THE RECONSTRUCTION OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL AND PUBLIC SPHERE THROUGH A CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM

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Introduction

The field of international relations was once dominated by the discourse of the Realist school, which constructed and interpreted global events from the lens of power politics. Such a construction is true for Europe, given its long history of interstate conflicts and warfare. The two world wars and innumerable preceding wars testify this fact. Nearing the end of the World War II, liberal idealism resurfaced on the global political landscape, as states were struggling to consolidate peace. The emergence of the United States and the Soviet Union as superpowers was a bitter reality which the European powers had to accept. The European states were left with little or no option than to submit to the predominance of the two global powers. This new development brought in its wake the American consumerist culture into Europe, besides its military presence.[1]

In response to the regional and global challenges, European elites were forced to embark on a soul searching mission, geared at creating a common European identity, distinct from that which led to the two world wars. The outcome of this introspection was what Keohane and Nye refer to as complex interdependence.[2] The formation of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) and the later European Economic Community (EEC) did not just facilitate Europe in regaining its global position, it also led to the emergence of a socially constructed common identity as opposed to divisive nationalism, which had facilitated the end of the Europeanization of the world.

Although the creation of the European Union and its predecessor the European Economic Community generated many exegeses, debates and theories, all with divergent perspectives on European integration, the Realist, Liberal/institutional and Functionalist schools are renowned

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[1] Peter, Taylor and Colin Flint, *Political Geography: World-Economy Nation-State and Locality* (Patparganj: Pearson Education, 2004), 97-100.

[2] Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr. *Power and Interdependence* (Patparganj: Pearson Education, 2011).

analytical instruments in this regard. The formation, transition and evolution of the EU was a socially constructed process, heavily drawing upon internal and external, planned and unplanned inducement, which by extension are responsible for shaping both the collective identity and memory.[3]

Over the years, Europe has witnessed momentous events, starting from the first wave of enlargement of the European Community, followed by the second, third, fourth and fifth waves of enlargement, the last one bringing into the European Union the former satellite states of the Soviet Union. The continent has also seen the rising tide of far-right, nativist and conserve movements and more recently, the radicalization of European youth. All of these developments can be understood through the Constructivist discourse. These developments in Europe are important for the Constructivists, because they are embedded in social normative and ideational structures, leading to restructuring and de-structuring of identity. [4]

The Constructivist narrative[5]
The importance of the Constructivist theory in the understanding of international relations and its various aspects cannot be underestimated. The school gained currency owing to its attention to the sources of change. Though the core of the theory revolves around shared beliefs, interests, conventional norms, and attitudes of a society, Constructivism also directs our attention towards the need to understand how knowledge is socially constructed and so is our consciousness and perception of the world. As Alexander Wendt puts it "anarchy is what states make of it."[6] The Constructivist narrative analyzes why and how security communities such

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[3] Anthony Smith, *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), 126-127.

[4] Christian Reus-Smit, "Constructivism" in Scott Burchill and Andrew Linklater (eds.), *Theories of International Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 188-212.

[5] It should be highlighted at this juncture that a sizable portion of the Constructivist theory used in this article has been culled from my dissertation. See also Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," *Foreign Policy* (Spring 1998): 40-41.

[6] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What State Make of It", *International Organization* 46 (Spring 1992): 391-425.

as NATO and other security arrangements emerged in the contemporary world.[7]

In the Constructivist's worldview, actors' preferences are not necessarily conditioned by rational choices, rather these are a reflection of beliefs, traditions, and ideologies, in short, historical and sociological factors. Constructivism argues that our interactions are shaped by social structures, norms and beliefs, all playing significant roles in how actors consciously shape their actions and their environment. The Constructivist paradigm lends support to the argument of cognitive regionalism, by which commonly shared values and history are reconstructed in order to build a foundation for cooperation. A recent example is that of Bulgaria, whose elites began to Europeanise their society during the process of political and economic transition, prior to the country's entry into the EU. The Bulgarian elite convinced their people that the future of Bulgaria was in the EU, and more importantly that the country, after having gone through the interlude of the oppressive Communist system, had to refurbish society in order to re-integrate with the European continent.

Constructivism thus explains how identity is created through construction and reconstruction of values and norms.[8] Hence, Constructivism gives attention to the subjective tendency of the individual and society and particularly, the interrelation of interest and identity, which are not immune to time. The Constructivist paradigm makes it easier to understand the European leaders' motivation in creating the European Communities and also why the former Communist countries sought membership of the EU. The Constructivist worldview borrows heavily from sociology. As argued by some scholars "political communities are not exogenously given but constructed by historically contingent interactions. These interactions … [take place] … in the pursuance of interests that are derived from the ideas of actors, in particular, social structures".[9] The EU assisted the former Communist states to create a new identity that would conform to the

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[7] Amitav Acharya, *Constructing a Security Community in Southeast Asia: ASEAN and the Problem of Regional Order* (London: Routledge, 2001), 3.

[8] CiljaHarders, and MatteoLegrenzi, *Beyond Regionalism?: Regional Cooperation, Regionalism and Regionalization in the Middle Eas*t (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 92.

[9] Quoted in Shaun Breslin, Christopher W. Hughes, Nicola Phillips, Ben Rosamond, *New Regionalism in the Global Political Economy: Theories and Cases* (London: Routledge, 2002), 36.

shared norms of the European Union member states, and as pointed out earlier, the Bulgarian political elite made all out efforts to spread awareness among the public, of the need to redefine their identity as "European". This was done through a revision of Bulgaria's heritage and history. This interactive process exemplifies cognitive regionalism or cognitive interdependence.[10]

Briefly put, the Constructivists understand the world from a more subjective, yet normative and institutional lens. This allows the narrative and discourse of the Constructivists to revolve around commonly shared values and identity that can be reconstructed by using the historical tool. This was true for the former Soviet satellite states of Central and Eastern Europe, who evoked the argument that they shared history, heritage and identity with the countries of the European Union. Thus, the eastward enlargement of the European Union and the emergence of a new group within the European Union dovetails with the Constructivist template, and as Wendt puts it: "Constructivists are interested in the construction of identities and interests, and, as such, take a more sociological than economic approach to systemic theory. On this basis, they have argued that states are not structurally or exogenously given but constructed by historically contingent interactions."[11]

Constructivism in European integration and enlargement
Prior to the Second World War, politics in Europe was driven by the rival nationalisms of nation states, which became a major catalyst in the outbreak of the Great War. The Constructivist paradigm contends that relations amongst states are not strictly inspired by ideas, but also by interest. Thus came the realization after the end of the war that instead of divisive nationalism that leads to hostility and war, the idea of a 'European nation' should be promoted, for it was likely to bring sustainable peace and prosperity to the continents. Constructivism does not simply rest on constructed beliefs and interests, but is also premised on the belief that change uplifts society and this explains the change in Europe following the end of the Second World War.

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[10] Christopher M. Dent, David W. F. Huang, *Northeast Asian Regionalism: Lessons from the European Experience* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[11] Alexander Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation the International State," *The American Political Science Review* 88, no. 2 (1994): 385.

The creation of the EEC and its transformation into the European Union was not just a response to the incipient phenomenon of globalization, the American culture of consumerism and politics in Europe,[12] but was also meant as a clear message to both the United States and the Soviet Union that the Europeans do have their common identity and can evoke it for a mutually agreed objective.

Looking at the formation of the ECSC, following the Schuman Declaration of May 9, 1950, the member states of the Coal and Steel Community were able to mutually check and balance their activities in a strategically important economic sector and thus secured Europe from the outbreak of more conflict.[13] The European Union and its predecessors paved the way for close and constant dialogue and interaction at the political and social level among the member states, irrespective of ethnic and linguistic barriers and differences in thinking and cultural outlook. Hence, the European Parliament is a platform where MEPs "are weaned away from their allegedly irrational nationalistic impulses toward a self-reinforcing ethos of cooperation,"[14] embedded in commonly shared and socially constructed values and norms.

The end of the Cold War brought down the 'Iron Curtain' and blurred the boundaries erected during the era and hence emerged the newly constructed identity of the Central and Eastern European countries. The same happened when the Second World War ended and a new era marked by rivalry and hostility between the two superpowers and their respective allies appeared on the horizon. The creation of the EEC in the early years of the Cold War was not just an important milestone, but a watershed, a redefining moment that turned West Europe, at that time still recovering from the ravages of the Great War, towards a soul binding mission.

The realities of the post-war era set the pace for the reconstruction of Western Europe first through the formation of the Council of Europe in

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[12] Alexander Stephan, *The Americanization of Europe: Culture, Diplomacy, and Anti-Americanism after 1945* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2005).

[13] Arie Bloed and Ramses A. Wessel, *The Changing Functions of the Western European Union (WEU): Introduction and Basic Document* (Norwell MA: Martinus Nijhoff Publisher, 1994).

[14] Duncan Watts, *The European Union* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 65.

1949, whose purpose was that eventually a Europe should emerge "in which national boundaries were not written in ink but in pencil".[15]

Among the major European statesmen involved in the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community was the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman. The proactive trait of Schuman went a long way in turning around a war-prone region into a peaceful one.

On May 9, 1950, Schuman presented a plan before European leaders, for uniting the coal and steel sectors of European countries in a Community run by supranational institutions. The offer, which was open to all European states, was accepted by six countries, viz. the BENELUX and West Germany, besides France. In this declaration Schuman, entreated "It is no longer the moment for vain words, but for a bold act - a constructive act."[16] This landmark statement paved the way for the formation a few years later of the EEC, which evolved into its present form (the European Union) through several treaties, hence unfolding Schuman's vision of a new Europe. The European leaders understood the need of the hour and the Treaty of Paris was signed on April 18, 1951, establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). The Community was not based on mere cooperation, rather it was aimed at creating interdependence between the participant states in two strategic sectors of the economy – coal and steel, ensuring that these would no longer be used for war-making.

From the prism of the Constructivist theory, the ECSC and EEC were products of 'transnational communication and shared civic values' that downplayed the importance of narrow nationalism and veered the member states towards 'Europeanism'. The Paris and Rome treaties were underpinned by mutually shared interests, norms and values which were embedded in a shared heritage. The animosity between Germany and France which can be traced back to the Franco-German war of 1870, made it very hard to imagine that these two countries could ever coexist as peaceful neighbours, let alone participate in tightly-knit communities such as the ECSC and the EU. Germany and France, were the two most important players in the formation of the Communities. The creation of the

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[15] Effie G.H. Pedaliu, *Britain, Italy and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 153.

[16] Richard McAllister, *From EC to EU: An Historical and Political Survey* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

ECSC, the EURATOM and the EEC and their evolution into the EU challenged the Realist narrative of inter-state behaviour. The existence of these institutions underscores that Constructivism is a fairly accurate lens for understanding domestic, regional and global politics.

The fifth wave of EU enlargement and deepening of integration
The EU's expansion towards Central and Eastern Europe was a turning point in modern European history. The policies and processes with regard to EU enlargement have generated scholarly debates and researches. These point to the attraction of the EU for non-member European states, which of course can be attributed to the successes of the Union in several fields, over the decades. Without disregarding the essentialism of this narrative, Constructivism provides a strong analytical tool for understanding the Eastward enlargement from the angle of the aspirants for EU membership.

The narrative of the former Communist states of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe (CESE) during the transition from the totalitarian system to democracy and market economy was deeply embedded in the notion of 'Europeanness'. The elites of these countries evoked the Western normative paradigm to stimulate public sentiments against Communism. This strategy was also applied to reintegrate their societies with those of Western Europe. Unlike Realism and Liberalism, Constructivism has paid ample attention to understanding the sources of change, which helps in fathoming the reintegration of the former Communist states into mainstream Europe and its institutions. The tide of change that swept Europe in the last decade of the twentieth century not only veered the Central and Eastern European countries towards democracy and market economy, it also brought considerable changes in Russia, the main successor of the erstwhile Soviet Union, which at the dusk of the Cold War, had appeared willing to embrace the notion of "common security".[17] In the CESE, the tide of change was not driven by external incentives alone, but had begun to take roots in society and was based on shared feelings, ideas and interests, to which later, political incentives were added.

Constructivism shows how the elites of these countries redefined their interests and modified their behaviour accordingly. Upon sensing the

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[17] Stephen M. Walt, "International Relations: One World, Many Theories," 41.

cracks in the foundation of Communism, followed by its complete collapse, the elites of the former Soviet satellite states concurred on the need for the liberalization and democratization of their polities. The process was contagious, beginning with Poland, and then spreading to the rest of East/Central Europe.[18]

Huntington's thesis of "Clash of Civilizations" remains one of the most controversial thesis of the 21st century, which drew both acclaim and criticism. Yet, regardless of the controversy Huntington's thesis has generated, one cannot dismiss or deny the implicit and explicit implications of the logic espoused by the late Harvard scholar. According to him, broad cultural sentiment, affiliation and affinity will strengthen and overlap to the extent of supplanting traditional, domestic and national affiliation and affinity, and hence result in the construction of broader transnational cultural identities. The transition of the former Communist states towards the democratic and liberal values of Western/Northern Europe was a reflection of the trend towards the creation of broader cultural identities.

The notion of a common European identity (Europeanness) became widely prevalent in Central and Eastern Europe during the period of transition in the post-Communist era. The common identity was socially constructed beyond national loyalties and the CEEC identity narrative was centred on a common European history, heritage, Christianity and the interconnectedness of European languages. Therefore the Communist era was perceived to have created a wide gulf between the Western/Northern and Eastern European kin.

In a Constructivist world, it might be difficult to drive a wedge between state and society. The two are not just part of the whole, but are also essential agents in shaping, constructing, moulding or discarding new ideas and identity. This was true for the former Communist states of Eastern and Central Europe, and the same is manifested in the rise of the far-right movement and the revival of conservatism across Europe. The revival of conservatism in Europe and the craving of the former Communist states for democracy and liberalism were not just elitist ventures. These betokened understanding between the elite (representing the state) and the general

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[18] Bakare Najimdeen, "EU Accession and Integration, Implications for Sovereignty: A Case Study of Poland, Czech Republic, Romania and Bulgaria", PhD Thesis (Islamabad: International Islamic University, 2013), 78.

public (representing the society). The early period of European integration in the 1950s was indeed elitist, nonetheless it drew inspiration from Constructivism.

Using the neo-Gramscian approach, it is fair enough to assert that the liberalization process that preceded the democratization of the former Communist states was not just socially constructed, but was owing to the deliberate resolve of the elite to maintain their status. In the case of the former Communist states, the narrative of Europeanness was not imposed, rather the ideas embedded in Europeanness were persuasively promoted leading to a consensus between the elite and public.[19] The transformation of the former Communist states presented a tangent view beyond the rational choice of the Realists. The Constructivist would argue that long before the transformation, the ideational factor moulded the actions of the elite.

The rise of the far-right and the nativists
It is important to examine the far-right phenomenon and its anti-EU, xenophobic, anti-immigration, and generally virulent manifestations, through a Constructivist perspective. Apparently, there has been a varied degree of conservatism in the European modern experience, *ceteris paribus,* if the far-right phenomenon is placed within the bracket of conservatism. European conservatism has become an expression against transnationalism or globalization and against anything perceived as un-European; beginning with the resentment against the Jews in Europe and more recently the reaction against the Muslims. Globalization promotes the interconnectedness and mobility of people across the world, a trend that is thoroughly disliked by the far-right. This resentment against globalization is manifested in the anti-immigration, xenophobic, anti-Islam and anti-Muslim sentiments. The far-right movement is a reaction to the presence of non-Europeans and non-European values in Europe, hence the argument of Klaus von Beyme, "future studies of right-wing extremism will have to pay more attention to the whole political context of this political movement instead of being preoccupied with traditional party and electoral studies."[20] This further justifies the Constructivist argument that

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[19] Ngaire Woods, "International Political Economy" in John Baylis and Steven Smith (eds.), *The Globalisation of World Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 288.

[20] Klaus von Beyme, "Right-wing Extremism in Post-war Europe", *West European Politics* 11, no.2 (1988): 1– 18.

to understand a state and society, attention must be paid to its approach towards change.

Globalization has brought about change the world over. The phenomenon is characterized by unprecedented mobility of people, technology, and capital between the north and south, and has altered the pattern of relations between the global core and the global periphery. The interconnectedness associated with globalization is redefining and reshaping identities. This form of change, which has resulted in massive mobility of people, which by extension brings cultural shock, is unacceptable to the far-right movement in Europe. The latter sees globalization as an affront to the European identity, which must be resisted. It is clear that this resistance is increasingly gaining momentum at both the public and political level. The far-right movement is posing a challenge to the European project that cannot be ignored. It has raised the question: can the EU project be saved from this onslaught? Meanwhile, some centrist European politicians look at this movement as antithetical to the vision of the founding fathers of the EU, who believed in and worked for a cosmopolitan Europe, a continent having the ability to transcend narrow nationalism, which had always embroiled Europe in conflict and wars.

The growing scepticism against the supranational project of the EU[21] is apparently borrowing from the nativist-conservatist-nationalist polemics, which unwittingly use the social and identity discourse. While on the one hand, the nativist-conservatist-nationalist movement is aimed at preserving a pristine European identity, on the other hand, it is determined to discredit the EU project, if not destroy it altogether.[22] The nativist-conservatist-nationalist polemics should not be confused or dismissed as mere farce; rather these should be viewed as a phenomenon that now enjoys and commands both public and political legitimacy. The rising tide of the far-right politics is not a fleeting occurrence, it is gaining considerable support from the public, as demonstrated in the last European

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[21] Tamás Boros and Zoltán Vasali, "The Rise of Euroskepticism and Possible Responses prior to the 2014 European Parliament Elections," *Foundation for European Progressive Studies*, 2013.

[22] Ralf Melzer and Sebastian Serafin, *Right-Wing Extremism in Europe: Country Analyses, Counter-Strategies and Labor-Market Oriented Exit Strategies* (Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, 2013), 7-8.

parliamentary elections.[23] The trend is transnational and not confined to certain classes or countries of Europe, rather it is a contagious political syndrome, which is even making inroads among in the so-called 'new' Europe i.e the former Communist states of Central, Eastern, and Southeast Europe (CESE).[24] The rise of extreme right groups in Europe appears as a common trend in Europe, but there are striking distinctions amongst them, when closely examined country by country.

The prevalent discourses in any society are mostly given by the Constructivists, because such discourses are a reflection of the interests, ideas and beliefs of a society, which in turn shape how the society wants itself to be perceived on the one hand, and how outsiders mould their perception of the society. The growing conservatist and nativist narratives across Europe seemingly fit into the contemporary discourse. The tempo of European conservatism and its various manifestations, the far-right for instance, has become a formidable phenomenon going beyond the realm of politics and becoming embedded in society. Borrowing a portion from my previous work on the same topic could help to further illuminate the issue. Conservatism in Europe has become a public sentiment which has begun to take roots in society. Present day European conservatism is a form of ultra-nationalism, garnished with anti-globalization and anti-Islam sentiments. Gone is the epoch, when Europe credited itself as being receptive to the concept of multiculturalism.[25] Prior to the recent rise of Europe's far-right, it was already apparent that there was a paradigm shift in European politics. European political leadership, particularly in Germany, Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands was already turning against the notion of multiculturalism.[26] The notion that Europe belongs only to a true European, having a cognitive, idealistic, political and above all cultural attachment to the continent of Europe was not confined to the conservatives.[27] While the era, when the Church and religious elites

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[23] European Parliament, "Results of the 2014 European Elections," 1 July 2014, available at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2014-results/en/election-results-2014.html.

[24] Kerry Longhurst and Marcin Zaborowski, *Old Europe, New Europe and the Transatlantic Security Agenda* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

[25] Tahir Abbas, *Islamic Radicalism and Multicultural Politics: The British Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

[26] Martyn Barrett, *Interculturalism and Multiculturalism: Similarities and Differences* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2013), 54-55.

[27] Furio Cerutti and Enno Rudolph, *A Soul for Europe: An Essay Collection*, (Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 96-99.

characterized the continent as 'Christian' Europe ended a long time ago, the legacy never really disappeared with the much decreased visibility of the religious establishment. The notion of Europeanness in all its aspects - cultural, geographical and religious – was rebranded by the new political elites. The most recent form of European conservatism bridges the gap between public and political authority. The far-right and its conservative rhetoric was not only consolidated, but also legitimized through its recent success in the European Parliament elections.[28] It reflected the sentiment shared by the masses and the political elite.[29] Melzer and Serafin's work on the European radical right-wing aptly illuminates the situation:

> The fact that a right-wing terrorist organization like the so-called "National Socialist Underground" (NSU) could take root in Germany is a scandal that requires a far-ranging public debate. Members of the NSU committed racially-motivated murders over a period of years, apparently undisturbed by any authorities. Apart from court proceedings, there must also be consequences for the internal organization, procedures, and priorities of the state security organs themselves, considering their egregious failures in this case.[30]

Even if one attempts to dismiss and downplay the far-right and its activities as a transient political trend; the recent events in Norway[31] and the rising anti-multiculturalist movement across Europe, speak volumes about how Europe is becoming inward-looking and exclusivist. In addition, the mixed reaction to the recent refugee crisis is an indication that Europeans are now unabashedly making it clear that Europe should be only for Europeans,

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[28] The victory of the European Right in the recent European Parliament elections illustrates the extent to which conservative political rhetoric has coalesced with conservative public belief. The election results prove to a considerable extent that European conservatism is not an out of box phenomenon; rather it symbolizes a growing trend in Europe, expressed through the electoral political platform.

[29] Bakare Najimdeen, "Muslims and the Charlie Hebdo Saga," *Policy Perspectives*, IPRI Papers 12, no 2 (2015):87.

[30] Ralf Melzer and Sebastian Serafin, "Right-Wing Extremism in Europe: Country Analyses, Counter-Strategies and Labor-Market Oriented Exit Strategies," *Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung*, (2013):7-8.

[31] Asne Seierstad, "Anders Breivik Massacre: Norway's Worst Nightmare," *The Guardian*, 22 February 2015. See http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/feb/22/anders-breivik-massacre-one-of-us-anne-seierstad.

and non-European ideologies and cultures should be kept out of the continent. Europe, they feel, has its own problems, so foreigners (refugees) should either stay at home or find other places of refuge, as insinuated by Donald Tusk, the president of the European Council.[32] The response of the Hungarian government[33] and some Balkan states[34] and the anti-refugee sentiment in Germany[35] are all symptomatic of a Europe reacting to the pressure of conditions that are likely to affect the native identity of the continent. It would however be a misrepresentation of Europe, if we fail to acknowledge the laudable humanitarian gestures of Europe, especially Germany in the current refugee crisis.[36]

Radicalism and Constructivism

Exclusivist ideas are becoming pervasive in Europe. In this environment, it is not surprising that European youth are becoming vulnerable to radicalization. The trend transcends religious and ethnic boundaries, though Western media gives the impression that radicalism in European Muslim youth is causing all the problems. The white youth, especially those who have reason to be disgruntled are as vulnerable to radicalization as Muslim youth. Both forms of radicalism are grounded in socially constructive narratives. On the one hand is 'Europeanness', and on the other is religious zealotry as a source of redefinition. Both are inspired by the inward narrative, on which the new identity is shaped. Modood and Werbner refer to such inward narrative as a tool for creating a new identity.[37] Although few observers would consider it appropriate to analyze the radicalization of European Muslims strictly from a cultural lens, such

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[32] James Kanter and Sewell Chan, "Europe, Reeling From Strain, Tells Economic Migrants: Don't Bother," *New York Times*, 3 March 2016.

[33] Robert Mackey, "Hungarian Leader Rebuked for Saying Muslim Migrants Must Be Blocked 'to Keep Europe Christian'," *New York Times*, 3 September 2015; see also Helene Bienvenu and Rick Lyman, "Hungary Blocks Migrants in Border Crackdown," *New York Times*, 15 September 2015.

[34] Nick Cumming-Bruce, "Croatia, Macedonia and Serbia Start Screening Refugees by Nationality," *New York Times*, 19 November 2015.

[35] Alison Smale, "Setback for Angela Merkel as Far Right Makes Gains in Germany," *New York Times*, 13 March 2016. See also Katrin Bennhold, "Empathy and Angst in a German City Transformed by Refugees," *New York Times,* 11 September 2015.

[36] Judy Dempsey, "Merkel's Open-Door Refugee Policy Leaves Her Isolated, *Newsweek*, 22 January 2016. See http://www.newsweek.com/merkels-open-door-refugee-policy-leaves-her-isolated-418446.

[37] Tariq Modood, Pnina Werbner, *The Politics of Multiculturalism in the New Europe: Racism, Identity and Community* (New York: Zed Books, 1997).

discourse might have some value in its own right. What is required most of all is an analysis of the structural (social and economic) inequality facing the Muslim community in Europe today. It is imperative for understanding why the Muslim youths are turning increasingly towards religion-inspired radicalism. The contention that society treats them unequally, and that they are disenfranchised in the socio-economic and political realms are indications that European societies consider them as second class citizens. When conditions reach a point where their endurance gives way to despair, the youth start looking inward; they seek and find succour in religious teachings, which tend to galvanize anti-societal sentiments. Sometimes, this disillusionment with society leads to violent or anti-social behaviour. In the case of the Muslim youth in Europe, the perception that the public and foreign policies of the host countries are iniquitous, even offensive, turns them towards radicalism. The view that at home they are virtually unwelcome and that abroad their government is harming fellow Muslims, nurtures an aggressive worldview. The killing of a British soldier on a street of London in broad daylight[38] is a tragic incident that illustrates the above contention.

The radicalism of European youth also springs from an inward looking and exclusivist narrative. The perception that Europe is on the verge of being Islamized and Arabized and that the growing Muslim population is demanding more public visibility which could alter the cultural fabric and identity of Europe, are some of the grievances of the radicalized white youth. Even though statistics show a growing trend of non affiliation or disengagement from the church in Europe,[39] the radicalism of European youth shows that religion is evoked to exclude those of foreign, particularly, Muslim origin.

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[38] Alastair Jamieson, "Two Muslim Converts Guilty of Killing UK Soldier Lee Rigby on London Street," *Nbcnews*, 19 December 2013. At http://www.nbcnews.com/news/other/two-muslim-converts-guilty-killing-uk-soldier-lee-rigby-london-f2D11775017.

[39] David Masci, "Europe Projected to Retain its Christian Majority, but Religious Minorities will Grow," Pew Research, April 15, 2015. Available from http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/04/15/europe-projected-to-retain-its-christian-majority-but-religious-minorities-will-grow/.
European Commission Standard Eurobarometer , "Public Opinion in the European Union," Standard Eurobarometer 74, Issue Autumn (November 2010). At http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb74/eb74_publ_en.pdf.

The ideology of rightist radicalism aside, European leaders and responsible agencies often play down or even dismiss the potential dangers of such radicalism by claiming that it poses no direct threat to the values of society, particularly European democracy. But we know that pluralism and heterogeneity are an integral part of the principles of democracy. Rightist radicals present monolithic, homogeneous and exclusivist narratives, which challenges the contention that White-Christian radical doctrines are not at odds with democracy.[40]

Conclusion

Constructivism, in comparison to other theories of Political Science, not only presents a clearer picture of current happenings in Europe, but also enhances our understanding of European history from a distinctive and non-traditional lens. The basic logic of Constructivism tallies with the underlying principles of other theories, however its interpretations of both domestic/national and global occurrences transcends the immediate time and space and its application is futuristic.

Drawing inspiration from my previous work,[41] Huntington's 'Clash of Civilizations' thesis was challenged by the epistemic community as yet another expression of traditional Orientalism, while others "dismissed it as somewhat strange if not downright wrong".[42] Regardless of the controversies associated with the Clash of Civilizations thesis, Samuel Huntington helps us to understand contemporary European conservatism (be it rightist or Muslim). His argument holds its own in an increasingly globalized world, where identity often appears to be blurred by the so-called global identity, and where some sensitive people feel repulsed by the trend and would rather reconstruct or redefine their position in the world by placing emphasis on their identity.[43] This is not only true for Muslims who fear that globalization is eroding their traditions and identity, it is equally true for European conservatives who feel that they are struggling to preserve their European identity against the pervasiveness of globalization. Hence the events that preceded the *Charlie Hebdo* incident

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[40] Bakare Najimdeen, "Muslims and the Charlie Hebdo Saga", 96-97.

[41] Ibid, 90.

[42] Richard Bonney, *False Prophets: The Clash of Civilizations and the Global War on Terror* (Oxfordshire: Peter Lang Ltd, 2008).

[43] Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Making of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996)

and the others that followed, illustrate the struggle between the two cultures with regard to identity, and the assertion of the freedom of expression or its limits. The onslaught of globalization is a fear that both share, but perceive in different ways. Although for Europe, globalization cannot be singled out as the pervasive fear, likely to wipe out the European identity, European conservatives are wary of the EU project, which they strongly feel, undermines national identities and the sovereignty of nation states.

Constructivism explains why by the end of the Second World War, the European elite felt that Europe could only be saved from more disastrous wars by discarding rivalries and hostilities and embarking on the path of regional integration. They redefined themselves as 'European' and not German, French, Italian, Belgian or Dutch. This did not mean that the feeling of nationhood suddenly vanished or that the nation state system was entirely abandoned, rather the elite made a conscious effort to find common grounds for making a new beginning, in which nationalism would no longer be able to play a negative role. Cognition of the need to recreate and reconstruct the European environment led to the creation of first, the ECSC and a few years later, the EEC and the EURATOM. The process reached its apogee with the formation of the European Union. The transition process in the former Communist states of East and Central Europe, was also characterized by the construction of a new identity by the elites, designed around a common European history, heritage, Christianity and interconnectedness of languages. The CEECs constructed their cognitive regionalism by consciously discarding the Communist doctrines and espousing the idea of a European community, or Europe once again "whole and free". It was a conscious effort by the leaders of these countries to reinvent and redesign their past and map out a future that would be completely disengaged from the history and events of the Communist era. The Constructivist narrative helps us to understand why and how the former Communist countries made conscious efforts to build a common identity with mainstream Europe.

Meanwhile, contemporary radicalization is not merely a phenomenon, rather it is a socially constructed, though pernicious trend. The Muslim youth do not carry faulty genes, making them prone to violence or extremism. Radicalization of Muslim youth in Europe can not be analyzed in isolation. Radicalism and radicalization are growing trends in Europe,

which are not peculiar to any one race or religion. Several authoritative European surveys have revealed how widespread radicalism is, amongst native white European youth. They are not only becoming more articulate, but are also displaying their beliefs by engaging in violent and anti-social activities. However, there is inadequate reporting and documentation by the concerned agencies.[44]

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[44] Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the implementation of "Council Framework Decision on Combating Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by Means of Criminal law," European Commission, 27 January 2014. Visit http://ec.europa.eu/justice/fundamentalrights/files/com_2014_27_en.pdf.