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## **“European Economic Crisis: Revitalizing National Identity Through Political Cartoons and Images”**

**Abstract:** Does the current Euro crisis assist in intensifying the conflict between national and Europe's collective identity by triggering nationalist attitudes? Is there a cultural representation of this conflict in mass media and what is its impact on the attempts for creating a collective Europe through cultural integration? In detail, the subject of this research questions whether the economic polarization between the PIGS and European northern countries (such as Germany, France, Britain and Sweden) has also triggered, a cultural polarization and the detachment of Europe into 'two Europes,' consisting of poor and rich. During the economic crisis, the increase of diminishing pictures and caricatures of PIGS, of those northern countries and European leaders assert a certain European cultural polarization. Examples of pictures analyzed here that depict this cultural polarization are the cover (February 2010) of the German magazine "FOCUS" with Venus de Milo having her middle finger raised against Greece's bailout, and in Greek newspapers, where Merkel is represented as a Nazi officer. Crucial is theorists' position such as Gerard Delanty, Chris Shore and Jürgen Habermas concerning the European cultural integration in conjunction to the dissolution of Europe's cultural identity and the intensification of national identity triggered by the current economic crisis. Finishing, this paper will show whether Europe responds is culturally explicit to this polarization by focusing on her suggestions for getting away from the current economic crisis, thus assuring cultural integration and the possibly creation of the 'United States of Europe'.

**Keywords (max. 5):** Economic crisis, National identity, Cultural Identity, Cultural Polarization, Media representation.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Most of fundamental categories and concepts pertaining to European integration, like those which give flesh and form to the ideas of nationhood, are represented through symbols. It is only through symbols that the meanings and 'reality' of ideas such as 'state', 'nation', 'citizenship' and 'Europe' itself can be rendered tangible and comprehensible.<sup>i</sup>

Bearing in mind the above epigraph, it becomes clear that only through symbols can Europe be considered tangible and comprehensible as a nation of states. Despite the flag, the anthem, the EU stamps with pioneers of EC and the EU passport, there is an economic symbol, the Euro that signifies the economic union of the European countries. As John McCormic highlights in *Europeanism* these icons "[...] are an important element of promoting 'belonging', to be sure, and the EU flag, for example, has played a vital role in giving the European Union a personality that goes beyond the work of its bureaucrats."<sup>ii</sup> Notwithstanding, during the current economic crisis the Euro indirectly became a symbol of cultural polarization and of conflict among the Euro members by even triggering discussions concerning the failure of Euro-zone. Therefore, the questions raised here are, what is the consequence of the economic crisis in European culture and how it is represented in political cartoons and images. As well as how this representation contributes in the European cultural disintegration through the revitalization of national identities and nationalism.

At length, my focal point will be to provide answers concerning whether the current Euro crisis assists in intensifying the conflict between national and Europe's collective identity by triggering nationalist attitudes. My intension is to examine this through the analysis of the economic crisis' representation in political cartoon and images by investigating if there are examples of cultural polarization among nations that underline national identities and intensify nationalism in Europe. In particular, my focal point will be the cultural polarization that is facilitated through the diminishing political cartoons and images between the PIGS<sup>iii</sup> and the northern European members (Germany, Britain, Holland, France). Consequently, these images and cartoons contribute culturally in the

polarization that the member states undergo due to the economic crisis as well as they assist in the cultural split among nations by revitalizing national identity and nationalism in Europe. This fact may have serious consequences to European culture, which according to Shore, Delanty and Habermas is of great importance for Europe's unity not only in political and economic level but culturally as well.

In the beginning, this research will bring up the definitions of national and European identity and then it will highlight the importance of media and in particular of political cartoons and images in representing social issues as well as in the creation of a public sphere. Following that, the analysis will continue with the ongoing polarization among PIGS, Greece and Germany through images and cartoons that trigger further intensification of nationalism and national identity in Europe by creating a visual polarizing public sphere. In the end, this discussion will focus on culture by highlighting its absence during the economic crisis as well as its importance for cultural unity that can provide solutions to the current crisis through its industry.

## 2. NATIONAL AND EUROPEAN IDENTITY: A *RUSSIAN DOLLS (BABUSHKAS) CONCEPT*

In *National Identity*, Anthony Smith defines nationalism "[...] as an ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity and identity on behalf of a population deemed by some of its members to constitute an actual or potential 'nation'."<sup>iv</sup> He continues by providing some

"[...]fundamental features of national identity as follows:

1. an historic territory, or homeland
2. common myths and historical memories
3. a common, mass public culture
4. common legal rights and duties for all members
- 5 . a common economy with territorial mobility for members."<sup>v</sup>

Despite those features, Smith brings the individual into the center of national identity's definition by suggesting that its sense assists in individuals' self definition and location in the world via the collective personality and its

"unique culture that we are enabled to know 'who we are' in the contemporary world. [...] [T]his process of self-definition and location is in many ways the key to national identity, but it is also the element that has attracted most doubt and skepticism."<sup>vi</sup>

European identity, which can be defined

"[...] as a cosmopolitan identity [...] rather than as a supranational identity or an official EU identity that is in tension with national identities. As a cosmopolitan societal identity, European identity is a form of post-national self-understanding that expresses itself within, as much as beyond, national identities."<sup>vii</sup>

Delanty concludes that there is

"[...] a more diffuse kind of European societal identity exists on the level of a cultural model in which new forms of European self-understanding and self-recognition are expressed. It is only from the perspective of this societal identity that the shape of Europe can be discerned. European identity in all these senses—personal, collective and societal—and especially the last, is not in competition with national identities; indeed, it is arguably the case that national identities are becoming more cosmopolitan, as are personal identities. Both national identity and European identity should be seen, like most collective identities today, as fluid or 'thin' identities rather than as hard or 'thick' identities that are rooted in pristine cultures or historical logics."<sup>viii</sup>

As a result, as Delanty argues the concepts of European and national identity should be seen as complementary parts which are not competitive to each other or 'thick' concepts deriving by the impeccable cultures or historical logics. Therefore, the European identity functions as the Russian dolls (Babuskas) which includes inside it many national identities and in consequence they are defined as 'national' through the existence inside them of much smaller identities.

During crisis these new ways of self-understanding as Delanty highlights above are not forgotten in my opinion but they are overshadowed by the resurfacing of national identities, which become prevalent in the name of national dignity and cultural protection. Therefore, there is a public power discourse between the European identity and the national ones in periods of crisis like the current one. Additionally, the minimization of the cosmopolitan character of national identities assists in the diminishment of European identity, which is based on economic, cultural and political unity through

the acceptance of diversities and differences, and the further strengthening of nationalistic characteristics of national identity.

### 3. POLITICAL CARTOONS AND IMAGES: A HUMORISTIC REPRESENTATION OF REALITY BUT....

Focusing on in the media in this part, which are often called

“the ‘fourth estate’, are powerful social institutions due to their ability to perform certain key social functions such as disseminating information, setting the public agenda and framing public discourse. The media therefore play a crucial role in ‘representing’ economic crises and shaping public opinion about the issues surrounding them.”<sup>ix</sup>

Common and overused tools of media for representing society and crisis are the political images and cartoons, which through exaggeration and humor attempt to formulate the public opinion. Therefore, during the current economic crisis appear many images and cartoons, which have contributed in the cultural representation of this crisis.

These representations became a device, which had as a goal to offer criticism towards national politicians as well as to function as national defensive tools, which protected national and cultural dignity against political comments and humiliating images and cartoons of other countries. Though besides their goals, these devices were able to polarize further more the national public spheres and public opinion by triggering a visual quarrel among nations through the employment of political cartoons and images. Consequently, these images and cartoons assisted in creating a visual hostile environment between the citizens of the northern European member states and the southern ones whereas the same time they contributed in the formulation of an unfriendly pan-European public opinion.

Top to that, this polarization is achieved through the resurfacing of national stereotypes, which do not contribute to the production of the pan-European public sphere. For sure, these political images and cartoons in media cannot be considered as facilitators for creating a similar European public sphere to the anti-war (Iraq war) demonstration events of the outraged Europeans that happened in the 15<sup>th</sup> of February in London, Rome, Berlin, Barcelona, Paris for which

“[...] the philosophers Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida were inspired to write an article for Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung in which they hailed 15 February as signaling the birth of a European public sphere.”<sup>x</sup>

Consequently, my suggestion is that the current economic crisis has serious consequences to what it supposed to be the birth of European public sphere as well as it assists in the strengthen of national identity and nationalism in Europe.

Additionally, the connection of political images and cartoons in newspapers to public sphere as well as of television and journals, is supported from the fact that:

“[t]he public space or sphere, *die Öffentlichkeit*, is by no means constituted by media alone, but newspapers, journals, television, and radio (digital or not) are among its most important manifestations.”<sup>xi</sup>

Additionally, images assist in understanding reality as well as in the creation of a cultural perception of the collective representation of political and social reality as Heidemarie Uhl argues:

“A special meaning must be given to images and what they convey” [...] Images are not a mere illustration of reality but rather a visualization of it; to that extent, they are quite relevant in the analysis of political democracy in terms of creating models of cultural perception of the collective representations of the political and social reality. More so that in a text, what is there to see in those visual proposal is much more marked with ideas of belonging on the one hand, and ‘otherness’ or ‘foreignness’ on the other hand.”<sup>xii</sup>

Therefore, the images are crucial elements for the construction of collective perceptions concerning the political and social reality, which are characterized by the perceptions of belongingness and otherness with which the viewer becomes familiar or estranged with. The importance of images is also highlighted by the motto that one image worth 1000 words. Therefore the power of the image is important in the creation of the public sphere and opinion. As Öhner correctly argues that “it is not the discourse themselves that construct collective identities, but it is above all images that create very powerful collective imaginations.”<sup>xiii</sup> Therefore, images have the power to create collective imaginations that represent, define and formulate society and public opinion. These collective imaginations in the

public media function as a visual political debate and as symbols affected by the beliefs of social groups which can assist in highlighting the national and European identity. These

“[i]dentities refer to shared representations of a collective self as reflected in public debate, political symbols, collective memories, elite competition for power. They consist also of collective beliefs about the definition of the group and its membership that are shared by most group members.”<sup>xiv</sup>

The importance of images and its impact

“which establish themselves as the ‘true’ (evident) comeback of reality proves quite efficient in the generation of affective and emotional (in the positive as well as negative meaning) representations of Europe. [...] [As a result] images must be given a critical role in the impregnation of collective representations.”<sup>xv</sup>

This collective representation can assist in the formulation of a pan-European feelings and attitudes among the European citizens. The question raised is whether this produced public sphere is characterized by revisiting and resurfacing of nationalist attitudes through the projection such images and cartoons, which facilitate the cultural polarization among the European citizens.

Despite the political images as a medium for society’s depiction, the political cartoons also play an important role in this research since they provide a humoristic but truthful depiction of social and political problems:

“Some studies address the relationship between (political) cartoons and reality; for example, Streicher (1967) argues that they are grounded in reality. They are somewhere between what something or someone is and what it is not.”<sup>xvi</sup>

Furthermore, the exaggerated representation of reality by political cartoons assists in the simplification and quicker recognition of social and political discourse that exists in society by becoming a means of understanding the social and political discourse since Morris argues that “[...] cartoons capture the endless binary oppositions that organize social representations about the world and provide, as it were, a ‘cognitive map’ for understanding everyday life.”<sup>xvii</sup> Those images and cartoons assist also through the images and the pictures in signifying who is considered the national ‘Other’ by rendering the public opinion into the process of identifying visually the scapegoats.

This process of ‘Othering’ through images and cartoons is strengthened by the current economic crisis through the creation of an inner European ‘Other’ which is connected with the diminishing abbreviation such as PIGS, a characterization which is used for the economically weaker southern countries, which usually are represented in the political cartoons as pigs. Meanwhile, the same images assist in the depiction of some of the northern countries as ‘Evil’ or as economic colonizers of the southern countries who attempt to impose on them austerity measures triggering great reactions to national politicians as well as to their citizens.

In “One Europe or Many? Reflections on Becoming European” Ray Hudson argues that

“[t]he inclusion of some EU states within the Euro-zone and the exclusion of others from it, as well as the continuing significant differences in national economic performance within the former group, is contributing to the emergence of a two-speed (or multi-speed) EU in part a consequence of processes of deepening and widening.”<sup>xviii</sup>

This distinction of Europe, into diligent and rich northern states from the poor and lazy southern ones assist in the creation of an inner European ‘Other’ where the core of Europe self-defines itself through the projection of the southern periphery as a scapegoat or as ‘PIGS’. This goes in contrast to Habermas’ belief for integrating the strange and the ‘Other,’ an element that can positively stigmatize the unity among the European nations by accepting diversity and the differences among nations:

“Habermas believes that Europe painfully had to learn ‘how differences can be communicated, contradictions institutionalized and tensions established’. Habermas is convinced that such as ‘acknowledgement of the Other in her Otherness-can also become a common features of a common identity for Europe.’”<sup>xix</sup>

## 4. EUROPEAN CULTURAL POLARIZATION AS A VITAMIN FOR NATIONALISM

Before digging in the analysis of the images and cartoons that represent the polarization between the PIGS and the northern European countries, it is important to investigate whether there are also

other examples that highlight the cultural split among the member states. A current example is that some member-nations want to temporarily freeze the Schengen Agreement concerning the free movement of European citizens by enforcing checks in airports for European citizens in order to control and stop the entrance of 400 thousands immigrants per year and the stay of 2 up to 4 millions in European Union's member states:

"Greece, Belgium and Sweden rejected the suggestion for temporary freeze of the agreement for free movement, whereas France, Germany, Austria and Hungary suggested its further enforcement. The rest countries keep a neutral position."<sup>xx</sup>

From that, it becomes obvious that some member states in the name of controlling the number of immigrants are ready to sacrifice the ideals upon which European Union was build on. This fact becomes an obvious attempt towards European disintegration in every level since it means the revoke of the idea of free movement of EU citizens through the use of the EU passport, which may have consequences in the creation of a European identity. Thomas Moore points out that

"[w]e have become accustomed to enjoying the fruits of the European Union project in economic terms: *free* movement of goods, *free* movement of capital, *free* movement of services and the *free* movement of people. But when the economic pendulum swings in opposite directions to long-held beliefs about economic productivity and marketization then we overwhelmingly revert back to 'national interest' as our reference point for understanding the financial crisis. The problem with conceiving the European project exclusively in economic terms is that it overlooks how these four 'freedoms' possess a social, political and moral character."<sup>xxi</sup>

Evidently, nations states may forget the ideals why European Union was created by focusing more on their national interests due to their desire for economic productivity and marketization as well as less immigrants in their countries.

These economic, political and cultural nationalist tendencies of member states assisted in the rise of extreme right political parties around Europe, which are skeptical towards the idea of 'more Europe'. This is evidently in Greece, where the political parties who are against the economic cuts and Euro zone (Anti-Troika parties) increased their percentages in the political results in the Greek national elections that took place on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2012, (like 'Siriza' with 16% from 5% in 2009 and the downfall of Pasok and New Democracy from 44% to 14% and from 32% to 19%) by having as an argument their opposition against the austerity measures in order to protect the social welfare and the labor rights. The nationalistic behavior against specific countries and Euro-zone had result in culture since less German tourists will visit Greece this summer than the previous years due to the unpleasant and polarized climate that is cultivated by the mass media and the current economic crisis in Greece: "In detail, concerning the profits from the two main markets of coming visitors, the ones from Germany show decrease of 61,2 in February 2012 in comparison with the 2011."<sup>xxii</sup>

Another example is the French nationalist and extreme right party of Marine Le Pen, which managed to be the third political party in the first round of French Elections of 2012 with the astonishing 17.9%. As well as in Greek national elections of the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2012 when the fascist and racist political party 'Golden Dawn' received 7% and the right for parliamentary representation from 0,5% in 2009 and in the Greek exit polls of 2013 it receives around 10%-12,5%. Accordingly, the current European economic crisis is an additional reason to the historical, political and economic reasons that assists in the rise of extreme right political parties:

"The ongoing financial crisis is often cited as one reason for a swing toward the right among certain European nations. But experts indicate that there are other political, economic and historical reasons for the trend - which is occurring in prosperous and tolerant European nations as well."<sup>xxiii</sup>

This dissatisfaction towards Europe is not only evident in Greece and in other southern European countries through strikes and public demonstration, but it is also apparent in countries where they are not in the same position like the PIIGS but they have to impose austerity measures due to the economic crisis in order to control their national debts. Therefore, as representatives of the enforcement of the austerity measures in European countries and in particular in PIIGS countries, they (Nikola Sarkozy and Angela Merkel) as politicians and their countries became the receivers of European dissatisfaction, which lead to the polarization of the European public opinion depicted through images and cartoons as well. As Mary Beth Warner highlights in *Spiegel Online* "[t]here are signs of growing dissatisfaction in Europe over the austerity measures pushed by Germany and other countries to solve the euro-zone debt crisis."<sup>xxiv</sup> Obviously, this fact becomes evident also from the last interview that Jean Claude Juncker gave as a president of Eurogroup where he highlighted as a reason for quitting his position that he is

“tired of Franco-German interference”<sup>xxv</sup> in handling the current debt crisis in Europe. He suggested that both they “act as if they are the only members of the group.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

Without question, this cultural polarization is further supported not only by images and cartoons but by reality shows and videos broadcasting in TV’s channels around Europe as well. Such examples are “Go Greek for a Week” (Channel 4 in Britain) and by French media satirizing the Modern Greek<sup>xxvii</sup> and the Greek economic crisis. The disrespect of European cultures from mass media provide the space for further cultural split in European Union through the creation of European polarized public sphere, which will certainly result in reviving nationalistic attitudes and the existence of frictions in the plan of constructing a collective European identity.

## 5. CULTURAL POLARIZATION: *THE GERMAN-GREEK VISUAL DISCOURSE*

Focusing a bit more on the German-Greek visual and cultural polarization, in “Greeks Vs Germans” Mark Mazower highlights the fact that the anti-German sentiments by Greek population were expected to stimulate a series of newspaper articles and cartoons that depict visually the economic, political and cultural polarization:

“[w]hen anti-German sentiments re-emerged in Greece last year at the onset of the eurozone crisis, they did so with little warning. This is not to say that their emergence was especially surprising. Much of the Greek anger was reactive, prompted by a series of newspaper articles and cartoons in the German press that portrayed the Greeks as profligate and suggested, only half tongue-in-cheek, selling off its islands and antiquities to raise money.”<sup>xxviii</sup>

Therefore, this visual quarrel between the two countries was one of the three reasons why I have decided to focus on this topic. The second reason derives from my willingness to warn the national and European politicians as well as the Eurocrats for the danger that lingers concerning the cultural cohesion of European Union. The third reason concerns the importance of images and cartoons in the construction of European social reality as much as any declaration or public speech since it is easier and faster for the viewers to grasp the visual connotation. The significance of the cultural representation of economic crisis in images and cartoons is highlighted by the visual reawakening of old ghosts and stereotypes and

“in particular, the ghost of German mastery in Europe. In Athens, anti-German feelings have been running high for some time and it is not only protesters who reach back to the era of the Nazi occupation for analogies with the present. European Union officials in Greece are likened to the Gestapo; Greek ministers are lampooned as collaborators.”<sup>xxix</sup>

This polarization of public opinion was further intensified through the engagement of European citizens into a ‘media war’ through images and ugly stereotypes between the northern countries and the southern ones. An example of this visual ‘war’ was triggered by the German *Focus*, which had as a cover the Venus de Milo with her middle finger raised towards Greece’s bailout. This was received by Greek people as cultural disrespect, which facilitated the polarization among the two countries and the consideration of Germany as ‘Other’ for the Greek citizens, which resulted in the revitalization of the ugly stereotypes through images and cartoons. This is also highlighted in *Spiegel Online* by Julia AmaliaHever and Ferry Batzoglou’s where they refer that:

“German publications were in fact the first to use derogatory language, referring to the ‘bankrupt Greeks’ as the ‘frauds in the euro family.’ The Greeks filed a lawsuit for collective libel against the Munich-based magazine *Focus* several months ago after it depicted the Venus de Milo statue with an extended middle finger in February 2010. The Greeks were also indignant at Merkel’s criticism of ‘southern European inefficiency.’ Nevertheless, this hardly explains the ensuing tirades of hate.”<sup>xxx</sup>

On the other side, GeorgiosDelastic<sup>xxxi</sup> puts forward self defense as the reason why he used harsh language such as ‘Hitler’ ‘Nazism’ and ‘Third Reich’ in the representation of Germany and Angela Merkel in his newspaper:

“[w]hen asked why he [Delastic] uses such harsh language, he says it is ‘self-defense’ and explains that he uses his op-ed pieces as an attempt to re-establish the wounded dignity of the Greeks, and that he does so by emphasizing the Germans’ most vulnerable side: their Nazi past”.<sup>xxxii</sup>

This self-defense can be characterized as nationalistic since it attempts to protect the national and cultural dignity. As McCormic points out in Europeanism, nationalism

“[...] can also be defined by goals, and thus we can make a distinction between defensive nationalism, which is primarily cultural and works to protect the heritage and identity of national groups, and assertive nationalism, which is primarily political and is based on the idea of superiority [...].”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Consequently, this polarization through the media triggers a form of nationalism, which is called defensive nationalism, which assists in the protection of heritage and identity of the national group. Therefore, this visual fight facilitated through publication's images assisted in the production of a polarized public sphere between Germany and Greece, which certainly does not add up in the creation of a pan-European public sphere. This criticism against Greece and PIIGS by northern European countries created an on-going cultural polarized environment where everyone becomes the 'Other' of somebody and everyone attempts to 'Other' somebody through the creation of scapegoat/s.

Meanwhile, in his interview Delastik refuses that he assists in the cultural polarization between Greece and Germany but he claims that there is a political reason hidden behind these unflattering and insulting representations of Angela Merkel and Germany: “However, Delastik refuses to admit that he is also fueling anti-German sentiment with his harsh editorial pieces. It is his duty, he says, ‘to convince German politicians that their prescribed approach is the wrong one.’”<sup>xxxiv</sup> Though the consequences on the construction of European public sphere and the European cultural integration becomes evident since mass media on both countries instead of attempting to highlight the positive aspects of economic cooperation between Greece and other European countries for confronting the debt crisis, they highlight the negative ones through the projection of ugly stereotypes and insulting political images and cartoons.

Evident of the consequence in the creation of a pan-European public sphere is the survey conducted by VPRC where

“[o]f the approximately 800 Greeks [...], more than three-quarters said they felt Germany is hostile to Greece. Some 69 percent even believe that German politicians are genuinely pursuing the goal of establishing a ‘Fourth Reich’. When asked what they associated with Germany, one in three respondents used terms like ‘Hitler,’ ‘Nazism’ and ‘Third Reich.’ [Whereas] [b]efore the crisis, the Greeks were generally enamored of the Germans.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

These facts can have serious influence in the creation of a pan-European public sphere as well as in the creation of a collective European identity characterized by the mutual sharing of ideals from all the member states.

One thing is obvious that after this economic crisis European Union will not be the same in political, economic and cultural level as well. Though, a positive change coming from this economic crisis is the deepening of the economic integration as Leah Leiva argues:

“[...] [I]t would be an exaggeration to call the financial crisis a blessing in disguise, it is certainly true that the EU is successfully using the opportunity to strengthen coordination in financial and economic areas, thus deepening rather than threatening integration.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

But the question raised here is where is culture and what is its position during the economic crisis?

## 6. THE ABSENCE OF EUROPEAN CULTURE DURING THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC CRISIS

Towards the end of his life Jean Monet said that “if we were to do it all again we would start with culture”<sup>xxxvii</sup> thus rendering culture as a crucial and important component for European identity and cultural integration. Though during the economic crisis culture is ‘absent’ whereas it could have helped Europe to escape from the current economic crisis through the creation of cultural products<sup>xxxviii</sup>, which will be more attractive to foreigners as well as to European citizens through the projection of the European culture which is characterized by diversity and multiculturalism. As Delors highlighted in his speech as Commission President to the European parliament in 1985:

“[T]he culture industry will tomorrow be one of the biggest industries, a creator of wealth and jobs. Under the terms of the Treaty we do not have the resources to implement a cultural policy; but we are going to try to tackle it along economic lines... We have to build a powerful European culture industry that will enable us to be in control of both the medium and its content, maintaining our standards of civilization, and encouraging the creative people among us.”<sup>xxxix</sup>



Though as it seems, his opinion is not quite heard from the contemporary politicians who through the employment of austerity measures and instead of the employment of culture, try to provide solutions to economic crisis, whereas the same time this crisis contributes in the cultural disintegration of Europe. Chris Shores underlines that

“[t]he emphasis on ‘culture’ as an integrative mechanism and possible solution to the riddle of European unification marks a fundamental shift in official EU discourses on integration away from the old assumption that socio-political integration would proceed as by-product of economic integration and technical harmonization.”<sup>xli</sup>

Additionally, through the brief projection of the on-going media’s discourse facilitated by the political images and cartoons, it becomes more apparent the alienation that the EU identity goes through due to the political and economic quarrels in EU which facilitate the intensification of national identity and Euro-skepticism in the member states. Therefore, culture as a medium can be used in order to reinvent Europe at the level of public opinion by providing power to the citizens from below through referendums, thus rendering Europe a ‘Europe of people’.

This alienation of the European identity and the empowerment of national identity are facilitated due to the lack of a European homogenized voice concerning the resolution of the economic crisis as well as the ‘absence’ of the European culture during the crisis. Additionally, the view of EU as an institution controlled by two member states or as a punisher of other members followed by harsh criticism does not contribute in the European co-operational feeling that should characterize all the members. Moreover, this culturally split becomes greater by the fact that some member states benefit from the current economic crisis on the fate of others states through the insistence of austerity measures to other member states. This is also noted by the last interview of Jean Claude Juncker as the president of Eurogroup where he criticized Germany over its treatment of other Euro-zone members during the debt crisis. Juncker said “[...] 17 of the EU’s 27 member states had less debt than Germany, though the bloc is enforcing austerity measures mainly at Berlin’s insistence.”<sup>xlii</sup> Logically, the least benefited members are opposed to such situation by showing this opposition not only in political and economical terms but culturally as well, through articles, images, cartoons and public demonstrations.

Leading towards the end of this discussion, it should be noted that the cultural split and the reviving of nationalism is facilitated through diminishing images and cartoons as well as through the economic and political quarrels that go on in EU. The ‘absence’ of culture during the current crisis as well as before and after it highlights its importance for further cultural integration that will smooth the way for a pan-European public sphere and the projection of a cultural historical memory for the future Europeans citizens. Therefore,

“[w]hat is missing from the discussion of the Greek crisis is an honest discussion about the philosophy of European integration: its function, its values and its potential to transform European community. We undermine the European public sphere by reducing the current financial crisis down to ‘sovereign’ debt.”<sup>xliii</sup>

The most important is that the moral values of European citizens concerning European unity and cohesion to remain intact by highlighting the fact that “[n]ational economies must work together, ensuring that the European public sphere retains its moral value.”<sup>xliii</sup>

## **7. CONCLUSION: ‘MORE EUROPE’**

Rounding this discussion, it is interesting the fact that Euro used to be a cultural symbol signifying economic unity but due to the current crisis it has turned into a symbol of economic crisis, cultural polarization and criticism among members by rendering some of them the modern and inner scapegoats of European Union. It has almost been forgotten what Francois Mitterrand said in 1989, which is brought up by Chris Shore, who argues that there is a cultural perspective in the economic symbol of European unity since

“[t]he Euro is the most important symbol of European integration and identity to date. [...] More than any other EU cultural initiative, the ‘euro in your pocket’ will help to transform the EU from a remote set of supranational institutions and abstract macroeconomic principles into a tangible cultural fact at the level of everyday social reality. As Francois Mitterrand summed it up in 1989, the EU’s goal is ‘one currency, one culture, one social area, one enrolment.’”<sup>xliiv</sup>

Though this sentiment is not even considered nowadays since many countries have started even considering not entering the Euro-zone or they try to delay that process. Concluding, economic and political integration is important but its cultural character should not be left aside but it should be

promoted through people and for the people since Europe is a 'Europe of people' during crisis and not. This can be achieved though the hard cooperation of all nations in every level as well as the acceptance of diversities and differences among the nations in economic, political and cultural level.

## 8. ANNEX



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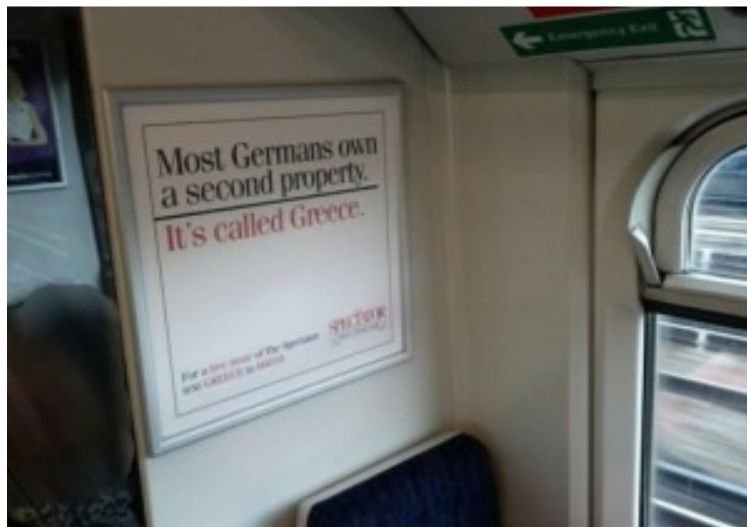
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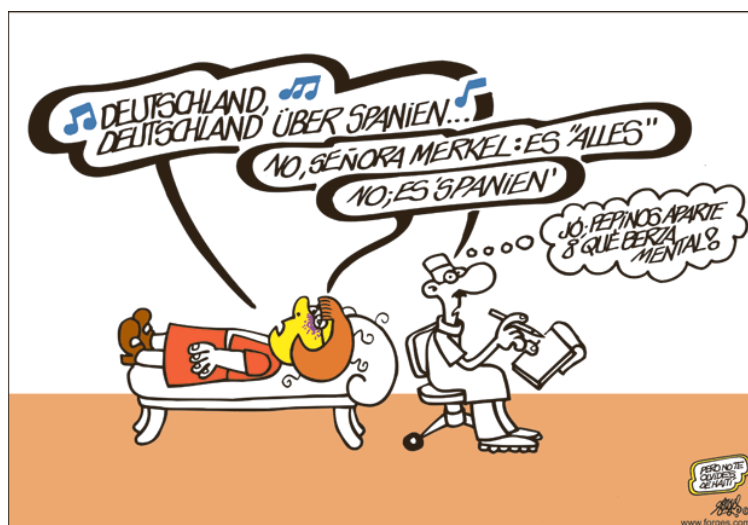
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Germans May Bail Out Greek Economy



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<sup>ii</sup> John McCormic, *Europeanism* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2010), 73.

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<sup>iv</sup> Anthony D. Smith. *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books, 1991), 73.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid. 14.

<sup>vi</sup> Ibid. 17.

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid. 56.

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