Cultural identity is defined by many diverse factors. Discuss this statement with reference to one case study of a European region you have studied

(80 marks)

Marking Scheme:

Number of aspects discussed:	3 @ 20 marks each	4 @ 15 marks each
For each aspect: Identifying aspect Discussion	 4 marks 8 x SRPs	 3 marks 6 x SRPs

Overall Coherence 20 marks graded* 20 marks graded*

In this answer, I choose 4 aspects to discuss (1. Nationality, 2. Language, 3. Race and 4. Religion). Overall coherence means how well your answer is structured (Introduction, main section, conclusion – well-structured and coherent) and do you keep to the point/ answer the question directly.

Identity as a concept entails a variety of cultural factors including nationality, language, race, and religion. The following case study of a Switzerland will draw together the issues of race, nationality, and identity.

Switzerland has considerable cultural diversity but has successfully created a sense of national identity. Switzerland is not a linguistic or religious unit. It has four languages (German, French, Italian, Romansch) and two religions (Protestantism and Catholicism).German is the most widely spoken, followed by French. Italian is spoken in the province of Ticino. Romansch, a language derived from Latin, is a minority language in the south-east. All but Romansh maintain equal status as official languages at the national level. In 2015 there were 63% native speakers of German, 23% French, 9% Italian and less that 1% Romansh and 4% other. To avoid having to translate the name of Switzerland in the four national languages, Latin is used on the coins of the Swiss franc and on Swiss stamps. Many Swiss are bilingual or even trilingual and official documents of the federal government are published in each language. However, the Swiss people are a nation (*a group or community of people with a sense of common identity, they share a common history that binds them together, they may share language, customs and/or religion. E.g. The Danes*) despite these differences because they have a shared sense of identity.

This shared sense of identitiy originates through the historical and political origins of the country. Swiss cantons, or countries, began to join together as early as the 13th century. In 1291, the Swiss Confederation was formed by three cantons that came together for their mutual protection. Over several centuries , other cantons joined until the total number of cantons reached 26 in the 19th century. However throughout these centuries, bitter religious wars were fought between Catholics and Protestants, especially during the Reformation in the 16th century. Even as recently as the 1840s, religious conflict threatened to destroy the confederation. Nevertheless, in 1848, the cantons came together to establish the Federal Constitution. This divided power between the national government in Bern and the cantons. The 600th anniversary of the confederation was celebrated in 1891. After this date Swiss people began to forge a real sense of identity and became proud of being Swiss. Today the Swiss political system is federal. A federal system is where political powers are split between the federal (national) and local governments (The US, Germany and Belgium

have federal systems of government). The national government controls coinage, postal services, foreign affairs, the national army and the national budget. The Swiss federal government meets in Bern. Each canton has its own constitution, parliament, government, courts and education system. The people have real political power with strong democratic foundations. Referendums are held regularly on many matters of national and local interest. For instance, after a referendum, women were granted the right to vote in canton elections in 1959 and in federal elections only as recently as 1971. The Swiss have a strong loyalty to the cantons in which they live. The Swiss are also quite conservative.

Combined with these political unions, physical boundaries also promoted this union. Switzerland is a landlocked country and shares borders with five countries (France, Italy, Austria, Germany and Liechtenstein). Switzerland's physical boundaries consist of the Jura Mountains and Lake Geneva forming a boundary with France, the Rhine and lake Constance with Germany and the Alps with Italy. The Swiss have guarded their mountainous country from foreign invaders for centuries. They are not members of the EU (membership was rejected in a referendum in 1992.) Switzerland only joined the UN in 2002 after another referendum. Switzerland managed to remain neutral during the two world wars of the 20th Century, when most of Europe was engulfed in conflict. Switzerland has a policy of armed neutrality and has universal male military service. This gives men who come together in training camps a strong sense of identity and belonging with their colleagues. As a neutral country, Switzerland hosts many international organisations. Geneva alone has more than 200 international organisations, including the World Council of Churches and the international Labour Organisation. Swiss banks are safe places in which to deposit savings.

As a people who are cut off by mountains from their neighbours, the Swiss have developed distinct traditions in sport, festivals and music. The Alpine region has distinct sports including schwingen (an Alpine version of wrestling - it is an old tradition from the rural central cantons and considered the national sport by some), waffenlauf (a long-distance race), cow fights in agricultural valleys and curling (a game played on ice by two teams). Switzerland is also a leading nation in winter sports, such as skiing, ice skating, snowboarding and bobsledding. As a predominantly mountainous country Switzerland has traditionally been one of the strongest nations in the sport of alpine skiing, where it has a long-running rivalry with the neighbouring nation of Austria. Switzerland is also notable as the birthplace of competitive sledding, which originated in the Swiss resort of St. Moritz. Many resorts in the country have hosted international winter sport events. The Swiss excel in these events and winners become national heroes. Also over the last few years several Swiss tennis players, like Roger Federer, Stanislas Wawrinka and Martina Hingis, became Grand Slam singles champions. Federer has won 19 Grand Slam titles and holds the record for the longest consecutive stay as the world number 1. In cycling, Fabian Cancellara nicknamed 'Spartacus' is one of the best road racer of modern times. He has achieved great success in the classics; he has won Paris–Roubaix three times, the Milan – San Remo once, and the Tour of Flanders three times.

Festivals include their national day on 1st August every year where the whole country unites. Many rural towns have their own local festivals. Cows are important farm animals and are honored in Spring and autumn every year for their importance to the rural community. Carnivals are held before Lent, These include parades by local bands in traditional costumes, masked parades and street dancing. The Swiss also host international festivals, including: The Lucerne Festival of classical music, the Montreaux Jazz Festival in Bern, the Locarno Film Festival and music festivals in Bern and St Gallen.

In recent European history the role of migration has come to play a great role on the cultural groups co-existing within nations. While the country avoided two world wars and standards of living were amongst the highest in the world druing the early to mid 20ᵗʰ century, in the later decades of the 20ᵗʰ century, inward migrants have been needed to fill job vacancies, especially in lower-paid jobs. These mainly came from Mediterranean countries such as Italy, Turkey and Greece. In recent years, asylum seekers from the war-torn Balkans and Sub-Saharan Africa have sought asylum in Switzerland. Therefore Switzerland now has several racial and cultural minorities. The presence of foreign cultures has led to the increasing popularity of SVP (Swiss People's Party), a right wing party. This party has an anti-immigration stance and blames immigrants for much of the countries crime. The SVP is adept at persuading people that the increasing number of immigrants is a threat to Swiss cultural identity. The SVP has gained up to 29% of the national vote in elections in recent years. The SVP has succeded in banning minarets from Muslim mosques, through a referendum. The Swiss have a high tolerance of cultural differences between the local Swiss cultures, but many of them have yet to extend that tolerance to races and cultures that have recently come from abroad. Therefore, in spite of its prosperity, Switzerland has not escaped much of the turbulence of the modern world.