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**Introduction: Voting ‘NO’, European Integration  
and the Nation State: Disintegration, Impasse, or a  
New Beginning?**

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The French rejection of the European Constitution in May, 2005 and the subsequent No vote in Holland in June, 2005 represented a significant blow to the legitimacy of the European Union and the process of European integration. This is the first time that two founding member states have used a referendum to reject further integration. It is still unclear what the implications of this rejection of the European Constitution are for the future of the EU. As Alberta Sbragia points out, the European Union is still going about its daily business “putting forth proposals to keep the Doha Round alive, continuing to negotiate a major trade agreement with Mercosur in South America, keeping peacekeeping troops in Bosnia and Herzegovina” (2006, 237). To be sure, this is largely due to the degree to which the new Constitution represented an amalgamation of previous treaties. However, given that some of the most important features of the new agreement addressed voting procedures for the enlarged European Union, it is less clear whether the failure to implement the Constitution will become less symbolic and more practical in the near future (Sbragia, 238).

An important question emerges from this confusion: where does the European Union go from here? Several scenarios are possible. Euro-skeptics proclaim that the failed Constitutional process signals the end of the European Union. Others claim that the EU will simply muddle along. Another group anticipates that the European elites (national and those in Brussels) have learned their lesson. They will simply proceed forward through intergovernmental treaties or through parliamentary ratification, avoiding the wrath of public opinion (Sbragia, 238). Still others proclaim that the No vote in France and Holland signals the end to elite policy making. Proclaiming that the rejection of the Constitution was as much a referendum on the democratic deficit, they

declare that the EU will need to become more democratic and it will need to more adequately address citizens' demands in order to regain its legitimacy.

The three articles in this special issue of the Review of European and Russian Affairs entitled "European Identities and Minorities" address this complicated social and political process of European integration through an examination of nationalism, national identities, state formation, and the process of inclusion and exclusion. The first two articles by Hernan Tesler-Mabe and Tracey Raney argue that in order to revive European integration, to cure the democratic deficit, and to create a true European citizen it will be necessary to include the nation-state into the very process of European integration. Tesler-Mabe argues that "revisionist" interpretations by prominent political, intellectual, and administrative voices within the European integration process, such as Pascal Fontaine and Klaus-Dieter Borchardt, epitomized the degree to which national narratives have been subsumed by teleological approaches that view European integration as not only inevitable, but as a top down process. Comparing and contrasting revisions of earlier texts by Fontaine and Borchardt on the European Union, Tesler-Mabe argues that more recent publications, such as Fontaine's *Europe—A Fresh Start: The Schuman Declaration 1950-90* and its newer version *A New Idea for Europe: The Schuman Declaration 1950-2000*, epitomize the degree to which advocates of European integration have rewritten history and in the process eliminating national narratives. For example, he argues that Fontaine perceives European integration as a common preordained destiny. In the process, post War Europe, unfettered by the chains of its bloody past, was put on a new path with the Schuman Declaration. Moreover, Europeanists such as Jean Monet are praised for their ability to act "*unfettered* by any political mandate." Eliminating, or

forgetting history, and unburdening integration from politics, Tesler-Mabe argues, is directly linked to the democratic deficit since it eliminates the nation-state, and in the process eliminates an important venue for public accountability.

If Tesler-Mabe examines the role that “elites” have played in revising history, Tracey Raney’s article, “An Even Further Apart Union? National and European Attachment in the European Union,” argues, through an examination of public opinion surveys, that the nation-state is not an impediment to European integration. Using Social Identity Theory, Raney’s analysis moves from the elite institutional level to a micro analysis. Her examination of public opinion within the European Union demonstrates, somewhat counter-intuitively, that many Europeans with strong feelings of national pride are also some of the most ardent supporters of the European Union.

Raney concludes that feelings of attachment to one’s own country do not necessarily impede the degree to which individuals “feel close to Europe.” Those who responded to the question “How close do you feel to Europe” were also those who felt the most proud of their own national identity. Surprisingly, those who proclaimed that religion and ancestry were important features of national identities were also more likely to have a closer attachment to Europe. These findings held irrespective of age, gender, education, and employment. However, an important caveat does appear: those who are less fearful of immigration are also more likely to feel closer to Europe. Raney thus points out that there appears to be two different visions of Europe: one based upon a civic nationalism and one based upon an ethnic nationalism.

Thus, she argues that identity is not a zero sum game. Instead, it is possible to possess multiple identities. This implies that a significant portion of EU citizens feel that

national belonging is compatible with feeling European. Implicit in this argument is the claim that the best way to obtain support for further European integration is to devise institutional structures, such as subsidiarity, that permit the nation-state to function within the confines of the European Union. In this manner, a common European identity, and thus support for European integration, are not incompatible with a strong sense of feeling, for example, Austrian, German, Italian, or Spanish.

Raney's findings also point to the link between non-civic forms of national belonging and fears of immigration. Given the degree to which radical right parties, such as the Front National, actively oppose and even campaigned against the European Constitution, there is a tangible link between issues of immigration, exclusion, and national identity. Similarly, the process of state formation and questions of nationalism, citizenship, and belonging inevitably leads to questions of inclusion, exclusion, and national minorities. This is no more prevalent than in the former Eastern Europe where countries such as the Czech Republic, Romania, and the former Yugoslavia attempt to consolidate their national identities while also attempting to comply with the process of European integration. The discourse of what it means to be European, how to maintain one's own national identity, and how to recognize the difference of others become particularly important within the difficult process of identity formation. However, as European history has taught us, and as recent debates concerning immigration continue to warn us, it is not clear that being "European" leads to inclusive notions of belonging. Thus, Eastern European states are confronted with the dual task of national consolidation, while at the same time attempting to forge connections with the European Union. Jason Young reminds us of the potential volatile nature of this process by demonstrating that

Europe's other is not only found in its growing immigrant populations. Rather, especially in Eastern Europe, the exclusion of the Roma represent both a threat to the nation project, while it also calls the European Union claims to inclusion, democracy, and multiculturalism into question. Thus, debates about what it means to be European are by no means confined to the West, or the old member states.

If the three authors presented here are correct, nation-states not only matter but they can also facilitate European integration. However, the question remains: How should and how will the process of European integration proceed? Will further integration become more elite driven? Or will it become more inclusive and democratic? Tesler-Mabe and Raney claim that a more democratic and legitimate form of integration must not exclude the nation-state. Nation-states are important sources of identity formation, they act as democratic controls on European elites, and, maybe most importantly, they are not incompatible with European integration. However, as Raney and Young warn us, this entails fostering civic and inclusive understandings of belonging as opposed to identities that are based on the exclusion of an Other.

### **Works Cited**

Alberta Sbragia, "Introduction-The EU and Its "Constitution": Public Opinion, Political Elites, and Their International Context," *Political Science and Politics*, April 2006.