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Center for International Studies  
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The Nation-State Meets the World:  
National Identities in the Context of  
Transnationality and Cultural Globalisation

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1. Studies of Identity, Mentality and Culture
2. Intercultural Cooperation in International Markets and Organisations
3. Migration, Spatial Change and the Globalisation of Cultures
4. International Politics and Culture

**THE NATION-STATE MEETS THE WORLD:  
NATIONAL IDENTITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF  
TRANSNATIONALITY AND CULTURAL GLOBALISATION**

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**I**

The last decade has seen a plenitude of academic contributions on the important question of the condition and future trajectory of nation-states and nationalism in a political, economic and cultural climate increasingly marked by what, for want of better words, is usually referred to as transnational and/or global processes.<sup>1</sup> Without going into any detail with these discussions, most participants in them have been engaged with trying to resolve what the majority - though not all - have tended to view as a potential or real opposition between the tight-knit politico-cultural

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<sup>1</sup> In my understanding, 'transnationality' refers to events or processes that straddle or transgress nation-state boundaries. They are part of, but not per se identical to 'globalisation' which I take to mean events or processes (cultural, political, economic, technological or social) that are transnational *and* can be identified as significant in all (or almost all) corners of the globe, as well as 'an "in here" matter, which affects, or rather is dialectically related to, even the most intimate aspects of our lives. Indeed, what we now call intimacy, and its importance in personal relations, has been largely created by globalizing influences' (Giddens, 1994, p. 95).

environment of the nation-state (with its paraphernalia of interest, identity, territoriality, culture and sovereignty cohering in a seamless fabric of nation and state) and processes of increasingly rapid globalisation (of economies, finance, politics, culture, crime, environmental issues etc), which have been seen to pose various kinds of threat to the traditional nation-state as the political and cultural organising principle of mass-industrial modernity.

This oppositional thinking has given birth to numerous theories and speculative scenarios, ranging from post-national/postmodern identity politics, the global homogenisation of cultures, through the revindication of nationalism (whether in an exceptionalist or liberal form), new regionalisms, the decoupling of states and nations, to the potentially apocalyptic doom and gloom of civilisational clashes of various orders of magnitude and depth (between nations/states/cultures as well as within them). A lot of intelligent labour has been expended on the question of whether globalisation in itself means homogenisation (eg. Fukuyama, 1992) or whether we are seeing a much more complex process of proactive and reactive patterns emerging, sometimes giving prominence to levelling factors, at other times privileging local, regional or national adaptive, transformative or oppositional countercurrents - or possibly even giving rise to multicultural arrangements and practices or different strategies of identity negotiation (Featherstone, 1990; Gutmann, 1994; Hannerz, 1992; King, 1991; Wilson & Dissanayake, 1996). Moreover, in the area of the study of identity, ethnicity and nationality, organic 'primordialists' have been locked in combat with civic 'constructivists' and with proponents of different versions of postmodern identity theory opposed to the primacy of *national* identities and foregrounding the multi-layered nature of personal and collective identities in an increasingly liminal national and international environment, characterised by fluctuating boundaries. Finally, many have tried to unravel what such processes mean and how they unfold in the specific case of 'European integration vs. the traditional nation-state'.

A constant feature seemingly uniting most, if not all, of these disparate debates in the 90s has been the realisation that issues of (international) politics are less easily distinguishable from matters of culture and identity than was traditionally believed.

'Culture', 'ideas' and 'identity' have entered the domain of IP, and conversely considerations of power, authority, institutions, integration and governance have made inroads on theories and analyses of cultures, nations, myths and identity. 'Realism' and 'liberalism' are not just being modified within their respective conceptual bastions, but are entering into hitherto unheard-of, more or less unholy alliances, and are being supplemented by novel ways of trying to come to grips with new processes of cultural-political fragmentation, levelling, disaggregation and reassimilation that have emerged on the mental and scholarly map in the last decade, notably since 1990 - ways we don't as yet have a satisfactory label for, but which cohere around attempts to tap and remould insights across both the boundary of traditional disciplines and the boundaries of nation/state and national/international in a manner that has not been seen quite so systematically before.

As for the almost universal presumption of opposition between the pull of nation-state cohesiveness and the push of global processes, on the other hand, there is much less agreement. Some stress the disruptive and erosive effects of cultural and economic globalisation on nation-states and national identities, while others argue that the nation-state and its national mentality are far from dead, but are rather being resurrected and reinvigorated by the imperatives of transnationality, whether in its cultural or political garb. (This has implied new prominence on the one hand to processes and theories of anti-immigrant positions on nationalism and ethnicity, on the other to processes and theories of liberal (inter)nationalism as a means of negotiating between nation-state scenarios and the transnational imperative.) However, a slight dislocation of these two in terms of current *Zeitgeist* can be detected: where the disruptive, normatively mostly apocalyptic vision tended to occupy center ground (ie some modicum of consensuality) in the late 80s and early 90s, the 'reinvigoration' scenario has recently come into its own, accentuated *in ter alia* by current debates on cultural identities, nationalism and political integration efforts in Europe/EU, where debates and foci have shifted from an emphasis on the undermining of nation-state sovereignty and the desirability of a 'European identity' to a realisation that political integration has actually fuelled a strengthening of nationalisms (though not necessarily of their concomitant nation-states'

sovereignty), and that the road to unity, rather than being paved with good intentions by state actors, is perhaps better envisioned as an obstacle course where riding rough-shod over national sentiments could prove self-defeating. The EU as a super-modern project of rational enlightenment and civilised harnessing of nationalist energies not only confronts, but actually strengthens it would seem, the very passions of national myth, belonging, exclusiveness and sometimes atavism that it was - at least in part - intended to quell. The question is: Are such phenomena (also on a wider global scale) attributable to the organicism advocated by primordialists and perennialists, or can we find other explanations? What do they manifest? And how representative are they?

Let me start by making a few observations on the specificity of nationalism and the crucial linkages between 'culture' and 'identity' (within nation-states as well as in the global context), without which it is difficult to get to grips with the (assumed) opposition of national identity and transcultural processes.

## II

The specific identity of nationalism - that which in my view sets it apart from other (historical or contemporary) forms of collective allegiance - is not its 'ethnic' components (although they exist), nor its traditionalism (although that too exists), nor again its components of political modernity, civic allegiance and future mission (in spite of their existence also). It is rather its all-encompassing nature, the fact that it is both a vehicle for 'ethnic' identity and political identification, for ideological modernisation and ardent traditionalism, for rationality and passion, for past nostalgia and future hope, for anonymity and familiarity, for the most respectable and the most despicable values at the same time (dependent both on situation and viewpoint). In other words, it is none of the above components *in isolation*, but all of them together in one structure of multiple potentiality, whose ideal identity is not accidentally that of a congruity of culture, politics and territory, and quite often one of a real-life violation of this harmonious order - with all the conflicts that this - familiar friction between ideality and reality spawns in the form of border disputes

and territorial mentalities (Self vs Other externally) as well as in the form of clashes between national elites and national masses (or different cross-cutting ideological groups) on the optimal formulation of a national politics in the best interests of electorates and in harmony with the nationalist ideal (Nation vs State internally) - eg. on questions of immigration and preferential treatment of ethno-nationals.

One of the important consequences of nationalism thus conceived - quite independently of whether or not it is an appropriate, possibly the best, possibly the ultimate expression of ethnic identity - is that it must be presumed to have an edge on almost all other versions of political identity by virtue of its *self-referentiality* and on almost all other forms of socio-cultural identity by virtue of its *existentiality*.

By self-referentiality I mean that nationalism as a political identity of both forward-looking modernity and backward-looking sentiment, of material satisfaction and idealist sacrifice, contains the necessary structural resources to enable it to refer to itself as its own value model and nodal point, even when it is dissatisfied or out of joint with itself; the richness of the national paradox is that on the terms of its own logic it will tend to always try to negate itself in its own name: if something is felt to be awry (the state of politics, democracy, the international recognition of the nation-state, the national culture ...) it must be put right in the name of the very nation and its betterment, in order to better shape the congruity of state and nation that is the starting-point as well as the end-point for this identity logic. To transcend the nation and its state in the name of, say, a world punctuated by fewer conflicts, less cumbersome boundaries, even possibly greater material benefits makes little sense within the mental configuration of nationalism as a political identity, because its 'deep structure' produces its self-referential, but also paradoxical qualities as axiomatic (quite unlike almost all pre-modern forms of political allegiance). This is one of the reasons why many contemporary Europeans have such a hard time accepting the idea of multiple identities in the EU context, because a 'European identity' as a second layer of political loyalty asks national citizens to make a leap of faith beyond the self-referentiality of their political identity (I'll return to this subject later).

The complementary side to this is what was above called the existentiality of nationalism as a socio-cultural identity. This refers to the unique qualities of national identities as the framework of existential trust, familiarity, civic security, common patterns of communication, shared myths and practices, social and cultural institutions, and an albeit constructed but nonetheless very real 'collective memory' - in other words, national identity as a horizontal 'imagined community'. All this to the ideal-type national citizen goes well beyond pragmatic arrangements that can be replaced at will - it has an existentialist quality, based on both a sense of 'life necessity' in material terms but also on imagined essences of 'home' and 'belonging' and 'what feels natural'. Where the political identity side of nationalism is 'vertical', this one is 'horizontal', but they are crucially dependent on each other and cannot really be conceptualised independently. The self-referentiality of the 'political' component is inconceivable without the 'naturalness' of the civic community, and the existentialism of the socio-cultural component (Renan's 'daily plebiscite') unimaginable without its ultimate reliance on and congruity with the 'political' bedrock. Together these two aspects of nationalism produce its sacrality, the features that make it resemble a latter-day quasi-religious frame of mind for the identity-starved masses of (post)modernity (although, as has been noted, it differs from 'normal' world religions in the sense that although it has universal presence in the international system from a bird's eye perspective, from a participant point of view it is always both particularistic and partial: one is never 'nationalist' in a universal meaning, but German, Spanish, Chinese or American etc.). However, in the sense that like religion nationalism commands awe, devotion, empathy and 'irrational' belief and loyalty as collective identity shapers, the two phenomena are very similar.

All this does not mean that nationalism is impregnable - quite the contrary. It is its strengths that also make it vulnerable. It is vulnerable both in the sense that it requires circumstances and interpretations that privilege it over other nationalities in the mind of its participant members (national self-esteem and legitimacy), and because it is crucially dependent on the imagined or real link between the ethno-national citizenry and their state being invested with trust (the double-bind of state

and nation).<sup>2</sup> In this sense, five interrelated processes currently question the stability of nationalism: i) the changing nature of national boundaries (less absolute, since belligerent encounters for the defense of territory in most cases make less sense); ii) the changing nature of sovereignty (its systemic and possibly less substantive qualities as opposed to international influence through transnational organisations); iii) dislocations of state and nation (because the nation-state is a less functional organisational unit than in earlier stages of modernity, due to transnational political and economic processes that tend to erode the significance of the sovereign state); iv) regional integration, especially the EU (because this is a political 'response' to the threat of increased international anarchy based on the freeing of market forces from state control); v) transnational and intercultural processes of a new kind and magnitude (ie. 'globalisation' of cultures, polities, economies and people - but in a sense which is different from the putative threat of, say, cultural Americanisation - see further below). Finally, as a 'sixth' item (but possibly better conceived as a consequence of the first five) should be mentioned an increasing reflexive awareness of and 'strategic' attitude toward national identity as well as other personal identity structures as resources in the fluidity of contemporary life and under circumstances dictated by major upheavals in the national and international order.

Closely interlinked processes of this nature tend to destabilise the environment in which nationalism as described above thrives and on which it is dependent. Not because nationalism cannot thrive in an international context (this is in fact its optimal breeding-ground), but because it encounters difficulties in a *trans- and supranational* environment that questions a number of its salient preconditions on a daily basis and to an ever-increasing extent. Differently put, nationalisms today are faced with a potential, structurally defined loss of functionality in terms of the trajectories of the international order. This functional deprivation manifests itself in encroachments on crucial parameters of national mentality (the sacredness of borders and sovereignty, the inviolable and uncontested primacy of domestic

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<sup>2</sup> The German post-war case is an interesting one for studying these two variables at work: the loss of national legitimacy has tended to burden the relationship of trust between people and state with an inordinate degree of affective importance for the new Germans.

political allegiance, the significance of democratic accountability, the ethno-cultural purity of the population etc), thus redefining - not national sentiment itself - but the extraneous context within which it must play itself out. Dean Acheson's remark on British foreign policy in the 60s can aptly be rephrased to fit the situation: nationalism has lost an empire but not yet found a role.

This does not imply that nationalism is dead or even obsolete, but that its traditional stomping-ground is being dramatically changed. In this interregnum its manifestations understandably oscillate between the scapegoating of national politicians, or international (im)migrants, or supranational structures like the EU; political attempts to reforge old-new convergences between nation and state; the polishing-up of nationalism to adapt to new demands; internationalising national identities through multiculturalism, the 'creolisation' of identities, 'negotiated identity' strategies; or reforging identities in smaller regional or local settings. The adaptive, all-encompassing nature of nationalism is facing and responding to its biggest challenge since the defeat of Nazism - a challenge against both its self-referentiality and its existentialism - in the process becoming more conscious of itself, its proponents and carriers having to (re)view themselves in the cold light of an externally enforced rationality. This of course does not mean that the consequences are not quite often a reconfirmation, frequently quite racist too, of the emotional, existential and exceptionalist identity of (a particular) nationalism, but if so only after having been through the process of reflexive reformulations and political-cultural repositionings (Hedetoft, 1995, Part II, Ch. VIII).

At this point, and before moving on to a closer look at how traditional identity structures of nationalism are being remoulded in the melting-pot of transnationality and interculturalism, two more basic issues merit a thought - both again Janus-faced phenomena. One has to do with the relations generally as well as historically between nationalism, nation-states and the 'global village'. The second with the interplay of 'culture' and 'identity' in the context of transnationality, or more precisely phrased: how and in what ways is the globalisation of culture(s) a threat to national identities? A few remarks on each will suffice for my purpose here, since I intend to return to the questions in more specific settings.

As for the first item, the apparent paradox is that not only has the nation-state and its nationalisms been historically responsible for the creation of the global (or 'world') system - in the forms of colonialism, imperialism, trade, migratory processes, global information structures etc., in a word through the export and global dissemination of industrial modernity, political and military regimes, and western (political) culture; but moreover it is still today the precondition, prime mover and pivotal point of global processes: the international order, whether conceived in more or less realist (power and international anarchy), more or less institutionalist (regimes and governance through international organisations), or more or less liberalist terms (minimal control of private initiatives and market forces across boundaries), derives from and is crucially dependent on the (sovereign?) nation-state.

The paradox is that on the one hand this sovereignty is not just limited (as all sovereignty has always been), but that it is crucially dependent on recognition and approval by the international community because the state of the world as a system of highly complex interdependence makes any other strategy self-defeating. Sovereignty today is something states are attributed on a kind of international licence, as a resource in and pass to the international arena - countries that do not buy into this system but try to maintain orthodox sovereignty are badly off (North Korea, Cuba, Libya, Iran, Iraq... the list is not long). The links between the units (the nation-states) and the international system are being quickly reversed (Hedetoft, 1994; Keohane, 1993; Wæver, 1995).

On the other hand, and as a result of this system of (hierarchically organised) (inter)dependence, the global processes unleashed by the nation-states themselves are today transmuting a system of internationality into one of transnationality and (sometimes) supranationality, partly placing the originary units of globalisation in a position of dependence on the forces (and their extra-national political institutions) that they have set in motion and still have huge vested interests in.<sup>3</sup> From being the starting-point of globalisation, nationalism finds itself facing this process as a threat

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<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the results of globalisation vary from nation-state to nation-state and from region to region, depending on size, economic-political clout, level of organisation and institutionalisation, the historico-cultural and politico-cultural readiness for coping with globalising forces, and other factors as well.

and itself as a protective cushion - a defensive bastion of identity and (eroded) sovereignty. Sometimes it even acquires fundamentalist features, or it blends with or transubstantiates into a religious-nationalist fundamentalism proper (not just Islamic: Christian fundamentalism is on the rise in the heartland of modernity, the USA) (Juergensmeyer, 1997 & forthcoming). The best manifestation of this structural change is the fact that the *ultima ratio* of classical realism - war as an instrument of foreign policy for the sovereign nation-state - has undergone a dramatic change of functionality in the current world order (without claiming that we are anywhere near Kant's 'eternal peace', nor would I unreservedly subscribe to the liberal tenet that democracies don't go to war with each other). Not that the world is less violent, but the violence tends to play itself out less between states than in a rather random and unpredictable fashion within states or at sub-state levels across state boundaries.

This leads directly to the second item: How does the globalisation of culture figure in all this? Are 'national cultures' being threatened by 'global culture', the particular by the universal (although often perceived as identical to 'American')? Our affirmative gut reaction to such questions - triggered by most people's acceptance of the national ideal for congruity between identity, culture and politics - should be tempered by reflection on the factual state of affairs: most 'national cultures' are far from homogeneous, logically neither cohesive nor 'free from foreign influence', and most share significant elements with other 'national cultures' (eg. in border areas). From a 'neutral' point of view, almost all these cultures are historical hybrids, in one way or another, and all of them have continuously adopted new cultural influences from outside of its own state borders (in terms of eg. language, everyday habits, food, media consumption, political culture, dress, style etc.).

This is and has been the rule rather than the exception, and has mostly proceeded without being perceived as a threat to 'national culture' or 'national identity' - or for that matter the close linkage between them (Hedetoft, 1995, Part I, Ch. V). To the extent that such foreign influences have been absorbed into a nation's identity perception based on its 'whole way of life', cultural mixing has not been anathema to nationalisms. In spite of the idealist - sometimes fundamentalist - assertion of

national identities basing themselves solely on a specific and separate national culture (this culture in other words being postulated as the causation of the nation's identity), the real-world situation more often than not belies this predication. Rather, it would seem, here as so often everything is inherent in *perception* and *interpretation*, ie in the collective reading (based on a blend between cognitive and emotional responses) of whether or not cultural change and assimilation of outside influences do or do not constitute a threat to a specific national identity.

The 'globalisation of culture' - and in the EU attempts to construct a common European/EU culture - apparently provides us with an example of such a scenario. However, rather than imputing such feelings and their reactive nationalist manifestations to the question of cultural influence as such, we need a different approach. For logically, if my argument about the real hybridity of national cultures and their general amenability to outside influences holds true, then the answer cannot be found within the cultural universe as such, but must be rephrased as a question of the meanings cultures are invested with and their vicarious functionality for the maintenance of national confidence. In this light, the threat does not come from the globalisation of culture, but from the fact that such globalising tendencies in the cultural domain have come to be interpreted as a phenomenon symbolising a much wider set of processes - namely the ones discussed above in the form of different inroads on national sovereignty, democracy, borders - in a word, national self-determination and the intimate ideal link between nation and state. The globalisation of *culture* (whether American or not) in this threat scenario is invested with a normatively negative sign value, it comes to *stand for* and *represent* the transnational imperatives that in turn are interpreted as eroding the nation-state and its identity. In the same way that national identities can comfortably accommodate a change in the cultural basis that constitutes its reference (if these cultural modifications are truly cultural and nothing else), so it can also interpret the relation inversely in cases where cultural changes become evaluatively linked to social and political transformations of a greater order of magnitude. The real paradox in all this is that, as already pointed out, precisely by reacting in this way, the very nationalism that is perceived to be threatened in fact reimagines and reforges itself, bracing itself for survival in new circumstances - circumstances dictated by new interrelations and

cross-fertilisations between transnational, intercultural and identity-shaping forces. The next section will take a closer look at a specific instance of this new national identity mould.

### III

I want to focus in the 'micro mode' on a specific example of interculturalism and transnationality, illustrating in a condensed fashion some salient points in what has been touched on already, and gleaned - not surprisingly for those who might know my theoretical work on nationalism, ethnicity, and identity (eg. Hedetoft, 1994 & 1995) - from the world of sport, an invaluable source of case examples for all manner of cultural and identity questions in the world we live in.

The setting is ideal, since it represents one of the arenas of both nationalism, interculturalism, and transnationality *par excellence*: the athletics world championships in Gothenburg in 1995. The textual discourse reflecting on it is no less transnational, at least in terms of aspirations: *The International Herald Tribune (IHT)*. And the concrete issue is also perfect, since it involves both nationality, race, ethnicity, and citizenship, and their symbolic and emotional representation or dissolution across borders of identity, mentality and geography. Here's the text:

#### **Oddest Favorite Wins Men's 800**

By Ian Thomsen, International Herald Tribune

GOTHENBURG. Sweden. The Norwegian had led the 800 meters for one and three-quarters laps around the track, but now his paleness was blushed around the cheeks and collarbone, his head was teetering with every slog and the first sellout crowd of the week was bellowing madly - which could only mean one thing.

The Dane was gaining.

Coming out of the last turn, from the dizzied corner of his right eye, the Norwegian could see the telltale white uniform trimmed in red of his Scandinavian rival, the ebony arms - ebony? - flapping, the close-cropped African - African! - hair on his head as the Dane pulled free and clear toward the first gold medal his country has ever won in the World Championships.

And that was all for the Norwegian, Vebjom Rodal. When the champion with the unlikely Danish name of Wilson Kipketer had sauntered past, Rodal was left lunging for the finish line like someone being tossed through the swinging doors of a bar. He was left holding

the bronze medal in 1:45.68, nipped at the end by a Burundian, Arthemon Hatungimana in 1:45.64.

The champion in 1:45.08, more than two seconds slower than the world-best time that had made him the prohibitive favorite, was hardly breathing hard at all. This is probably because he grew up running in Kenya. This is definitely because he is Kenyan.

'Deep down inside, I know where I came from', Kipketer had said on the eve of the big race, 'But I've been in Denmark for many years. I know the language, and I feel Danish. What I do, I do for Denmark'.

Which is to say that he appreciated everything Danish, except how it feels to run like one. If the Danes didn't know that the world is shrinking, the proof was Tuesday night as their flag was raised to the playing of their national anthem. The last time that happened in this stadium it was to honor the Danish winners of the European Championship in soccer.

It must have seemed just as strange for Kipketer.

He was 18 when he came to Denmark five years ago to train and study electrical engineering. A coach from a Copenhagen club had offered him the chance, even though most of his teammates were choosing to study and train in the United States.

'For me I was trying to do something different', said Kipketer, who shares a flat with his Danish girlfriend, a sprinter. 'A lot of people were talking about America but nobody was talking about Denmark. I thought, nobody will be talking about Wilson Kipketer in America, so why not Denmark?'

To be or not to be...

The Kenyans might not have missed Kipketer at the time, but this week the federation declined to say anything about him.

Their internal controversy, which became public with the firing of coach Mike Kosgei last winter, might have something to do with their disappointing results so far: nothing better than a bronze from Pul Tergat in the 10.000 meters Tuesday, and no finalists in the 800 meters. Other than Kipketer, that is.

The glare will now turn on the Danish government, which must grant Kipketer early citizenship if he is to compete in the Olympics for Denmark next year. Otherwise he would not qualify until 1997: too late to make use of the best runner in Denmark since, since...

'I won the race for me, my coach and Denmark', Kipketer said. 'Despite the fact that I won a car today and that I have none at home, I will continue to cycle to training'.

Well: if that isn't proof of Danish citizenship, nothing is.

(*IHT*, 9 August 1995)

The truly interesting point about this commentary is its pervasive ambiguity about the intercultural, transnational and 'inter-identity' character of this not-quite-yet naturalised Dane, and his and Denmark's legitimate right (or not) in casting him and his victory as Danish. On the one hand the text tries to prick a hole in the ethnic-homogeneous self-perception of Danes: 'If the Danes didn't know that the world is shrinking...' etc., and the irony in this sense is directed at the way in which international migration and the choosing of new identities and citizenships tend to put in question an international order firmly based on nation-states and their concomitant identities. On another level, however, the irony of the discourse is also self-referential: the journalist is obviously just as put off by

the glaring discrepancies between the ideal and the reality of national selfrepresentation as the Danes to whom he is imputing such feelings in the first place. Isn't it somehow unnatural for a Dane to look African? Is this kind of hybridisation really possible, without being ludicrous? Is a national identity really something you can, or should be able to choose? Is it ultimately fair that a true-born Norwegian is beaten by an artificial Dane, whose running (and background, and blood, and skin colour, and name etc.) is not Danish at all, but Kenyan? (Let me marginally intersperse that although it is of course true that Wilson Kipketer is an 'unlikely Danish name', it carries the stamp of another kind of interculturalism: 'Wilson' is hardly a name with roots deeply embedded in tribal Kenya!).<sup>4</sup>

In fact, the author of this piece of sports commentary seems more confused about the transnationalised world he is witnessing than Mr Kipketer himself, who does not come across as one having a serious identity problem. Where the journalist transmits an uneasy feel about this type of intercultural mixing at an event that is supposed to represent the pure battle of national identities, Kipketer simply asserts that 'what I do, I do for Denmark'. He has made a choice - he could have chosen the USA, but didn't. His reflections are frank, rational and, if you like, opportunistic. That of course is not the stuff that national identities and ethnic primordialism are made on. In that world of perceptions, nationality is not something you don or doff like a suit of clothes, but your destiny for which you're supposed to make sacrifices.

So, this is a skewed text, using irony and deflation as techniques to bridge the gap between the essential primordialism of the national imaginary in the ethnic mode, and the rational constructivism of both the so-called 'western', civic take on nationality and citizenship and the more postmodern readings of cultural hybridisation, multiculturalism and transnational identities linked to processes of globalisation.

In this sense, this microscopic text is an accurate reflection of the two currently dominant paradigms in discussions of globalisation and intercultural issues. On the one hand the vision embedded in e.g. Huntington's 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington, 1996), more benignly represented in the thinking about ethnicity, the rights of oppressed peoples, and

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<sup>4</sup> Wilson Kipketer comes from the Nandi tribe in the Kenyan highlands, and attended the famous St. Patrick's Boarding School where track and field constitutes a high-priority area. In an article in the Danish daily *Jyllandsposten* (16 March 1997) Kipketer is quoted as stating, 'there was no specific reason that I wanted to be Danish and not Kenyan. I just made the decision. It came from the inside - from my heart. It's something people can't understand'.

nationality of academics like Anthony Smith (who I suppose could be defined as the paramount 'realist' of ethnic nationalism) and Edward Said (though in a noteworthy way Said straddles the fence between the two paradigms, since he's also a representative of postmodern identity, happy exile, and fluctuating definitions of Self), and practically/politically the kind of anti-immigrant, apparently defensive, New Conservative national racism that we can witness in all industrial countries these days. On the other hand, we have the proponents of (post)modernism, constructivism, global homogenisation or cultural mixing: notable academics like Immanuel Wallerstein, Stuart Hall, and Ernest Gellner - all very different, but all of them basically anti-primordialists. Gellner, as may be known, only a couple of weeks before he passed away was involved in an interchange with Anthony Smith at Warwick. In Smith's own words, Gellner's stance implied the jettisoning of nationalism's own account of itself as the awakening of the primordial nation in favour of grasping it as a necessary modern phenomenon, the outcome of a particular social structure and culture (see *Nations and Nationalism*, 2/3, November 1996). Or in Gellner's: Nationalism has a navel, unlike Adam, who must be presumed to be navel-less and truly primordial. Seen from another angle, however, Gellner and Smith belong in the same category of thinking on nationalism; however much they may differ on the historical explanation of the national phenomenon and about the degree of its inventedness or essentialism, they agree that nationalism and national identity are, today, almost inescapable, necessary manifestations of the sociological and political structuration of modernity. In this sense they are in stark contrast to the postmodern, postcolonial perceptions of mutable and hybrid identities, the identity politics of a Stuart Hall, a Homi Bhabha, a Charles Taylor, and even an Edward Said.

#### IV

Both as far as debates on nationalism and transnationalism are concerned, these two opposing paradigms of conceptualisation - primordialism and constructivism - seem to be locked in an ever more entrenched and apparently insoluble conflict. The political philosopher, Seyla Benhabib, has recently analysed this in terms of the difference between observers and participants, and their mutually exclusive viewpoints (Benhabib, 1996). In her perspective, for the participant in national identities and national movements, thinking is organic and essentialist; national belonging appears as founded in ethnic, primordial roots. Fighting for the national cause goes almost without saying. For the observer, according to Benhabib, the very same identities take on the appearance of constructs,

inventions and become a matter of choice and deliberation. What for the participant is necessary, for the observer is contingent.

The problem is that the two modes of vision are unable to talk with each other; intercultural communication here becomes almost impossible, because the universes of interpretation are at loggerheads, mutually exclusive. In this light, the potential clash of worlds and cultures is no longer inherent within the fundamentalist, organic paradigm as such, but between that vision and the constructivist one. Where essentialism is unable to grasp the rational workings of the rational paradigm, the rational paradigm is just as unable to explain why certain symbols, memories and identities to the essentialists appear as elevated above discussion, as just the natural basis and outcrop of who 'we' are. This may, as Benhabib points out, well be the limit of the rational paradigm. It corresponds with the view of say Danes of themselves, and their perception of the 'them' outside their national frontiers - and vice versa. Thus, observer-participant aligns itself with them-us and in turn with constructivism and essentialism. At least ideally. For the same reason we all tend to be both observers (constructivists) and participants (essentialists), according to situation and the imagined topic at hand.

These are all valid reflections, and yet may not always faithfully represent the real world of interculturalism and transnationality today. Let me briefly return to Wilson Kipketer.

The *IHT* narrative, interestingly, is also structured dually along an observation/participant axis. But the breakdown of the components does not match the ideal dichotomy that I outlined, using Benhabib as my springboard. Clearly, Kipketer - the athletic, national migrant, our exponent of transnational processes and cultural interweaving - is the participant, and the journalist in this instance is the observer. Yet, Kipketer is not by a long stretch the national primordialist (not even the journalist's puzzlement can conceal this fact), and the journalist is an unimaginable stand-in for the part of the observing rationalist (though he might have liked to project himself like this). Rather the two seem to have swapped roles. Kipketer ought to have been the national existentialist-in-action, but is much more rational and self-constructivist, having chosen Denmark rather than being born to the role, and seemingly having few problems with bridging the gap between root essentialism and rational constructivism that according to Benhabib is a yawning abyss. And the journalist, feeling maybe that he ought exactly to have been the impartial observer of irrational national antics in the world of sports, is somehow forced to assume the role of semi-sarcastic, semi-serious essentialist, exposing an unnatural event on the backcloth

of the meeting of authentic representatives. If anything, here he, the onlooker, is the representative of naturalism, whereas the participant carries his intercultural, inter-identity burden with ease and quite some grace too. The world turned on its head!?

My point is that if Kipketer is emblematic of anything more, anything wider, it is precisely what the author of the piece cannot help but notice, but which he lays at the door of the Danes only: that this is a harbinger of a shrunken world, a global village which is in the process of defying even the clear-cut division between essentialism/participation and constructivism/observation, and possibly of modifying both in the light of new structures and a new international social and political order. Transnationalisation, internationalisation, globalisation... whatever we may choose to term the process, it is impinging significantly not only on the areas of economy and politics, but very likely also on the structuration of identities, loyalties and mental geographies. This creates a whole new ballgame, a whole new battlefield - to stay in the metaphoric world of sports and war (and their intimate connection), an arena where identities are no longer just organic, natural loci of belonging and attachment, but also properties of the rational mind and therefore strategic points of negotiation and for the vindication of political, cultural and historical rights.

Let me proceed to consider another arena where the game is being similarly restructured in accordance with new pressures and new processes: i.e. Europe and the question of its identities, an area where orthodox lines of demarcation are being questioned and redrawn.

## V

The relationship between 'cultural identity' and 'European integration' has, *grosso modo*, been approached in two distinctly different ways, corresponding in broad terms with the two paradigms I have been discussing so far.

The *first*, operating within a 'threat' mode, basically perceives European integration in almost whatever form - but most dramatically as a project pointing towards a political union superseding the nation-state - as a menace to a view of identity which equates cultural and national identity and usually sees national identity as the most genuine and authentic form of cultural identity, because it embodies the historical memories of the collective *ethnie*. Here we meet more or less outspoken proponents of nation-state

sovereignty, of the intimate equation between political community, social and cultural identity, and a territoriality bounded by national frontiers. From this viewpoint, European integration is either an unacceptable imposition or, if one can see its progressive potential but still adheres to the cultural identity of nationalism, a highly ambiguous and Janus-faced undertaking. As Anthony Smith has phrased it, '(h)ere lies Europe's true dilemma: a choice between unacceptable historical myths and memories on the one hand [i.e. those legitimating orthodox nationalism], and on the other a patchwork, memoryless scientific 'culture' held together solely by the political will and economic interest that are so often subject to change' (Smith, 1992: 74). In both variants, integration is set to alter the conditions of cultural (read national) identity dramatically, though Smith - not entirely convincingly - holds out the hope that 'over several generations some loose, over-arching political identity and community might gradually be forged' (ibid.). In spite of this, most theorists and practitioners belonging within this category are opposed to (too much) integration, since the ultimate outcome of political integration is imagined as the abolition or relegation of the nation-state and its identity paraphernalia.

The *other* school of thought - those thinking and speaking in an 'opportunity' mode - consist of those who on the one hand are in favour of 'deep' political integration and on the other have come to recognise that questions of culture and identity are important, if not essential, to the integration project. Here arguments generally fall into three distinct but not mutually exclusive categories:

1. A stance envisioning the creation of a common European identity and building on real or imagined historical commonalities of political or popular culture. We could term this the 'Delors' position of the 80s, a position most strongly in opposition to the ethnic take on cultural-equals-national identity that I described above. Here 'culture' is seen as having an unrealised 'European' and unifying potential that just needs to be cultivated and encapsulated by suitable political beliefs and institutions. The problem of the link between 'cultural identity' and 'European integration' adds up to 'European identity'.

2. Another position imagining the creation of a more postmodern identity universe in Europe, where integration would entail the shaping or fortification of 'multiple' or 'nested' identities, with European cultural identity as yet another superadded layer on top of an already large ragbag of social, generational, national or regional identities. This has led to different discourses of a 'multicultural Europe' or a cultural 'unity-in-diversity', whose

prime characteristics and strengths would still seem to be their visionary engagement rather than their contribution towards conceptual clarity. And finally,

3. the third position consists in putting more emphasis on the positive impact of being able to distinguish between a *cultural* identity that may and should still reside with the nation (and which is recognised as primary, authentic and essentialist), and a *political* identity or set of allegiances that could and should be transferred to a European, supranational level (and which is projected as having a more rationalistic, instrumental and interest-related component).

The three sub-variants are not, as I said, mutually exclusive, and it is therefore possible to find a host of different, and sometimes very peculiar, mixes of them in contemporary European discourses on these matters. Also (and this applies if we include the 'threat' interpretations too), they show a country-based, social and regional pattern of distribution that conforms with overall attitudes to integration and how acceptable political integration and political union are to the historical political cultures and political discourses in different parts of Europe. For that reason, 'threat' positions are more commonplace in Northern than Southern Europe. 'Multicultural' stances are more acceptable to cosmopolitan-minded elites than to mass proponents of national cultural homogeneity. And the distinction between cultural and political identity is possibly easier to sell in Belgium or Germany than in France or England.

I am not going to dwell on these categories. I only want to point to an important fact that both the schools of thought take for granted, but rarely address explicitly. The point, that is, that whenever culturally shared values translate into national identity, more often than not they contain a component of political loyalty and civic values that are, *eo ipso*, of a *political* nature, though 'culture' or 'cultural identity' as such are not political concepts (as discussed in Section II). The widely accepted assumption that national homogeneity is the basis of legitimation for the state, and the state the basis and articulation of national identity - this organic ideal *implies* the politically charged nature of 'cultural identity' in the sense we mean it when we talk about its links with European integration.

The point can be made in even more poignant form: I argue that it is the politically motivated perception of homogeneity in national terms that for most people makes cultural boundaries and national identity boundaries coterminous, even in cases where there are not if a more 'objectivist' definition of culture is applied. Hence, this is where the European

integration project can reasonably be presumed to have its momentous impact on national identity structures, since as a potential rival for political legitimacy and allegiance it not only has a tendency to separate the state from the nation, the elites from the masses, and political from cultural loyalties, but also - again potentially - to disrupt or revamp the connection between cultural and national identity - if in no other way, then at least by introducing a new form of Otherness against which national-cultural identity can pit itself and reaffirm itself in new ways and new formats. Thus, European integration creates conditions for national culture and identity that enforce a reconfiguration of European nationalism - into something that I prefer to call Euro-nationalism, rather than a postnational condition with nationalism at the fag-end of its life. This process in turn, I think, should be seen as a regional articulation of a process that is truly global (see below).

First, however, let me pose the question of what more precisely characterises this new form of Euro-national identity.

i) In terms of two key concepts introduced earlier, it is less self-referential and more existential than national identity in its 'normal' format. Both these factors have directly to do with the transnational-supranational context of the EU. The self-referential component is directly predicated on perceptions of nationalism grounded in an 'organic' relationship between nation and state, and on this triadicity (Nation - State - Identity) having a crucial function for all nationals. The EU situation on the other hand is typified by national identity fearing for its 'political roof', which now has taken on a bifurcated nature: national and European at the same time. For the same reason, the existential condition of national identities has been mentally foregrounded: the implicit, affectively based value system of nationalism is if not being threatened, then at least being questioned, producing the kind of reflexive awareness of the meanings and futures of nationalism that I mentioned earlier. In a sense this makes nationalism in Europe these days more calculating, more strategic, less 'spontaneous' and 'essentialist'. Or differently, heightened existentialism engenders a *reconstructed* essentialism of national *discourse* and purported significance, rather than of 'unreflected allegiance'. This reflectiveness may result in decisions to try to fortify national identities along more traditional parameters, stabilising the 'bind' between nation and state through a process of 'internationalising' what's perceived as 'supranational' or in symbolic attempts to keep the nation free of foreign 'contamination' (always meaning stemming immigration); or in moderate downgradings of the existentialist exclusivity contained in such traditional parameters, resulting in greater degrees of openness and a gradual erosion of negative foreign stereotypes of the European Other.

ii) In socio-psychological terms, it is basically a defensive kind of identity, often pessimistic, sceptical, alarmist or downright eschatological. Where earlier forms of nationalism contained an important element of 'future mission' (as well as nostalgia and historical myth), this is almost totally absent from Euro-nationalism today, which is full of self-doubt, sentimental cliché and ritual, and external scapegoats - whether in the form of Islamic immigration, incompetent national politicians, or the (mentally speaking) wildly exaggerated 'EU bureaucracy'. On this background, both extreme right-wing politics trying to reforge the nation/state-linkage of the good old days, and Tony Blair's new national optimism (boosted by the sentimental outpourings following Princess Diana's death and funeral) take on the hue of a political ritual with little contextual substance, the papering over of the crevasse that both globalisation generally and the EU project as a proactive way of containing it have introduced into the old configurations of European nationalism. For the same reason, this new nationalism as such has no future-oriented politics that naturally follows from it; whatever there might be in Europe these days of such programmatic positions in terms of a modernity for the 21st century substantively strikes at the very roots of the nationalist configuration of nation/state-homogeneity (inclusive of the New Labour's political programme, which no less than Lady Thatcher's in the 80s is trapped between global economic liberalism, EU integration, and its *laudatio* of the old-new spirit of the British 'we'). Understandably, but also ironically, it is the German type of non-national nationalism, born and bred in the aftermath of its predecessor's shame and guilt, that is best equipped for the global age: Europe is here more of a benefit for national confidence rather than a direct threat, though the Euro-debate has, also there, touched a raw nerve in Germany's 'D-Mark nationalism' (Habermas, 1990).

iii) It tends to reinstate 'culture' to a new position of primacy, trying to forge a tighter link between 'identity' and 'culture' than what was necessarily contained in the old form. This is based on doubts about the stability and functionality of the national political roof and the redefinitions of boundaries, 'Others' and sovereignty prevalent in the EU as well as in the world at large. In such a predicament (as viewed from the perspective of nationalism), culture's traditional role as that to which national meaning is attributed in a process of selective perception tends to change towards something more proactive: culture tends to become/be treated as an autonomously homogenising factor, moving from a status as dependent towards one as independent variable. Reasons for this are fairly obvious: where in the old Europe, national identity was largely created in a process of Self/Other-demarcation, in the new Europe this is not possible to the same extent, since confirmation and justification for viewing the Other in a hostile light are not forthcoming from the

majority of the political elites (neither from their discourse nor their actions). 'At best' signals are ambivalent. This implies that national identities to an increasing extent are thrown back on their 'internal' cultural resources, resources they have allegedly always been shaped by, but whose real nature and feature now become reinterpreted. Also in this domain, results of the review are multifarious: standing firm on the defense of old boundaries (immigrant policies; 'renationalising' the national territory; a more sharply formulated cultural politics); redrawing boundaries to fit better with the convergent ideal (eg. new regionalisms and the claim for the recognition of new autonomous national units); localising identity structures in cultural terms, accepting the separation of cultural identity and political allegiance, or playing around with different forms of hybrid, mixed, nested or multicultural identity settings. The common factor in all these is that 'culture' is becoming self-consciously treated as the nodal point of contemporary formulations of national identities, in a context where the overarching political roof - which used to function as the self-evident glue tying 'identity' and 'culture' together in one seemingly homogeneous structure - is, or seems to be, undergoing a partial 'denationalisation'.

Thus, the new pattern of nationalism in EU-Europe is really neither ethnic nor civic. It belies this traditional dichotomy. It is cultural, but mostly in a defensive manner, looking to reconstitute itself in order to weather the dual storm of what could be termed postnational globality on the one hand, and the late-20th century supermodernist, technocratic-rational project of EU integration on the other (Weiler, 1997).

The first irony of this situation is that the EU - conceived as a reaction of containment to transnational forces that evade the control of the sovereign nation-state - has turned out to be perceived as a greater threat to national identities and nation-state sovereignty than the economic, political and cultural forces at work within the perimeter of globalisation, against which the EU was supposed to defend 'the Europeans'. Consider: These odd creatures generally do not balk at being labelled as or for that matter seeing themselves as Europeans in a vague cultural sense when for instance travelling on other continents. But when 'European' means 'EU citizen' with an 'EU identity' defined by Brussels, it is generally met with rejection, mockery or indifference. In a European sense, 'culture' signifies negatively when used to carry connotations of political allegiance - unlike the national context, where the reverse applies. For the same reason, some EU-sceptical movements have no problem championing themselves as both (true) 'Europeans' and 'internationalists', as long as this does not imply any sincere support for the EU (as is the case with eg. the 'June Movement' in Denmark).

The second irony is that although the EU in this way may contribute towards a heightened awareness of national identity issues and sometimes towards the creation of more nationalism (contrary to the intentions of the founding fathers as well as the USA as international licenser of the project), this increase in nationalism does not base itself on nor lead to - with the possible exception of Germany - a stronger nation-*state*. If states are strengthened in the process, they are so as regulatory units which no longer have the 'nation' as their natural (let alone only) economic, social or territorial underpinning. And the more these globalising forces engender more EU initiatives to hem them in, the more this will tend to boost the tendency for a 'stretching' of states beyond their national confines. In this *milieu*, nationalism may or may not be strengthened, but if it is, it is bound to have to undergo either a transformation process that I have elsewhere called 'agnostic maturing' (Hedetoft, 1995) or to turn fundamentalist. This last scenario would necessarily be violent, although most probably the manifestations would be less inter- than intranational, like recent disappointed reactions by Christian national fundamentalists in the USA against the alleged 'betrayal' by political leaders of fundamental American values (notably the Oklahoma City bombing) (Juergensmeyer, forthcoming).

Would this be tantamount to a 'clash of civilisations' (Huntington, 1996) or a 'Jihad vs McWorld' scenario (Barber, 1995)? Or just a 'clash of cultures', which is by now quite a common discourse in which to frame understandings and perceptions of what happens when the nation-state meets the world? The argument to this point has attempted to show that although these prevalent theories contain a vast number of insights and valid conceptualisations, they suffer from unquestioned acceptance of the commonsense equation between 'identity', 'culture' (or civilisation) and the politics that often wed these notions to each other. In other words, culture/civilisation far too often become invested with politically (or religiously) shaped identity markers, ie with the collective interpretive and selective lenses that sometimes (but sometimes not) give cultural and civilisational features a potency of meaning and consequence which transcends their cultural properties *per se*. This is what happens when eg. Islam by many commentators (including Huntington) is imputed with a 'violent' or 'terrorist' *quality* - which is no more valid than a statement to the same effect about Christianity (with reference to Northern Ireland, Serbia, or medieval crusades for that matter).<sup>5</sup> This means that a 'cultural' or 'civilisational' clash only makes sense if one does not understand the terms literally, but symbolically, as

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<sup>5</sup> For perceptive reflections on the interlinkages between religion and nationalism, see eg Juergensmeyer, 1993.

collective carriers ('interpretants' in terms of Peircean semiotics; see eg. Hedetoft, 1997) of very particular readings and perceptions of reactive identity politics. On the other hand, this approach takes the predictive causalities pointing almost irreversibly towards global doom-and-gloom out of this dominant paradigm, and sends us back to much more unmotivated, arbitrary, interpretively informed links between 'cultural identities' and 'globalisation', calling in turn for grand theories to base themselves in greater measure on a precise reading of the complexity, paradoxes and non-linear nature of world development.<sup>6</sup>

## VI

At the beginning of 1996 *The Economist* carried an interesting article with an equally interesting title: 'The nation-state is dead. Long live the nation-state' (5 January, 1996). It basically argued that although the world is being transformed by transnational processes and political interdependence, the nation-state will 'stumble on' because 'it is still the sole possessor of that magic formula without which it is hard to hold any sort of political structure together'. 'Only the nation-state possesses the necessary sense of identity', it continues, but also warns that we should 'watch Europe' in order to gauge whether this state of affairs might be in for a dramatic change.

I think *The Economist* is right - up to a point. As far as Europe is concerned, there is still no reason to think that the nation-state will wither away, but certainly the conditions for its survival are changing so fast that it is doubtful whether by nation-state we mean the same thing that we did 50 or 100 years ago. Both in Europe and outside of Europe nation-states and their identity structures are being reforged in a melting-pot (or salad-bowl?) of globalisation which makes them into *reactors* to transnational processes more than the *shapers* of those processes, and in the same vein makes nation-states and national/cultural identities into defensive, dependent bastions of communication, organisation and 'home-like-ness'. For the same reason, wedges of uncertainty, and cleavages of solidarity and common interest and purpose are being imposed on the supposedly homogeneous world

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<sup>6</sup> In this light it must be said that one of the problems both with optimistic modernists à la Fukuyama and apocalyptic pessimists like Barber is that both schools tend to think in linear, evolutionary terms: a kind of reductive causality thinking which far too readily overlooks the real complexities and differentiated, simultaneously aligned trajectories of global developments.

of nation-states, threatening both the tight bond between nation and state and between culture and identity. In this patchwork world, elites particularly are split between the vision of *The Economist* that the nation-state still offers the most tested formula for a politically cohesive structure and the insight that this formula is, politically more than possibly culturally or identity-wise, obsolescent, at least in the orthodox nation-state format. The masses have a hunch of this and have increasingly come to doubt the national loyalty of their elites (Lasch, 1993). Some react by reasserting the cultural and mythical roots of their national identity. Others by withdrawing into smaller circles of 'local knowledge' (Geertz, 1983), perhaps realising the relative artificiality of national identity if measured by the standard of cultural homogeneity, or trying to reinvent it by creating smaller, more manageable and culturally more close-knit nation-states. Regionalism and localism here transform into a new, late 20th century nationalist movement. Just think of Scotland, Lombardy, Slovenia and Flanders in Europe, of Kurdistan, Khalistan, Quebec and the Tamil separatist movement elsewhere. A third category effect or negotiate hybrid identities for themselves across national boundaries, drawing on a diverse pool of cultural-ethnic potentials - such as possibly Wilson Kipketer.

All of this is a product of and a manifestation of globalisation. Europe is a specific regional example, where the European integration process, as a *proactive* attempt to limit and control the impact of transnationalisation, has also spawned unique patterns and problems of cultural identity, from cultural localism over cultural renationalisation to, perhaps, the incipient (but very unlikely) creation of a cultural EU-identity. Most importantly these processes impact the linkage between nation and state, masses and elites, but lines of divisions also cut across such neat distinctions. Like Europe generally, cultural identities find themselves between a rock and a hard place, squeezed between unity and fragmentation, between going forward (but where to?) and looking over their shoulder (but for what purpose?). It is in this ambiguous and hard-to-interpret situation that we are moving towards the 21st century. *The Economist* is right therefore on another point too: it pays to 'Watch Europe' extremely closely. It's a laboratory for the future of nationalism and its 'cultural identity', and for studying some crucial and globally transformative interactions between transnational and intercultural processes.

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