

## **Euronationalism - or how the EC affects the nation-state as a repository of identity**

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1

**Ulf Hedetoft**

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**Aalborg University · 1990**

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Ulf Hedetoft

**EURO-NATIONALISM:**

**or how the EC affects the nation-state  
as a repository of identity**

Department of Languages and Intercultural Studies  
Aalborg University · 1990

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## **PREFATORY REMARK**

This is a slightly revised and extended version of a paper presented at the Second Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas, held at the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium, 3-8 September 1990. The theme of the Conference was "European Nationalism: Toward 1992".

The paper was given in a workshop entitled "The EC and Euro-Nationalism", chaired by Professor Charlotte Ku, the American Society of International Law, Washington D.C., USA. It will be included in the select conference proceedings, to be published by Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1991.

The paper breaks down into two main parts: Sections 1, 2 and 3 make up the originally distributed paper, while section 4 is an expanded form of the supplementary oral presentation given in the workshop.

## 1. OUTLINES OF THE DEBATE

To embark on a discussion of the relationship between nationalism and supranationalism within the European Communities (EC) is also to venture into the firing-line. It is a subject which, on the one hand, has been hotly disputed ever since the commencement of the EC in the 1950's and which more or less exactly has followed the ups and downs of the political discussion, from ardent federalism via intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism to our present-day debate concerning the Single Market and the Political Union; on the other hand, not only has the subject been bedevilled by historical ghosts such as the less than reputable history of modern European nationalism, by the frequent reluctance of politicians and other opinion leaders to address the question directly and frankly, and by the different emphases given to the matter by different member-states, but in addition debates often seem muddled and confused because of a certain lack of focus: do we mean the same thing by, say, "European identity" or "political union", is the commitment to closer cooperation within the EC actually a move towards the abolition of the nation-states, into a "post-nationalist" era, how much truck should one have with the supranational ideals and rhetoric coming out of the Commission, how do they relate to the interests and aspirations of politicians in the different member-states, and - not least - to the national sentiments of the various populations, etc. When the smoke lifts on these and similar questions, one sometimes realises that we might not have been talking about the same things, or widely different points of departure and sets of implicit assumption and value might have hindered any real clarification of the important issues. Add to this that these issues comprise both political, economic, cultural and socio-psychological questions, and it should hopefully be clear that this area is at least a maze, if not a mess. "Euro-nationalism" (whatever that is) is hedged around with ifs and buts, qualifications and



provisions, doubts and fears, hopes and illusions. Are the supranational ideals anything over and above exactly that: ideals for the gratuitous consumption of whoever might be so inclined? Are they guidelines for action, or moral legitimacy? Is nationalism being eroded? And should it be? In other words, how does the EC affect the nation-state as a repository of identity?

It would be well to remind oneself at this stage of some of the questions raised by Renan in his famous Sorbonne lecture, "What is a nation?" ("Qu'est qu'une nation?", 1882), pertaining to what we are used to thinking of as the "classical" nation-state in Europe, but also questions with obvious implications for the subject under review here:

"Do interests suffice to make a nation? I do not think so. Community of interest brings about trade agreements, but nationality has a sentimental side to it. (...) A *Zollverein* is not a *patrie*. (...) A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. (...) a large-scale solidarity, constituted by the feeling of the sacrifices that one has made in the past and of those that one is prepared to make in the future. (...) A nation's existence is (...) a daily plebiscite, just as an individual's existence is a perpetual affirmation of life."

This organic-existentialist explanation of the nation-state and its nationalism effects a combination between "nature" and "popular will", but divorces these from "interest" (*Zollverein* etc.): "Nothing purely material suffices for it"! In a sense, national sentiment is seen as the opposite of self-interest, manifests itself best in "sacrifices". One is reminded of Tönnies' distinction between "*Gemeinschaft*" and "*Gesellschaft*", the former based on a "*volonté générale*" that transcends materialism; or of Benedict Anderson's "imagined communities"; or of the German expression "*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*". How does modern Europe relate to such categories? Is the EC merely a "customs union", and if so from where derive all the supranational ideals? Why is it that this "union" constantly conjures up notions, positively or negatively conceived, of a common European identity etc, which e.g. EFTA has never done, nor NATO on another supranational scale? Have we come to the point in history envisaged by Renan in the same lecture: "The nations are not something eternal. They had their beginnings and they will end. A European confederation will very probably replace them. But such is not the law of the century in which we are living". Are we about to achieve this European confederation? Do politicians want it that way, do economic developments make it inevitable, do people generally back it up? Is

this the law of the century in which *we* are living? Or are we in need of completely new analytic tools, theoretical parameters?

## 2. THE NATIONAL CORE OF EC SUPRANATIONALISM

It is obvious that the outlines of the debate I have tried to sketch might take on the nebulous and blurred quality indicated for an additional reason to the ones I have enumerated: It might conceivably be due to the contradictory, paradoxical and unique character of the subject in hand. The question of "national identity" v. "supranationalism" could in the EC-context prove to be unprecedented, its political and cultural effects novel and *sui generis* - as so much else springing from this forum of European collaboration. This uniqueness is sometimes, for want of more precise terminology, addressed by means of negations: "Less than a federation, more than a regime", as William Wallace chooses to call the EC as a political system (Wallace, Wallace & Webb 1983, 403 ff.). "It lacks full legitimacy", is "not yet a fully developed political system", as the same author states further on, whilst taking note of the fact that there is not (yet) a "sense of common loyalty, of a shared we-feeling sufficient to persuade groups and citizens to accept recurrent and structural sacrifices of their interests in the furtherance of the interests of others or of the system as a whole" (420). Paul Taylor (1983) finds that there are "limits to integration", debating whether Karl Deutsch's concept of a "security community" would be applicable or whether the limits set derive more from "utilitarian calculations", noting that "the European peoples (are) still very much intact" (56). Former advisor to the Danish Prime Minister, Erik Holm, in an article published by the daily "Politiken" (7 June 1990), attempts to embrace both sides of the paradox: "The European Community has been an ambiguous creation from the very start. On the one hand it is seen as a challenge to the nation-state, on the other it contains opportunities for the continued existence of the nation." Erik Holm then goes on to describe the various reasons for the member-states regarding the EC as either an opportunity or a threat, particularly as regards the dividing-line between the original "Six" (for whom the EC was a question of ensuring the survival of the nation), and the latecomers (who for different reasons saw themselves as being compelled to enter, and who therefore are still regarded as "minimalists"). And

the former British EC Commissioner, Christopher Tugendhat, in his book **Making Sense of Europe** (1986), sees one of the misfortunes of the Community in the overdone supranationalism of the federalists which is out of step with "reality" and needs a thorough overhaul. Not in order to be done away with entirely, but to emphasise that the EC cannot and should not supplant the nation-states, but is their complement. We should recognise that tension and conflicts are part and parcel of the Community's rationale, and that unity and rivalry are constant companions. Tugendhat calls it "creative tension". On the level of politics, things look and sound much the same. In the autumn of 1988, the Danish Prime Minister, Poul Schlüter, created an uproar in his own country when, in a speech in London, he predicted the demise of the nation-state in Europe, though his policies before as well as after that speech hardly convince one that he is an ardent enthusiast of a federal European Union. Simultaneously, almost, Margaret Thatcher was making her by now famous speech to the Collège d'Europe in Bruges where she did pay lip-service to the European idea but in all but form championed the continued existence of the nations and of national identity (but see also section 4 for a more detailed evaluation of the background for the speech). And even in the most "European" of member-states, the FRG, the question that seems to occupy the minds and not least the hearts of politicians as well as the *Volk* is the nationalist rather than the supranationalist one; the pace with which it is apparently possible to "reunite" two states with different political systems into a new and enlarged nation-state contrasts rather glaringly with the twists and turns, the ifs and the buts, the entire caveat that surround the "political union" within the EC as a whole, the long-drawn-out process of negotiation, hustling, hassling and bickering, approving deals and laws on day 1 and breaking or bending them on day 2. All very confusing. Tugendhat's creative tension might have something for it.

At least this will provide a point of departure for a few theses, in an attempt to come to grips with some of the confusion. The first thesis, which is also the most important, is the following:

**1. The EC is the institutional point of convergence of national, not supranational interests and aspirations, in unique historical circumstances.** The seemingly contradictory positions outlined above are best resolved, I contend, if the EC is regarded from the point of view of national(ist) interests in a particular kind of international environment. This will also help to explain the rationale of supranationalism in the EC form as well as the moderate, non-

exclusive patriotism that seems to be the word of the day, filling in as the mediator between "classical" nationalism and the abolition of the nation-state as a paradigm of identity altogether.

I argue that this "patriotic" - as normally opposed to "nationalistic" - tendency in modern Europe is not the result of a greater willingness to forego national interests or a more basically friendly attitude towards "the others" - let alone a supranational angle unrelated to national interests -, but the national response to the post-WW II situation in Europe, where the nation-states, whether they formally belonged to the winning or the losing side, had to realise that the only way to be reinstated to some national sovereignty, economically and politically, was - paradoxically - to enter into a relationship of dependence vis-à-vis the USA and, as a corollary, to take leave of one of the traditional means of nationally asserting oneself in the European context, i.e. the military, and instead look for "extraterritorial" power and influence in other and more peaceable ways. This resulted in an unusual form of political cooperation: The European Communities, based not only on the fact that it was no longer the European powers that were "pulling the strings" in world affairs, but also on a "pooling" of *political* sovereignty. This is thus a distorted reflection of the unprecedented global politico-military environment of the immediate post-war world, where the national freedom of the European powers (especially Germany, of course) was granted on certain terms and was in this sense limited. This has restricted *not*, it seems to me, the national basis and aspirations of these European nation-states (the less so the more successful their newfound way towards national strength proved to be), but the conditions of their mutual competition. The EC offers a way of enlarging the *national* scope for politics, diplomacy, economics, of gaining influence and markets beyond one's own territory, for *all* the member-states involved. Regarded thus, the EC is no more, no less than the *instrument* of the member-states for the furtherance of their interests - whilst in the process proving to have the additional moral advantage of being linked with a supranational idealism.

However, there's a lot more to it than that, for in spite of the basic nationalist objectives, the very form of EC cooperation/competition necessarily takes an institutional, "supranational" direction, or in other words,

**2. The EC entails a partial surrender of sovereignty.** And though the end might justify the means, this particular means lands every member-state in a permanent conflict between the "natural" desire of sovereign states for the most



all-encompassing power execution possible within secure borders, and their equally strong wish to make an imprint on the world (this is partly a conflict between politics and economics). So in order to take advantage of the EC as a means for the strengthening of the nation-state, one has at the same time to accept a certain weakening of the same nation-state, at least in formal terms. There's the rub and the paradox. In a way, the "means" assumes its own institutional forms, makes itself partly independent of that which it is meant to serve, constructs its own autonomous aims and ideals and thus endangers, or seems to endanger, the very core of the nation-states: their national sovereignty - and hence possibly their various nationalisms?

This situation might, of course, be interpreted as Joseph Rovin has done ("Nation und Europa", 1985): the nation-state lives on but in a qualitatively different form or even only as an empty shell ("dem Anschein nach"). I would be more cautious here: It is true that the EC nations have had to yield a little bit of their political self-determination in order to achieve a strengthening of their economies etc. This is a paradox, or as Rovin calls it, a "Zwickmühle", but still a far cry from the death of the nation-states, let alone their national identities. What we are seeing is not the passing away of the national framework nor of nationalistic emotions and allegiance, I contend. This is not the postnational narrative, but in an important sense the heyday of nationalism (cf. also developments in Eastern Europe, in the Third World, in Central America, in Germany etc). There is no good reason to associate nation and nationalism "naturally" with the state of affairs round the turn of this century, as we usually do - neither in political nor in cultural terms. In fact, for most European nations it marked the beginning rather than the end. Most European nation-states have used the larger part of this century to "nationalise" the popular masses, instill in them a national pride and identity, teach them about the natural correlation between state and people, construct national fictions and moral evaluations of the world along national lines. It may be that the nation-state has played out its historically *progressive* role at precisely the point in time when "West" European states have secured the loyal support of their citizens. But that is another matter. Why should the destiny of nations and their modernised fundamentalism (national identity) be decided according to whether they are progressive, rational or whatnot? If nations are far from defunct, such determinism at least ought to be. What am I driving at? Does the EC mean nothing for national identity, supranationalism etc? But certainly it does.

**3. Creative tension of identity?** In a political *milieu* characterised partly by the ditching of a number of radical means formerly employed as the national option for open confrontation, partly by the willing commitment of the member-states to an institutional form of permanent political cooperation over and above the modulations usually obtaining between nations, it is inevitable that (the discourse of) national identity and national allegiance must be affected too. Within the EC, we have seen a modification, a glorification and an internationalisation of nationalism.

It is *modified* in the sense that perceptions and images of "the Other" in Europe can no longer have the form of exclusiveness. Hostile imagery, open contempt and suspicion can no longer be vented openly, antagonism is banned on the official level, and the hostilities that nevertheless keep cropping up - often within the gratuitous framework of old enemy images that die very hard indeed - are softened, explained or laughed away, diverted into "harmless" areas such as sports, economic wrangling, witticisms, or played down as friends talking at cross-purposes. Thus "official" pride in one's country is hemmed in (more or less so, of course, depending on the country's modern history), because one of the parameters of nationalism - the international comparison - is weakened.

But this simultaneously entails the aspect of *glorification*: suddenly the utopia of nationalism, the moderate dream of intellectuals, the postulate of cosmopolitanism have come true. Peace reigns between the EC nations, the countries and their peoples respect each other, recognition has replaced contempt, patriotism walks hand in hand with intercultural understanding. Nationalism in its negative form seems to have disappeared, only the "weltoffene" patriotism remains: "Weltoffenheit und Patriotismus sind keine Gegensätze. Wer im eigenen Land beheimatet und verwurzelt ist, der wird dem Patriotismus seines Nachbarn verstehen und achten. Europa entwickelt sich in diese Richtung" (Weizsäcker 1987).

The glorification of nationalism involves the *internationalisation* of it, not just in the sense that other national identities are respected and recognised or that "European identity" is introduced as a new ideal, but also - and more importantly - that a dual national/European identity is coming to the fore (e.g. being German and European at the same time). This does manifestly *not* mean, however, that the two sides of the dualism are given the same significance or belong on the same "ontological" level or can be evaluated according to the same criteria. We are somehow back to Renan: all indications (e.g. from

EUROBAROMETER) show that on the one hand most EC-populations give added emphasis to EC membership, even think it is a good and beneficial thing (at least for "their country"), but rarely think of and definitely do not *feel* a European identity/allegiance. "Interest" and "emotion" in the pan-European context are falling apart (in the "classical" nation-state they are one and the same and derive from "nature"), a dichotomy of loyalties is being created (a cost-benefit loyalty towards the EC, an emotional/cultural towards the nation) which is not akin to either that between a country and a "Zollverein" pure and simple, or to that of federal or multinational nation-states (UK, Switzerland, USA etc.). This points towards the creation of unique blends of "national" and "integrationist" forms of mentality and discourse within the EC.

However, whatever the precise form, the national basis of European supranationalism shines clearly through. It is not to be understood as the elimination of nation-states, let alone national identities, in favour of some European super state, but as a particular official brand of nationalism. In fact, the national basis for all EC supranationalism is fairly conspicuous once you start looking for it: For instance, in the composition of the Commission, where national representation is meticulously safeguarded; in the rationale of the heavy-handed agricultural policies that only make sense if they are seen in the light of the interest of each member-state in maintaining an independent provision of basic necessities; in the nebulous "principle of subsidiarity" (one of J. Delors's terminological inventions), which in fact turns the relationship between higher and lower decision-making levels upside down as compared with the way national sovereigns act within their own territory; in the supranational symbolism created by the formal existence of the EC as an independent structure above and beyond the member-states: flag, hymn, passport etc, which partly strike you as quite artificial constructs and partly because they are evidently moulded and modelled on the symbolic imagery of the nation-states and serve only as appendices to the national markers (for example, the EC flag is hardly ever used alone, but appears as no. 13). It could in fact be argued that "European identity" is no more and no less than such official rhetorical and symbolic "discourse", the ideal point of convergence of different national intentions taking advantage of each other within a seemingly permanent political structure. From this perspective, the EC and its institutions both reflect and enact the national(ist) teleology in modern Europe. The implication, amongst other things, is that within this teleology, "European identity" as a mental and emotional structure must be funnelled through the national identities and cannot be "allowed" to take

too firm roots. Hence the rhetorical acts of tight-rope walking performed by European politicians; when addressing their peoples, they must steer hazardous courses between Scylla and Charybdis, between nationalism and supranationalism. Thatcher: "I do believe that for nations of the European Community freely to work together and to strengthen their cooperation is just as worthy a purpose (as building the US, UH). But to submerge their identity and variety would be contrary to the instincts of our peoples and therefore could not bear fruit". Mitterrand: "Europe in the abstract, a geometric shape - is a caricature. The true Europe needs nations just as a living body needs flesh and blood". Natural metaphors abound, we note, when statesmen talk about their nations. Still, they set a lot of store by their European cooperation and want their people to be committed, too (cf. e.g. elections to the European Parliament). Erik Holm, who I quoted earlier, is right: The EC both presents an opportunity and a threat to the nation-states involved. Or differently phrased: It is an instrument for the nation-states without being an instrument for their national identities - except perhaps in an odd and backwards way (cf. Danes who feel more Danish because of the "menace" represented by the EC). This is seen more clearly if we turn the mirror.

### 3. THE SUPRANATIONAL RATIONALE: TOWARDS A FEDERAL EUROPE?

What I mean is this: It is not only necessary to explain the national core-content of the EC and its supranational idealism, but the supranationalism must itself be explained. Whence does it spring, is it necessary and, if so, how and why? And as I said at an earlier stage why is there no real supranationalist question connected with, say, NATO, EFTA, or even the UN? In such cases it seems fairly obvious to all and sundry that they are international organisations consisting of a variety of sovereign states which all take part out of (some kind of) self-interest. Not so with the EC - why?

What I am implying is that an answer cannot simply refer to the fact that the EC is an independent structure in its own right (though it is a necessary prerequisite). Nor is it enough to argue (as e.g. C. Tugendhat does in the work cited above) that the EC needed its supranational ideals as "moral authority" in



a post-war world where European nationalism had been discredited (though this is undoubtedly an important factor, especially as regards W. Germany). Rather, the root cause would seem to be the *enforced limitations on European nations/nationalism springing from the geo-political results of WW II*, i.e. a unique kind of dependence on the US and a functional role in the East-West confrontation, both of which excluded the West European nations - some of which had rather more "glorious" histories - from fully asserting themselves as independent, sovereign nation-states, compelled them to work together in a form entailing a partial "pooling" of sovereignty, explicitly debarred from independent military politics, and on a permanent institutionalised basis. It is this unique combination of a) *political* (rather than purely economic) cooperation, b) abandonment of sovereignty (on a voluntary basis), c) no military aspect (rather the EC is a compensation for the exclusion from military methods: "the continuation of violent confrontation using other means?", turning the tables on Clausewitz's famous dictum), which not only makes EC supranationalism possible, but necessary as well. And once it has been rendered necessary, it must be turned to advantage, be cultivated, developed and cherished, as "moral authority", the "European peace movement", ultimate proof that Europeans have learnt from history and done away with nationalist animosity. Whilst deriving from objective conditions beyond the control of the EC nations, their supranationalism presents itself as a common decision freely arrived at, a new kind of European "volonté générale" - not surprisingly most strongly advocated in the six founding nations which had been most seriously debilitated by the war and were hence in dire need of the moral superstructure that the EC cooperative ideal represented.

The "latecomers" have proved to be more pragmatic in their dealings with the supranational ideals and rhetoric, having less of a need for it and often indeed having to defend their "minimalist", self-centred stances against the moralising rhetoric of those who are truly "communautaires" (this should be divorced from the question of who acts how in what circumstances: the most European-minded member-states do not always fulfill their moral imperative). When it comes to rhetoric, supranationalism is often presented in the guise of an end in itself. When it comes to practical politics, this moral stand can sometimes be useful too: as a means of making minimalists look overly egoistic and thus of squeezing them into a corner. In other words, supranationalism - the idea of "Europe" acting in concert - can be utilised by each of the nations as a means to further a particular national cause. In the EC, "Europe" has become a novel receptacle

for negative images of "the other", positive images of national selfhood: in the original "six", mainly by condemning the newcomers as self-seeking opportunists; among the latecomers (particularly Denmark and Great Britain), by conjuring up images of the EC as a threat to legitimate nationalism and giving proof of the hypocritical attitudes of the genuine Europeanists. Where "political union" is a plus-word among the founding nations, it is negatively or indifferently received among the rest, who are accused of going too slowly ahead and wanting only "negative integration". On the level of the single member-state, the form and content of the supranational question stand in a direct relation to its need for it, its advantage from it (moral, political, economic)(cf. section 4).

Without itself in any serious sense being a repository of identity, the supranationalism of the EC then seriously affects the identity question vis-à-vis the individual nation-state. On the one hand, it makes national identity, in its open-minded mode, attractive and legitimate; on the other, it makes it more difficult to champion national affiliation within exclusive, contrastive parameters - at least in the European context. This is a containment of nationalism corresponding to the limitations on the nations' sovereignty which EC supranationalism obliquely reflects. All the nations have entered into commitments that influence the orthodox identity structure of national identity, by inviting their citizens to invest their calculations for the future not only in relation to their own political sovereign, but also to institutions formally superior to it. Thus, if nothing else, the existential naturalism of national identity (cf. Renan) is questioned simply by having to be constantly debated and - where possible - reasserted. This is an anomalous situation. The partial surrender of sovereignty which the EC entails (but which no statesmen favour as such) makes the call for the emotional support of citizens all the more urgent. At the same time it cannot just be taken for granted. If *national* identity is a discourse which politicians willingly embrace and quite honestly support, *European* identity is a double-edged sword to which they have to pay lip-service, but must simultaneously reject as a form of rival emotionalism. Its superficiality must be made clear, but cannot be openly stated. It is national pragmatism couched in the rhetoric of supranationalism. But hence also the "danger": Will the means in fact outsmart the end? Is it possible that although the EC is not a step towards the superstate, a Federal Europe, the conditions for the survival of the nation-state are so unpropitious that we *are* sliding towards Renan's "European confederation"? Will EC supranationalism take the place of national identities

instead of just complementing them? Have the EC countries set in motion a string of developments that they cannot control?

Well, as I have indicated, I think not. Rather, it is important to realise the historical uniqueness of the European dialectic between nationalism and supranational commitments which may modify the conditions of the nation-states, render identity structures more muddled, but at the same time provides the *milieu* for the wheelings and dealings of nations. And as current developments in Europe seem to confirm, nationalism is far from extinct. For the EC, the disappearance of the East-West confrontation will tend towards a liberation of national identity (something which is confirmed by developments in Germany) rather than a reinforcement of supranationalism. The stress in the future might well be shifted towards the plural form of the European Communities, and thus towards the instrumental aspect. To all intents and purposes, the century in which we are living is still a very national one.

#### 4. NATIONALISM AND SUPRANATIONALISM IN THREE MEMBER-STATES: (West) Germany, Denmark, Great Britain (supplementary oral presentation)

All nation-states, all national mentalities entail an international dimension, since nation-states are not only "sovereign", but also "limited" (Anderson 1983). The particular form of the nationalism/internationalism interaction in a given nation is the result of complex interactions between the history, interests, political status, culture, and ambitions of the country, and can, of course, be dealt with from a variety of angles. (Cf. e.g. Hoffmann 1968)

I am not going to pursue these very general questions further now. My concern is - on the background of sections 1, 2 and 3 - to enquire into the relevant modulations and configurations in respect of the EC in three of its member-states. Time of course only allows for a very brief outline.

You might have noticed that I have so far been using the term "supranational" rather than "international". The former seems more appropriate in the EC context, since the ordinary forms of national external orientation, foreign policy and modes of perception and representation of "the Other" that we usually refer to as "international", have in the EC framework taken on a more permanent, committing and politically interlocking dimension. In fact, it is probably because of this permanent and institutionalised political recognition - an important concept - that cultural questions and questions of identity ("*European identity*" for instance) keep imposing themselves on the debate. And this is of course also the reason why images of aliens in what I have elsewhere termed the "hostile mode" (Hedetoft 1990<sup>1</sup>, Hedetoft 1990<sup>3</sup>) are more or less outlawed from consensual rhetoric these days. Images of the Other in modern Europe are "friendly" or "exotic", tending sometimes towards a discourse that *symbolically*

removes the barrier between "us" and "them" (this is still official discourse more than popular reality, as almost all empirical enquiries confirm).

Let me also say before I address the question on a more concrete level that my *methodical parameters* - which will not by any means be applied systematically, but still constitute the methodical underpinning of the discussion - are the following:

- \* the *discourse* of nationalism/supranationalism (including hegemonic signs and images)
- \* *political culture* and its relation to EC supranationalism and "dual identities" (includes images of aliens inherent in popular mythology)
- \* the question of *pragmatism* as the prime mover of EC integration v. *the moral emotionalism* linked to the nation-state
- \* and the *historical dimension* in its comparative European context, particularly with respect to developments since WW II. It should be added that history can be regarded from three different, but mutually supportive aspects: as "reality" (= what actually happened); as the "fountain of myths and images" in the political culture; and as the "conditioner" of official rhetoric towards a particular balance between nationalism and supranationalism.

Thus, my approach is a blend of cultural analysis and "l'histoire des mentalités", an approach which I prefer to call the analysis of mentality.

For the sake of brevity, and since in a presentation of this nature one has to fall back on rather more rough-and-ready distinctions than may be advisable in a more nuanced discussion, I venture the hypothesis that the three member-states - Germany, Denmark and Great Britain - have each their own particular dialectic between "nationalism" and "supranationalism" within the modern European framework. Germany's could be called "nationalism-as-supranationalism", Denmark's "nationalism-as-nationalism" and Great Britain's "supranationalism-as-nationalism". Let me try to clarify what these catchwordy expressions entail - and to add a few modifications.



## I. West Germany: Nationalism-as-supranationalism

West Germany is in an important sense *the* European country par excellence. Its Europeanism is embedded in the Constitution (1949), and the vacuum of German identity, of legitimate pride in the nation and of a sense of historical continuity which was the mental consequence of both the Nazi defeat and the division of Germany was compensated for by a fervent European and international *rhetoric*, and *morality* as well, and by attempts to construct a new German identity round a European political and economic commitment. A German political scientist once aptly described West Germany as not a nation in search of a foreign policy, but a foreign policy in search of a nation. Nationalism is only acceptable in its patriotic mode, as "weltoffener Patriotismus". In March this year (1990), in the midst of the heated debate surrounding a united Germany, the West German foreign minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher insisted that unification would not lessen Germany's European commitment, and advocated that we should think not of a German Europe but a European Germany. The President of West Germany, Richard v. Weizsäcker, one of the principal figures behind this Europeanism, repeatedly states that "deutsche Kultur gehört zur europäischen Kultur" (Weizsäcker 1988, 25), and that "today we are no longer looking for our identity in a national inclusiveness and in the exclusion of others, but in the awareness that the national cultures, which have been formed over the centuries, are related to each other as fraternal members of an overarching all-European culture" (ibid., 16; my translation).

Thus, this German discourse - which has also constructed the term "Verfassungspatriotismus", "constitutional patriotism" - indicating that it rests on a less-than-stable political culture - tends to repress both the national and the pragmatic elements of German European cooperation. The EC as "means" and as "end" fuse into one, which leads, also, to a particular use of "Europe" as a vehicle of rhetorical attacks against, and criticism of nations less open-minded, more "minimalist" and pragmatic (cf. Hedetoft 1990<sup>3</sup>).

European identity has thus acted vicariously as a national-identity stand-in and has been able to because of the success which "Europe" has implied for West Germany. This comes to the fore in two other, though subordinate discourses, that of the "Wirtschaftswunder" and that of "Wir sind wieder wer". The latter in turn links up with the "reunification"-motif, which has been consistently on the national agenda ever since the late forties, when reunification was provided for in another clause of the Constitution.

What's happening now is the end of that motif and the beginning of another. In this context, German "reunification" manifestly underpins my argument that it is national aspirations that permanently form the backbone of the EC. In point of fact, the EC has, more than anything else, provided West Germany with the means to achieve its present-day economic and political strength. What it seems to be looking for now is not only a further strengthening of its economy and its political clout, but also, it seems, a *freeing of its national identity* as something distinct from *and* the foundation of its European dimension. West Germany is the war loser that has turned into a manifest peacetime victor. It has capitalised on its international moralism, has been immensely strengthened as a nation-state by insisting that it never had national, let alone nationalist aspirations. At this juncture, however, we are watching a nation emerging from the shadows of war, about to rewrite/retell its history, its myths and its identity.

## II. Denmark: Nationalism-as-nationalism

Strangely enough, all German attempts to reforge/modernise the country's international image have cut hardly any ice with the Danes. The image of the "ugly", militaristic and domination-seeking nation south of the border still haunts the Danish imagination, to the extent where - consciously or not - resistance to or scepticism about the EC no doubt rests on a sign of equation between "EC" and "German interest-sphere".

This indicates that, for Denmark, EC-cooperation is a "mariage de convenience". Most Danes still draw lines of separation between the possible - but disputed - economic/political benefits to be had from membership, and questions of identity, culture and supranationalism. Danish history, prejudices, political culture and small-nation interests converge in a discourse averse to anything but the most necessary forms of cooperation, conjuring up fears of an EC-bureaucratic monstrosity out to submerge "Danishness", representing German intentions as insidious and rejecting also the possibility of "dual identities". Danishness is a mythology of antediluvian smallness and fairy-tale harmlessness, of having survived history fairly unscathed by keeping out of harm's way and too much international involvement. Hence, Danishness represents a cultural narrow-mindedness which has *no consistent international dimension* - other than possibly the non-committal symbolism of a Nordic brotherhood of nations and, earlier in the century, a distinct veneration for all things Anglo-British (some Danish historians argue that to all intents and purposes, Denmark was - until 1930 or so - part of the British colonial empire, a British colony; at least it must

be conceded that it was part of the British sphere of influence, both economically and culturally). Also, it was no coincidence that Denmark's entry into the EC was actually forced upon it by Great Britain opting to become a member.

Thus, Danes on average are proud patriots (though they often blush to admit it: they would rather live out their national identity than have it discussed/analysed) and see "nationalism" and "supranationalism" - at least in the EC context - as worlds apart rather than as complementary forms of consciousness. Even the most ardent political supporters of the EC have to vie for backing for the EC project on strict grounds of national interest and utility, because Denmark's influence in the world will be increased, because membership is simply inevitable, etc. The supranational dimension is regarded as negative, pooling of sovereignty in the EC-institutions is construed as a stepping-stone to a quick national demise (politically and culturally). And *although* the debates that the EC has triggered off concerning national identity and values have no doubt strengthened rather than weakened Danes' appreciation of their national affiliation; *despite* the deeply rooted "homogeneity of people and state"; and *despite* a political culture which is in large measure built on turning international defeats into a strengthening of national, cultural identity (unlike Germany)(cf. Hedetoft 1990<sup>2</sup>, section V), the fiction of the imminent death of Danishness or its relegation to the status of mere regionalism is still very much alive and kicking - as are the concomitant hostile images of the Other (not just Germans, but refugees as well). Denmark has been *nationalised* in the course of this century, but at the expense of an *international* dimension, which did exist prior to the 1850's. In the particular Danish version of equality - "Janteloven", the 'modernised' Ten Commandments of social morality - Danes are admonished to think nothing of themselves, not to set themselves above others, always to keep a low and humble profile. Today, they apply this yardstick rigorously to the EC. Conversely, the only true internationalism of Danishness resides in its obsessive concern with mirroring itself in the positive opinions of Denmark that can be ferreted out - or constructed - in the international community.

### III. Great Britain: Supranationalism-as-nationalism

On the face of it, the British configuration might seem very similar to that of Denmark. Britain, too, is a latecomer to the EC, joining less out of enthusiasm than out of necessity and overt calculation. Also, in Britain - not least since the advent of Thatcher - the discourse and official imaginings about the EC have rested firmly on "minimalism", "national interest" and "getting as much out of



Europe as possible". Further, it is evident that for a very long time the majority of the British have shown no inclination towards European supranationalism: "We're *English*. We're *not* European", as a Manchester cabdriver is said to have stated with great force (*Newsweek*, 3 July 1989).

Still, I would contend, this nationalist discourse rests on preconditions radically different from those of Denmark, both in terms of history, political culture and political ambitions. "Little Englandism" is counterpoised by the fact that this is a former colonial power, an island nation with strong international and hegemonic aspirations, whose internationalism, historically, has been directed elsewhere than towards Europe (colonies, Commonwealth, the American alliance) and which tends to regard "Europe" (EC) as a hamstringing of its international freedom of movement (cf. also George 1989). And yet, "Europe" is now a necessary alliance, needed to halt the proverbial decline, cure the British disease, and set the UK on the path towards renewed international clout; but in itself a hard one to swallow since Great Britain is not at the controlling centre of things in the EC, but rather an appendix on the German-French axis.

Clearly, the political rhetoric in an internationally "demoted" power, vis-à-vis the EC, *has to be* stridently unaccommodating, *has to* pound on the utilitarian aspect of EC-membership, *has to* oppose "centralised control from Brussels" etc. *Not* because it is satisfied with its insular nationalism, but because it wants *more* than the internationalism that EC can give it - true to its former status, its still-existing international ties/interests elsewhere, and its feelings of moral and political-cultural superiority (being the cradle of parliamentary democracy, having civilised large parts of the world, being more common-sensical than others, etc); and true, also, to the post-war humiliation of imperial decline, economic deroute, and rejection, twice, at the hands of France, the age-old enemy. The stance of Great Britain is nationalist all right, but it is a cosmopolitan sort of nationalism which refuses to be tied down by a "regionalist" Euro-nationalism. British politicians see themselves as the true internationalists, which is why Thatcher in the same interview can talk of her "*European nightmare*" whilst insisting that she is the "*best European of all*" (*Daily Mail*, 18 May 1989). This was also the tenor of her (in)famous Bruges speech (Sept. 1988). Where Danes see the EC as a danger because of the international enlargement that it contains, a new layer of commitment and orientation alien to the Danish mentality of small-nation self-sufficiency, the danger manifest in the British nationalist rhetoric rests on the perceived containment and restrictions of

British interests in a global context. This is not to say that the nationalism-cum-racism of many ordinary "Brits" is not of a very narrow-minded and inward-looking nature, but often that, too, is a sort of disillusioned reaction to Britain and British identity being no longer passports to (real or illusory) hegemony.

Add to this that in a comparison with West Germany, Great Britain's national pride was not shattered but strengthened by WW II, and that for some time after the war both the economy, the American connection and the fiction of a role as an international moral "third force" in world politics were (respectively seemed to be) rather strong, and we can discern a picture of a nationalism with a heavy international, but not European bent, and further a nationalism rooted in a strong liberalist/laissez-faire "pragmatic" tradition. It is these components rather than supranationalism as such that are at odds with Britain's membership of the EC.

#### IV. 4 brief 'extractions'

On the basis of these considerations, a few conclusions and pointers can be extracted:

- 1) Supranational discourse and idealism is most pronounced in the country (Germany) that has benefited most, as a nation-state, from the EC; and vice versa. What this shows is that supranationalism and national interest/nationalism are linked to each other not as antithetical but as complementary, that supranationalism is in a sense part and parcel of a national, though not nationalist, discourse. Or differently, a given national interest can be strengthened by avoiding rather than pursuing a nationalist rhetoric.
- 2) The corollary of (1): The usefulness/advantage of the EC for the three nations stands in an inverse relation to the legitimacy of a discourse of utility. In other words, for the two nations who stand to gain the least (or seem to) in the EC, the pervasive argument for membership has been hardcore national interest, but of course in a negative framework: "we see it as a regrettable necessity", is the codeword. These nations bargain from a position of economic weakness but national-cultural and national-political strength. It is obvious that - discursively at least - "integration" here cannot even seem to imply abandonment of sovereignty or the like, for strengthening the nation is precisely the consensual reason for joining, and at the same time questionable in terms of effect. Whereas, for Germany, the

benefits are so much beyond any doubt that official praise of supranationalism is evidently in order. For not only is it useful, but it makes it seem as if usefulness is not what it's all about -which can be quite useful too. It is in international as in private matters: it is bad manners to sport your riches and superiority; modesty is called for, particularly so in the North European morality context of Puritanism and self-control. (This question indirectly poses another, namely the standing of the other "supranational" though less influential EC-members: for instance, Holland, Belgium and Italy. This is outside my scope here, but still I would like to indicate that "gain" in the EC framework is not necessarily or originally economic: these countries (all losers in and/or severely damaged by the war and hence under the influence of the attendant erosion of nationalism in continental Europe) calculated their post-war strategies in terms of the political and/or moral dividends that would possibly accrue from closer European cooperation, for the Benelux countries specifically the immense advantage of securing an influence on (West) German affairs, thus keeping the "menacing" neighbour in check).

- 3) The contrast between the Danish and the German cases/modulations is fairly clear-cut and obvious. The British case is more complicated. For, if my argument is tenable, here we are not confronted with a type of national identity that presents itself as such (DK), nor with the morally comprehensible form of "supranationalism" representing national interests and ambitions (Germany), but with the more "quirky" case of a basically global, almost cosmopolitan internationalism often making crude nationalist gestures, wrapping itself in the national flag (and other similar symbols). This discrepancy between aims and discourse reverses the German case in an interesting way: appeals to a narrow-minded, inward-looking insular nationalism (the popular, idealised version of the national interest) are often cast in the role of symbolic vehicles of a much more wide-ranging international perspective. In other words, where, in the German case, the national interest seeks abode in a (European) supranational morality to the point of seemingly vanishing, in the British case the 'national interest' itself is often the discursive representative of supranational ambitions to the point of misrepresenting the true substance of the current national interest, or of, say interpreting *real interests* (e.g. maintaining sterling as an independent currency) as a quest for holding on to *symbols* of sovereignty.

- 4) The two countries with the most "stable" political cultures, with the most intact nationalisms and the greatest degree of "homogeneity" between state and people (DK and UK), have had great difficulties in accepting EC integrationism as a receptacle of identity and morality. At the same time they are also the ones to comply most faithfully with EC rules and regulations. This is sometimes seen to demonstrate - and perhaps spring from - the incompatibility of constitutionalist or legalistic as opposed to common-law and conventionalist political traditions - at least as far as UK is concerned. There may be some truth in this argument, but it seems to me that not too much emphasis should be placed on it. Without disputing that the legal systems of the EC (and e.g. France, Germany, Holland etc) and Great Britain are quite different, and that the British tradition knows of no superior authority to the one vested in Parliament (hence sovereignty is often seen to be indivisible), one of the supreme characteristics of British law and British politics is - really and admittedly - their adaptability. This they prove when they speedily and often with a minimum of delay implement EC regulations and comply with EC rulings. (Whereas e.g. Italy, France and Germany often do things in the opposite "order": in principle they adhere to supranational, integrationist principles, whereas in actual fact the honouring of obligations often seems a lot harder. *Here* the differences of political culture do come to the fore!) So, the conclusion would be more valid that often the "incompatibility" of political cultures and legal traditions is a handy argument - and can indeed be used on both sides as either "offensive" blame or "defensive" justification. Conversely, the possibility should of course not be ruled out that part of the background for Denmark's and Great Britain's compliance with EC regulations and legislation could be to create a counterpoise to the strident anti-EC rhetoric employed in the two member-states.

\* \* \*

Finally, it is important to emphasise that although some of this might have left the impression that I have described an unchangeable ontological position, the historical dimension is significant: This whole complex is very much in a state of flux at present. Developments are weakening the "nationalist" discourse in Great Britain and Denmark, while strengthening them in Germany - "harmonisa-

tion" with a difference if not with a vengeance! But it is a common feature that forms of "utility" and forms of "emotion" vis-à-vis the nation-state and the EC are entering into new configurations. This applies also to the forms in which "the Other" is perceived (contempt-recognition-respect etc) and to the relation between official and popular discourses and states of mentality.

Apart from this, the future of the precise relationships between the nation-state/nationalism and the EC/supranationalism is not easy to predict. For

"Europe cannot be what some nations have been: a people that creates its state; nor can it be what some of the oldest states are and many of the new ones aspire to be: a people created by the state. It has to wait until the separate states decide that their peoples are close enough to justify the setting up of a European state whose task will be the welding of the many into one. (...) Between the cooperation of existing nations and the breaking in of a new one there is no stable middle ground. A federation that succeeds becomes a nation; one that fails leads to secession; half-way attempts like supranational functionalism must either snowball or roll back." (Hoffmann 1968, 228-9).

Indeed, as Hoffmann puts it at the end of his article, "there are more things in the heaven and earth of possible international futures than in any philosophy of international relations" (230). All we are left with are hints and guesses, more or less qualified.



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