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EUROPEAN INTEGRATION AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

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## **European Integration and the Politics of Identity**

### 1. A European puzzle

The European Union is still a puzzle for political theorists as well as for its citizens. Theorists get excited when they find a puzzle out there in the real world: a phenomenon whose description somehow escapes their traditional conceptual tools. In academic life this is a great opportunity. There is a premium on inventing new concepts and rejecting those set into circulation by one's colleagues. Careers have been built and bookshelves have been filled with contributions on the question what kind of beast the Union is. The easy answer is that it is *sui generis*. It is a new kind of political animal that is so difficult to classify because, as a polity, it is still to be born although its institutions have been around for half a century. Beyond that there is little agreement: Is it a multilevel system of governance, a confederation of states, or a federal state in the making?

Citizens get annoyed when they are confronted with puzzles of this sort. Their interest and passions can still be aroused for politics as usual: domestic electoral campaigns and international conflicts between nation-states. But in stark contrast with political theorists citizens generally find European integration rather boring. It's not that they are not aware of the profound effects it might have on their future. The trouble is that only the opponents of European integration seem to care for mobilising the citizens. Among proponents the controversy about where Europe ought to go politically is rather muted. EU Europe has been built top-down.<sup>1</sup> Citizens are not even invited into the European arena to play their usual part of cheering and voting for one or the other party. There are no truly European parties or electoral campaigns; the line-up is almost entirely along domestic fronts. And instead of declaring where the path of European integration is supposed to lead to, most mainstream politicians tell their compatriots that there is simply no alternative to walking along with the others.

But the puzzle must be resolved by the citizens themselves because it is ultimately about their own role in the Union. Joseph Weiler has aptly summed it up in the title of an essay, in which he criticizes the lack of clearly stated ends in post-Maastricht Europe: "Do the new clothes have an emperor?"<sup>2</sup> German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer heeded this critique in his recent speech at Berlin's Humboldt University where he outlined a "finality" of the integration process: a European federation that will create a government from either the Council or the Commission and will resolve the democratic deficit through a bicameral European parliament with real legislative power.<sup>3</sup> But this is yet another description of new clothes. It does not answer Weiler's question: Where is the emperor?

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<sup>1</sup> Puntcher-Riekman (1998) suggests that "commissarial administration" is the major instrument of European integration. She finds historical analogies between the role of European commissioners today to that of royal commissioners in the old European monarchies.

<sup>2</sup> see Weiler (1999).

<sup>3</sup> for the full text of the speech see [http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/6\\_archiv/index.htm](http://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/6_archiv/index.htm).

Theories of democracy have an answer to this question. In democracies the rulers are citizens and the citizens are supposed to rule themselves collectively. The former principle is easy to understand and to put into practice. It has a negative implication and a positive one. The negative is that there must not be any aristocracy or other caste of people who enjoy a monopoly in public offices; the positive is that office-holders remain citizens who rule over co-citizens and not over subjects of the state.<sup>4</sup> The second part of the formula, which says that citizens rule themselves collectively, is the more difficult one. When democracy is no longer practised in an Athenian *agora* or a New England township meeting but on the scale of vast territories and millions of people it requires considerable imagination to regard it as a form of collective self-government. Nationalism has been the source for this imagination. In the history of modern democracy since the American and French revolutions nations have replaced the burghers of free cities as collectivities predestined to govern themselves.

One reason for the European malaise may be an unwillingness of the more cosmopolitan elites to address issues of collective identity that tie European citizens to different national and ethnic communities. The Amsterdam Treaty has added a new principle “The Union shall respect the national identities of its member states.”<sup>5</sup> This raises a number of questions:

1. What is meant by *respect*? Presumably more than grudging toleration but less than recognition, affirmation, or protection.
2. Why only the national identities of its *member states* rather than of its *citizens*, which need not be identical with those of the states of which they are citizens – what about national minorities?
3. Why only respect *national* identities and not also those of ethnic, linguistic and other kinds of minorities?

Such questions immediately conjure up the spectre of identity politics; of an excessive multiculturalism that endangers solidarity across group boundaries and individual liberty within cultural communities. These worries must be taken seriously, but so must the questions. It is wishful thinking that they will go away when they are ignored. Critics of multiculturalism and minority rights should also never forget that the most powerful manifestation of identity politics and the greatest obstacle to European integration is the nationalism of majorities. There is a pervasive sense among the population of several member states that political integration means losing national sovereignty and ultimately also national identity. This creates deep resentments, which are stirred up by populist politicians but also catered to by mainstream parties who are afraid of losing voters unless they beat the nationalist drums.

Today the European Union is a political community that respectfully ignores the national identities of its members as well as their internal minority conflicts. Yet enlargement as well as further political integration will make an attitude of benign neglect increasingly difficult to sustain. National majority resistance to integration can only be overcome by creating an attractive vision of a supranational political community with which citizens can identify. Certainly such a vision must include a promise of international peace and domestic security, of economic prosperity and social welfare, of individual liberties, democratic participation and ecologically sustainable development. These are the common staple of EU rhetoric. What I want to consider here is a neglected element: the need to forge a European identity out of the

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<sup>4</sup> see van Gunsteren (1998: 67-77).

<sup>5</sup> Article 6.3 TEU.

raw material of ethnic and national identities that are firmly entrenched in our present societies.

I should emphasize from the very start that I see neither a need nor a possibility to create a European identity that would be as significant for individuals as their gender, religious, linguistic or national identities. These are important because they shape the lives of individuals in many different spheres and activities. Politics is only a small part of everyday life and being part of a political community need not come up in our self-descriptions in most other contexts. National identities are thicker than that because they combine political with cultural membership. But European integration should not be misunderstood as an attempt to build a European nation. There is not even a need for hyphenated identities of the American sort (Austro-, Italo-, Greco-Europeans...) that would turn the national identity into an ethnic prefix of a European one. I will argue that we need the opposite kind of transformation: a pluralisation of our national identities so that they include a European element alongside many other ones.

## 2. From confederation to federation

When speaking about Europe's future many regard it as impolite to use the f-word. The term federalism seems overloaded with historical analogies and sensibilities. Yet there are not many other concepts that we could use to describe the coming together and integration of several independent states into a new political entity. Instead of avoiding the term federalism one should make productive use of the richness of its meanings. That requires also to break free from narrow analogies with existing federal states. In order to describe a new type of federation it will be more useful to explore the contrasts than the similarities between different kinds of federalism.

The first contrast that springs to one's mind is between confederation and federation. The Union is rightly seen as moving from the former to the latter. Historical analogies, especially with the adoption of the second US constitution in 1787, often lead to the assumption that federation implies a pooling of all external sovereignty and a strong central government. However, as Sporting Life sings in *Porgy and Bess*, this ain't necessarily so. A federation involves by definition a vertical sharing of sovereignty between constitutive units and a federal government. Which kinds of political powers are concentrated at which level is, in principle, an open question. Joschka Fischer suggests that in a future European federation there could be a "division of sovereignty" between national and European governments, with a strong principle of subsidiarity guaranteeing the former control over all political agendas that they are better equipped to deal with and have not transferred to the federal level.<sup>6</sup> The important difference between confederation and federation lies not in the concentration of power at the level of member states or of the union, but in the structure of membership. In a confederation, only states or governments are represented in the common political institution, whereas in federations citizens are directly represented both in constitutive units (the provinces, regions or states) and at the federal level. A democratic federation is thus not only a multilevel government but also a multilevel community of citizens towards whom all governments are accountable. Direct election of EP members since 1979 and the formal introduction of EU citizenship in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 were the first timid steps towards federation; a Charter of Fundamental Rights will be a much larger one. However, in order to establish the crucial direct relation between citizens and the federation, a modernized

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<sup>6</sup> Proponents of a cosmopolitan federation at the global level make a similar argument. See for example Höffe (1999).

catalogue of basic human rights will not suffice. What ties individual citizens to a democratic community is not only the rights and liberties that they enjoy, but the relation of representation that makes political authorities directly accountable to them. A European federation must establish democratic accountability of the Commission and the Council and legislative powers for the European Parliament.

The second contrast, which is the more important one for my present purposes, is between regional and multinational federalism. Federations vary not only with regard to a vertical division of powers, but also with regard to the horizontal relations between their constitutive parts.<sup>7</sup> In the US, Australia, Germany and Austria all states, provinces or Länder are considered as regional subdivisions of a homogeneous nation. By contrast, in Canada, Belgium or Switzerland some provincial borders separate linguistic groups. Spain and the UK are not formally federal states, but devolution in these countries follows a similar pattern. The effect is that some national identity groups gain territorial autonomy and often also guaranteed representation in central government institutions.

For a future European federation there is no doubt that it will be multinational in this sense, i.e. composed of states with different languages and distinct national identities. This still leaves open the question how to imagine a common European identity and its relation to the various national and ethnic identities within member states. I will discuss three answers to this question.

### 3. Postnational Federation

The first model suggests that a European identity ought to be disconnected from national ones and should be based instead on shared political values and constitutional principles. The contrast between such civic patriotism and ethnic nationalism has been often overstated.<sup>8</sup> A notorious difficulty with the former is that it fails to identify the particular political community one ought to be loyal with. If my loyalty to my country is grounded in its constitution, which guarantees me fundamental rights, why should I not be loyal to another democratic state whose constitution is as good or even better in that respect? Any reason must inevitably refer to the historical accident that I happen to be born and raised in this country rather than another one. Constitutional patriotism is thus always parasitic on a communitarian idea of unchosen belonging. It is also parasitic on cultural particularities. Without a shared public culture the polity cannot be imagined as a community that deserves loyalty. A society of individuals who coincidentally reside in a given state territory at a given point in time cannot be imagined as a community of that sort. Without public narratives about a common history one cannot think of this society in terms of the first person plural.

In the old nation-states of Europe there is no shortage of such narratives. Their very abundance is the problem because they often raise rival claims to the same populations and territories. In this context constitutional patriotism is a noble idea: it does not unravel all these communities but tries to push them to a background. Liberal constitutional principles cannot determine our membership in a particular community, but they may provide us with better reasons for loyalty and can help us to peacefully resolve our conflicts, including those about national identities.

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<sup>7</sup> see Lijphart (1984: 179-183).

<sup>8</sup> For a critique of this distinction see Yack (1996) and Levy (2000).

The project of a European constitutional patriotism is different precisely because one cannot take its background for granted. Europe is divided not only by its various national languages and cultures, but also by its past. Historically, the idea of European unity has been always associated with that of empire, never with that of a federal republic. This difficulty is exacerbated by the problem of variable geography. Empires have moving borders. They are not imagined as political communities of their citizens, but are united by loyalty towards a dynasty. In contrast with an empire, a democratic polity needs a stable territory within which self-government can be established.

If we are still searching for historical analogies, we might look west across the Atlantic. The most successful historical example of creating a civic identity in an expanding federal state is the USA. Yet the American model was certainly not a pure case of constitutional patriotism. It started out from a dominant WASP identity that was sharply separated from indigenous peoples and African slaves and only gradually expanded to include other groups of immigrants. Moreover, the settlers and migrants who built the American nation had before been uprooted from their national homelands. Europe, however, can never become a melting pot nation – its citizens are invited to join the federation while residing in their traditional homelands and retaining their national languages and affiliations. This is different only for the small number of people who travel regularly to Brussels for EU meetings. Their life world and their career patterns provide a solid material base for an emerging European identity.<sup>9</sup> The great mass of European citizens does not share this experience. Levels of mobility within the Union are so low that they hardly contribute to a geographic fusion of national identities.

To sum up this point: The European federal project lacks three prerequisites for a civic form of patriotism: there is no self-evident background of historical narrative and public culture, there is no stable territorial frame of reference, and there is no melting pot of uprooted peoples. Paradoxically, this lack of preconditions need not mean that the project is doomed to failure. Constitutional principles might become a focus of identity by default rather than by design, because there is nothing else that could unite these populations *politically*. A European civic patriotism must be *postnational*, not so much because it exemplifies a new cosmopolitan identity, but because it is cut off from the sources of national identity that support all existing manifestations of civic patriotism. For this very reason, a European civic identity will, however, also remain rather thin.

A European constitution that can actually be read by the citizens and taught in the classrooms of European schools would certainly help. But citizens are less likely to be enthusiastic about the beauty of such a text than legal scholars and political philosophers. The difficulty is also greater than that of writing and adopting such a document. In the European case one cannot first introduce a constitution and then wait patiently until political support for it grows among the citizenry. Federalization will not be a single event but a long process. This process of democratising the Union must itself be democratic; it must enjoy widespread support among citizens and must be put to occasional tests in elections and referenda. The prospect of trading in national identities for a future postnational one will hardly mobilize European citizens to endorse this project.

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<sup>9</sup> There is a parallel here with Benedict Anderson's analysis how the career patterns and travel itineraries of colonial administrators in Latin America shaped their national consciousness. The artificial borders of the colony determined the range of their travels and were thus endowed with meaning. And if they were Creoles born in the colony the geographic end-point of their career paths was the capital of the colony rather than the metropolis of the Empire (Anderson 1983: 55-60).

## 4. Multinational Federation

The alternative is to conceive of Europe as a multinational federation not only in the composition of its parts, but also with regard to a common identity. The Union would then not merely *respect* the national identities of its member states but also *affirm* them.

This second model must avoid the pitfalls of a confederal “Europe of fatherlands”, on the one hand, and of a European “nested nation”, on the other hand. A Europe of fatherlands is diametrically opposed to building a community of citizens at the European level. In this view national loyalties are supreme and ultimate. They are also the only kind of attachment that can ground substantive forms of democracy. Nations may closely cooperate in alliances for limited purposes or in all-purpose confederations, but the supranational decision-making bodies must be exclusively accountable to national governments that are themselves accountable to their respective citizenry.

The opposite danger is a view of Europe as a nested nation that contains within itself the national identities of its member states much like Britishness contains Scottish, Welsh, English (and, more controversially, Ulster) identities. David Miller suggests that stable democratic rule needs a common national identity.<sup>10</sup> In his view, nations can themselves be internally multinational, or to put it the other way round, multinational federations must develop a sense of common nationhood in order to remain well integrated. Miller is sceptical towards European political integration because he correctly assumes that it is not a nation-building project. I would, however, disagree with the diagnosis itself. Pierre Trudeau’s attempts to strengthen an all-Canadian sense of nationhood may have contributed to disintegrate that multinational federation.<sup>11</sup> Most Québécois, Catalans or Scots feel rather uncomfortable with the idea that they are parts of a larger Canadian, Spanish or British *nation* because this is opposed to their conception of multinational *federation*.

Even if multinational federalism could find the right balance between these two interpretations (a Europe of fatherlands and a nested European nation), it would still remain plagued by three sources of instability: asymmetry, shifting borders and democratisation.

Asymmetry between larger and smaller units is an endemic problem in federalism.<sup>12</sup> It results from the dual composition of the federal polity whose members are the constitutive units as well as the individual citizens. Federal units are always historical entities and never created by design (as were the French *départements*). They are therefore unequal in size and population. In order to represent the units as constitutive members of the federation they ought to be given equal numbers of seats in all federal decision-making bodies. But this means that individual citizens are represented unequally because the votes in the more populous units receive less weight than those from smaller units.<sup>13</sup> In the US it takes about 60 times more votes to elect a Senator from California than one from Wyoming. This problem of asymmetry, which arises with any move from confederation to federation, has already been put on the agenda of the current IGC where different formulas for weighting votes and allocating seats to the member states are being discussed.

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<sup>10</sup> see Miller (1995).

<sup>11</sup> see Laforest (1995).

<sup>12</sup> Charles Tarlton (1965) has first distinguished symmetric and asymmetric forms of federalism. Tarlton’s use of these terms coincides more or less with the distinction between regional and multinational federations. I use asymmetry here in a broader sense to refer to structural imbalance that results from different status or conceptions of identity among the constitutive units of a federation.

<sup>13</sup> see Lijphart (1984: 173-175).

There is a more specific form of asymmetry in multinational federations, which I have already referred to when criticizing the idea of nested nations: A majority population identifies with the larger state while a minority puts its regional identity first. In the context of the European Union this may not seem a likely scenario. Imperial notions of a French or German Europe have been defeated at Waterloo and Stalingrad. There is no hegemonic nation in Europe that could imagine itself as the core of a nascent European nation. Yet the danger of asymmetry arises also if member states of the Union move towards federation at different speeds with some forming a “centre of gravitation” (Joschka Fischer). Even if that centre remains open for others to join, it will presumably determine the rules that these others will have to accept. One should be cautious when drawing the obvious parallel with the expanding Schengen area and Euro zone. A common currency and national border guards are certainly powerful symbols of sovereignty. But building a federal polity is not the same thing as creating an area of free movement and common currency. It involves much more than giving up cherished symbols of this kind. In order to cope with such asymmetry of the integration process itself, the citizens of the Union will have to accept what the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor has called “deep diversity”: a mutual recognition of different ways of belonging to the Union.<sup>14</sup>

Shifting borders are a more unique difficulty for European unity that normally does not arise in federal states. I have suggested that this variable geography might make a postnational mode of integration more plausible, but it creates additional problems for a multinational conception. A multinational federation is like a compact between a limited number of potentially or formerly independent communities. If more and more communities join this makes the federation not only more difficult to administer, but upsets also a carefully crafted balance between the founding members. The official language regime in the EU is a good example. With further enlargement the present rules will become ever more costly to maintain, but all reform options are likely to offend some national sensibilities.

Finally, democratisation is likely to exacerbate national conflicts within the Union. This is a lesson to be learned from the transition to democracy in postcommunist states. Supranational government in the EU operates so far in a rather undemocratic manner. Federalisation means that conflicts that had previously been negotiated in the sheltered environments of Commission and Council meetings or intergovernmental conferences will be much more exposed to public disputes and citizens’ choices. In this process national identities will not simply fade away but will more likely be politically mobilised. The question is whether a sense of supranational political community can emerge at the same time and promote the integration of national identities into an expanding multinational conception.

## 5. Pluralistic Federation

A European federation would not merely involve an attempt to forge a political community from the diversity of national identities of member states. All of these states are themselves internally heterogeneous. Many have traditional linguistic minorities and all have substantial immigrant populations. The postnational and the multinational models ignore these subnational and transnational identities. A pluralistic conception would include them by establishing common guidelines for the treatment of minorities within all member states and at the level of the federation itself.

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<sup>14</sup> see Taylor (1993: 155-186).

Over the last decade there has been an intensive debate in political theory on nationalism and minority rights. Adopting a suggestion by the Canadian theorist Will Kymlicka<sup>15</sup> we can distinguish three approaches and stages in this debate:

- (1) the first stage focused on the value of *community*. It was linked to the communitarian critique of liberalism and rejected the model of an atomistic individual. For communitarians our individual identities are constituted through our belonging to cultural communities that we have not chosen. Minority cultures deserve protection and recognition because of their role in shaping the identities of their members.
- (2) The second stage applied liberal theories of *justice* to minority rights, which are required insofar as they addressed specific disadvantages suffered by members of cultural minorities but are also constrained by individual liberty. Even when minorities are not directly oppressed they are disadvantaged because modern democracies create a public culture that is never neutral towards the cultural identities of minorities. This is most obvious with regard to linguistic minorities because all modern states establish certain national languages. The argument might, however, also apply to certain religious minorities who are disadvantaged in a secular public culture.<sup>16</sup> In contrast with the communitarian view, in the liberal perspective minority rights will be conditional upon the internal freedom of minority members to redefine or reject their cultural traditions.
- (3) In the third and current phase there is focus on common *citizenship* and questions of conflict and integration. The argument is that we do not have to believe that cultural communities are per se valuable and worthy of protection, or that disadvantaged minorities have a claim to special group rights. It is enough to think that cultural conflicts are here to stay and that democratic states must find just and sustainable ways to accommodate the claims of rival groups.<sup>17</sup>

The point is that it does not matter which of the three positions you endorse, each of them forces you to take national and ethnic identities seriously. The common insight that unites the three strands of the debate is that assimilation is no longer an answer. Coercive assimilation is more likely to trigger resistance than compliance. Liberal democracy with its freedoms of speech and association offers minorities resources to organize and articulate their grievances; and modern communication technologies allow them daily contact with their homelands and with transnational diaspora communities.

This does not mean that the future political agenda will inevitably be dominated by conflicts between clearly distinguished cultural identity groups. Within a liberal framework the very proliferation of such identities means that they will also increasingly overlap. Geographic mobility and intermarriage create fuzzy boundaries and hybrid identities. Yet they do not resolve intercultural conflicts and may even exacerbate them compared to a situation where cultural communities live segregated alongside each other with their own separate territories or life worlds. In a liberal society integration and resolution of conflict depend essentially on two things: creating equal opportunities and creating shared political identities.

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<sup>15</sup> Kymlicka (1998) divides the second stage into two: a liberal framework that distinguishes between the external protection of minorities against majority preferences and internal restrictions of their members' liberty; and a view of minority claims as a response to nation-building. I lump these two perspectives together because they are generally combined (including in Kymlicka's own work).

<sup>16</sup> see Modood (2000).

<sup>17</sup> A forthcoming book by the American theorist Jacob Levy states this argument very well. Its programmatic title is "The Multiculturalism of Fear" (Levy 2000).

You may ask: What is the relevance of these questions for European integration? Let me suggest four reasons:

- (1) The Union is well aware that enlargement might lead to importing some new conflicts. There is a telling discrepancy between the 1993 Copenhagen criteria for the admission of new member states, which include respect for and the protection of minorities, and the principles the Union maintains for its current members, from which this item is absent.
- (2) There are also unresolved minority conflicts in many present Member States, some of which involve terrorist violence or secession threats and some of which reach across state borders and affect other Member States.
- (3) National linguistic minorities in the EU often put high hopes into political integration. They regard it as an opportunity to bypass their national governments and achieve direct recognition or representation at supranational level.
- (4) Migrant minorities also hope that their legal status and rights in the countries of the Union may be improved through harmonization. Free movement within the territory of the Union, combined with a harmonization of asylum and immigration policies, will create political pressure for common standards for the integration of immigrants..<sup>18</sup>

The Union has so far left the initiative in this field of rights of migrants and minorities to the Council of Europe and the OSCE. While a confederation may regard such matters as an internal affair of the states affected, this is certainly not possible for a federation in which minority conflicts naturally become a common concern.

A pluralistic conception faces two major difficulties: First, member states have their peculiar national approaches and dominant philosophies on these issues.<sup>19</sup> It is very difficult to imagine what a common policy on linguistic and ethnic minorities would be like that France, Britain and Belgium could agree upon and that would not merely replicate minimal human rights standards. Second, critics of multicultural identity politics have emphasized the twin dangers of fragmentation of the larger political community and of internal repression within cultural minorities. The former results from escalating and proliferating demands for group rights; the latter from tolerating illiberal practices and granting special powers to community leaders. These dangers are sometimes real but more frequently exaggerated. And to repeat the point I have already made: they can no longer be avoided through assimilation policies that produce homogenous and presumably liberal national identities. Liberal democracies must accommodate multinational and multicultural conflicts because they cannot suppress them without abandoning their basic principles.

Accommodation is, however, necessarily contextual and must take into account local and national circumstances. In a future European federation the constitution will have to guarantee general national and ethnic minority rights; the political institutions must address nationality conflicts that affect the internal security or territorial integrity of member states; but otherwise subsidiarity should clearly prevail and specific arrangements ought to be worked out regionally, bilaterally or at the national level.

## 6. Combining the Three Approaches

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<sup>18</sup> The Tampere European Council of 15-16 October 1999 has quite explicitly established this link.

<sup>19</sup> see Favell (1998).

Is it possible to combine the three approaches in intelligent ways? As an example let me consider what a regime for the legal status of immigrants in a future European federation could look like.

All nationals of member states and only these are citizens of the Union, but the nationality laws of member states are still regarded as a purely domestic matter of these states. The postnational model would remove the present oddity that each country may establish completely different requirements for access to the citizenship of the Union. It would advocate a uniform standard for admission to federal citizenship (e.g. a waiting period for naturalization of no more than five years, and an automatic acquisition of nationality at birth for children whose parents have been long term residents in the country). To this should be added a uniform legal status for third country nationals, a European “denizenship” that disconnects many present rights of European citizens, such as free movement and access to employment or the local franchise, from nationality and ties them instead to legal permanent residence.

Once harmonization of nationality laws has been achieved, the multinational model could come into play. It would favour retaining the formal link that derives citizenship of the federation from member state nationality. All present federations with the exception of Switzerland reverse this model and derive instead membership in the subunit from federal citizenship. However, for the EU this could only signal a problematic move towards a nested nation model. The present model, on the other hand, corresponds to the idea of a “Europe of fatherlands” The specific multinational character of the EU could be well expressed by harmonizing admission to Union citizenship while making it still conditional upon acquisition of member state nationality.

The pluralistic model, finally, would support recognition of multiple citizenships as long as they reflect genuine social ties to several countries. All EU member states accept multiple citizenship that results from mixed birth, but some of them still require the renunciation of a present nationality as a precondition for naturalization. This is a major obstacle for some groups of immigrants who are afraid of losing rights in their home countries (such as the right to inherit or own land and, most importantly, the right to enter and live in this territory). Multiple citizenship gives a legal expression to overlapping national identities that do not fit neatly into the nested patterns of federal communities but cut across their internal and external borders.<sup>20</sup>

This is a practical illustration. The need for taking all three approaches into account can be stated more generally. Transforming a union of democratic states into a supranational federation is a unique endeavour. All historical precedents have involved nation-building efforts at the federal level. This route is blocked for the European Union. A European federation must be postnational in the sense of creating a political community where citizenship is a relevant identity but is no longer associated with a particular national territory, history and culture. Creating this new type of polity will require more than institutional

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<sup>20</sup> Multiple citizenship between a member state and a third country presents no particular problems for a federal conception. Standard models of federation exclude, however, multiple membership in constitutive units, but they make the acquisition of membership in another province an automatic consequence of a change of residence. This amounts to a latent multiple membership in all units with an active membership only in the unit of residence. The multinational conception I have advocated would rule out such automatic acquisition through residence alone (without any declaration of intent). At the same time, it could more easily accommodate multiple active membership so that, for example, Austrian citizens who have also acquired French nationality, could vote in elections in both countries.

reform and even more than a federal constitution. Democratic representation at federal level involves the citizens more directly in far-reaching collective decisions. The price for democratising the Union is that we will see much more political polarisation on European issues. Given the multinational structure of the federation it is not difficult to predict that a lot of this polarisation will be along national lines rather than along lines of economic interest that cut across these internal borders. It would be an illusion to believe that fostering constitutional patriotism in a federal Europe could overcome this danger of nationalist mobilisation. In such a federation the antidote to nationalism is multinationalism, i.e. a mutual public affirmation of national identities that undercuts the tendency to put one's own nation above all others. However, such multinationalism also preserves the potential for the disease that it is meant to cure. It creates the image of a Europe that is perpetually divided into national communities that have been independent before and could become so again when the federation no longer satisfies their particular aspirations. Multinationalism needs to be complemented with a pluralistic approach that recognizes the overlapping and cross-cutting identities of sub-national and transnational communities.

Building a federal polity is necessarily an exercise in identity politics. The challenge is how to combine postnational, multinational and transnational identities so that all can see themselves as belonging to a larger European community. This task is not like constructing a European house from building blocks of various national colours. Existing national identities must also be transformed to become compatible with the integration project. In order to fit together in a supranational federation European nations have to become internally more pluralistic. They must learn to understand and accept their own heterogeneity that results from recent immigration and old minorities.

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