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## Constructing European Identities

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(This paper was given on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2008, at Istanbul University: hence some of the explicit references to time and place).

### **Abstract**

*This paper considers the changing nature of European identities, suggesting four key aspects developed over history. These include the development of the barbarian other, the conflicts between Latin, Orthodox and Muslim hegemonies, the development of concepts of nation, colonialism and empire, and the resulting conflicts that shattered the continent. Contemporary European identities, in contrast, use the idea of the past as 'the other', and are based on a celebration of diversity that requires tolerance and a unifying focus on the promotion and expansion of human rights. The keynote paper particularly addressed the contribution of Islam to European identity, and events centred on the city of Istanbul: it was delivered on the 555th anniversary of the fall of Constantinople/ establishment of Istanbul.*

This paper examines four critical moments that in some way triggered the construction of different aspects of European identities. Exploring these will help illuminate the various ways in which identities can be constructed, and the potential consequences of different ways of demonstrating or manifesting these identities. In particular, I hope that we can begin to understand the last of these moments, which is currently still in progress place, and see how each of the previous moments of constructions have had consequences. This is not intended to impute a direct or casual relationship between each of these events and the construction of forms of European identities, but rather to show that each in some way contributed to significant changes in how many people in Europe identified themselves. It is not suggested that these changes were in any way inevitable or linked to some great teleological narrative about the emergence of 'the European identity'. These critical moments each prefaced significant reconstructions in the way Europeans thought about themselves, and have contributed to the situation in which we now find ourselves: they tell us something, I will argue, about who we think we are now.

These critical moments extend over four millennia, and two were related to events very close to Istanbul.

The first critical event took place in the fourth century before the common era, in about 490-480 BCE: the events known as the Persian Wars. Before this time, the Greeks do not appear to have envisaged their neighbours as enemies. Homer treated Greeks and Trojans as equals in the Illiad. The term barbarian, or non-Greek, simply meant foreigner, specifically someone who does not speak Greek. Homer uses it to describe the Carians as incomprehensible – 'men of strange speech' (1967, Book 2): there were no

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negative connotations. The attitude to others – and particular easterners – and the use of the word barbarian shifted dramatically in about 480 BCE.

Cyrus the Great established a Persian state in 540 BCE. The Greek leader of Lydia, Croesus, attacked Cyrus, but was defeated and the Persians occupied most of Asia Minor, what is now Turkey. Persian satraps taxed the Greeks in the coastal cities, and in 500 BCE these cities rose in revolt against Darius, the successor to Cyrus, but were put down in wars that lasted to 493. Darius then took the opportunity to annexe the Greek Aegean islands and the Propontis (the area around here, the entrance to the Black Sea). The Persians were conciliatory: tribute was replaced with a progressive tax based on the wealth of each city, democracies were established in some of the Ionian city-states, prisoners were returned, and Darius encouraged the Persian nobility to participate in Greek religious practices. Persian and Greek nobility began to intermarry, and Persian nobles' children were given Greek names. Darius' policies were publicised in mainland Greece, so that when Darius demanded Greek submission in 491, most city-states initially accepted the offer, Athens and Sparta being the significant exceptions.

The Persians sent an army of between 20-60,000 that landed near Marathon. The only allies of the Athenians in the Battle of Marathon were the Plataeans. With some 20,000 men, they attacked at a run, preventing the Persian archers taking up their positions. The Greeks maintained their formation, retreating in order when the Persian centre counterattacked, and then closing in on the wings and encircling the Persians: 6,400 dead Persian bodies were counted on the battlefield and buried against only 192 Athenian and 420 Plataean dead. The effects were significant for both sides. The Athenians defied the superior Persian forces, and the other Greek cities saw that they could resist - several city-states renounced their submission to Persia and joined the Athenians and Spartans. The impact on the Persians was the first defeat of Persian infantry forces since before Cyrus: Marathon signalled Persian inadequacy at sea and threatened Persian holdings in the Western part of the empire. Darius set about raising an invasion force, which was taken on by his son Xerxes on his death in 480 BCE. It is estimated this may have been between 200,000 and 250,000 strong (Herodotus says 2.5 million). The army marched through what is now western Turkey to the Hellespont, where 674 triremes were lashed together to form two bridges, over which the cavalry and foot soldiers crossed. It took four months for the army and fleet to move towards Attica. The Greek and Spartan forces divided to cover the possible approaches, and just 300 Spartans were assembled when the Persian army arrived at the pass of Thermopylae.

Xerxes' general Artabanus, with 10,000 men, fought an engagement with Leonidas, the Spartan general, at Thermopylae; the Persian host was cut to pieces, while only two or three of the Spartans were slain. The king then ordered an attack with 20,000, but these were defeated, and although flogged to the battle, were routed again. The next day he ordered an attack with 50,000, but without success, and accordingly ceased operations

(Ctesias, quoted by Photius, 890/1920)

The Spartans were eventually overcome, but the battle allowed the Greek forces to regroup, and defeat the weakened Persian forces at Plataea. The fleets met at Salamis: the Persian triremes were routed, and the Persians withdrew from Attica for good.

The Persian civilisation was at that time elaborate and advanced in comparison to Greece. Darius' government codified data about the empire, and devised a universal legal system. The practice of slavery was generally banned, and they freed the Jews held at Babylon. The new capital, Persepolis, was built by paid workers rather than slaves. The 2,500-kilometer Royal Road from Susa to Sardis allowed relays of mounted couriers to reach the remotest areas within fifteen days. Darius also initiated a central economy based on silver and gold coinage system, leading to extensive trading and the exchange of commodities: trade tariffs were one of the empire's main sources of revenue. The mathematical system they had developed from the Babylonians was more advanced than anywhere else at the time.

One of their most significant contributions may be the Cyrus Cylinder, described as the world's first charter of human rights. Passages in this appear to express Cyrus' respect for humanity and his promotion of religious tolerance and freedom, and his support for freedom of local religions and opposition to slavery, repression and tyranny.

I am Cyrus, king of the world, great king, legitimate king, king of Babylon ... I did not allow anybody to terrorize [any place] of the [country of Sumer] and Akkad. I strove for peace in Babylon and in all his [other] sacred cities. As to the inhabitants of Babylon ... I abolished forced labour ... I returned to these sacred cities ... the images which [used] to live therein and established for them permanent sanctuaries. (Michalowski, 2006, p 426-30)

But these achievements were dismissed in the Greek accounts of the Persians that followed the war. Herodotus, born four years before the final conflict, became the victors' historian. In his account of the world that he knew, his earlier and infrequent uses of the word *barbaroi* did not carry the connotations of the modern day barbarian. In the early chapters, it was not a pejorative term, nor was it used to distinguish easterners from westerners. But Herodotus contributed to its evolution into a term of denigration: as the forces of Xerxes are introduced, they become the barbarians: tyrants leading a despotic superstate against the gallant little Greek democratic communities: it is an initial run of the battle of 'freedom' against the 'axis of evil' -

history's original villains, .... the Orientals against whom the first European civilisation defined itself. ... In winning their nationhood, the Greeks consigned the Persians to a miserable place in the world's memory. (Jones, 2005)

Herodotus wrote 40 years after the events: a more contemporary view on the Persians is given by the playwright Aeschylus, who fought at the battle of Marathon. His play *The Persians*, written ten years after the battle, gives voice to the idea of 'the Glorious West', in opposition to the East, the seat of slavery, brutality and ignorance. The Queen of Persia in the Persian royal palace at Susa receives news of the defeat of her son Xerxes.

Queen: Who commands [the Hellenes]? Who is shepherd to their host?

Chorus: They are slaves to none, neither are they subjects. No longer will they that dwell throughout the length and breadth of Asia abide under the Persian yoke, nor will they pay further tribute through the master's crushing necessity, nor will they fall headlong on the ground to revere him, since the kingly power has utterly perished. (Aeschylus: *The Persians*,) (Vellacott, 1961, lines 585-90)

As Norman Davies puts it, Aeschylus 'creates a lasting stereotype, whereby the civilized Persians are reduced to cringing, ostentatious, arrogant, cruel, effeminate, and lawless aliens. Henceforth, all outsiders stood to be denigrated as barbarous. No one could compare to the wise, courageous, judicious and freedom-loving Greeks' (Davies, 1996, 103).

Greece is all liberty, Persia all tyranny. Edith Hall has shown how the Athenian playwrights of the period used images of incest, polygamy, murder, sacrilege, impalement, castration, female power, and despotism to define the non-Greek world. The playwrights conceptualized the barbarian as the negative embodiment of Athenian civic ideals. These invented barbarians became a powerful cultural expression of Greek xenophobia and chauvinism (Hall, 1989). This denigration is amplified in the plays of Aristophanes: in *The Wasps* the Persians are ridiculed as pampered and effete. Coupled to the emerging xenophobia that characterised classical Greece is a linked sexist theme of denigrating the barbarians as 'effeminate', being not manly. We can trace this through Xenophon's *Anabasis*, where the Persian barbarians flee rather than face Greeks, fuelling their disdain of barbarians as weak and effeminate. The stereotypical barbarian created by the Hellenes belittled their effeminacy and life of lavish and soft excess: barbarians were simply inherently weak creatures (Warner, 1949). Isocrates gave hugely denigrating speeches that divided the world between Greek and barbarian: he describes the Asiatic barbarians as bred for servitude, both an insult and a distinguishing criteria from the 'free' Greeks. The barbarians become servile, with no pride, simply slaves. The disdain of barbarians is directed at their intrinsic nature as human beings (Norlin, 1928). Aristotle shows barbarians as simple slaves, barely human – and then asserts that they are a community of slaves (Sinclair, 1962).

This complex of superiority was adopted in large part by the Romans – although they did allow that barbarians could, by due diligence, fealty and deeds, attain Roman citizenship. The concept of otherness, of the outsider – and perhaps particular, of orientalism, a disdain for the east, pervaded first Greek, then Roman, and then European senses of identity.

In this particular encounter began the idea of 'Europe', with all its arrogance, all its implications of superiority, all its assumptions of priority and antiquity, all its pretensions to a natural right to dominate (Ascherson, 1995, 49).

Throughout the centuries, Western writers and artists have repeatedly represented this military conflict as a triumph of Western ideals of freedom and self-determination over the slavish submission to repressive forces of oriental despotism (Basu, Champion and Lasch-Quinn, 2007)

This view echoes down through our histories. Thus Montaigne writes 'there are triumphant defeats that rival victories. Nor did those four sister victories, the fairest that

the sun ever set eyes on—Salamis, Plataea, Mycale, and Sicily—ever dare match all their combined glory against the glory of the annihilation of King Leonidas and his men at the pass of Thermopylae' (Montaigne, 1965, p 157).

Hegel opined that: '[The Persian Wars] live immortal not in the historical records of Nations only, but also of Science and of Art - of the Noble and the Moral generally. For these are World-Historical Victories; they were the salvation of culture and spiritual vigour and they rendered the Asiatic principle powerless' (Hegel, 2007, 257).

As John Stuart Mill saw it, 'The battle of Marathon, even as an event in English history, is more important than the battle of Hastings. If the issue of that day had been different, the Britons and the Saxons might still have been wandering in the woods' (Mill, 1859).

The construction of a first European identity includes ideas of othering, of boundaries and exclusion – and of xenophobia and the denigration of the illicit orient. These ideas suffused first the Hellenic world, and then the Roman civilisation that followed. Although the boundaries of the eastern threat were first forged at the Hellespont and Bosphorus, in the classical world the land that is now Turkey was distinctly part of the civilised European world: Asia Minor and the Levant were part of the Graeco-Roman tradition: Marc Anthony's headquarters were at Tarsus, in southern Turkey; St Paul wrote most of his letters, and spent most of his time, criss-crossing Asia Minor.

The European world and identity centred on the Mediterranean for many centuries, until the second major critical event. This was the reformulation and reorientation of the European identity that started with the onset of the middle ages. Traditionally, historians have dated the Middle Ages from the fall of Rome and the Roman Empire early in the 5th century, a theory Edward Gibbon famously put forward in the 18th century. By this time the Empire had split, to have two capitals – Rome and Constantinople – and the Alans, Goths, Huns and Visigoths - archetypal 'barbarians' in the discourse of the times - had been harrying the Roman forces for several decades. The Constantinople Emperor, Valens, had held them at bay at Edirne, about 200 km to the west of here in 378, but by 410 they had laid siege to Rome and sacked the imperial city. They retreated to France, and then settled in Aquitaine, then moved on again to Spain, then along the North African coast till they conquered Carthage, the great Roman city port that accessed the wheat and oil of the North African territories.

This thesis has been seriously challenged by historians over the last 80 years. They point to the essential continuity of the economy of the Roman Mediterranean long after the barbarian invasions, and show, with much archaeological evidence (Hodges and Whitehouse, 1983), that the Roman way of doing things did not fundamentally change in the time immediately after the 'fall' of Rome. Barbarians came to Rome not to destroy it, but to take part in its benefits; they tried to preserve the Roman way of life.

The first and most prominent proponent of this thesis is the renowned Belgian historian, Henri Pirenne. He made his proposal in a posthumous book published in 1936, *Mohammed and Charlemagne*. Pirenne challenged the notion that Germanic barbarians had caused the Roman Empire to end. The trade routes across the Mediterranean remained essentially intact, and archaeological remains – particularly pottery and coins, and records of the time, show that Mediterranean goods continued to be traded across

much of the territories of what had been the western empire – gold, fabrics, spices and papyrus (Hodges and Whitehouse, 1983). These goods did not disappear from western Europe till the 7<sup>th</sup> century. The migrant tribes preserved what political institutions they could, and did not deliberately destroy the classical civilisation. Germanic invaders made determined efforts to preserve classical culture, as did the church. Pirenne went on to analyse the impact of the Islamic expansions into North Africa, the eastern Mediterranean and Spain in the 7<sup>th</sup> and early 8<sup>th</sup> centuries: he concluded that it was the rise of Islam that overthrew the Roman mastery of the sea lanes, and it was this that detached the western empire from the eastern empire. Byzantium became detached – and these dramatic changes isolated the Merovingian kings in north-west Europe.

Mohammed died in Medina in 632. Islam took off with amazing speed: in less than 25 years they had conquered Syria, Persia, Palestine and Egypt. Constantinople was besieged, unsuccessfully, in 673, but in the following thirty years the armies of Islam took Kabul, Samarkand and Bokhara in the east, and Carthage and Tangier in the west. In 711 Al-Tariq led his forces across to the Iberian peninsular at the place still known today as the Jebel or Mountain of Tariq - Gibraltar, swept through Visigoth Spain (part of which they renamed Land of the Vandals – El Andalus –Andalusia) and by 732 – just one hundred years after Mohammed's death – were at Tours, only 200 km from Paris. There, Charles Martel was able to lead forces into the Battle of Poitiers that stemmed the tide (though by this time Arab lines were probably desperately overstretched – they were over 1000 km from Gibraltar. They retreated to the Pyrenees. A great swath of Muslim territory now cut Christian Europe from direct contact with almost every other civilisation and religion.

The rupture of economic ties to Europe, cut off the continent from trade and turned it into a backwater, with wealth flowing out in the form of raw resources and nothing coming back. There was now steady decline, so that by the time of Charlemagne Europe had become entirely agrarian at a subsistence level, with no long-distance trade.

This reorientation of Europe led to the establishment of the Carolingian empire, remote and isolated from the Mediterranean trade, and the Pope had to align himself with this new north eastern Europe in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century – to the extent that Charlemagne was crowned Emperor in Rome on Christmas day 800. Pirenne concludes, in a famous passage

Without Islam, the Frankish Empire would have probably never existed. It is therefore strictly correct to say that without Mohammed, Charlemagne would have been inconceivable. (Pirenne, 1936, 234)

The new empire of the west became 'the scaffolding of the middle ages' (Davies, 1995, 256) and led to a major reorientation of European identity. The European territory in the west was turned in on itself – commercial, academic and political discourses were severed. While the beleaguered Byzantine eastern empire became heavily absorbed in defending its eastern frontiers, the west had to fend for itself, developing its own economy and autonomy: as Davies puts it, the spread of Islam

... gave a major impetus to feudalism ... it destroyed the supremacy which the Mediterranean lands had hitherto exercised over [all Europe]. Before Islam, the post-classical world of Greece and Rome ... had remained essentially intact. After Islam, it was gone for ever. Almost by default, the political initiative passed from the Mediterranean to the emerging kingdoms of the north... It created a cultural bulwark against which European identity could be defined. Europe, let alone Charlemagne, is inconceivable without Muhammad (Davies, 1996, 257).

Instead of seeing the medieval period as the dark ages, some historians are now suggesting that the changes imposed by these events in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century revitalised and redirected the creation of the European identity. In the empire of Charlemagne we see a new political entity emerging, a strong empire, specifically allied to the papacy, which took economic and political initiatives that would earlier have been inconceivable. In his court the term 'Europe' was revived, to describe the area he reigned over – an area that did not incorporate Byzantium, nor the Muslim lands to the south, nor the pagan lands to the north, nor all Christendom.

The Frankish Empire incorporated what is now Western and Central Europe, and Charlemagne is not only regarded as the founding father of both French and German monarchies, but as the father of Europe: his empire united most of Western Europe for the first time since the Romans, and the Carolingian renaissance encouraged the formation of a common European identity.

He enjoyed an exceptional destiny, and by the length of his reign, by his conquests, legislation and legendary stature, he also profoundly marked the history of western Europe (Riche, 1993, 18)

His reinstatement in Rome of an evicted and weakened Pope was reciprocated when the Pope crowned him Emperor, thus usurping the place of the Emperor in Constantinople. Charlemagne tackled the problems of the lack of access to gold, brought about by the Islamic expansion, with a reconfiguration of a silver-based currency, soon adopted beyond his own territories, a strategy that economically harmonised and unified the complexity of currencies that has been in use, simplifying trade and commerce. Prices were controlled; taxes on particular goods raised revenue for government. The contacts with the culture and learning of other European areas - Visigothic Spain, Anglo-Saxon England and Lombard Italy soon led to the establishment of monastic schools and centres for book-copying: many surviving works of classical Latin were copied and preserved by Carolingian scholars.

What were the characteristic features of the identity of Europe in the middle medieval period that began with the consolidation of Islam and the consequent foundation of the Carolingian regime? One was the consolidation and spread of Christianity. The expansion of the church is marked by the establishment of new bishoprics that both pushed back the territory of Moorish Spain, and expanded into the Scandinavian and Baltic areas. Latin Christendom expanded:



the images of exclusion and otherness available to those who formed and expressed opinions in twelfth century western Europe included not only the dichotomy Christian/non Christian, but also that of civilised/barbarian, and the two polarities were often mutually reinforcing (Bartlett 1994, 24).

The Welsh were 'rude and untamed': they 'nominally profess Christ but deny him in their life and customs' (Millor *et al.*, 1986). The Ruthenians 'confess Christ only in name, but deny him in their deeds': they were 'primitive Slavs and wild peoples' (Appelt and Irgang, 1963).

Coupled to this was the establishment of new trading routes within Europe, focusing on the major north and west flowing rivers, and the North Sea, the Baltic and the Irish Sea. These were sufficiently strong to incorporate and Christianise the Viking incursions, and to rapidly adopt the settlement patterns and political structures of Frankish Europe. Thereafter, Western Europe adopted a colonial pattern that followed both trade and the church, and there were numerous examples of western Europeans establishing trading colonies across northern and eastern Europe – in Riga, to give an example.

Historians sometimes refer the Europeanization of Europe in the tenth to twelfth centuries: by this, they refer to the spread of the construct of Europe into areas beyond the Frankish heartlands. This was not simply military conquests, although there were a series of military expansions moving outwards from the core. It was also cultural: the Hungarian historian Fügedi (1975, 494) writes 'we maintain that Hungary was Europeanised in the course of the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries', while in Leon and Castile the ruler Alfonso VI has been described as 'anxious to Europeanise his realm' and to 'Europeanise the liturgy' (Lomax, 1978, 56).

This aculturation was manifest in the way that we see names changing: local names being replaced in the younger generations by the adoption of western Christian names; saints names in local churches being replaced by saints of the Latin canon. Another important integrative element was the University – 'one of the most powerful instruments of cultural homogeneity to arise in the High Middle Ages' (Bartlett, 1994, 288). From the core of France and northern Italy in the late eleventh century, the idea of the University spread with the development of the European area – from the original golden triangle, to middle Europe, Scotland and Scandinavia, and as far as Istanbul. Note the concentration of Universities in Italy, a point referred to below.

The effects of Charlemagne – and of Mohammed – were that, as Bartlett wrote

by 1300 Europe existed as an identifiable cultural entity. It could be described in more ways than one, but some common features of its cultural face are the saints, names, coins, charters and educational practices ... Europe's names and cults were more uniform than they had ever been, Europe's rulers everywhere minted coins and depended on chanceries; Europe's bureaucrats shared a common experience of higher education. This is the Europeanization of Europe (Bartlett, 1994, 291).

From this period on, European mariners were able to land armies at any point in the known world (though the military might of the armies was not always so pre-eminent as that of the mariners). The Germans, abetted by Danes and Swedes, made the Baltic a Catholic lake. Italian and Hanseatic merchants stretched around in a pincer movement,

meeting in the Ukraine. The trading cities of Hamburg, Lubeck, Genoa and Venice expanded and integrated the economy and culture of Europe. But the 'others' that the Europeans encounter in this were very different. To the south, they were confronted with societies at least as wealthy, populous, urbanised and literate as Latin Christendom, in the Muslim and the Orthodox spheres. They might have abhorrent religious beliefs – but they were monotheistic religions, based on truths revealed through scripture. But to the north and east the other was less populous, rural, non-literate, with polytheistic, local and idolatrous religions. This other could be converted, or westernised, or otherwise incorporated in a way that the societies to the south could not. The Slav rulers could also see what they could gain by being incorporated into the west. The development of attitudes that lead to expectations of colonial domination and expansion came from this northern and north-eastern orientation, rather than from the south. Colonisation was the reproduction of the social frameworks of the homeland, rather than subordination: the spread 'by a kind of cellular multiplication' (Bartlett, 1994, 391) of the cultural and social forms of the Latin Christian core. Adoption of Christianity signified loyalty, and brought with it freedoms, liberties and inclusion – but the Christianity was non-negotiable. To the south, Muslim communities were given rights in much the same way as Jews were – their religion was, within certain limits, guaranteed and accepted. In the north, the choice between resistance and conversion was sharp: in the south, there was a third possibility, of continuing as a defeated but tolerated minority. Mediaeval Europe generated institutional and attitudinal racism as part of its colonial dispositions. This new European identity profoundly influenced the Europeans who followed – but the Europeans of the sixteenth century, at the beginning of the modern era, were also shaped by a new set of factors, that in some way are typified by the events that happened in Istanbul, 550 years ago.

This is my third critical moment, the fall of Constantinople. This occurred right on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May 555 years ago. Some historians refer to the fall of Constantinople, the last remaining vestige of the Eastern Roman Empire - and others refer to as the capture of Istanbul (the balance is 130,000 to 5,700, according to Google) (Runciman, 1965). The attacking forces of Ottomans (and others) were led by the young sultan, Mehmed 11; the defenders were a motley group of Byzantine Greeks and others, led by Constantine XI Palaiologos, the Emperor and a direct descendant of the founder Emperor, Constantine.

The opposing sides were very mixed: one of the Turkish strengths was the Hungarian cannon master Orban who offered Mehmed cannons powerful enough to break down the "walls of Babylon". Orban pushed the limits of his art and cast what was probably the largest contemporary gun yet made "the Great Turkish Bombard". These tubes were over 5 meters long and 17 tonnes in weight. Each gun fired 680 kg granite stones with a diameter of 76 centimeters. Each gun was moved into position by 60 oxen and 400 men: half the force of men prepared a roadway for the guns while the others pulled on ropes to keep the huge weapons from falling over as they were moved along the road. It took seven days to prepare the guns before they opened fire, and each gun took three hours to reload. (Nine years later Mehmed commissioned 42 more of these cannons to guard the Dardanelles, which were still in use 300 years later in 1807 against the British Navy). On the defending side were a wide range of European nationals – Genoese, Venetians, Spaniard, French – and a Scottish engineer, John Grant, who destroyed the Turkish

tunnels being built under the walls by building counter mines and firing these to collapse the Turkish tunnels.

The final attack on the city started, two hours before dawn at about 3.40 am, and the city wall was breached soon after first light. Mehmed delayed his own entrance till the early afternoon, and, entering through what is now the Edirne gate, he first made his way to the Church of the Holy Apostle. His advance guard had protected this site, as he wanted the church to be the seat of the orthodox Christian patriarch he intended to install to control his new Christian subjects. They then moved down the Mese Street, through the Forum of Theodosius, on their way to the centre of the old city, the Augusteum and the great Church of the Holy Wisdom, the Aya Sofia. Here he proclaimed that looting should cease. He dismounted his horse, and, as a symbolic act of submission to Allah, he picked up a handful of earth, which he poured over his turban. He entered the church (Runciman, 1965, 148). A few Greeks were cowering in the corners of the church, and Mehmed ordered they be allowed to go free. A few priests emerged from secret passages behind the altar, and they too were set free by Mehmed. But Mehmed insisted the church be converted at once into a mosque. One of the Sultans' ulema climbed into the pulpit, and proclaimed the building a mosque.

The fall of Constantinople itself is only of symbolic significance. It had long become a cultural backwater in Europe. The fourth crusade, 1202-4, which found itself firstly short of provisions, and secondly acutely aware that they had leased their ships, and time was running out – so they decided to sack Constantinople instead of proceeding to Palestine. A Latin Empire was established here, that lasted for fifty years – the split between the Eastern Empire and the Western was total. The Byzantines themselves were not minded to associate with the Latin west. The Byzantium Admiral, Lucas Notaras, active in the defence of the city was recorded as remarking 'Sooner the Sultan's Turban than the Papal Tiara' (Herrin, 2007) – an interesting example of 'othering' that I heard reflected in an English football fan's chant, just before a match against Scotland – 'I'd sooner wear a Turban than a kilt'.

Before and immediately after the conquest of Mehmed, many of the materials and documents of Constantinople were finding their way to Western Europe: most important were the Greek texts that became the foundation of the renaissance that had started in northern Italy in the fourteenth century. This received a significant boost with the fall of Constantinople. Renaissance scholars sought out ancient texts, typically written in Latin or ancient Greek, scouring monastic libraries for works of antiquity that fallen into obscurity. They wanted to improve and perfect their worldly knowledge; a radically different approach to the transcendental spirituality of medieval Christianity. It was not a rejection of Christianity, but a subtle shift in the way that intellectuals approached religion, reflected in many other areas of cultural life. Thus artists tried to portray the human form realistically, developing ways of showing perspective and light; political philosophers such as Machiavelli tried to describe political life as it really was, and to improve government on the basis of rationality. As well as using classical Latin and Greek, writers increasingly use vernacular languages; and this with the invention of moveable typeface allowed many more people access to print.

The Renaissance was a rebirth of classical ideas lost to Western Europe, fuelled by the rediscovery of ancient texts Eastern Roman Empire and in the Islamic world, and the translations of Greek and Arabic texts into Latin. Greek and Arabic knowledge was

assimilated from Spain and also directly from the Greek and Arab speaking world. Mathematics flourished in the Middle East, and mathematical knowledge was brought back by crusaders after 1204 - and the final fall of Constantinople brought a sharp increase in the exodus of Greek scholars, bringing with them texts and knowledge.

The Renaissance sparked of a remarkable reconfiguration in Europe. Ross (2004) refers to the parallel events between five hundred years ago and the present, in terms of redefining social relationships. Schultze (2004) points to the strikingly similarity between the descriptions used in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century and those used by people in the sixteenth century when responding to the loss of certainty in the early modern period. The series of loosely-linked events triggered by the renaissance led to another reconfiguration of the identities of Europeans. One of these – the development of humanism, exemplified by the work of Erasmus – was and remains a key element of European identity: a shift from the theocratic world-view of the medieval population to an anthropocentric view: but there were many others. Parallel to the view that ‘the proper study of mankind is man’ (Pope, 1732), the work of Copernicus and those who followed him challenged the geocentric view of the Greek and Roman writers that had been adopted as the new orthodoxy of the Latin church and its rulers. But the renaissance also led to the ‘age of exploration’. This not only allowed the first complete view of the relationship of all parts of the earth, so that Europe was began to realise that the world was more than Europe, but also allowed Europe to unleash is characteristic of colonialism on the rest of the world. These new ‘others’, ‘discovered’ by the voyages of exploration, were if anything even more heathen and more barbarian than the north Europeans had been, and moreover, many resisted the idea that they should adopt the culture of the Europeans. Coupled to the emerging European technology of firearms - Orban the Hungarian cannon founder represented a burgeoning European arms industry that helped the colonial conquests. The development of the musket made for a new mass-produced weapon, highly portable, that could be used to kill large numbers at a much greater distance than had been possible with conventional weaponry. The final stage of the *reconquista* of the Iberian peninsular was marked by far less accommodating attitudes towards the Muslims of Spain and Portugal– the expulsion of the Moors from Granada in Spain, after some 800 years of settlement there began ethnic cleansing policies that are still found in Europe. Muslims were required to convert or leave, and this policy was then applied to first the Jews of Spain, and then the Jews of Portugal. Religious ‘acts of faith’ – *autos-da-fe* – became fires that burned to preserve the purity of the blood.

Technology was evident also in mass communication: Gutenberg efficiently exploited moveable typeface with the roman alphabet from about 1450 in Mainz. The books of the ancient world, as well as the Bible, became much more available to Europeans of a wide range of social classes and languages. This new technology, linked to the new questioning nature of the age, led to the reformation, and this in turn to the great European wars of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. The Peace of Ausberg, in 1555, effectively recognised the fragmentation of Europe with the principle that each rule had the right to determine the religion of his own state and the people who lived in it - Catholicism, Lutheranism or Calvinism (*cuius regio, eius religio*). The nation-state had become part of the European identity. The Peace of Westphalia (1648), the first modern diplomatic congress, initiated a new order based on the concept of national sovereignty and territorial integrity.. The interests and goals of nation-states were now assumed to

transcend those of any individual citizen or even any ruler, and the Westphalian doctrine of states as independent actors bolstered the rise of 19th century nationalism, Legitimate states were assumed to correspond to *nations*—groups of people united by language and culture – or, as Benedict Anderson says, ‘imagined communities’ (1983).

So my third critical event, the fall of Constantinople, triggered the Renaissance, the Reformation and the rise of the autonomous nation state. Within the span of a single lifetime revolutionary changes began in society, knowledge and government: the birth of the modern era, the transition point from medievalism. European identity now had not just a new humanist streak, but also a new nationalistic streak. The colonial identity of medieval Europe was now augmented by a fearful technology, that had the power to export this mix to the world.

My fourth event is a bit less clear-cut. It is rather the series of events between 1914 and 1945 that marked the end-point of the mix of identities that characterised the growth of Europe. Seeing the other as barbarian, cultural imperialism, colonialism, nationalism: these characteristics of European identity culminated in an orgy of destruction and bloodletting that far eclipses previous massacres. After Herodotus, Charlemagne and Constantine 11<sup>th</sup>, Jean Monnet can act as a symbol for this reorientation of European identities.

Monnet had been deputy General Secretary to the League of Nations in 1919-1923. In the early stages of the second World War, he worked on Anglo-French cooperation (including the idea of an Anglo-French united state, and then on Anglo-US cooperation in military supplies, and then as a member of the French government in exile – to whom he declared on 5<sup>th</sup> August 1943 ‘There will be no peace in Europe, if the states are reconstituted on the basis of national sovereignty... The countries of Europe are too small to guarantee their peoples the necessary prosperity and social development. The European states must constitute themselves into a federation...’

Nations were already a problem. Ernest Renan, in a famous lecture at the Sorbonne in March 1882, asked ‘What is a nation?’ (Rennan, 1882). He concluded that it could not be defined in terms of race, language, religion, interest group or a naturally defined territory: a nation cannot be defined in terms of any substantive attributes. Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande conclude ‘... and the same holds true for Europe!’ (2007, 7).

It has taken some time, but there is now some acknowledgement that the Westphalian system that had been born of and shaped Europe was outdated. In 1998 the NATO Secretary General Javier Solana observed

the Westphalian system had its limits. For one, the principle of sovereignty it relied on also produced the basis for rivalry, not community of states; exclusion, not integration. ... Humanity and democracy: two principles essentially irrelevant to the original Westphalian order (Solana, 1998).

The German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer pointed out that the system was obsolete:

the core of the concept of Europe after 1945 was and still is a rejection of the European balance-of-power principle and the hegemonic ambitions of individual states that had emerged following the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, a rejection which took the form of closer meshing of vital interests and the

transfer of nation-state sovereign rights to supranational European institutions (Fischer, 2000).

So what are identifying characteristics of today, that have developed since the work of Jean Monnet?

European society is characterised by its social and cultural diversity, and this gives us great strength, but also presents challenges. European society can be seen moving towards a belief in equality, linked to a desire to challenge and counter inequalities, to promote social cohesion, and to work for distributive justice. But diversity also means that there are inequalities and disadvantaged groups – socially, economically and culturally – and Europe is, to some extent, addressing these inequalities whilst also preserving its diversity. European social values are not in themselves unique, and are shared by some other nations and regions of the world. But they are nevertheless a particular combination, articulated in a distinctive way. They also have a degree of fragility, and need to be defended, extended, and we sometimes need to be better in putting them into practice.

I think there are five particular areas in which European identity is distinct and positive - though within each there are practices that need to be improved, challenged and extended (Ross, in Isaacs, 2008, 44-47).

Europe today is above all founded on essential and legal enshrined human rights, as Javier Solana observed. Now well developed, they continue to need to be extended to address the needs of new and newly identified minorities. It is not an accident that institutionalised European supranational justice, that fostered respect for difference, originated in the Nuremberg trials in 1945 and 1946. The fact that individuals and groups in Europe have access to supranational and enforceable systems of human rights, that has authority over national governments, is an important and unique feature of European society. Freedom of speech is an important aspect of these European human rights, and we will need to continually develop our definitions of these and other human rights in order to address changes and diversities within Europe. Europe has taken on a particular role in addressing global poverty and international development – perhaps acknowledging that much global inequality has arise as a result of past European activities in colonialism and global exploitation. Europe now provides disproportionately more international aid than do other developed countries, although we still fall considerably short of the UN target of 0.7% of GNP, and we have much more to do. Of all the people in the world who live in countries where capital punishment is forbidden, two thirds are living in Europe. We imprison a much smaller proportion of our population – about a fifth – than do the United States and Russia. These are important markers for the strength of European society's values. But although the 'system' is well developed, practice is varied: there is the perception of a fortress Europe; international action is not always accepted; sometimes there is a lack of trust; solidarity may be confined to certain groups or regions; and our attitude towards the Third World is ambivalent. There is also at times a two-faced attitude towards human rights beyond Europe. We can sometimes ignore human rights when it is in our economic self-interest. Although corruption levels are relatively low in Europe, there remains room for improvement. But at other times we can be keen to impose our model of human rights on others.

The second area that distinguishes European society is social welfare. Europe shares a broadly common idea of social welfare and of the role of the state in this. But welfare is unequally distributed, and it varies for different social groups. Social welfare remains primarily embedded at the national level and is sometimes problematic at the European level. It has developed since 1945 in a different way in each country: but although our welfare systems are diverse, and give different roles to the family, the state, insurance and private companies, we share a belief that the disadvantaged are not to be blamed as responsible for their own misfortune, and that we collectively have the responsibility to care for disadvantaged groups, to support and to empower them to participate and to minimise inequalities. Social resources are not distributed fairly. We see poverty and inequality as relative qualities, not absolutes, and we are aware that these diversities will mean that there will be a continued need to protect, modify and extend our social welfare systems. Europe has a distinctive and positive model of welfare, which we are fortunate enough to be able to afford.

Education is related to social welfare: we see European education as based on principles of free and universal access, and an open attitude towards knowledge. Education helps individuals to achieve both vertical and horizontal mobility. The efforts for harmonisation create new differences in this period of transition. Professional recognition of studies achieved abroad remains an issue, and our 'traditional' education systems are not value-free, and are not therefore always adapted for all diverse social groups and individuals. But some social groups continue to have unequal access to education and to the advantages that education can bring. Access is not well distributed, and some groups tend to preserve and protect their particular positions and advantages.

The fourth important characteristic identity marker of Europe arises from the increasing level of mobility, for study, employment and for leisure. Tourism and mobility for professional reasons lead to a rise of social citizenship; student mobility is breaking down barriers, decreases scepticism and broadens the individual's views about the cultural values of others. It encourages networking and insights of others elsewhere and in other professional circumstances. Mobility, and the social contacts that follow from living in a different country, can add significantly to the individual's understanding of European society and diversity. But labour mobility may be limited to particular groups, and may also lead to resentments and to friction. Not everyone is welcome in another part of Europe; xenophobia is much more present in non-mobile groups.

The fifth characteristic of European identity is our attitude towards language and communication. Languages are a tool for social communication, and this is important to support mutual understanding. The European Unions' one plus two language policy is one way to preserve linguistic diversity and to improve understanding and appreciation of diversity. The ability to communicate in more than one language is relevant for the job-market, is linked to mobility, but also to elites in society. Knowledge of language helps to participate in horizontal and vertical mobility. We are, however, concerned that inequalities may arise when groups and individuals have differential access to and competences in some languages. Ability in English may in particular privilege particular elite. The European Union need to sustain attention to protect 'smaller' languages. We also note Europe's apparent inability to value the non-European languages spoken by many of our minorities, which are a valuable resource which we could use better, and

which would lead to greater respect for peoples with such competencies. In global development and trade this is a resource we should not ignore.

A major and new characteristic of European identity is our ability to learn from each other, and our diversity becomes a very positive aspect of this. Beck makes a similar pointing respect of European identity: 'The 'we' who legitimise the cosmopolitan legal regime are the *prospective* Europeans who in this way become the subject of their own history' (Beck and Grande, 2007, 8, emphasis as in original). We have learned from our history, and we are learning to trust each other, to be reflective, and to use best practice. We are generally willing to share all kinds of knowledge and ways of thinking, and Europe generally is willing to negotiate, discuss and compromise on settling problems and issues. Our diversity means that we have many models to observe and to learn from. Beck again: 'what is lacking is not a single European identity that unites everyone, but a narrative of Europeanization that makes sense of the interrelations between new departures and declines' (Beck and Grande, 2007, 4).

These new identity markers for Europe have developed over the past sixty years, and are of a distinctly different character to what went before. And this is, I suggest, at the very heart of European identities today: we are not the past. Europe is now based on identifying a new kind of 'other': our own past. We do not behave or identify ourselves or practice as did the generations before us. This is not simply a negative rejection of the past, but a positive affirmation of these values. 'The past is another country – they did things differently there.'

This imposes a particular burden on education: the generations that can recall the old Europe, the Europe that we have rejected, is dying out, and educators must ensure that we keep alive that fierce understanding of the need to move away from the old identities. On the day after the fall of Constantinople, the 30<sup>th</sup> May 1553, Mehmed gave the instruction to start a Theological University in the city: the direct ancestor institution to Istanbul University. The University: that particularly European kind of institution, charged with the development of the culture and identity of a society. This is a particularly appropriate location and time to debate the identities of Europe, and this is a particularly appropriate group to be charged with this task.

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