LECTURE 5

IDENTITY AND EUROPEAN UNION 'CORE VALUES'

- The concept of 'collective identity' draws on social psychology
    - and in particular within that, social identity and self-categorisation theories

- social groups tend to define themselves on the basis of a set of *ideas* to which members can relate positively

- these ideas can be expressed directly in their ways of interacting and communicating, or indirectly through the application of common symbols, codes or signs.

- The function of these ideas is to define the social group as an entity which is distinct from other social groups

- The members thereby perceive that they have something in common on the basis of which they form an 'imagined community'

- Social identity and self-categorisation theories also argue that, apart from being defined by a set of shared ideas, the sense of community among members of a social group is accentuated/heightened/increased by a sense of distinctiveness with regard to *other social groups*.

- In other words, a social identity defines not only an 'in-group', but also one (or several) 'out-groups'
- those 'outside' that particular self-defining 'in group'.

- if we then apply these social identity and self-categorisation theories to questions about the development of a common European Union identity within its citizens we can suggest and point to *'a shared set of ideas'* based on liberal democracy to which EU citizens can relate positively
> - the 'core values' of liberal democracy, and consequently, the 'core values' of the European Union

- This then is what I am going to look at in this lecture:
> - firstly, briefly to identify some of the 'core values' that underpin the European Union
> -then to move on to look at what can be termed 'the culture' of those values and beliefs – the 'culture' underpinning them
> -and finally, to briefly raise questions as to whether the acceptance of the 'culture' of those core values has drawn the EU member states closer together
> -and thereby drawn the citizens of those EU member states closer together, towards a common EU identity

The 'core values' that underpin the European Union

- as I said before, we can suggest that there is *'a shared set of ideas'* based on liberal democracy upon which the EU is based
> - the 'core values' of liberal democracy, and consequently, the 'core values' of the European Union
>> -   the principles upon which it is based

- we can list the key ones:
  - democracy
  - the rule of law
  - peace and security
  - economic stability and prosperity
  - respect for human rights and minority rights
  - diversity and tolerance

- and these operate alongside and in conjunction with the basic
  founding principles of the European Economic Community set out
  in the Treaty of Rome in 1957
  - the free movement of goods, capital and labour

- these then are the *'ideas'* and values that comprise/make up the
  elements of the 'European ideal'
  - the norms, social determinants, and institutional elements
    and processes that combine to shape EU identity – the basis
    of what it is to be a citizen of the EU

- But these social and institutional elements have to operate alongside,
  and interact with, other cultural elements existing within the member
  states of the EU

- although those cultural elements that are promoted in that process are
  also, of course, based upon the *'ideas'* and values that
  comprise/make up the elements of the 'European ideal' - the norms
  and social determinants

- And it is this attempt to promote and develop a European Union
  culture based upon the 'European ideal' ('the idea of Europe') that is
  seen as most important in the process of developing an EU identity

- the cultural representation of the 'European idea' is seen as the 'cement' that binds together the different groups of citizens in the EU member states
- and it is that 'cement' which will ultimately produce a European Union identity in its citizens

- So, let's move on then to the second section of the lecture and look at what can be termed:

'The culture' of those values and beliefs of the 'EU idea' – the 'culture' underpinning them

- A report of the European Commission in 1988 stated:
  "The world of culture clearly cannot remain outside the process of completion of the big European internal market: that process demands the formation of a true European culture area."

- In his introduction to the European Commission's booklet entitled *'A Citizen's Europe'*, published in 1993, Pascal Fontaine sets out what he sees as the rationale and moral foundation for the European Union.
  "It is an experiment whose results are of universal significance, an attempt to establish between States the same rules and codes of behaviour that enabled primitive societies to become peaceful and civilised."

- So, from this we can see that according to the European Commission, the EU exists first and foremost 'to build peace'.

- This objective, together with the idea of creating a new kind of 'supranational' political order in Europe, is enshrined in the founding Treaties of the European Economic Community (EEC)
    - the preambles to the 1957 Treaty of Rome states that the aim is 'to lay the foundations for an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe'.

- the aim, therefore, was to initially create an economic community
    – but that was to form the basis of a deeper and broader community among states and peoples that had been divided by wars for much of the first half of the twentieth century

- for people like Pascal Fontaine, who was Cabinet Chief to the President of the European Parliament from 1984 to 1987, there was no alternative to closer union, and a more common identity, for the citizens of the new greater Europe
    - any other course would mean a return to nationalism, insecurity and the instability that had brought conflict and wars in the past.

- Jean Monnet, one of the European Community's 'founding fathers', declared at the setting up of the EEC:
    "We are not forming coalitions between States but union among peoples."

- So, for the European Commission, from the 1970s onwards the objective was the creation of a *'People's Europe'*

- and, for the Commission therefore, integration is not simply about the elimination of barriers to trade or the free movement of capital, goods and labour

- but rather, it is primarily a 'humanistic' enterprise involving a 'coming together' among peoples of different national cultures.

- consequently, the aim is to create a European Union, based on the 'idea of Europe' as an entity in itself and rooted in the values and norms of liberal democracy,
    - a European Union that is seen as close to, and relevant to, its well-informed citizens
        - with those citizens united by shared (European?) cultural values
    -             - and with those citizens having a sense of belonging to a 'common European homeland'

- In order to assist that process and promote it the European Union has created an institutional framework for what is, in effect, a new kind of pan-European political architecture that will transcend the old international order based on competitive nation-states

- Previous pan-national movements in history have failed to achieve their political goal of unification largely because of deficiencies in the cultural field
        - the failure to produce a common unifying cultural 'idea'

- this has been attributed to the poor state of their communication technologies of the past

- it is argued, therefore, that given the nature of mass-communications today there is a far greater opportunity for superseding the nation-state and creating a cultural pan-national European Union.

- In today's hi-tech communications world popular culture already transcends national boundaries (doesn't recognise them), so why shouldn't a European cultural tradition do the same

- After all, over past centuries traditions like Roman law, Greek philosophy and science, Christian theology, and traditions based in the Renaissance and Enlightenment periods, have travelled across the European continent to produce a 'European culture-area' or 'family of cultures'

- And as I pointed out in the first lecture of the course, national identity, in the form of nation-state identity for citizens, is a relatively recent development in much of Europe.

- The Czech philosopher Ernest Gellner has argued that a sense of national identification in citizens is a recent phenomenon in historical terms, and yet it has somehow become intrinsic or vital for the modern citizen.

- Gellner wrote in 1983:
"The idea of a man without a nation seems to impose a strain on the modern imagination ... A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears. All this seems obvious, though, alas, it is not true. But that it should have come to seem so very obvious is indeed an aspect, perhaps the very core, of the problem of nationalism. Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such".

- However, although Gellner argued that perversely national identity had become vital for the modern citizen, he believed that national identity was based on (political) loyalty no longer to a monarch, or

even to land or faith, but rather loyalty to and identification with a culture – a national culture

- culture is therefore the 'key'
    - if, as Gellner argues (and as was pointed out in lecture 1), culture has been used/employed/created to produce (in a relatively short historical period of time) national loyalty and identity, then there is no reason why it could not be employed to produce an EU loyalty and citizen identity.

 - the development/creation of a cultural 'Europeanness' in EU citizens
    - a collective identity that can transcend, though not replace (but operate and exist alongside), exclusively parochial and nationalistic loyalties, and thereby lay the foundations for a higher level of consciousness in EU citizens based on allegiance to European Union ideals.

- By the end of the 1980s though even the European Commission itself recognised (in its 1988 report) that Europeans were not sufficiently aware of their common cultural values and their shared European heritage
    - and in that respect, it accepted that EU citizens were inadequately informed about what the EU was doing for them.

- So, let's move on to the final part of this lecture and ask whether the acceptance of the 'culture' of those core values has drawn the EU member states closer together

- **<u>Can we yet talk of an 'imagined EU community' based on common citizen identity?</u>**

- In order to examine that question we need attempt to identify what have been referred to as *'agents of European consciousness'*

- By this we mean those forces and objects through which knowledge of the European Union is embodied and communicated as a socio-cultural phenomenon
- all those actors, actions, artefacts, bodies, institutions, policies and representations which, singularly or collectively, help to engender awareness and promote acceptance of the 'European idea'.

    - these *'agents of consciousness'* range from the abstract and intangible to the concrete and the mundane:
        - *from :*   - EU institutions and civil servants
                    - the single market
                    - the Euro
                    - the metric system for weights and measures
                    - and the proliferation of EU laws and regulations

        - *to :*   - educational exchanges
                    - town-twinning
                    - invented Euro-symbols and traditions
                    - European Union historiography
                    - and the harmonisation of European statistics by the Eurostat offrice

- All these elements contribute in one way or another to the way people/EU citizens perceive and experience Europe in relation to themselves.

- They all contribute to creating the conceptual and symbolic foundations that make it possible to *imagine* the new Europe as a political entity and community
  - and for EU citizens to conceive of themselves as part of that community

- Just as nationalism is flagged in everyday life in a host of often rather mundane or taken-for-granted factors and sentiments, so the agents of European consciousness serve to communicate Europeanism in ways that are frequently ignored or taken for granted
  - although this process has a long way to go before European institutions become as 'naturalised' and as uncritically accepted as those of the nation-state.

- As Gellner has put it though:
  - "nationalism is not the awakening of nation-states to self-consciousness; it invents them where previously they did not exist"

- it is at this point that the link between *'imagining'* the state and nation, cultural politics and the formation of political identities emerges.

- so that while it is probably true that the major elements in the construction and maintenance of a national identity will typically cover a range of fields, including language, law and history,

consciousness of that identity (in the citizen) arises through the medium of culture and communication

- the communication of that identity and what it means/represents

- For example, 'English national identity' (or at least a version of it) may be bound up in literature, in a selective reading of national history, and in a range of supposedly 'typical English' institutions such as Parliament, the monarchy, Shakespeare, cricket and warm beer

- However, these are expressed and understood symbolically by citizens through the symbols of state and nationhood, including the flag of St. George, the national anthem, the Royal Family, the BBC, the national football team, and various venues and places that have been appropriated as representative of England's national heritage (i.e. Tower of London, Houses of Parliament, etc.)

- the role that symbols play in the articulation and formation of patterns of consciousness and identity is crucial to understanding how Europe is being constructed as a political entity, and within that how citizen EU identity is being constructed.

- indeed, anthropologists argue that it is a mistake to underestimate the importance of symbols and the role they play in mobilising sentiment and public opinion.

- symbols do not simply represent political reality; ***they actively create it***

- so, the European Commission has gradually, over the years (last 20?), attempted to mobilise popular support for the EU by creating a whole new repertoire/group of public symbols for the European Union
    - the sky blue flag with the circle of gold stars symbolising European unification is now seen more and more flying alongside national flags in front of public buildings
    - *'Ode to Joy'* from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is widely accepted as the anthem of a united Europe (Champions League games)
    - when we arrive at airports we follow the signs that say European Union passport holders
    - and we hold a uniform European Union passport (adopted in 1985) – that declares we are citizens of the EU

- for sceptics, of course, these symbolic measures may seem purely decorative
    - BUT because they strike most people's imaginations, and because they closely resemble the symbols that embody State sovereignty, they are evidence of the substantial progress made by an 'idea' – the 'European idea' – which has now been transformed into reality.

- And they are symbols seen by EU citizens as associated with, and representative of, the 'ideals' that underpin the European Union (and of liberal democracy)