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National Identity in Europe

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A voluminous historical and sociological literature argues that in Europe historically three stages of nation building can be distinguished: The first stage occurred in Western Europe (England and France), the second in Central- and South Europe (Germany and Italy) and the third in East Europe. This historical typology has been elaborated into a wide-spread typology of three different concepts of nationhood by writers in the field, from Friedrich Meineke (1928) till Rogers Brubaker(1992): A state-nation, a cultural nation and an ethnonation. After sketching out this theory, I will investigate in the second part of my lecture the question if these different types can be found empirically, and if there exist significant differences between West and East Europe as predicted by the theory. Comparative survey data from the ISSP-programme National Identity of 1995 are analysed and it is shown that neither this typology, nor the division between West-, Central- and East Europe can be found. Instead of it, a functional-communicative and a traditional-ascriptive conception of nation are found. The first is supported by a majority of people all over Europe. Implications of this finding for the theory of nation building and for the prospects of European integration are discussed in the third part of the lecture. It is argued that the findings correspond quite closely to the theory of nation as communication by Karl W. Deutsch. Some implications of such an approach are outlined, and its applicability to nation buildingprocesses and national conflicts in other parts of the world.