European Identity and the Democracy of the EU

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1. Europeanization of identity?

Common identity and democracy are vital to the legitimacy of the EU as a democratic polity. In fact, the progress of the integration has made these two factors into the central agenda. There are many important works on each issue and they have insisted the vulnerability of European Identity and the Democratic Deficit. However, the table shows that attachment for Europe and Nation among the EU citizens is getting to achieve a significant convergence. There is not necessarily a zero-sum struggle between national and European identity. This change seems to indicate a beginning of Europeanization of identity. The table 2 says the legitimacy of the EU is gradually increased, by contrast that of national level is decreased. What do these data mean?

In this paper, at first, I argue briefly about the relationship between the legitimacy of a democratic polity and identity politics from the theoretical viewpoint. Secondly, the case of the EU is examined, especially the linkage between identity making and embedded democracy as values from the point of polity building. Finally, with taking into consideration of the post communist member states of the
Table 1. Trend in dual attachment to Europe and Nation (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Closer to Europe</th>
<th>Equally close</th>
<th>Closer to nation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luxemborg</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average EU12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Citrin and Sides 2004: 170, table 8.3. (Eurobarometer No.36 and No.54.1)

Table 2. Legitimacy for political agencies in France, 1995－2003 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Diet</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>-8</td>
<td>-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Parliament</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>+6</td>
<td>+6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National government</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Commision</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>+8</td>
<td>+14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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EU, I’ll point out the ambivalent situation which they are facing.

2. Legitimacy of a Democratic Polity and Identity Politics

1) Subjective acquirement of the Social World

According to social psychology and social constructionism, an individual categorizes cognitive objects through a process of socialization. By this categorization, an individual places and re-places the self and the other, includes the objective world and the others, and internalizes the social world as reality in the subjective world. In this processes which produce subjectivities, an individual nourishes a sense of the self and constructs identities with exchanging questions of “who am I?” and “who are you?”. It is important that identities can vary and the Other plays an important role in this process.

Collective identity will be constructed in such social interaction. George Herbert Mead accounted for this process in terms of socialization by “the generalized other”, and Berger and Luckmann expressed it with the famous phrase, “social construction of reality”. Therefore, considering the relation among democracy, legitimacy and identity, it’s significant to take into account the relation between individuals and his/her living society.

2) Democracy, Legitimacy and Identity Politics

In the case of a society having the principle of popular sovereignty and the ideal of democracy as social fundamentals, the polity should be concerned about what categorization and identity the citizen has got. Because the legitimacy of a democratic polity can be obtained only through categorization as an entity and internalization as a social world in the mind of the citizen as sovereign.
Saying that, for a democratic polity, the construction of citizen's identity has been and also still is the important political agenda closely related to produce and re-produce of members who consist the society. For example, since the 18th century, the legitimacy of nation-state as modern liberal democratic states has associated the process of democratization with the construction of identity\(^{12}\). In the global age, one often argues about “the retreat of the state”\(^{13}\), but this efforts for nation state building still continue in the new independent states since decolonization. Even former colonial powers which have already built the system and identity as democratic nation state tend to reinforce the common sense of “We” in recent monetary crisis. John Breuilly shows through the study of nationalism around the world that ‘national identity’ is political constructions. He says it is “not a mysterious cultural essence which can endure without appropriate political and economic conditions”\(^{14}\).

Here, identity will be politicized. The power will intervene in the identity making as significant means of governance for self preservation. This relation between legitimacy of governance and identity is also true for the EU building, even if the EU has not yet led to a state.

3. Case of the EU

1) Construction of the EU

In referring to the construction of the EU, many researches begin from 1992 or 1986, namely the Maastricht Treaty or the European Single Act. But is it proper for talking about this issue?

In fact, the project of the EU building started at 1972. The Paris
Summit held on October 1972 was the first Summit for the enlarged Community. The Six member states of the EEC together with Great Britain and Ireland decided to "transform the whole of relations of Member States into a European Union as a democratic polity with single voice". That means the Nine gave a new dimension to the Community and started for Europe becoming a political reality. At that time, the Community had faced profound international changes as well as economic crisis, for example, the Détente, the Nixon Shock, the North-South problem, the loss of many Colonies, the need of creating new markets etc. Under such situations, the Nine decided to transform into the EU on the recognition that Europe must unity of its interests, extend its capacities and be aware of the "magnitude of its duties".

There was no concrete definition about the system of the EU in the declaration. However, it is significant the Nine shared an image for the EU, a European Government. For instance, Mansholt spoke about the future Union in a press conference after the Summit. According to him, it should have "autonomous powers of decision; in other words, a government, and be responsible to a Parliament democratically elected". In addition, Jean Monnet also suggested a "provisonal European Government" (August 1973) following the EU project declared in the Paris Summit. This Monnet's suggestion proved fruitful in the establishment of the European Council in the next Paris Summit on December 1974.

2) Construction of the European Identity from above

This movement towards the EU also brought the construction of European Identity from above. It was the political efforts to match the external oneness as an entity and the internal uniformity.
In the next year of the Paris Summit, foreign ministers of the Nine declared the European Identity toward the world in Copenhagen Summit on 14 Dec 1973. The declaration was consisted of three parts. The first section is “The Unity of the Nine Member Countries of the Community”. The second one is “The European Identity in Relation to the World”. The third one is “The Dynamic Nature of the Construction of a United Europe”. What signifies is to be able to find clearly the fundamental, essential and originality of the European Identity in the Declaration;

“Déclaration du Identité Européenne”

* The fundamental, essential and originality of the European Identity
  - “fundamental elements” = “the rich variety of their national cultures, …… the principles of representative democracy, of the rule of law, of social justice ……, and of respect for human rights.”
  - “essential part” = “transforming the whole of relations into a European Union”
  - “originality and dynamism” = “The diversity of cultures within the framework of a common European civilization, the attachment to common values and principles, the increasing convergence of attitudes to life, the awareness of having specific interests in common and the determination to take part in the construction of a United Europe.”

* “a single entity” with “one voice”
  - “Europe must unite and speak increasingly with one voice if it wants to make itself heard and play its proper role in the world.”
  - “The Nine, acting as a single entity”

* re-definition of national identity in the external relations
• “In their external relations, the Nine propose progressively to undertake the definition of their identity …… thus making easier the proposed transformation of the whole of relations into a European Union”

There are three important points. First, democracy and diversity are embedded in the European Identity as fundamental elements. Secondly, however, the diversity is limited in scope. That is to say, what should be encouraged is only cultural richness, which is allowed to be only “within the framework of a common European civilization”⁹. What means the “European civilization”? Once the term of “civilizing mission” had been used to justify the rest of the world included in Europe, but now that of “European civilization” seems to be used to make the rest of the world, in fact the Non-European world, excluded. The Islam world might be one of the symbolic cases. Manuel Castells insists that European Identity “is not a ‘civilization’ based on religion, past history, or a set of supposedly superior ‘Western values’”⁹. I totally agree, but at least at that time when the EU program began, the Nine has related European Identity to “European civilization” with “Western values”, and specified the linkage. Even now this tendency of thought seems to be living. In fact, according to Cris Shore, the efforts for the creation of a European ‘Other’ is carried out through the strengthening of physical and symbolic boundaries, and the political technology of citizenship⁹. And this “othering” process is also embedded in the construction of European Identity from above.

Finally, European Identity is placed as the political key notion of the EU, which can speak with one voice and have the potential to redefine national identity. Off course, the two Identities are not the
zero-sum relation. They can live side by side as the Table 1 shows. However legitimacy for a political power is still zero-sum one, like the table 2. This fact might mean for extreme nationalists that European Identity shakes the foundation of National Identity.

4. The Post Communist Member States and European Identity

1) End of the Cold War and “Return to Europe”

How about the post communist member states? Now I’ll argue on the final issue, the post communist member states and European Identity. There are 2 factors; the end of the cold war and globalization.

After the cold war, the post communist member states had a hunger for sustaining of independence. But this task imposed the construction of new relationship with Russia on them. On the other hand, in the globalization it is difficult for small states to maintain its full independence. Consequently, especially from the points of security and politics, the post communist states needed to “return to Europe” in order to rebuild the modern democratic nation-state. A European Identity has had and perhaps still has its uses in the struggle to wrest the destiny of the Baltic or Central European states away from Russian hegemony since the late 1980s.

2) Re-construction of “the people” and a fear of “dark side of Democracy”

At the same time, their disillusion against the internationalism has developed their nationalism more and more, and made their ethnic identity become an important element in the process of Nation-State rebuilding. It was easy to identify the criteria of “the people” as not
demos, but ethnos. As Tocqueville says, democratization might become "tyranny of the majority". Then, if the majority will be consisted of ethnos, what will happen? Michael Mann says in Europe the danger of the ethnic cleansing "began to loom more across its central and eastern regions".

Here I don't verify Mann's argument, but it's possible to say the post communist member states faced an ambivalent situation about their identity. In general, for democratic polity, identity of "the people" as sovereign is source of legitimacy, and European Identity is based on the re-definition of national identity for the construction of the EU as a democratic polity. "The diversity of cultures" is guaranteed, but in the high politics, it is required to behave as "a single entity with one voice" toward the rest of the world. As I already mentioned, European Identity and National Identity are not zero-sum relation because identity has the multilayer and pluralistic structure, but legitimacy for a political power is still zero-sum one.

Therefore, for the post communist members on the way of democratic nation-state rebuilding, if their people will internalize European Identity stronger than national / ethnic identity, their political legitimacy will be reduced. But if the member states will insist on their national power, European Identity as a political symbol will be weakened. As a result, it would be difficult for the EU to become a global power (and this will also mean that post communist member state's power would diminish in the global arena, and consequently national identity might be weakened). However, identities can change and it takes a good amount of time to do so. That's going to take at least 30 years as was true of the Western Europe.
5. Conclusion

Both democratization and identity making are closely related to the fundamental question over the border; "who are full members in the polity". As I argued in this paper, European Identity is not just a cultural symbol, but also a political resource in the EU as a democratic polity. Especially, the EU member states of Western Europe have continued the efforts of the construction of European Identity as political resource over 35 years, and then identities of the citizens are gradually changing. By contrast, the post communist member states still need to strengthen national identity, as a result, they are facing an ambivalent situation on identity making. If they could not derive the full benefits not only economically but also politically and security from the EU, they would not have the strong political will for constructing European Identity. This difference between Western and Eastern Europe seems to arise from the degree of maturity as a democratic nation state.

Notes;

1) This paper was presented at the Panel, “Will Democratization in Post Communist Area be Succeeded under the Globalization, EU Enlargement, and increasing Nationalism?” of the International Studies Association 50th Annual Convention in New York (16th Feb. 2009).


Integration History, Nihon Keizai Hyouron Sya: Tokyo, 2003 (Frank’s speeches in Japan) etc.


15) “Déclaration du sommet de Paris,” Paris, 19 au 21 Octobre 1972, Bull. CE, No 10, Octobre 1972/“Erklärung der Pariser Gipfelkonferenz,” Bull. EC, Oktober 1972, Nr. 10/“Statement from the Paris Summit” Bull. EC, October 1972, No.10. In the English version of this declaration, not a version original, there is the additional word of “complex”—“the whole complex of the relations”. However in the original French and German version, there is no pertinent word “complex”, but just “l’ensemble des relations” and “Gesamtheit der Beziehungen”.


17) Mansholt, “Intervention de Monsieur le Président MANSHOLT pour une


19) “Statement from the Paris Summit” op. cit..


(付記：本論文は2009年2月にニューヨークにて開催されたISA第50回記念大会で発表した報告に加筆修正したものである。なお、同国際会議参加に際し、日本国際政治学会2009年度第2回国際学術交流基金から助成金を得た。記して感謝したい。)