

An examination of European and national identity

IN 1987 I conducted a small study into one of the peripheral institutions of the European Community, The European University Institute in Florence. One hundred members of this organization—mostly post-graduates working on their theses there for several years—answered questions about their perception of national differences and their European awareness (reported in: Wilterdink 1990, 77-85). A large majority of the respondents (85 %) said they defined themselves as 'Europeans' and almost two-thirds (65 %) subscribed to the statement that 'We Europeans have a common identity which separates us from people from other parts of the world'. When asked how they would designate themselves if given the choice between the European identity and the identity of their original nationality, almost equal numbers responded in favour of both alternatives (38 % and 41 % respectively).

The terms 'culture' and 'history' were prevalent in the description of this 'European identity'. Some respondents implied that Europe is characterised by more culture (more highly developed, more complex, more refined) and more history (a very long well-known history, manifesting itself in old buildings, old cities, works of art, books, customs) than other parts of the world. In addition, the following characteristics were repeatedly named as determining the European identity: the large cultural variety and the common respect for it; the liberal democratic principles of the state; and the political solidarity due to the shared position between the superpowers.

These answers are surprising to those who thought that there was no such thing as a European consciousness, that it only appeared in rhetorical speeches and writings. Here was a group—albeit a very specific group—that took the idea of a 'European identity' seriously and applied it to themselves.

A few more general questions can be tied to these findings. What are the intellectual foundations of these ideas about a European identity and what form do they take? What are the underlying suppositions and motives? To what extent are such ideas alive in various sections of the European population? In other words, how strongly developed is a 'European consciousness'—and how does it relate to 'national consciousness'? Will the feelings of a common European identity grow stronger in the future and will they displace the old national feelings?

As several social theorists have pointed out, nation-states are by no means the natural end products of human history (see e.g. Elias 1987). Processes of increasing international interdependence have occurred especially after the Second World War, involving the organization and coordination of human activities on integration levels higher than those of

the existing nation-states. Will these processes lead to more encompassing sociopolitical units, and what will be the nature of these units? To be more specific: will the efforts toward European integration eventually lead to a large European nation-state, comparable to the old nation-states of which it is composed? Here I will enter into the 'nation' side of this question—the possibilities and probabilities of increasing feelings of identification and solidarity on a European scale.

Euro-nationalism and European identity

European integration is not only an economic and political development, it is also a cultural and an intellectual one: this is something the propagandists of integration agree on. In a Europe that is truly one, the citizens of different European countries must feel united across the borders of their own countries, they must identify with one another in the realization that they are part of the same collectivity.

This idea has been articulated in various pleas in favour of European integration since the nineteenth century, but after World War II, with the institutionalization of the integration process, it has received, one might say, official status. It has become part of the repertoire of European administrators, it can be found in countless publications by European organizations, in conference statements and preambles to international treaties. Various important private organizations propagate the same idea. Time and again they refer—more or less emphatically—to a Europe which is more than a geographical area. It is suggested repeatedly that European integration finds its final justification in the unity of European culture and the awareness of this unity.

These ideas—or, put in less friendly terms, this propaganda—is strongly reminiscent of the development and dissemination of a national consciousness in the separate states of Europe (particularly) since the nineteenth century. The similarity is such that one might speak of an aim to form a nation at the European level and an ideology of Euro-nationalism. Just as in former times elite groups in existing or projected European states shaped a national identity and tried to get it accepted by large segments of the population (cf. Hobsbawm/Ranger 1983; Boerner 1986), Euro-ideologists (in the broadest sense of the word) are now attempting to give substance to—and disseminate—a European identity.

This pursuit is revealed in numerous post-war writings, whose titles usually contain the word 'Europe', which propagate the European unity concept more or less explicitly, and which provide a justification for European cooperation. In these writings—ranging from official publications by the European Community or the European Council to passionate individual reflections—the European identity is being 'constructed'. Despite all variations regarding themes, style of argu-

mentation and ideological import, together they present—or so a limited selection (1) shows—a certain image of what 'Europe' essentially is.

According to Euro-nationalist writings the unity, the special nature of Europe is found in an entirely unique culture or civilization, which is rooted in a distant past and therefore has a very long history. Denis de Rougement for example, in his book called *Vingt-huit siècles d'Europe* (1961), argued that Europe was originally a unity, which only became divided by national differences at a later stage. The French historian J.-B. Duroselle (1987) goes even further in one comment on this book and situates the beginning of European civilization not twenty-eight, but fifty-six centuries ago.

Europe's roots are usually searched for in a less distant past. A conventional image situates the beginning (the 'cradle') of European civilization in Greek antiquity, which produced the values of individual dignity and critical, independent thought. After that follows Roman civilization, in which legal thought is developed to impressive heights, and in the bosom of which a third tradition emerges: the tradition of Christianity, which specifically emphasizes community spirit. Some authors add a fourth tradition: the tradition of the Renaissance, Reason and Enlightenment, in which the secular ideals of rationalism and humanitarianism are developed. In this view, the cultural unity of Europe is the result of old, continual, successive and mingling cultural traditions, which together produced a unique amalgam and found their expression in, among other things, organized science, institutionalized protection of human rights and democratic political institutions.

Despite the emphasis on unity, the Euro-nationalist writings do not deny the diversity within Europe. 'Unity in diversity' is the phrase that is used time and again to express this. They indicate, for example, the ancient differences between the 'Latin' and the 'Germanic' peoples, the historical divisions between Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches, the emergence of national contrasts. An enormous, colourful variety of languages, national traditions, regional and local customs, landscapes and climates are considered typical of Europe. These differences are partly regretted as the sources of conflicts, but on the other hand the point is stressed that Europe also finds its strength and originality in this diversity—it is the diversity which is a source of constant creativity and innovation. Therefore, as the Euro-nationalists emphasize, European integration should not signify the disappearance of this variety; its complement is in a shared respect for diversity, a common tolerance, which also rests on a long tradition.

According to Euro-nationalist writings Europe is also special because

(1) The documents studied include publications by the European Community as well as miscellaneous writings by scholars and journalists, such as: Hoggart/Johnson 1987;

Barzini 1983; Morin 1987; Kohlhasse 1988; Duroselle 1990; and several contributions in Rijksbaron/Roobol/Weisglas (eds) 1987.

of its major historical significance for humanity as a whole. References are often made to modern science, the technological breakthroughs of the industrial revolution and the humanist ethics that imply respect for the unique value of each individual. It is suggested (although seldom put in so many words these days) that Europe is not just a civilization among other civilizations, and it is not only a powerful civilization, but in many ways it is a superior civilization, which serves as an example for non-European nations.

The extent to which Euro-nationalist writings pay attention to the process of European integration varies. They name, for example, important predecessors who advocated a European federation long ago (Saint-Simon, Mazzini, Victor Hugo), or who set up an organization to that end (Count Van Coudenhove Kalergi and his Pan-European Movement founded in 1923). They frequently refer to famous speeches that called for European cooperation, such as Aristide Briand's speech to the League of Nations in 1929 and Churchill's speech in 1946. They refer to the constructive work of illustrious founding fathers like Robert Schuman and Jean Monnet, 'builders of Europe', who were encouraged by idealist motives. The main motive for the European integration objective for them, as it was for others, was to guarantee the peace, even though other, more utilitarian motives are also mentioned. The impression created by all this is one of slow but steady progress in which strong resistance, born from conservatism and narrow-minded nationalism, is gradually overcome.

Abstracted from specific names and facts, the propagated European identity resembles nationalistic representations of the own nation (French, German, Dutch, etc.) in various ways. A collective identity that has its roots in a distant past and is based on long-standing, uninterrupted cultural traditions; unique characteristics and special achievements that command the admiration of other nations; major historical figures and important events which resulted in political integration and autonomy and had a decisive impact on further political developments—all of this is also at the core of nationalistic tracts and histories from and about separate European states. 'Unity in diversity' is also frequently ascribed to separate countries as a special characteristic.

Another remarkable thing in both types of ideology is the paradoxical way in which they strive for confirmation and reinforcement of the own collective identity. On the one hand it is explicitly stated that there is a fundamental unity and that it has deep historical roots; on the other hand there is the belief that this unity is still insufficiently 'realized'. So a discrepancy between essence and manifestation, between the essential unity and the empirical reality of the moment is assumed, and this implies a summons to achieve, and justifies the pursuit of, further unity. Observation and recommendation, ontological statements and formulation of desirabilities blend into one another here.

Ideology is not separate from reality, and it is impossible to say about Euro-ideological writings that they contain only or mainly falsehoods. Although it would not be very hard to point out laughable excerpts in this literature (for example: 'It is neither a coincidence nor a purely religious reference that the cross is the symbol of European civilization; it shows the eternal choice between extremes, a battle between anarchistic individualism and stifling collectivism, a cross between security and danger' (Dumont 1980)), such excerpts are not characteristic of Euro-nationalistic literature in general. What typifies this literature, however, is a selective view of history, a one-sided emphasis on harmony, unity, continuity, progress and culture—the 'Sunday clothes of history' (Brands 1987). Cultural traditions are identified to a high degree with principled intellectual and artistic achievements, and are mostly situated in an autonomous realm of the mind. The insight that even the highest intellectual and artistic achievements are related to basic work and power relations is not quite reconcilable with this pretty image. Wars, oppression and genocide, which have marked European history, are even less compatible with this image, and the writings in this genre either disregard them or present them as deviations, lapses which are in essence not European (but for example 'Asian', as in Ernst Nolte's (1986) infamous statement about the 'Asian' nature of the persecution of Jews in World War II). The violent and repressive sides of the European expansion into other continents do not receive much attention in this literature either.

The Euro-nationalist writings also resemble more conventional nationalistic literature in this selectiveness, this normative one-sidedness. However, there are striking differences between both genres with regard to the nature of the selection: while Euro-nationalism strongly emphasizes culture, and High Culture in particular, conventional nationalist historiography focuses much more on battles, war heroes and accompanying virtues. The fact that the national independence has been won, preserved and enhanced by means of violence is not concealed here. This difference in focus is directly related to differences in actual development and pursued objectives. While national states have never emerged without violence, the process of European integration is supposed to proceed peacefully: differences are to be overcome and the danger of war is to be banned. This aim cannot accommodate a view of history in which conflicts between states take a central role. On the contrary, it searches for the things that reconcile and overcome national differences, and these are found in culture or civilization.

A difference between conventional nationalism and Euro-nationalism is then that the latter is in comparison very peaceable and non-aggressive. It knows no explicitly displayed enemy; not only are internal (intra-European) conflicts covered, but there is also no designating and attacking of external adversaries. Even pointing out contrasts with other

cultures is limited, although there are sometimes references to, for example, Asian collectivism. Again, this is connected with the nature of the integrationist efforts. European unity and autonomy do not have to be won from external enemies; the states which must give shape to their integration are autonomous (at least formally) and their joint pursuit takes place with the approval of (initially even pressured by) their mighty ally, the United States. This ally offers military protection, but does not intervene directly in domestic affairs. On the other hand there was, until recently, the military threat from the East; insofar as Euro-nationalist writings address this issue, they do not point at the East European nations, but rather at their regimes as the enemy. This is understandable: these nations are (at least in part) considered to belong to European civilization and an ideology that advocates and argues in favour of the unity of Europe can't very well turn against them.

In a more general sense the peaceful, non-aggressive nature of Euro-nationalism is related to the changing position of the European states in general, and the West European states in particular, since World War II. During the centuries of European dominance, the elites of these states took it for granted that Europe was the centre of the world; Europe was more or less identical with 'civilization'. Other peoples could only reach the level of European civilization after a lengthy development (as the nineteenth century evolutionists put it), or they would never be able to reach that level in view of their inherent disposition (as the racial theories contended). A more relativistic view gained influence at the end of the nineteenth century, as is clear for example in the works of Max Weber: Europe or the West has a separate culture that is not necessarily better or higher, but very different from the cultures developed elsewhere. Due to and after World War I, a more pessimistic view of Europe became popular among European intellectuals; Europe was still the centre of High Culture, but at the same time it was a divided continent, marked by conflicts and doubts. While the emergence of Fascism and of Communism gave new hope to some of them, others saw in these developments the symptoms of the coming downfall of Europe. World War II put a seal on the process that had started with World War I: loss of power by the Western European states, including victorious Great Britain, coupled with an increase in power for the United States and the Soviet Union, plus a dissolution of the colonial empires governed from Western Europe. This was the situation in which politicians and intellectuals called for a United Europe—to turn the European loss of power, to give Europe its rightful place among the new superpowers. As Europe had weakened itself by raising the internal differences to disastrous proportions, so it could strengthen itself by achieving unity (2).

So underlying the post-war integration aim were political power

(2) See for example Winston Churchill's famous speech in Zürich on September 19, 1946; published in: Patijn (ed.) 1970.

considerations of a defensive nature. The concept of European unity did not become politically important until Europe's position in the world was no longer one of dominance. Europe was only allocated a place alongside other parts of the world when it was no longer identical with the centre of the world. Euro-nationalistic writings adopt this definition: while they boast Europe's historical greatness, they assign it a relatively modest, or at least non-dominant position in the world, both for the present and the future. A continuity between past and present is suggested by emphasizing culture: Europe does not derive its status from dominance, so the message goes, but from special cultural traditions and innovations. In this context European superiority is suggested rather than postulated explicitly; in general one attempts to avoid the impression of narrow-minded ethnocentrism. Meanwhile, the power-political and industrial-economic motives in the pursuit of integration are kept in the background, and are not made an object of analysis. It would be inappropriate to point out these motives too explicitly in the exalted atmosphere in which the European concept and European identity are written about.

Europe is usually situated between the superpowers of the East and West; that is another point where Europe, as a *Schicksalgemeinschaft*, finds its unity. However, in this context the Euro-ideologists run up against a central problem: the indistinctness of Europe's boundaries. They generally regard Western Europe as the core of the European cultural unity: these regions in particular developed and put into practise the important European values of individual freedom and democracy. But Central and Eastern Europe are not totally excluded (although Russia is frequently shut out explicitly). On the other hand the essential characteristics of the European core definitely also apply to the United States. This is expressed in the terms 'Western' and 'the West'. Sometimes 'Western' and 'European' are used interchangeably and the United States (and also Canada, Australia, New Zealand) are considered part of 'Europe'. But the pursuit of European integration does not concern the United States or any other area outside geographical Europe. So the problem is that the integration aim within geographical Europe is justified by referring to a cultural communality that also comprises areas outside Europe in essential respects, while that same communality does not apply, or is less valid for certain areas within geographical Europe.

There is another source of confusion in this context: it is exactly during the period of Europe's relative loss of power that Europeanization, or rather Westernization is stronger than ever before. So it becomes more and more difficult to speak in terms of separate culture areas or civilizations of which the European or Western civilization is one. The demarcation of Europe as a cultural unity therefore becomes more problematical than it already was.

These problems—and in particular the indistinctness of boundaries and the absence of contrasts and enemies—frequently show Euro-

nationalistic reflections to be unmistakably woolly and pointless. Nevertheless they undoubtedly have some influence. The European academics' responses mentioned at the beginning of this article when asked what the 'European identity' consists of, reflect in a lapidary form the core issues of Euro-nationalism as it has been developed in books and discussions. To what extent are similar notions of a European identity present in larger segments of the European population?

European and national awareness in the European Community

The results of the annual 'Eurobarometer' surveys conducted for the EC shed some light on the extent to which an awareness of a European identity has found acceptance among the populations of the countries in the European Community. These results indicate that the European integration aim enjoys considerable and through the years relatively stable support from the populations of the EC-countries. According to the poll held in 1990 (Eurobarometer 34), no less than 81 % of the respondents from the twelve member states declared to be in favour of European integration (34 % 'very much in favour', 47 % 'somewhat in favour'), while 9 % declared to be against. That is an increase compared to five years earlier, when 74 % declared to be in favour of integration (29 % very much in favour, 45 % somewhat in favour) and 12 % against.

In each separate country the number of supporters surpasses the number of opposers, albeit that the degree in which this occurs varies considerably per state. The resistance is highest in Denmark, where 29 % of the respondents declared to be against European integration in the 1990 poll (compared to 64 % in favour), followed by the United Kingdom.

Other data confirm—to a somewhat lesser extent—the ample goodwill (shown by the populations of the member states) that EC politics can pride itself on. For example, according to the 1990 poll, 69 % were of the opinion that membership of the European Community was a 'good thing' for their own country (7 % felt it was a 'bad thing' and 18 % found it neither good nor bad). A small majority (59 %) felt the own country had benefited from the membership, while 23 % did not believe this was the case. Despite this positive attitude towards further integration exhibited by a majority of the EC-population, there is not much evidence for an emotional identification with 'Europe'. A remarkably large percentage of the respondents, 34 %, said they were indifferent to the possibility of their country withdrawing from the European Community (whereas less than half, 49 %, said they would find that very regrettable). In the poll of 1989, nearly half (48 %) responded 'never' to the question of whether they ever felt a 'citizen of Europe', while only 14 % responded that they 'frequently' felt it and 33 % said they 'sometimes' felt it. Only 8 %

indicated that they attached value to symbols such as a European flag and a European anthem.

This limited identification with Europe becomes even more obvious when comparisons are made with national feelings in the traditional sense. A 1984 survey (Eurobarometer 21) shows that a large percentage of Europeans readily expressed being 'proud' of their own country. The answers given in five EC-countries—France, United Kingdom, Italy, the German Federal Republic and the Netherlands—were distributed as follows:

Expressed national pride in five West European countries in percentages (1984)

	(very) proud	not (very) proud	don't know/ no response
France	82	14	4
United Kingdom	87	9	4
Italy	85	8	7
Germany	63	30	7
Netherlands	76	20	4
TOTAL	78	17	5

It would seem logical to assume that a relatively strong national pride is coupled with relatively low support for European integration, but according to the data from the survey there is no definite connection between the two at the aggregate level. Although it is true that in Great Britain a strong national pride is accompanied by high resistance to European integration, this does not automatically imply that in the reverse situation where the expressed national pride is lowest, as in the case of West Germany, scores are highest on support for the European cause; since the 1980s Germany has been overtaken in this respect by Italy and France.

When asked to make a choice between the own country and Europe (more specifically the European Community), in nearly all cases a majority will choose the first option. In 1984, for example, a large majority of the respondents in various EC-countries declared they were against one European Olympic team instead of national teams and against EC-ambassadors to replace the ambassadors of the separate member states. In a comparable survey in 1978 (Eurobarometer 10) two-thirds of the respondents felt that national autonomy should be preserved at all costs. A continuing orientation with the national state is also shown in the answers to the 1989 question of whether the European Parliament should be organized on national criteria or political criteria: a 59 % majority preferred the first option, which is contrary to the actual situation.

We can deduce from these data that the prevalent attitude towards European integration is sympathetic and can be characterised as positive or accepting, but not unconditionally positive, let alone enthusiastic. There is, to use another term, a relatively widespread permissive consensus (cf. Hewstone 1986), a mainly utilitarian acceptance of the integration process, that is not (or hardly) accompanied by a European consciousness, by sentiments of 'we-Europeans' comparable to the feelings of national pride. The majority expects European integration to bring advantages such as free travel, freedom of residence, being able to study where one chooses, being able to choose from a wide assortment of duty-free consumer goods (3)—but the Euro-nationalistic symbolism proposed in the context of the 'Citizens of Europe' program (flag, anthem, etc.) has no appeal. The European Community is associated, and not without cause, primarily with industrial-economic interests. The integration process in the Community context is accepted as useful and perhaps necessary (in line with historical developments), but only as long as and insofar as the national autonomy is not fundamentally threatened. However, it is not quite clear where this fundamental threat of the national autonomy would start in the eyes of the citizens of the various national states. We can predict that the tensions in this respect will increase with the extension of supranational powers at the EC-level—a prediction already corroborated by the responses to the Maastricht Treaty, particularly its rejection in the Danish referendum.

Other data confirm that the large majority of the citizens of EC-countries have a permanent and strong orientation on their own national state. Although there are complaints about disappointing turn-outs at elections for national parliaments, these turnouts are always much higher than those for the European Parliament, despite intensive campaigns to increase participation in these elections. This thinking in terms of national differences is also indicated in the reputation and popularity of certain national stereotypes. The arrogant Frenchman, the orderly German, the reticent Englishman, the theatrical Italian, the thrifty Dutchman—such images are popular throughout Western Europe, as is shown not only in countless writings (ranging from cultural-historical essays to travel guides), but also in the results of empirical studies of national images (Peabody 1985; Wilterdink 1992). There are no comparable stereotypes about 'the Europeans', especially among Europeans themselves.

Studies of specific sections of the Western European population do not indicate much enthusiasm for the European cause either. One survey among university students in the four largest countries of the European Community—France, Italy, Great Britain and the German Federal Republic—showed that their opinions about Europe did not deviate

(3) This can be inferred from the results of Eurobarometer 31 (June 1989).

much from those of the population as a whole; in their case also it was more a question of passive acceptance of the integration aim than active and affective support; resistance was also highest among the British students (Hewstone 1986, 87 ff.).

The role of the political elites of the member states of the EC is not (or only slightly) stimulating in this respect. Here also, the main orientation of a large majority is on their own national state and national interests, and they are inclined to view the European Community in that light—as a cooperative that must serve these national interests. A 1976 study, based on interviews with members of parliament and senior officials from several EC-countries, showed that these officials were generally even less taken with European integration than the populations of their respective countries as a whole (Feld/Wildgen 1976).

As is so often the case, it is a minority which proclaims and attempts to realize collective objectives, and tries to persuade a relatively passive and indifferent majority to join them. This minority consists increasingly of professionals, officials from the EC-bureaucracy or one of the other European institutions whose job it is to promote European integration in some way. They have a professional interest in honoring and propagating the European concept. A relatively strong European consciousness can be expected to be found in still another—larger—category, given their professional interests as well as their international (European) contacts and experiences: those associated with European institutions as researchers, lecturers or students, who benefit from the money these institutions have and/or those who have specialized in European Law, the history of the European Community or any other area of 'European studies'. We refer to the Europe-experts who populate the countless conferences devoted to Europe and who have invested a part of their cultural capital in the European integration process. The respondents at the European University Institute in Florence were part of this category and, as we have seen, the majority of them did indeed show a highly developed European consciousness. As the EC-bureaucracy and European Law expand, and the number of other European organizations increase, this professionally Europe-oriented minority will grow.

The chances of nation-formation at the European level

It is not necessary to speculate at random about the chances of a nation being formed at the European level. A good theoretical starting-point is to assume that interdependence is the basic condition of identification; or, to put it in process terms, that the widening of networks of interdependence is the basic condition of the tendency to identify with larger groups (cf. Elias 1970; 1987). However, while networks of interdependence—e.g. those of trade markets—do not neces-

sarily have clear, sharp and stable boundaries, feelings of group identification and, more in particular, of 'national' identification involve a more or less sharp distinction between 'we' and the others—the outsiders, foreigners or strangers. This distinction is based, moreover, on the recognition of cultural similarities and dissimilarities. Combining these theoretical notions with knowledge derived from historical studies on nation-formation processes which have occurred in Europe and elsewhere over the past centuries, we can distinguish three main conditions which are generally necessary or conducive to the formation of nations:

1. Large-scale nation-formation takes place on the condition that local and regional communities are opened up and enter into close mutual relations—by intensifying transport, trade (market relations), travel and communication, and by the extension of central state regulation. Through these developments the living conditions of inhabitants of different areas become more equal. The chances that people will resemble each other in a cultural sense and identify with each other increase as the economic and political interdependencies between residents of different regions grow, as their mutual contacts intensify and their geographical mobility increases, as the regulations they are subject to become more uniform. In short, given all these conditions, the probability of a national culture and national consciousness spreading, increases (cf. Weber 1976; Gellner 1983).

Equalization of living conditions as a condition for the formation of nations relates not only to the inhabitants of different districts, but also to the various social strata: democratization in the wide sense contributes to the mutual identification of people in different social positions and so to the generalization of a nation-awareness. Political democratization, the extension of political rights and the involvement of larger numbers of people in political decision-making at a central level, is part of this development: in this way the mutual identification of people as members of one political community spreads.

2. A national awareness presupposes the awareness of boundaries: the actual recognition—or the projection as the desired situation—of territorial borders which coincide with political and cultural boundaries. In short, national awareness implies the notion of a country, a state and a socio-cultural community, and of a natural and unbreakable connection between them. It means there is a differentiation between 'we' and 'they', it implies both feelings of solidarity with those within the projected boundaries and feelings of distance or even enmity for those outside them.

So as the territorial, political and ethnic-cultural boundaries are clearer and coincide to a greater extent, nation-formation becomes more probable. Formulated in terms of processes: the chances of nation-formation taking place increase as the processes that promote intensification of communication and equalization of living conditions

and culture show particular fault lines, *i.e.* as the standardization within the given territorial boundaries implies more differentiation with regions outside those boundaries.

3. National cultures do not emerge out of nowhere; they presuppose a continuity with preceding cultures. The chances of nation-building increase as a given area has a stronger initial 'core culture' which is shared by a dominant social group, and elements of which are subsequently disseminated deliberately across larger segments of the population (Smith 1991; Hobsbawm 1990).

At the European level these conditions are only partially met:

1. Intensification of transport and trade, expansion of communication, increased mobility: all of these processes take place within Europe, and in particular within the European Community, and they bring a certain equalization of living conditions and lifestyles between different countries and regions. That makes it easier for people from the various (West) European countries to feel united and makes it more difficult to regard them as very different.

The equalization between countries and regions is the result of technological and economic developments that are not controlled by governments, rather than a result of deliberate politics; to the extent that it is determined by political measures, it is more a result of the abolition of impeding regulations (border checks, import duties) than any regulation on a European, supranational level. Within the European Community the Brussels bureaucracy expands its operation, but its influence on the daily lives of most people in the Community (except specific categories such as farmers) is limited, much more limited than the influence of national governments. However, as this influence increases, so will the orientation towards 'Europe', in a positive or negative sense, increase.

A long-term perspective shows that the differences between social strata in terms of living conditions and lifestyles have also diminished—since the second half of the nineteenth century at least—and this development was a pre-requisite for the spread of national awareness in each of the European states. The short-term perspective, however, shows that—since the 1980s—the discrepancies in terms of property, income and job opportunities are increasing rather than decreasing; this trend has become visible primarily in the gradual emergence of an in part ethnically differentiated underclass of poor and long-term unemployed. If a European consciousness is to generalize in the future, it will not be among this category. In general we can expect a European consciousness to spread more strongly among particular elite groups (large entrepreneurs, 'Eurocrats') than among lower social strata.

There is little political democratization at the European level, considering that the powers of the body which is supposed to epitomize

this democratization, the European Parliament, are still limited. As long as these powers remain primarily symbolic—and they will as long as the important decisions at EC-level are arrived at in negotiations between the ministers of the national governments—elections for this parliament cannot be expected to contribute significantly to raising a 'collective consciousness' with regard to the European unity.

2. As indicated earlier, the lack of clear boundaries—territorial, political, ethnic-cultural—is a major obstacle in the formation of a European national awareness. Unlike the image of France or Italy or Germany, the image of 'Europe' cannot be supported by a map with sharp contours. The European Community is not one unbroken territory, but a collection of countries that together present an extremely irregular geographical image. Conversely, geographical Europe with its relatively clear territorial boundaries does not imply even a potential political or cultural unity. The European continent transects two important existing states, the Russian Federation and Turkey, and in both cases it is not clear whether and to what extent they belong to cultural Europe. (Turkey, although a member of several European organizations including the European Council, is generally not considered part of cultural Europe by non-Turkish Europeans.) The values which are considered essentially European by Euro-ideologists only apply to some states in geographical Europe, and also to some states outside that area. European organizations comprise only—ever changing—parts of geographical Europe (the EC, EFTA, the Council of Europe, CERN, etc.), while an organization like NATO links a part of Europe with North America. The most extensive European organization, the semi-permanent Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), also includes the United States and Canada as members. The recent changes in Eastern Europe imply a rapprochement to the dominant West and therefore mean a potential extension of originally Western European organizations like the European Community and the Council of Europe. So the boundaries of 'Europe' as a possible object of identification shift, become wider, but not necessarily clearer.

The processes of the expansion of interdependency networks, the increase in trade and transport, the growth of geographical mobility and the intensification of communication over larger distances are not specifically tied to European borders. This demarcation does apply in part to the European Community: since its foundation, trade between the member states has increased much more than the trade between these states and the outside world, and it is also because of this development that the living conditions in separate parts of the EC have become more similar. The further removal of obstacles in passenger travel and the movement of goods and capital between the countries of the Community, and the extension of EC-regulations to replace national regulations (for example, the agreed-upon introduction of one European currency), will

intensify this tendency. As a result the involvement in the European Community will increase.

However, on other levels and in other ways this conclusion does not apply. First, the European Community is not identical with 'Europe' as a perceived cultural unity and for that reason alone it is unsuitable for the development of feelings of identification and solidarity. An increasing involvement in EC-matters will not automatically result in 'national' feelings at this level. Second, the demarcation along EC-lines (or other European lines) does not apply to organized communication through the mass media or education. On the one hand the borders of the existing national states have a very real significance in this respect: education is standardized per state to a high extent, and a large part of the information presented by the mass media is nation-related and reaches only national audiences. The national states of Western Europe each constitute separate cognitive worlds, in which celebrities figure, debates are held and scandals come to light which are generally known within the nation and practically unknown outside it. It is not to be expected (despite cable television and dish antennae) that this will change drastically in the foreseeable future. On the other hand we see a pattern of internationalization in news coverage, the entertainment industry, fashion, the sciences and arts, that takes little notice of European borders and in which American culture centres now take a dominant position.

3. The European past contains plenty that can be presented as common cultural background and which has—as we have seen—been presented as such by Euro-nationalists. In that sense the Euro-nationalists contribute to a degree to the formation of a European identity. As was shown earlier, certain segments of the European population are aware of this common cultural identity, while in other segments (the numerical majority) such awareness is hardly noticeable.

At lower levels of abstraction it becomes harder to speak of a common European culture or a dominant core culture. The differentiation is clearest in the area of language: not only do different Europeans speak and write different languages—largely related to national states—but none of these languages is dominant. This is not a situation of a 'floral figuration' (De Swaan 1988, 60 ff.), characterized by one central language and a number of peripheral languages, but more of a 'block figuration': different language groups, approximately equal in terms of size and strength (English, French, Spanish, German, Italian), exist alongside various smaller languages (Dutch, Danish, Portuguese, Greek); both the larger and the smaller languages are standardized in dictionaries and grammars, are guarded by ministries and educational institutions, have long literary traditions and find their continuation not only in the daily speech of millions of people, but also in a daily flood of newspapers, magazines and books. None of these languages will be able to displace the

others, as for example the French spoken by the Paris aristocracy displaced patois and Provençal. Characteristic of the situation is the solution arrived at in the EC: all the member states' languages are officially recognized, which means that EC-documents have to be printed in all these languages and that interpreters are available for each of them. While French is the dominant language in the EC-bureaucracy, outside it English is increasingly recognised as the common *lingua franca*—not as a specifically European language, but as a world language. So here we have the paradox that insofar as there is some unification of language in Europe, it will be realized not thanks to, but rather in spite of the strongest European organization; and the language all Europeans will subsequently learn lacks a specifically European nature.

More or less the same can be said of other cultural aspects. In these cases it is also very difficult to find a dominant core from which dissemination among ever larger groups will take place. And insofar as certain cultural elements become more dominant, they lack a specific European nature.

Permanent cultural differentiation along national lines in Europe is also to be expected because several European states have strong ties with countries outside Europe. The United Kingdom has strong cultural ties with the English-speaking former colonies, including the United States, expressed for example in the term 'Anglo-Saxon'. Spain and Portugal have comparable ties with their former colonies in Latin America. These relations are impediments to the development towards a more uniform European culture as well as to the spread of a European unity awareness.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this outline are mixed. It is conceivable and even probable that feelings of European solidarity will become more intense and more widespread in the years to come, partly because of the rapprochement of Central and Eastern European states to Western Europe, and also because of the diminishing dependency on, and orientation towards, the United States. However, given the lack of clear territorial, political and ethnic-cultural boundaries and the strong differentiation between established national cultures (of which not one is dominant), it is not to be expected that a European consciousness will develop that can be compared to the national awareness at the level of the existing states in terms of intensity, continuity and generality. The idea of European identity will remain relatively vague, the object of lofty reflections rather than a source of spontaneous emotions. In view of the ongoing processes of economic, administrative, military and cultural internationalization, we might predict that the decline of nationalistic sentiments in Western Europe, which has been noticeable at least since the 1960s, will continue, at least among the more prosperous and highly educated sections of the population. That does not imply, however, that

these sentiments will be replaced by a Euro-nationalism. The susceptibility of societies characterised by a high level of prosperity, strong physical safety, and on average high levels of education and strong individual mobility, to nationalism or other collectivistic ideologies, is probably not high in any case. The nature of group identification in general becomes less fixed and absolute, more variable and relative. Only when the danger of war becomes acute, does nationalism get a new opportunity—but in all likelihood not at the European level.

In conclusion

Should we regret the fact that there will probably be no fundamental and widespread development of sentiments of 'we-Europeans' in the foreseeable future? Euro-nationalists will respond affirmatively (that is, if they accept the premise of the question) and from the perspective of effective European government, they are correct. Supranational decision making remains very laborious and time-consuming as long as it stays supranational, *i.e.* as long as it does not become national on a higher level of integration. The politics of the European Community will probably remain characterised by repeated deadlocks and lengthy negotiations between ministers and between them and the European Commission (with parliament playing a secondary role) as long as the interests of national states have priority.

From another perspective, however, this lack of European awareness is not necessarily so regrettable. European consciousness, irrespective of how it is defined or justified, is a form of group particularism, a kind of large-scale nationalism that includes some and excludes others. From a perspective of consistent universalism, the European ideal is not very uplifting. It implies both unity and division, both solidarity and favouring one's own group above others.

It would be naive to reject all group particularism on the basis of absolute universalistic ethics. Group particularism exists and fulfills fundamental human needs. However, that does not mean it should be encouraged. Nationalism in particular, which has motivated and justified so much large-scale violence in this century, deserves to be regarded with suspicion, irrespective of the unity involved.

As we have seen, the development in Western Europe is one of toning down nationalism in the traditional sense. What seems to be taking its place is not so much a new (Euro-)nationalism, but rather a complex of scattered group loyalties based on different, intersecting bonds. Both national awareness in the traditional sense and European awareness belong to this complex, and they can be used to keep one another in perspective. When cultural, administrative, economic and military connections cross-cut each other and material security and physical safety

retain a high level, there are not many opportunities for fierce nationalism. And perhaps the confusion and administrative inefficiency that accompany this situation are an acceptable price to pay.

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NOTES CRITIQUES