

Islam – threat to European identity?

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1. Introduction

Dominating headlines in European media are enriched with fear against an Islamic invasion in Europe. They are drawing pictures of an European Union transforming into 'Eurabia' or an European identity crisis because of Islam in Europe. Is Europe a fortress? Recent developments like the reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis seem to underline this perception. Not counting the number of Syrians, who are predominantly Muslim, crossing the borders of the EU illegally, up to now the EU has pledged, out of a total number of 15,244 internationally, altogether 12,340 resettlement or humanitarian admission places, which represents just 0.54 percent of the total number of refugees from Syria. The vast majority - 10,000 places - were offered by Germany, in the form of a humanitarian admission program. The remaining 27 EU countries have pledged a mere 2,340 places. Eighteen EU Member States, including the UK and Italy, have not made any resettlement or humanitarian admission pledges. (Amnesty International, 2013) How does that reflect the self-image of the EU and affects the exogenous perception? Furthermore regarding waves of immigrants from Northern Africa and the remaining Arabic world the number of Muslims entering the European Union is rising permanently. The EU cannot close its eyes anymore to the consequences of that development. But how much pressure can the European community tolerate in order to persist and what holds the EU together in times of scarcity, conflict, danger, and threat? Chris Howarth, a senior policy analyst at the London-based think tank Open Europe, said that "Migration is now the No. 1 concern for the public when polling about European Union membership and accession" (Salem, 2014). Identity is the trace to the past. Can it lead us to the future? According to Friedman the past and the future can be used as ideological tools for nation building processes (Friedman, 1992). Is the European identity constructed along these lines? With European emphasis increasing on preserving Judeo-Christian tradition whilst maintaining a generally hostile posture towards Muslims, it is no wonder why many perceive Islam as not integrating into Western society properly (Ramdani, 2011). But is Islam a threat for European identity or is this identity construction of the EU rather a threat for Islam in diaspora? Is a changing European identity, a reconstruction or even a whole new formation of what defines European identity a way of bridging the gap between Islam and the West?

In order to answer the question whether Islam is a threat to European identity, this paper aims to take a look on the different indicators constructing European identity. Thereby the focus lays on

the cultural and religious dimension, taking into account among others factors the dichotomy between Islam and Christianity, European secularism, European history and enlightenment and the impact of the Euro(pean) crisis. The analysis of the cases of Germany, France and Turkey on the basis of different survey data will show how Islam is functioning in diaspora and why it is perceived as a threat. Conclusively a few suggestions how to overcome the perception of Islam as a threat are being made in order to rethink European identity construction and to foster a broader and deeper solidarity among EU member states as well as between the EU and its neighbors.

2. What constructs European identity?

The idea of a European collective identity is broadly discussed in political and social science literature. For the purpose of a deeper insight in the debate I would recommend to look at Kaina's detailed review of European governance and European identity. Kaina is looking at the different concepts, methods, strategies, notions and problems regarding the construction of a European collective identity (Kaina, 2013). In the framework of my analysis I will focus mainly on the cultural/religious dimension in order to consider the potential threat of Islam and which role it plays for the construction of a common European identity.

Identity is not fixed. It is a constant process of both being and becoming. We are never 'am', we are always becoming. We are obliged to permanently reconstruct our identity in the framework of the society. We need some reference points to construct an image of ourselves. Therefore we create an 'otherness' mostly with a negative connotation because than its easier to see oneself in a brighter light. Hall noted that the 'self' becomes true through the 'other', therefore the 'other' is needed for the construction of the 'self'. Both terms are staying in interdependent relations. The constitutive 'other' also prevents you from repeating yourself. The new identities are characterized as changing, fluid, flexible, multiple, modern, syncretic, horizontal and constructed (Hall, 1992).

Turkey was and is perceived as one of the principle European 'others'(Kylstad, 2010). Therefore the focus will mostly lay on the Turkish case, a possible future member state of the EU, as reference for the role of 'otherness' in the construction of a European collective identity and the perception of Islam as a threat, because Turks represent also a large part of Muslim-origin migrants inside the EU.

European identity doesn't mean to abolish the national identity. As a European citizen everybody becomes a 'second' identity on another level of governance in the multi-level governance system of the EU. But should European identity really just stand next to the national identity as a kind of second layer of skin? Is it actually creating another 'other' next to the national identity?

The notion of a European identity is recently becoming a comprehensive debated topic. Some researchers suggest that the idea of a European collective identity is most notably a phenomenon of crisis. After the oil crisis back in 1973 the then European Community adopted the Declaration on European Identity. It consists of three sections: The Unity of the Nine Member Countries of the Community, The European Identity in Relation to the World, and The Dynamic Nature of the Construction of a United Europe. The European Community agreed to preserve their national cultures, the principles of representative democracy, the rule of law, social justice and human rights, all perceived as fundamental elements of European identity. Furthermore they stressed the relevance of close relations with the 'others'. However the declaration did not offer any clear idea regarding how to achieve a common, supranational or European identity (Radeljić, 2013).

Nowadays the EU is in crisis, not just in economic matters, what the word 'Eurocrisis' often falsely implies, but rather political and cultural. A better word to describe the current situation the union faces is therefore Euro(pean) crisis. Due to the 'Euro(pean) crisis' voices for a deeper and stronger construction of a collective European identity are getting louder again. However, over time, it has become clear that the notion of European identity had and has much more to do with the presence of minorities in Europe, perceived and constructed as European 'otherness', primarily the presence of Muslims in Western Europe. In most cases, these minorities tend to continue cultivating their own, imported identity (Radeljić, 2013). Along with concepts of the 'others' notions of nation-state or secularism rooted in Christianity are shaping the culturalist understanding of the EU project on both sides of the political spectrum (Kylstad, 2010). Hence Islam can be seen as an item to categorizing the others (Kaina, 2013).

In order to create a European identity what is unique about the EU plays an important role. A European Union dominated by democracy, human rights, rule of law, minority protection and a market economy seems at a first glance to be a political union only, without any definitive cultural characteristics. Its principles are phrased in a universal language owing to the European enlightenment. But looking at the case of Turkey, although it is well underway towards fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria it is kept at bay. It seems that there are some unspoken cultural requirements that form the fundamental ground of a common European identity (Casanova, 2003). The

increasing discourse on a cultural based common European identity makes references to culture and heritage. It is an idea of a pan-European legacy reaching back to ancient Greece and the Roman Empire through Christianity up to the enlightenment. Hegel noted that history is moving from East to West and Europe marks the end of history. But what about European history of feudalism, colonialism, communism and fascism? What about the historical influence of Islam in Europe? Turkey is not seen to be sharing the historical roots that the rest of the EU has in common. It is perceived as a politically, culturally and historically 'other' (Kylstad, 2010).

In a period of economic crisis and political tension the EU is facing rising scepticism. Since the Arab Spring the news are full of protest movements all over the world. Societies are using democratic instruments to voice their demands. These new protest movements manage to unify civil society groups under specific goals which have otherwise quite different claims. What about the pro-EU demonstrations in the Ukraine for example? The society is divided along the lines of either support for EU-membership or closer relations to the Russian Federation on which they economically depend. Doesn't the opposition around Klitschko have a sense of a European identity itself, seeing the bonds from the past and the path for the future in the EU? Hard to say if liberals are demonstrating next to open anti-Semites show that a European notion of identity is underlying. How should countries which fail to construct a national identity which fits the majority of the population be able to create and maintain a European identity and fill it with content? A common enemy seems to be the key for unification of a broad part or the majority of a population. In this sense works politics of fear like Islamophobia in Europe, which proclaims Islam as a threat for European collective identity.

3. Epitome of Islam in Europe

The changing face of the world due to tendencies of globalization are leading to two different ways of using Islam in diaspora, namely individualization of Islam vs. institutionalization of Islam. What is left in the age of securitization seems to be history, culture, religion and ethnicity (Kaya, 2011). How should Muslims cope, caught in an archaic community located in Western modernity? Which strategy suits the best: purity, modern or emancipated Islam, integration or assimilation? Are Muslims living in diaspora forced to redefine their relationship with their faith? Is Islam rather a

source of emancipation than repression? Is it a political weapon against the materialistic hegemonic West?

Marranci describes Muslims, even if they were born in the West or reside in the country since decades, as perceived not only as 'aliens', but also as dangerous. However, it is not the person per se that is perceived as dangerous, but his/her Islamic culture and identity (Marranci, 2007). For members of the European 'otherness' from whom the Muslims build the biggest group it is often difficult to meet European expectations. Minorities often prefer to continue the construction of their own, imported identity in diaspora. In order to do that they have to go through two phases of identity formation. On the one hand regarding the Muslims, they need to construct a Muslim identity, which is accepted by the national identity of the majority of the host country. On the other hand there is the focus on the switch from the national towards the supranational, in this case European identity (Radeljić, 2013).

Muslims in diaspora make a strict distinction between religion and culture. On the one side ethno-cultural and religious 'brokers' reinforce the existing boundaries through engaging in ethnic and religious associations. In some countries of the EU efforts are being made to present Muslims vis-à-vis the state through establishing central Islamic councils and organizations. But the Islam doesn't follow such hierarchical structures and therefore this institutionalization in diaspora can be dangerous because it can lead to new boundaries, hybrid identities, a deepening of the heterogeneous character of Islam or even create a barrier for integration. On the other side Islam has become more scripturalized in diaspora and the young generation has a widespread and individualized access to Islam via new social media and web presence of a lot of religious organizations. This is a growing challenge for the status of the folk Islam brought from the origin countries through their parents or grandparents. Young Muslims are instrumentalizing Islam to liberate themselves from the pressure of their patriarchal parental and community culture. This is not only the case in diaspora but when Islam is traveling into the West it is more obliged to change and become more critical. Recent studies show that *"Young Muslims hold their Islamic identity only at a symbolic level, that most do not observe religious rites such as daily prayers and fasting (during the month of Ramadan), and that they adopt an increasingly secular (material) worldview"* (Kaya, 2006: 11). Looking from outside, with Western glasses, for example on women's lives within the Islamic faith, the headscarf may appear simply as a sign of women's oppression within the Islam. But if you look closer it might be also a sign for the modernization of Muslim countries. Not only in diaspora can it bring more freedom to women. They can leave the house and due to

different forms of headscarf express themselves to a certain extent. Other means to wear a headscarf are in terms of religious freedom, identity affirmation, political resistance as well as a sign for Islamic commitment (Marranci, 2007). Here both mechanisms – individualizing and institutionalizing – are working. But still, the idea of being covered in itself holds inevitable discriminatory qualities. It may also be an example for a growing Muslim consciousness, because an increasing number of women in diaspora is choosing to wear a headscarf. Men tend to engage more in diasporic nationalism whereas women are searching shelter and freedom through religiosity, but also due to access to the labor market for example. They're more likely to identify themselves with terms like cosmopolitan and European citizenship (Kaya, 2011; 2013b). Europe is seen as the heritage of modernity and civilization whereas the Islam is perceived as a sign of backwardness (Kylstad, 2010). But if we look at Islam in diaspora this stereotype seems to constantly change over time.

The threat of terrorism has increasingly been linked with Muslim communities in all European countries since the 9/11 attacks on the US in 2001 and the 7/7 atrocities in central London in 2005. People tend to categorize Muslims increasingly on the basis of religious features rather than physical characteristics. They have been blamed for self-segregation and cultural separatism along with Islamic fundamentalism. But we shouldn't forget, that Evangelical fundamentalism is not at all better (Ramdani, 2011). One should keep in mind the cycle of events embedding the rise of Islamophobia in the West, changing the perception of Muslim-origin immigrants, beginning with the Arab-Israeli war up to recent events in Europe, like the Stockholm bombings 2010. This cycle is still ongoing. The actual issue being described with the ideology of Islamophobia is hostility to Muslims, which can be seen as an 'ethno-religious identity within European countries', rather than hostility to Islam. Islamophobia creates a social stigmata towards Islam leading to an exclusion of the 'others' from the own identity. Some scholars see Islamophobia as anti-Muslim racism, a continuation of anti-Arab or anti-Asian racism and in line with anti-Semitism for example. Western media tend to draw the image of homemade terrorists as 'enemy within'. But it is no one-way road. What is social and political is nowadays reduced to what is cultural and religious. When differences of minorities are misrecognized or even unrecognized, they are inclined to generate ethno-cultural and religious discourses. Minorities tend to instrumentalize Islam themselves. On the one hand Western-Islamic identity is radicalized and on the other hand re-stigmatized through the same channels of argumentation (Kaya, 2013b). Furthermore Marranci supposes a dichotomy between the Muslims in Europe and the Muslims of Europe. Integration and assimilation of

Muslims are often presented as the best, if not the only, solution to immigration issues. „*However, Muslim immigrants have to deal with a schizophrenic language and political behaviour. On the one hand, Europe asks them to become part of it, in other words to become, if not ‘fully’ Europeans, at least Muslims of Europe; in other words, Muslims that re-elaborate their cultural and religious identity to become citizens of a new Europe, which include also Islam. But, at the same time, Europe acts in a way that Muslims can only remain Muslims in Europe; in other words, aliens in a Christocentric European environment to whom tolerance might be only granted. It is Islamophobia and, in particular, what could be called institutional Islamophobia that prevents Muslims to become of Europe.*“ (Marranci, 2007: 112).

4. Islam – a threat to European identity?

As we have seen above European identity is constructed to a largely part along cultural and religious lines. Based on the European self-perception in contrast to the 'other' the dichotomy between Christendom and Islam plays a fundamental role. The question whether Islam is a threat to European identity already implies the religious dimension, thus the key issue will be remaining extend of Christianity in the contemporary secular EU. Silvio Berlusconi said *“We are proud bearers of the supremacy of western civilisation, which has brought us democratic institutions, respect for the human, civil, religious and political rights of our citizens, openness to diversity and tolerance of everything [...] Europe must revive on the basis of common Christian roots”* (The Guardian, 2001: 15). Another example for the strong emphasis on Christendom regarding the construction of a collective European identity is the statement of current German Chancellor Angela Merkel: *“We don't have too much Islam, we have too little Christianity. We have too few discussions about the Christian view of mankind”* (Ramdani, 2011). Yilmaz stated that *“Christianity in Europe is therefore first and foremost [...] a civilizational idea, political culture and lifestyle”* (Yilmaz, 2007, p.298). On reference of this strong influence of Christianity in European countries Islam can easily be perceived as threat and be instrumentalized by European policy makers.

Along with concepts of the 'others' notions of nation-state or secularism rooted in Christianity are shaping a culturalist understanding of the EU project on both sides of the political spectrum. The relations with Turkey for example are raising questions about the direction of the EU, its underlying

rationale and its construction of identity. Turkish candidacy highlights unfinished business in the social fabric of the EU members, including what it means to be secular and how religion, including but not limited to Islam, relates to European identity. Negotiations over Turkey's accession to the EU since 2005 are moving in slow-motion, with several chapters of the community acquis effectively blocked. Public opinion polls conducted by Eurobarometer reveal a broad scepticism along with widespread opposition towards Turkey (Kylstad, 2010). But that seems to be no one-way street. Recent surveys within Turkey showed a shift in Turkish perspectives towards EU – the bit is not that strong anymore. Turks are criticizing for instance that the EU is not treating them in a fair and objective manner and in fact for example the focus on actual implementation of reforms and passing of legislation is stronger with Turkey than it has been with previous candidate countries (Verney, 2007). Concerns regarding membership of Turkey are voiced not only in Paris, Berlin and especially in the group of Christian Democratic parties in the European Parliament. Arguments against Turkey joining the EU cover a wide range of themes, from economics to demographics to domestic political problems with democratization and human rights. The incidents around occupy Gezi 2013 reinforced these concerns. Turkey's relationship with the EU demonstrates that '[...] Europe (is) actually the torn country' (Casanova, 2003). Maybe the liberal idea of an EU as a purely political entity based on Kantian ideals can be a solution. Regarding Turkey's membership ambitions the EU is pushed to test its limitations of self-understanding and universalist language. The question is whether the EU is an offspring of a tradition of cosmopolitanism or rather an exclusive club for Christian countries located on the European continent (Kylstad, 2010).

European policy-makers constructed the fear of a Turkish wave of immigration into the EU and that they will steal jobs, houses, social benefits and are not willing to integrate but rather build Muslim counter-societies which threatens European identity. But if we look at the net migration numbers shouldn't rather Turkey be afraid of an immigration wave from Europe? Turkey's 'otherness' is basically driven by the dichotomy between Islam and Christendom. International newspapers depicting that Turkey has its own version of political Islam with anti-Western and pan-Islamic overtones. Religion remains the major cultural difference between the EU and Turkey. The roots in Christianity is a main factor that all the EU-28 states unambiguously have in common (Kylstad, 2010). The language of Christianity was over time projected onto 'Europe' whereby Christianity was replaced with civilization and Islam with barbarians (Delanty, 1995). *"Further complicating Turkey's road towards the EU, and connected to the above, is the question of exactly to what extent*

the idea of homogeneity acts as an underlying premise of the EU-project. To what extent is the ideal of a homogenous nation-state still part of the EU's DNA? The current political climate in Europe suggests that cultural homogeneity remains a strong desire. Turkey, being the ultimate Other as a predominantly Muslim country, suffers the consequences of this” (Kylstad, 2010: 3).

Kaya argues that the Western political elite has constituted a 'civilizational idea' of Europe with the aim to construct a culturally prescribed Europe. This is based on historical myths and memories, the Ancient Greek and Roman legacy, shared meanings and values, Christian mythology as well as homogeneity and heterophobia. In this construction neither Turkey nor the Islam has a place. In this sense a 'post-civilizational idea' of Europe is needed, based on cultural diversity, heterophilia and dialogue. (Kaya, 2013a: pp. 210). Thus a need to change the basic understanding of EU in order to integrate Turkey can be identified. A post-civilizational notion of the EU could lead to a reduction of the perception of Islam as a threat. Furthermore the EU could benefit a lot from accession of Turkey in regard of its young population and European demographic problems, its energy policy and as a protective shield against cultural closure and eurocentrism. In addition Turkey could act as a bridge between the West and the Islamic world (Kylstad, 2010).

As we have seen up to now identity is a complex construction shaped by a wide range of different factors. What is Turkish identity and what constructs European identity? Are they compatible? Turkey was not only an Asian empire but equally an European empire so it is important to recognize the historical influence of Islam next to the legacy of Christendom. Çağaptay tries to answer the question 'Who is a Turk?' by analysing who is excluded from Turkishness and why. Hence Çağaptay is looking at the relations between the government and the non-Muslim minority groups – Christians and Jews – in the 1930s inside the new founded Turkish Republic. Islamic religion, Turkish language and the legacy of the millet system are defined as components of Turkish nationalism. Çağaptay identifies three categories of Turkishness in High Kemalist understanding in the order of a concentric circle. The core is defined by ethno-religious terms and reserved for the Turks. The middle circle is bound to religion and therefore open for the non-Turkish Muslims. They are able to access the inner core through assimilation. The outer territorial circle is reserved for non-Muslim minorities. The Jews are due to their position in the former millet system closer to the center as the Christians, but both are far away from direct state accommodation and are strictly bound to the hostile margins of the society. At the same time there was the notion of a planned relocation policy in the means of resettlement of the non-Muslim minorities among the Turkish

population in order to facilitate their integration into the society. Quite interesting is the tension between Islam as religion and Islam as an identity in Turkey. On the one hand it stands outside the public sphere, open to everybody, on the other hand it is seen as a strong marker of Turkishness tied to ethnicity. Thus religion seems to be a core element in the creation of ethno-national boundaries between the Ottoman Christians and the Muslim majority. The ethnic cleansing of the Ottoman Muslims by the Christian powers and the recent conflicts with the Christian nations led the Turks to identify Christians as adversaries. The antipathy was also linked to Kemalist secularism (Çağaptay, 2006). Nowadays Turkish nationalism and identity is still based on an ethnic-religious dimension. Turkishness is constructed by the 'Holy Trinity' of Sunni-Muslim-Turk, therefore Turkish identity can not survive without Islam. In this sense Christianity can be seen as a challenge for the national identity of Turks. Hence the religious dichotomy works in both directions. Islam is a threat for European identity in a similar way as Christendom is a threat for Turkish identity. Both European identity and Turkish identity are built along the same cultural and religious lines. In order to integrate Turkey a rethinking of the construction of European identity is a precondition, but maybe a redefinition of Turkish identity could be fruitful as well.

Another problem is the lack of a common vision of what the EU will become in the future. Should supranationalism or intergovernmentalism be reinforced? Maybe the famous saying 'the way is the goal' is right, but can you really go the way if there is no aim where to go to? There is a gap between what the EU is ought to be regarding the legal documents and the form it is ready to construct in reality (Kylstad, 2010). The EU sees itself as a unique space of enlightenment. This way of thinking correlates the decline of religion with modernity and progress. Therefore religion becomes a sign of backwardness or stagnation and something unenlightened (Casanova, 2003). Enlightenment promises a specific kind of European identity. Here Turkey's membership ambitions impose a twofold challenge because on the one side it inflames differences and tensions inside the union about what it ought to be and on the other side challenges the self-image of enlightened Europeans when opposing Turkey as future member (Kylstad, 2010). Taking all that into account Islam is regarded as a threat to European identity because it challenges its most basic foundation. To include Turkey into the EU a new mode of European secularism is needed.

I'm working at the moment on an EU project called "Perspectives of the Euro(pean) crisis" together with the Sharing Perspectives Foundation. We made four rounds of surveys regarding the

political/institutional, the economic and the social/cultural dimension of the crisis together with an extra survey analyzing especially the perspective of the Turkish youth about the relation between Turkey and the EU and possible impacts of the 'Euro(pan) crisis'. Participating countries are Germany, the Netherlands, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Italy, Cyprus and Slovenia. The aim of the research is the perception of the current situation the EU is facing since 2009 of young people in the age between 18 and 29. It prevailed that there is a growing lack of political trust in the youth in general in member states of the European Union. The European youth perceives the euro crisis as a crisis of democracy. The South of Europe distrusts their national governments to a high percentage to manage the crisis but they more likely seem to trust the EU alone to do so. The North is stating a higher trust in their governments but less trust in the EU alone to overcome the crisis. In general, the combined efforts of the EU together with the national governments of the member states seems most trustworthy for the youth. At the same time respondents from all countries clearly report that the EU should have some influence within its member states, but not as much as the member states themselves. Only Germany and Italy seem to favor an increasing influence of the EU on the national level, thus favoring a consolidation of the supranationalist approach.

Furthermore the survey showed that the Euro(pan) crisis is not only recognized as economic and institutional but as well as socio-cultural. Consequently the dimension a particularly concern weighs on the questions of European identity. Nearly the whole youth of the analyzed countries state that they have a European identity. The available polling data from the Eurobarometer 2013 suggests similar conclusions, namely that many people in Europe already feel a certain sense of European identity, suggesting that 62 percent of Europeans consider themselves to be a 'citizen of the EU' and 55 percent feeling their identity is both European and national. In addition the survey data of the Sharing Perspective Foundation revealed that the European youth identifies common values, cultural diversity, a shared history, mutual political institutions, a shared currency as well as a common economic market, in this chronological order, as the basic parts of European identity. While respondents from all countries agree that it is important to strengthen European identity, with Germany reporting the highest demand, the opinions about the measures are diverging. Organizational measures, like adopting an ID for all European citizens are regarded as not that helpful, whereas cultural measures are perceived as important instrument to strengthen European identity. The young Europeans value not only the free movement inside the EU, that means the fact that borders in the EU are open for European citizens to travel, work, study and live

everywhere in Europe. Accordingly supporting working experience abroad for the youth is regarded as a valuable measure to strengthen European identity. Moreover it would probably encourage a better understanding of cultural differences and promote social solidarity. The strongest emphasis regarding measures to reinforce European collective identity lays on the education. Northern European countries perceive educational measures as helpful, whereas Southern European countries consider them as very helpful. This could be interpreted as a sign for the educational cleavage inside the EU Professor Anricht Wille from the Leiden University in the Netherlands has revealed. The European youth would also like to have deeper rights according to their EU citizenship in terms of having a common welfare and healthcare system and regarding equal rights without being a member of that particular country, no matter where you reside inside the EU.

Concerning their understanding of politics citizens of the EU seem to find it difficult to understand EU politics compared to the national one. Apparently, respondents from all the countries participated in the previous national, as well as EP elections to a great percentage. They mostly report that they plan to vote for the following elections on both levels. This might be a sign that European citizens take their rights and duties of citizenship serious and developed a profound European identity. But this positive outcome could be also related to the fact that 72 percent of the participants of the surveys are students or have already finished their academical education. That would refer again to an educational cleavage. Regarding other ways of political participation apart from elections, the youth doesn't seem that involved, except in the less 'aggressive' cases, such as signing a petition, wearing a badge or boycotting certain products. A final issue concerning participation in the EU political affairs concerns whether respondents feel that they are well informed on the 2014 EP election and whether the EU political affairs are a topic of discussion among their group of friends. In the first case, respondents mostly state that they either do not feel well informed for the upcoming EP election or that they do not feel informed at all. In the second case, they report that the EU political affairs are a topic of discussion among their group of friends "every now and then". Accordingly a rethinking and restructuring of election campaigns on the European level is required, for instance via providing a European media platform. European identity is not just a construction to seek approval for EU policy-making and decision-making, it seems to have arrived in the individual private space.

By comparing this evidence with the debate about further integration and enlargement of the EU and a demand for a collective European identity to realize these certain commonalities are

becoming visible. In line with these findings up to now it would be very interesting to compare the perspective of the European youth with the perception of the Turkish youth, but unfortunately the survey is due to a lack of respondents still open and will be analyzed in the foreseeable future (survey results of the project 'Perspectives of the Euro(pean) crisis of the Sharing Perspective Foundation).

In contrast there is also Euroscepticism, which is spreading like a virus all over Europe. It is not a new phenomenon but the Euro(pean) crisis foreshadows this ghost behind every corner. Concerns and doubts increase between and within creditors and debtors. (Torreblanca, 2013) Can we see a clash between Northern and Southern Europe? Is everyone losing faith in the European Union? Will growth restore the collapsed trust in the EU? Is the EU heading towards a dark or a bright future? Is the EU without its economic appeal just an empty shell? Can we see a sign of solidarity to overcome the crisis, which would indicate a European identity?

According to the Eurobarometer data from 2012 Germans see themselves as the victims of the euro crisis which is quite contradicting regarding their remaining intact economic status and standard of living. They fear having to pay higher taxes or accept higher levels of inflation in order to save the euro. 56 percent of Germans have no trust in the EU while only 30 percent have a fairly positive image of the EU. The mainstream political parties still support the euro and recent polls show that three quarters of Germans are against leaving the euro. A new anti-euro party, 'Alternative for Germany', has just been set up but is so far without societal power (Torreblanca, 2013). Before the crisis EU membership was associated in Greece with economic progress, prosperity, and modernity following totalitarian rule. But since then, Greece has gone through severe recession, structural reform, harsh austerity and humiliating bailouts. Therefore Greek support for the union decreased dramatically from +26 percent 2007 to -63 percent in 2012. But not only trust in the EU collapsed but also trust in and support for the national government. So Greece is drifting to the radical extremes which reject the EU in different degrees. Since the crisis the trust in the EU has fallen dramatically as the most recent Eurobarometer showed. Despite the self-perception as European citizen there is a tremendous lack of trust in system and structure of the union, visible through the predominant opinion that the individual voices are not properly heard at the European level (Torreblanca, 2013). Regarding the examples of Germany and Greece it is quite questionable if there is a real European collective identity. It is a clear sign that Islam is not the only threat for European identity, but it may work as a political instrument to distract the attention of the European citizens away from such socio-economic and political problematics.

Can European identity be seen as a form of governmentality in Foucaultian sense? The notion of a common European identity is used as a political tool. (Kylstad, 2010) The common identity of the EU is constructed by othering the 'others'. Thus happens for example via Islamophobia, which is operating with stereotypes such as all Muslims beat their wives, stone women, cut throats, are suicide bombers and so on. In the age of neo-liberalism Islamophobia becomes apparent together with processes of securitizing and stigmatizing migrants and migration. The Muslim-origin minority is instrumentalizing Islam for social and political interests and the Western majority societies construct an anti-multiculturalist discourse. Political elites, media and experts want to secure their power and mobilize masses by fabricating and re-enforcing politics of fear. Therefore Islamophobia is a tool of power struggle (Kaya, 2011). Marranci states that Islamophobia is a hostility based on the fear of multiculturalism and its consequences. What Huntington calls the 'Western civilization' fears that in a real multicultural society Islam might change what 'Western' means. Furthermore Islam is a late-coming challenge to Christianity (Marranci, 2007). According to Hesse Europe perceives Islam as a transruptive force that might challenge the alleged Judaeo-Christian heritage of Europe. Islamophobia is an reaction to multicultural connections between the European-Western values and Islamic ones, it is defense and resistance against multiculturalism. Multiculturalism brought re-minorization, re-ethnicization and re-religionaization of minorities in Europe (Kaya, 2011). The actual issue being described with Islamophobia is hostility to Muslims which can be seen as an 'ethno-religious identity within European countries', rather than hostility to Islam. It creates a social stigmata towards Islam leading to an exclusion of the 'others' from the own identity. It is important to re-think first the construction of Western identities in order to minimize the impact or prevent constructions of politics of fear like Islamophobia. With reference to the survey data of the Sharing Perspectives Foundation the Euro(pean) crisis seems to have affected the view on immigration issues inside the EU, with a stronger impact in the Southern countries, which suffer the most from the consequences of the crisis. Respondents from all countries report an increase in racism and discrimination towards certain nationalities. The perception and political instrumentalization of Islam as a threat to European identity fits right into that atmosphere.

France and Germany have the biggest Muslim communities in Europe. Britain has a sizable Muslim presence as well, with members often complaining of discrimination and prejudice in each country. The Le Monde/IFOP poll from 2011 conducted in France and Germany revealed that both countries perceive Islam as a threat. Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy's government has

displayed an increasingly hard line stance towards what he perceives as religious extremism. An example therefore is the ban of the Islamic headscarf after a controversial debate. This has been accompanied by a highly publicized national identity debate, in which thousands have complained about the increasing influence of Muslim communities within France. Germany had and has tensions with Islam as well, such as occasional opposition to religious traditions of Islam, like the construction of a large mosque in Cologne that caused a hot debate. Recapitulating the survey results it is distinct that immigration is not only linked with matters of security or immigration but beyond that Islam is increasingly linked with a threat to identity (Ramdani, 2011).

Another recent study about religious attitudes of Germans from the Bertelsmann Foundation called 'Religion Monitor 2013: Religiousness and Cohesion in Germany' shows that more than half of the German population perceive Islam as a threat to the country and their way of life. On the one hand 85 percent Germans think that the civil society should be open to all religions and over 60 percent believe that there is a core of truth in every religion. On the other hand the majority considers Islam to be something different, foreign and threatening. According to the survey only a quarter of Germans believe that Islam has a positive influence on the society. To have a comparison, Judaism is regarded as a threat to the German way of life by 20 percent of the citizens. Furthermore the survey also reveals that Muslims possess the strongest religious identity in Germany. Some 90 percent of Muslims believe that religion is somewhat or very important, which is based for example on the construction of the Turkish identity, which makes Islam to a core point of self-image. 40 percent of the Muslim-community in Germany rate themselves as very religious, and 30 percent of Muslims visit the mosque on a regular basis. By contrast, only 18 percent of Protestant Christians attend church on a regular basis. According to the survey, nearly 40 percent of Muslims in Germany believe Islam 'has a monopoly on the truth' and that other religions are patently false. The poll shows that nearly 20 percent of Muslims in Germany believe that 'only politicians who believe in God are suitable for public office.' More than 30 percent of Muslims believe that Muslim religious leaders should have more influence on government decision-making. The weak position of Muslims is becoming visible through the fact that only 24 percent of Muslims are involved in civil society activities outside of work and family, which may refer to the traditionally strong collective attachment to family, thus leading to prioritize family relationships over civil society activities (Kern, 2013). Regarding the institutionalization of Islam as previously mentioned, there are two modes of politics according to MacIntyre: „[...] *politics of the insiders and politics of the outsiders. The insiders carry on their political practice via legitimate*

political institutions (the parliament, political parties, the media), while the outsiders resort to culture, ethnicity, religion, and traditions to achieve their goals. Therefore, the main motive behind the development of ethno-cultural and religious inclinations by migrant and minority groups can be perceived as their concern to be attached to the political-public sphere“ (Kaya, 2006:2). In addition the Bertelsmann Foundation claims that mostly elderly and people with low levels of education report most concerns about Islam. In this sense education is a very important key for tolerance of Islam. As some scholars suggest to enhance the general education system with classes about the European Union to trigger European collective identity formation, it would be advisable to lay a stronger emphasis on Islam in religion classes (Kern, 2013).

Moreover there seems to be a high correlation between the question of whether someone ever had contact with people of other religions, and attitudes towards other religions. This means that people of different religions must enter into dialogue and interact with each other. Ultimately in Germany compared with other European countries the ghettoization and segregation in the neighborhoods is not that bad. In conclusion the results of the poll are undeniably bad news for multiculturalists, who are now busy casting the blame for Islamophobia on German or French ignorance and portraying Muslim immigrants as victims of negative stereotypes. These findings lead towards the direction of the view of some experts that there is a growing divide between the perception of ordinary European citizens and the multicultural elites, who promoted immigration from Muslim countries considering the 'unity in diversity' conception (Kern, 2013). But we shouldn't forget for instance the Turkish labor migration in the 1960s forced by the German government, which had nothing to do with an EU elite project.

Since the federal elections 2013 there is a new German Minister for migration and integration with Turkish-origin, Aydan Özoğuz. Is this a step towards the future, regarding demands for political participation and structural, social and cultural integration? Is it evidence for a changing Islam in diaspora? From my point of view it is to a certain degree. But there is also the other side of the medal. Looking deeper into the Turkish community in Germany 'Turkish quarters' are visible in several cities like Berlin or Hannover for example. Therefore Turks can live in Germany without the need to learn German or to integrate in any matter. A part of the Muslim community in diaspora even feels the need to become more conservative in diaspora, in order to truly live in Islamic faith among unbelievers and not to lose their socio-cultural connection to their country of origin. According to the Qur'an they rather live among believers to have the proper spiritual input and inspiration to stay in the true faith. Therefore they need to build counter-societies in diaspora.

Doomed to stay in the private space in diaspora Islam tries to get into public through searching for politics via mosques. They are not investing in integration but in their ethno-cultural, religious identities. What lies beneath the formation of parallel societies in Western nations are structural and political mechanisms of exclusion. Caused by factors like poverty, loneliness, insecurity, unemployment, institutional discrimination, racism, xenophobia and heterophobia and so on religious fundamentalism and religious nationalism are rising as well in diaspora. The constructed ideology of Islamophobia reinforces such tendencies (Kaya, 2012).

Another facet is the mass migration myth of 2014. Once again Western Europe is hysterical about a swarm of criminal, scrounging immigrants that doesn't actually exist. The right-wing press is proclaiming threats for the labor market, rising crime rates or benefit tourism through waves of immigrants – redressing these issues to Islam. But the EU is not only concerned about external but also internal migration movements. Thus this panic is not just raised because of migration from non-European countries but also because restrictions for Romania and Bulgaria ended with the begin of 2014. That means workers from both countries are allowed to emigrate without limitations into the labor markets of the Western and Southern part of the European Union. These waves of labor migrants won't have just an influence on the receiving countries but may also have tremendous negative effects for the already weak economies of the countries of origin, like the brain drain. Instead of helping these EU member states to overcome there precarious economic situation in matters of solidarity and a common sense of identity based on democratic values, like equality for every single individual, politics and media are producing fear. Romania and Bulgaria seem to become outsiders inside the EU. That doesn't speak much for a profound existence of a European identity. Since the accession of the so called A8 countries (poorer counties in Eastern Europe) migration towards Western and Southern Europe increased systematically because people seek to take advantage of better standards of living, employment opportunities, and welfare and health care provisions. UK for example, because of a lack of migration control, was effected particularly by this development. Over 650.000 people migrated into the UK since 2004. Together with long-term concerns against immigrant societies and the economic downturn of the EU, xenophobia was popping up like the plaque. To deal with these problems the EU is heading back towards enforcing integration through measures such as compulsory language courses for example. But in reality countries like Germany or the UK benefit from migration due to a lack of skilled labor in fields like IT or health care. The Commission found out that in the long run migrants

pay generally more taxes as they receive social benefits and they make in total just a small number of the unemployed receiving welfare in the EU (Salem 2014). The freedom of mobility of goods, capital and most importantly people is one of the main benefits a society gets when its country joins the EU. Every citizen of the union should therefore be able to travel, study or work wherever he/she wants inside the union. But apparently that is not the case. As long as there is no change we cannot really talk about a deep-rooted European identity. This change could be a shift toward a more political identity of the EU, a political identity that emphasizes that difference is both legitimate and possible. It could lead to higher levels of political affiliation of affected EU citizens, decrease the democratic deficit by generating legitimacy for the EU institutions, increase solidarity and reduce the fear of the 'others' and their 'otherness' in general (Kylstad, 2010).

In order to bridge the gap between Islam and the European Union, to overcome Islamophobia, racism, xenophobia there is an inevitable demand to reconstruct European identity as a political, not an ethnic (against Euro-nationalism), cultural or a colonial concept (against Euro-centrism). Therefore developing higher inclusivity and not exclusivity of the European idea (of Eastern part of Europe, of neighboring regions) is essential. European identity should be a bottom-up construction. Turning away from the notion of an imposed, economic-based project, the project of European bureaucrats but back to the roots, a project of ordinary people through education, culture, work, migration etc. Realizing and reversing European historical debt and responsibility from the colonial times are important steps in that process of reformation and reconstruction of European identity, also when regarding the problems of migration the EU faces. Furthermore the EU imposes certain strategies to strengthen the European collective identity through foundational myth-making and the manipulation of common European symbols like European flag, anthem, motto, Europe day and so forth. According to the survey data of the Sharing Perspectives Foundation educational and cultural measures are demanded in order to strengthen European identity. The creation of a common social welfare system (healthcare, education, pensions), the free movement of pension, EU ID cards, an EU emergency response service for natural disasters, a directly elected President of the EU or an EU-wide mobile phone network at same price are ideas to create a deeper European identity and could lead to the reduction of the emphasis of 'otherness' and Islamophobia as keystones of identity construction. (Velikonja, 2013).

5. Conclusion

The analysis revealed that there is a European collective identity, but it remains unclear with certainty how wide and deep its impact in reality actually is. European identity is constructed along political as well as cultural and religious lines. It is based on Christian roots, European secularism, enlightenment, a common history, Ancient Greek and Roman legacy, shared values and beliefs and heterophobia. Thus it follows a civilizational idea of Europe. From a top-down perspective European policy-makers are pushing European identity through initiatives, declarations, the manipulation of symbols, politics of fear and other measures. In reference to the fact that the European self-image is based on the contradiction to the 'other' they are emphasizing the significance of Christianity as a key issue all 28 member states of the EU share, hence reinforcing the dichotomy between Christendom and Islam. The difficulties of the EU accession negotiations with Turkey are a pellucid example. From a bottom-up perspective the majority of European citizens report having a European identity as the survey data revealed. In consequence of a lack of other commonalities, Christianity seems to be the glue which holds the European citizens together. In addition this is further enhanced through tendencies of globalization, which reduce socio-economic and political problems to cultural and religious ones in general. The Euro(pean) crisis seems to accelerate this development. Accordingly Islam is to a certain extent perceived as a threat to the basic foundations of European identity. The truth in the matter is that Islam per se is no threat. It is the notion of Europe and the construction of the European identity which creates an image of an Islamic threat. A solution might be a further transition to the political dimension of building a common European identity, in the sense of a shift towards a post-civilizational idea of Europe, based on dialogue, cultural diversity and heterophilia.

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