 1998). Political leaders typically attribute the relatively modest popular support for their efforts at integration to a lack of information among the population, or they imply that European integration can only be a matter of emotions among «ordinary people».

Bearing these general remarks in mind, we can now proceed to the development of a typology and the presentation of some empirical data on the different images of Europe in different nation states and among elites and populations at large.

### 1.5 Interests behind and functions of European integration

European integration fulfils different purposes for different nation states and social groups and people. The first step towards an explanation is to conceptualise these different functions in a typology. This typology has been developed by systematically combining (a) the structural positions and interests of different social groups and nation states with (b) the ideas, values and aims associated with this process of European integration. Behind this procedure lies the idea of sociology as a science of social reality (Wirklichkeitswissenschaft), which sees its main aim as being the elaboration of systematic relationships between interests, values, and institutions. In elaborating such relationships, it does not aim at the development or testing of very general theories (as the natural sciences do). Rather, it aims at understanding and interpreting social pro-

## 2 Functions of European integration for different nation-states and social groups. A sociological typology

In this section, I will show that these strategies can really be detected in the present-day process of European integration. Throughout these considerations, we need to look both at the macrosocial, official level of politics, and at the microsocial level of the perceptions and attitudes of the individual members of the different European populations (on the variations see also Estel/Mayer 1994; Therborn 1995; DeFlem/Pampel 1996; Pfeitsch 1997; Schauer 1997).

### 2.1 European integration as a prop or a crutch

Several countries look to European integration primarily in the hope that they have been unable to solve by themselves in their post-war history. There are two main areas in which European integration might serve as a panacea for nation states.

First, in *economic terms*: Countries lying somewhat behind the «European core» in terms of socio-economic development (GNP/capita), and characterised by persistent socio-economic problems, such as unemployment, high public deficits and/or periodic high rates of inflation, expect that the process of economic integration will provide a spur to accelerate economic growth, ensure the economic catching-up and the reduction of economic crisis phenomena.

Second, in *political terms*: Countries lying behind in terms of «democratic maturity» expect that membership in the European Union will help them to overcome their problems in this regard. Two kinds of problems are relevant here: – Three Southern European countries experienced dictatorial regimes in the post-war period, until the mid-Seventies. This was the case in *Portugal, Spain and Greece*. In fact, it was a condition of admission to the European Union that democratic political regimes were established in these countries, which in turn hope that EU-membership will serve as a kind of guarantee of their democratic maturing.

– Another country, *Italy*, has been characterised throughout the post-war period by a rather unstable political situation. This is reflected most clearly in the fact that Italy has had over fifty governments between 1945 and 1998; the mean duration of a government in power was less than one year. This instability is also reflected in the fact that Italy is characterised by very high

levels of «anti-civilian» behaviour (including tax evasion, clientelism, corruption and the like) among the elites as well as among the population.<sup>4</sup> – In Italy, but also in Greece, the danger of a take-over of power by strong communist parties was felt, particularly during the Fifties and Sixties.

Thus, in the case of four members of the European Union, the motives for membership included the expectation that European integration would serve as an economic and political prop or crutch (see also Pfeitsch 1997: 77ff.). In Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece, membership was also motivated according to official declarations by the desire to strengthen their democratic systems. In the cases of Portugal, Spain and Greece, this desire meant nurturing young democracies after decades of authoritarian rule; in the case of Italy, it meant developing more stable and civilised democratic conditions. A similar factor might also have been significant in the case of *Belgium*.<sup>5</sup> Both Belgium and Italy would certainly not have been able to reduce their budgets significantly if there had not been the strong pressure exerted by the prerequisite conditions for participation in the Euro. A very nice parody on the tendency of the Italians to expect the cure of all national ills from the European Union and the Euro was made by Giorgio Bocca (1998) [in his article «Santa Europa, benedetto Euro» in: *Il Venerdì della Repubblica, Supplemento del giornale La Repubblica*, Roma, 27.2.1998, p. 38].

The economic motive was also important for all of these countries. In view of their relative economic backwardness, given a high proportion of relatively poor agrarian populations, countries like Portugal, Greece, and Ireland (and, to a lesser degree, Spain and Italy) expected, and to a large degree obtained, economic support from the Union for their underdeveloped areas. In the case

<sup>4</sup> By referring to these negative aspects of social and political life in Italy, I would not like to discredit Italy or the Italians in general as being dishonest, inefficient, etc. Rather, as the Swiss author Victor Willi (1983) has shown in a very nice book – «Surviving in the Italian Way» – most Italians are characterised by high levels of responsibility and efficiency in carrying through their activities, even in spite of adverse circumstances. In my view, the main reason for the high instability of Italian post-war governments, as well as for the high levels of corruption, was the fact that the Communist Party was not considered as a «constitutional party». This had the consequence that the coalitions which were formed between Christian-conservative, social democrats and a few other small centre parties had a monopoly on government. Until the early Nineties, these conditions had a clear majority of the votes in parliamentary elections and were therefore able to treat political offices, as well as the broad sector of politically controlled services and industries, as their own private domain, in which posts and privileges were distributed mainly according to party interests. See also Ruscconi (1993) for a discussion of the relationship between national and European identity in Italy. Among possible reasons for the relatively low sense of national pride among Belgians, there could be mentioned: the loss of their colonies; their quick defeat by Nazi troops in the Second World War and the partial collaboration of Belgium with Nazi Germany; and the deep internal cleavage along linguistic-ethnic lines between the Flemish and the Walloonian groups. These Jacobs (University of Antwerp) suggested in a lecture at the University of Graz (14.4.1998), however, that only the last factor plays a significant role today. Belgians, particularly French-speaking Belgians, might greet European integration as a means of overcoming this division of the country. The country's capital Brussels especially profits directly from being the new capital of Europe.



of Ireland, the reduction of its economic dependence on England was an additional incentive.<sup>6</sup>

If we look at some statistical indicators for the levels of development and the net contributions of the different EU-member states to the household of the European Union, we can see that a considerable net financial transfer is made to the four peripheral nations Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain (see *Table 1*).<sup>7</sup> These four peripheral nations are also those which in the early Nineties still had over 10% of their active populations employed in the agricultural sector; their general standard of living was clearly below the EU-mean.

**Table 1:** Indicators for the economic relevance of membership in the European Union to the member states in 1991

Country	% of Persons employed in Agriculture (1989)	GNP in % of the EU-mean	Net contribution to the EU-budget (1995)
Great Britain	2,2	98,2	80,7
Denmark	5,2	112,0	-58,6
Germany	3,7	106,7	164,6
Belgium	2,9	110,4	30,6
France	5,9	107,2	29,6
Netherlands	3,7	100,4	129,7
Luxembourg	1,3	128,9	110,6
Italy	7,9	101,7	10,7
Ireland	13,7	85,2	-526,8
Spain	10,1	76,1	-184,0
Portugal	11,5	67,9	-241,8
Greece	21,8	60,6	-333,0
Austria	6,9	109,3	112,9
Sweden	3,4	95,3	105,5
Finland	8,6	92,5	32,3

Source: Pletsch (1997:177,260)

<sup>6</sup> The motive of European integration as a prop or crutch to help solve domestic problems is also evident in other nation states. For example, during the governmental campaign in Austria for EU-membership, it was stated openly, particularly by big industrialists and the conservative party Österreichische Volkspartei, that membership of the Union would oblige the country to open up its ossified institutional structures and to adapt to a more competitive environment (see also Haller 1994).

<sup>7</sup> Otherwise only Denmark, with its significant but rather modernised agrarian sector, gains from EU-membership by receiving direct transfers.

**Table 2:** Indicators for the approval of European Integration among the population of the 12 member states of the European Union in 1991

Country	Q13: Index of approval of the EU (1991)	Q14: A country's membership in the EU is a good thing (1991)	Q15: A country's membership in the EU is a bad thing (1991)	Q16: A country has benefited from being a member of the EU (1991)	Q17: A country has been harmed by being a member of the EU (1991)	Q18: I would like to see my country join the EU (1991)	Mean approval of European integration (1991)
Great Britain	14	53	28	59	55	33	40
Denmark	21	29	25	63	77	46	44
North Ireland	7	67	29	63	73	36	59
West Germany	17	59	38	74	62	61	52
East Germany	10	64	33	83	83	65	56
Belgium	23	64	28	78	83	50	54
France	26	67	27	73	71	53	53
Netherlands	14	62	26	90	89	58	57
Luxembourg	36	55	33	86	86	70	61
Ireland	29	80	46	83	81	66	64
Ireland	14	73	47	80	88	58	80
Spain	31	84	49	82	70	58	62
Portugal	16	77	49	82	81	60	65
Greece	22	80	47	83	86	64	63
Mean**)							
Difference largest/smallest value***)	20	65	38	77	70	56	56

Source: Eurobarometer 1/1991

\*) Aggregate mean

\*\*\*) Based on individual values

\*\*\*\*) Printed in bold figures

**Synopsis 2:** Results of Referenda in 9 European countries and regions resp. concerning the joining to the European Community/Union and the acceptance of the Treaties of Maastricht

Year	Country and topic of Referendum	Result
02.10.1972	Denmark: joining the EC	majority in favour
05.06.1975	Great Britain: remaining in the EC	68% in favour
26.05.1987	Ireland: ratification of the European Act	majority in favour
18.06.1992	Ireland: ratification of the Treaties of Maastricht	68.7% in favour
1992	France: ratification of the Treaties of Maastricht	majority in favour
18.05.1993	Denmark, second referendum about Treaties of Maastricht	56.8% in favour
12.06.1994	Austria: joining of the EU	66.5% in favour
16.10.1994	Finland: joining of the EU	57% in favour
13.11.1994	Sweden: joining of the EU	52% in favour
<b>Negative decisions</b>		
26.09.1992	Norway: joining of the EU	majority against
23.02.1982	Greenland (autonomous region of Denmark): remaining in the EU	majority against
02.06.1992	Denmark: acceptance of the Treaties of Maastricht	68.7% against
06.12.1992	Switzerland: joining of the European Economic Area (EWR)	50% against
27./28.11.1994	Norway: joining of the EU	52.2% against

Source:

Pletsch 1(997:290 ff.)

## 2.2 European integration as a necessary evil

There is at least one large nation state in which European integration is clearly not seen as a positive goal in and of itself, but as something which nevertheless cannot be avoided in the long run because in that case, negative consequences would have to be accepted. This state is *Great Britain*; to a lesser degree, the *Scandinavian states* also fit into this category. It is well known that the official aims and actions of British European politics have changed several times. There are at least three reasons for this: (1) historically, Britain was at the centre of its own large Commonwealth empire, and it still maintains close ties

It is therefore not difficult to understand why the «official» attitudes toward membership of the European Union were and still are very positive in these five countries. These attitudes are evidently supported by their populations at large. If we look at the findings of the Eurobarometer surveys concerning public approval of European integration, we find that it is precisely the populations of these five countries which are shown to be those most in favour (see *Table 2*). In Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and Greece, a clear majority of the respective populations – nearly two-thirds in each case – approves of their country being an EU-member; about 80% think that the membership of their country is «a good thing» and has been to their advantage; 70–80% think that European citizenship would be a good thing. These sentiments are statistically significantly higher than the findings for most other European nations.

There is another indication of the convergence between the aims and strategies of these countries at the macro-level, and the micro-level of the positive attitudes of their individual citizens. This is the fact that the political elites of none of the four South-European countries felt it necessary to put the issue of EC- or EU-membership to a public vote or referendum (see *Synopsis 2*). Had they done so, they would probably have obtained results similar to those in Ireland, where a referendum about the ratification of the Treaty of Maastricht won a two-thirds majority in 1993. Before this vote, Irish political elites were eager to present the advantages of EU-membership to their citizens in the most brilliant colours.

with Canada, Australia and New Zealand; (2) Britain also maintains particularly close ties with the United States, ties which are based on a common cultural heritage and intensive economic, social, cultural-scientific and political relations; (3) their tradition of economic and political liberalism, as well as their old and well-established democratic system, make Britons suspicious of any strongly centralised political and comprehensive welfare system.

Britain's official policy towards Europe after World War II began with Winston Churchill's famous speech at the University of Zurich in 1947. In this speech, Churchill asked for a united Europe which would secure the peace on the Continent; but Britain was not seen as being part of this alliance. Again, the foundation of the European Economic Community of the Six in the mid-Fifties took place without Britain. It was only in the Sixties that British European policy changed significantly. But even then, it was defined as «a policy of the last resort» (Petersch 1997: 74). The European Community was seen as a necessary new partner for trade, because Britain's relationships with the former colonies (or Commonwealth partners) had changed drastically, to the disadvantage of Britain. At the same time, the increasing economic power of the Community made it clear to the British that they would lose influence in Europe if they did not join the EC. However, French President de Gaulle then blocked British entrance to the Community. In 1971, a new vote in the British parliament brought a majority in favour of joining the EC, although the votes of the Commons were rather divided (59% pro). A referendum in 1975 obtained a surprisingly high percentage (68%) in favour. But once more, in the Eighties, many objections were raised to British EC-membership, this time by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. She argued strongly for Europe as «a family of nations» as opposed to an integrated federal state. This position led to additional protocols in the Treaties of Maastricht in respect of Britain's special position. As far as social policy and the monetary union are concerned, Britain is not obliged to adhere completely to the integration process. A more pro-European attitude, however, has been evident since 1997 with the new Labour government of Tony Blair.

In the case of Britain, then, EU-membership is not something which Britons think is absolutely necessary for their country. This is clearly reflected in survey data. The British are characterised by a rather high level of national pride; they are particularly proud of the working of democracy in their country, of their armed forces, and of their history (see *Table 4*); and they feel much closer to their nation state than to Europe (*Table 4*). In the mean, only a strong minority of 40% of the population – the lowest proportion of any of the EU-member states – approves of Britain being an EU-member (*Table 2*).

**Table 3:** Dimensions of national pride in 12 countries (ISSP-95)

Dimension	- Percent of respondents who are «proud» or «very proud» of their country in regard to ... -														
	AUT	GER	GB	FR	SPA	USA	NOR	SWE	POL	CZECH	HUNG	SLO	Mean (Variation) <sup>1)</sup>		
Working of Democracy	67	62	32	60	26	52	83	76	61	21	33	20	19	47	64
World political influence	65	54	54	48	22	35	80	72	37	31	45	18	25	45	58
Economic achievements	77	76	77	38	39	38	82	74	16	25	39	9	31	48	73
Social security system	80	68	37	44	27	51	50	59	63	15	18	7	27	42	63
Scientific-technol. achievements	77	74	75	79	80	64	95	70	75	49	47	78	53	70	48
Achievements in sports	83	60	73	70	87	85	88	89	80	39	84	87	87	76	50
Achievements in arts/literature	69	57	69	69	93	81	88	63	59	57	79	89	66	72	36
Armed forces	41	26	22	81	42	55	91	33	26	49	15	28	53	43	76
History	77	30	28	83	88	89	88	72	60	72	87	72	70	70	61
Fair treatment of groups	52	65	21	47	22	57	88	42	40	27	19	44	35	43	69
Mean value	69	57	49	62	53	61	83	65	52	38	45	45	47		
(N)	(1007)	(1282)	(612)	(1078)	(1094)	(1221)	(1367)	(1527)	(1470)	(1603)	(1111)	(965)	(1036)		

Source: ISSP-95

<sup>\*)</sup> Difference between lowest and highest value

**Table 4:** Feeling of closeness to different territorial units in 12 countries

Country	Feel 'very close' or 'close to...' (in %)			
	Neighbourhood	Town/City	Province	State
Austria	81	51	86	(55) 89
Germany (West)	67	48	58	(22) 73
Germany (East)	69	45	67	(26) 76
Italy	68	82	79	(43) 87
Great Britain	60	50	44	(21) 63
Slovenia	77	77	94	(49) 92
Hungary	79	84	86	(79) 97
Czech Republic	78	72	66	(46) 89
Poland	69	72	60	(53) 92
Sweden	63	63	65	(32) 81
Norway	51	69	78	(51) 94
Spain	88	92	91	(43) 89
USA	57	60	62	(35) 81
Mean	70	66	72	(43) 85
(N)	(907)	(865)	(936)	(555) (1103) (756)

Source: ISSP-95.

A somewhat similar attitude toward the European Union can be seen among several *Scandinavian countries*. These countries are today, in economic terms, among the wealthiest countries in the world. At the same time, they are proud of their welfare and social security systems, which have achieved a considerable equalization of life chances and the virtual elimination of open poverty, and these facts are reflected in rather high levels of national pride (see *Table 3*). But Scandinavians are also quite proud of their democracies and history. It is not surprising, therefore, that Norwegians and Swedes are more attached to their nation state than to Europe as a whole (see *Table 4*). The data for Denmark, which – as an older EU-member – is also found in the Eurobarometer surveys, show the second lowest level of attachment to the European Union among the twelve member states (see *Table 2*).

Another factor which tended to make Finland and Sweden sceptical for a long time about the European Union was their position of political neutrality in foreign affairs. It was thought, especially as long as Europe was divided into two hostile camps (East versus West), that neutrality was not compatible with membership of the European Community, as the EC maintains close ties with America and the military alliance NATO.<sup>8</sup>

2.3 European integration as the creation of a new kind of bureaucratized super-state

The sort of critical stance towards the European Union displayed by Britain and Scandinavia, is even more pronounced in the cases of two small European nation states which have so far officially rejected membership of the EC/EU. These two states are *Norway* and *Switzerland*. In Norway, the population has twice rejected joining the European Union, in 1992 and again in 1994. In Switzerland, even the question of joining the European Economic Area was rejected by a small majority in 1992 (see *Synopsis 2*). What were the reasons for the critical attitudes of the populations (not the elites!) in these two countries?

In the case of Norway, the main reasons were probably the same as those which inhibited Finland and Sweden for a long time from joining the European Community (political neutrality, a strong welfare state, a high standard of living). In addition, though, we might mention the high revenues which Norway gets from North Sea oil, providing this country with considerable economic strength, at the very time when Finland and Sweden ran into serious economic difficulties, albeit for different reasons.<sup>9</sup>

In the case of Switzerland, factors similar to those influencing Britain might account for the negative attitudes toward European integration. In the first instance, pride in the history of the country and the well-established federal and democratic system must be taken into account. Unlike Britain, however, Switzerland did not experience an economic decline in the post-war years – rather the opposite. In spite of the small size of this country, the Swiss *Franken* is one of the strongest currencies in the world. We can probably also say that the strong sense of national identity among the Swiss is second to none in Europe.<sup>10</sup> I would argue that the resistance, particularly of the population of the German-speaking rural cantons, was not in the first instance (as many commentators would have it) an expression of backwardness, but a well-founded fear that local democracy and national political autonomy would be signi-

8 A strong attachment to political neutrality was also one of most important reasons for the scepticism of many Austrians about EC-membership. This positive evaluation of neutrality still exists, but is declining in the face of a sustained propaganda campaign against it, perpetrated by the political elites in power (see Haller et al. 1996: 501 ff.). It must be admitted, however, that the meaning and function of political neutrality has changed since the collapse of the Iron Curtain, increasing European integration, and globalisation (Kirsti 1998: 27 ff.).

9 Finland because of its close economic relations with the former Soviet Union, Sweden because of a sudden change in currency policy and an overloading of the welfare state, due to high increases of wages (see Jochem 1998).

10 Unfortunately, we do not have strictly comparable survey data on this topic, because Switzerland is not a member of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), neither are the Eurobarometer surveys conducted there.

fically undermined by joining the EU (see Kriesi 1998: 90 ff. for a systematic discussion of the Swiss system of direct democracy).<sup>11</sup>

2.4 European integration as a substitute for a weak sense of national identity

A pattern which is almost the opposite of that in Switzerland can be observed in the case of *Germany*. The present-day Germans are characterised by a comparatively low level of national pride. It is, in fact, the lowest level among the 26 countries examined in the study on National Identity conducted by the International Social Science Survey Programme (ISSP) in 1995, and one of the lowest in the World Value Survey of 1990 (see also Westle 1992). *Table 3* shows that Germans both in the East and the West have by far the lowest pride in their history and armed forces. The low level of German national pride is clearly the product of two historical facts: (1) German responsibility for the outbreak of the Second World War, and their total defeat in this war; (2) German responsibility for the Holocaust, the systematic genocide of nearly six million Jews in the concentration camps. Consciousness of this crime remains a painful trauma for many Germans today. This issue continues to be debated hotly and strongly in the German public arena<sup>12</sup> (for further evidence, see von Krockow 1970; Greiffenhausen 1979; Buruma 1994). We must say, indeed, that Germany is still today an «ashamed nation».<sup>13</sup> This thesis is supported by the fact that the Italians, who were also defeated in World War II, also have a low sense of pride in their army, but a rather high feeling of pride in their history; the latter is similarly true for Austria.<sup>14</sup>

Looking at the data concerning the identification of Germans with Europe, we cannot say that they are as enthusiastic as the first group of countries discussed above. The data on the identification with different territorial units (*Table 4*) as well as those on their identification with the European Union (*Table 2*),

- 11 This anxiety would be seen to be entirely justified were we to compare the example of Austria after it joined the EU. In the Austrian parliament, hundreds and hundreds of decisions had to be taken almost overnight, in order to enact EU-law in Austria. Today, it is said that 70–80% of all political decisions which affect Austria are taken in Brussels.
- 12 One of the most recent instances was the publication of Daniel Goldhagen's book on the attitudes and behaviour of ordinary Germans concerning the Holocaust (Goldhagen 1996).
- 13 In German political science literature, a heated discussion about this designation has taken place during the last few years. The well-known social scientist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann (Noelle-Neumann/Köcher 1987) has used the term «vertezte Nation» («hurt nation»), which I think is misleading in this regard, however, since Germany was not hurt by others but by its own national socialist regime, which was guilty of committing crimes against the Jews. (See Scheff 1994 about the importance and exact meaning of the concepts of «pride» and «shame».)
- 14 See Haller et al. 1996 for a systematic comparison between Germany and Italy, and Haller 1999b for a comparison between Austria and Germany.

show that the Germans have only an intermediate level of attachment to Europe. In a comparative analysis of national pride in Germany and Italy, I correlated the feeling of belonging to different geographic-political units (local/regional/national/European identity) with national pride (Haller 1999b). It was found in the case of Germany that those respondents who identified themselves in the first instance with «Europe» or with «the world as a whole» were characterised by a low level of national pride,<sup>15</sup> but the same was not true for Italy. Thus, we can say that at least for a significant subgroup of the German population, the identification with Europe constitutes a substitute for a low sense of national identity and pride.

2.5 European integration as a positive vehicle for the realisation of particular economic, political and/or cultural interests

Under this rubric, I would include three kinds of ideas and strategies. The first concerns the realisation of positive economic goals and interests. In this connection, it is quite evident from the perspective of contemporary history that the interests of large enterprises and multinational corporations have taken the lead in the breakthrough of European economic integration since the early Eighties. This is clearly shown in a comprehensive recent study by Volker Bornschier and associates (1999; see also Middlemas 1995). The European Round Table of Industrialists, established in 1983, which included all the major European transnational and multinational corporations (Phillips, Siemens, Shell, Olivetti, etc.) developed very concrete ideas and proposals about how Europe should meet the challenge presented by the United States and Japan on the world economic scene. The ideas of this Round Table were largely taken over by the EU-Commission and its president, Jacques Delors, in the *White Book for the Internal Market*, published in 1985. In this pamphlet, the future shape of a fully free market in Europe was very clearly laid out in its principal characteristics.

There is one small member state of the European Union which fits particularly well into this pattern. This is *Luxembourg*, whose entire economy, but especially its banking sector, profits massively from European integration. Due to specific advantageous conditions, the private and corporate moneyed aristocracy from the neighbouring countries prefers to invest money in this small

- 15 In 1988, only 9% of the respondents who identified in the first instance with Europe, were «very proud» of Germany while, in the whole sample, this proportion was about 25%; in this subgroup, the proportion of those with «no pride» in Germany was 56% (in the whole sample about 30%).

country or to establish puppet companies there in order to evade taxes and other public burdens and restrictions.<sup>16</sup>

Besides Luxembourg, this motive of using the EU as a vehicle for the realisation of the interests of big enterprises and capital is certainly relevant for every European country which hosts such companies. This applies particularly to Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Italy.

A second positive aim (or group of aims) connected with European integration is political. The dominant aim here was, in the Fifties, clearly that of maintaining internal peace between the member states, particularly between France and Germany. The close and friendly relationship that was established between these two core European countries was an epochal achievement of several political personalities, including Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer. In more recent times, this aim has been enlarged to include that of providing the European Union with more concerted power to effect foreign policy and relations with other countries and regions of the world. It is quite evident that, once again, this aim is supported primarily by the larger member states of the EU, notably Germany, France and, belatedly, Great Britain. By uniting the armed forces of the fifteen member states, the European Union could, at least in theory, play a significant role in world politics. In this way, it could compensate these middle-sized nations for the loss of their former world power and influence. It should come as no surprise, then, that from time to time politicians from these countries ask for a common military force in the EU, or even attempt to establish a small European corps.

A third and final aim of the European Union may be called the realisation of a cultural vision. Here, Europe is seen as a cultural unit, stemming from the Middle Ages when the Roman Catholic church extended over and united almost the whole continent.<sup>17</sup> From that time on, this concept of a Christian Europe («Abendland», as against the pagan Orient) has been a politically contentious but potent symbol (Faber 1979). The success of post-war economic integration can only be fully appreciated if we recognise the fact that the «European Idea» has really been current for centuries (Swedberg 1994).

16 This certainly also applies to Switzerland (see Ziegler 1992). Since Switzerland's entry to the EU would bring an end to some of the advantages which it enjoys through these means, this could be another reason for the negative EU-attitudes of some Swiss people.

17 I am aware that this «cultural» or «religious unity» of the European Occident did not preclude many conflicts between the several Christian kings. On occasion, they (notably the French kings, who were consistently in opposition to the German emperors of the Holy Roman Empire) even entered into alliances with pagan rulers, such as the Turkish Sultans.

All of these three concepts and aims associated with European integration are most prominent in the central European nation states, particularly in France and Germany, and to a lesser extent also in the Benelux nations and in Italy. The largest multinational corporations of the EU are located in these countries. Some of these countries, again most notably France and Germany, have also played central roles in European and world history as major powers, subsequently experiencing decline in this sphere. Moreover, with few exceptions (Netherlands, North and East Germany), Catholic Christians constitute a majority of the population in these countries, and Catholicism can be considered historically as having been the «dominant religion». It is not surprising, therefore, that we find solid majorities approving of European integration in all of these countries (see *Table 2*).

If we consider the role of Catholicism in particular, we find an additional explanation for some surprising findings. It is possible that Catholicism is a religion which can contribute to a more positive attitude toward European integration, because among other things: (1) Catholicism is a universal religion, thus supporting international co-operation and integration; and (2) the Roman Catholic Church is a strongly centralised and hierarchical organisation. Both of these facts would suggest that Catholics will be less afraid than Protestants of a new central EU-bureaucracy in Brussels. This effect of religion could also explain the essentially positive attitudes of Austrians and Italians. German Catholics, too, have traditionally had a positive attitude toward European integration (Langner 1985). The thesis that Catholicism predisposes towards a positive integration attitude is also confirmed by the fact that the leading German politicians in European integration were Catholics or came from the South-West Catholic regions of Germany (K. Adenauer, W. Hallstein, H. Kohl).

What would a «Catholic European Union» look like? It would be: (1) strongly centralised, bureaucratised, hierarchically structured; (2) a very well integrated and comprehensive welfare state, effectively reducing inequalities and poverty; (3) a paternalistic-elitist state whose citizens were well provided for in material terms, but had few interests, possibilities, or powers in political terms. In short, it would be a new kind of «mild totalitarian state», as was foreseen by Alexis de Tocqueville (1976).

another fact: the respected British newspaper *Financial Times*, which detected and criticised these practices, was taken to court and charged by EU-bureaucrats for publishing its enquiry!

*Europe as a substitute for a weak sense of national identity.* This function of membership in the European Union was quite obvious in the case of Germany, but I see two problems here. First, from the democratic point of view, it is disturbing that to date Germans have never had an opportunity to vote in a referendum about such a far-reaching inclusion of their political system within a new, larger unit which in fact considerably undermines their national action potential. As in the case of all the other member states of the EU, we cannot say whether the possibility of Germans being able to elect deputies to the European Parliament would be an adequate compensation for the significant loss of impact of the Bundestag.

Second, since the high level of integration and stability in present-day Germany ultimately does not depend on the economic prosperity of the country, negative economic events or trends could significantly affect the attitudes of the German population toward European integration. In this respect, the high net financial transfers to other member states and the high symbolic value of the Deutsche Mark pose particular problems (see Martin 1991). It could become very problematic if Germans began to see that redistribution within the European Union helps to strengthen a bureaucratic and corrupt apparatus. A problem could also arise if the Euro were to become less stable than the DM.

*Inherent conflicts between different functions of European integration, and between the interests of elites and people.* I have argued that in the cases of some nation states, social and economic groups, we can say that European integration was in fact more or less consciously planned for and pursued. This raises two questions: have the aims of integration been achieved so far? Do conflicts exist between the different aims or between the actors and the people at large?

Economic integration, the liberalisation of markets, and the introduction of the common currency, significantly reduce the potential of the single nation states to pursue autonomous and effective economic and social policies. At the same time, the development of a new welfare state at the EU-level is not yet in sight, nor even imaginable. The American writer John Newhouse has shown in his recent book, *Europe Adrift* (1997/98), that the Maastricht treaty was an incomplete compromise between France and England on the one side, and Germany on the other side. The first two countries and their political representatives (particularly President Mitterand, who was at first openly opposed to German reunification) wanted to introduce monetary union in order to

In concluding, I shall point out some of the implications of the widely differing images and expectations concerning the European Union and its identity, in relation to three of the aforementioned functions of European integration.

### 3 Concluding remarks

*European integration as a prop or crutch:* Will European integration really help the Southern and peripheral European nations in economic and political terms? What will be the consequence of the inclusion of these countries, and also in the foreseeable future of the former communist nations of East-Central Europe (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia), for the European Union as a whole? In economic terms, it is a fact that Ireland has profited considerably from integration. As far as the peripheral South European nations and regions are concerned, however, the picture is much less clear. But as a comparison, it might be observed, for example, that almost one hundred years of considerable support by Italian governments for the Mezzogiorno have not really brought Southern Italy much closer to the high level of development in Northern Italy.

This situation in Italy could be replicated in Europe, namely, a spillover of internal problems to the whole Union. The persistence of corruption in Italy is closely related to central government support for the South (as well as for state-owned and state-controlled enterprises which are very important in Italy, but also in France). Corruption in its less openly criminal forms of clientelism, patronage, favouritism, etc. is an endemic feature of modern societies. It flourishes particularly in market societies where transactions are no longer controlled by primordial units but where an open flow of resources and opportunities exists together with an increasing inequality of access to the market and socio-political sphere<sup>18</sup> (Roniger 1994: 8; Roniger/Günes-Ayata 1994). Two tendencies are relevant here: first, the massive increase of the sphere of state activities in all Western democracies and the increasing complexity of decision-making processes; second, the differential capacities of access to the sponsoring activities (Förderstoffe) at the level of the European Union. It was probably not pure chance that in 1998, an Italian and a French EU-Commissioner were involved in dubious financial transactions and in the haggling for well-paid jobs within the EU-bureaucracy. Even more problematic in my view is

18 «Clientelistic relations» are defined as being «built around asymmetric but mutually beneficial and open-ended transactions and predicated on the differential control by social actors over the access and flow of resources in stratified societies ... Basically, clientelism creates an inherently contradictory situation: Asymmetrical power and/or inequality is combined with solidarity, and potential and/or actual coercion co-exists with an ideological emphasis on the voluntary nature of the attachment.» (Roniger/Günes-Ayata 1994: 31.)

control Germany's economic power. Germany, under Chancellor Kohl, wanted to introduce a political union. Only the first goal was achieved. The consequence is that the European Union in its present form is a torso – a structure with strong economic and market integration, but no corresponding integration of domestic and foreign policy.

A new European technocratic elite is coming into existence which is very remote from the daily life of the citizens in their home nations and regions (Bach 1999). It is not well known that 90% of the political decisions in Brussels are taken not by the Council of Ministers – the direct representatives of the single nation states – but by a very small committee called COREPER (Comité des Représentants Permanents): this group prepares all the decisions which the Council of Ministers makes. Since the members of the Commission – the «acting government» of the EU – are also appointed by national governments, none of the most influential groups and authorities at the central level of the EU are elected in a democratic process.

Another serious problem exists with the objective of preserving the high degree of cultural differentiation within Europe – in the first instance, the variety of languages – while at the same time attempting to resolve the considerable imbalances caused by the relative sizes and degrees of power of the constituent nation states within the European Union. No single federal state in the world – from Germany and Switzerland, to Canada and the United States – is characterised by such a high degree of internal differentiation and size and power imbalances between its subunits (Haller 1992). As long as these remain the only constituent units of the European Union – and there is no expectation that they will be replaced as such – a balanced power structure is hardly possible.

All of these facts – the tendency to undermine national political autonomy, the weak development of democratic processes at the level of central authorities in the EU, the large gaps between the national level and the level of European institutions in Brussels, Strasbourg and elsewhere – could help to explain why, throughout most of Europe, there is very little enthusiasm for European integration (Ciesen 1993; Immerfall/Sobisch 1997). Nevertheless, I would not like to argue that European integration as a whole is a problematic undertaking. As an example of an integration process that was successful in the long run, we could mention the United States, which were deeply divided between North and South in social and cultural terms until the late 19th Century.<sup>19</sup> I

19 One could well ask, though, whether the national unification of the USA (and the according of equal status to the blacks) was worth the extremely bloody civil war of 1861–65, in which over 60000 people died. I would answer this question with a «Yes».

would argue, however, first, that we must see the European integration process much more critically than the actors involved seem to see it, and second, that we should invest more time and energy in thinking about institutional structures which are appropriate and adapted to this extremely variegated and complex entity which is called «the European Union».

Can we give an answer to the general question whether a truly European identity will develop among the people of this continent? I would be rather sceptical if we were to think here simply of feelings of attachment comparable to those expressive of a national identity. The European Union is obviously a much larger, abstract, and complex entity than any single nation state. The EU cannot rely on a common history and on shared and venerated symbols, as nation states can do. None of this necessarily presents a problem, however, as long as the Union keeps clearly to its character as a community of nations which does not seek to regulate the daily lives of its citizens in every detail and to become one of the power-players on the world scene. As a comparatively loose union of relatively independent nation states, it can fulfil important and useful instrumental functions for its constituent units. An attachment to the Union as an entity which is more instrumental and neutral, but overall positive, could well go hand-in-hand with a stronger emotionally based, but demystified sense of national identity for Europeans.<sup>20</sup>

20 For ample evidence showing that chauvinistic forms of national identity are declining in Europe, see Dogan (1994).



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