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# Post-national Europe – without cosmopolitan guarantees

PEO HANSEN

*Abstract:* For some years, a growing crowd of ‘cosmopolitan’ Left-liberal scholars and intellectuals have been taking aim at the nation state, holding it responsible for numerous grave problems facing Europe and the wider world, ranging from growing anti-immigrant sentiments to the absence of a counterweight to US neoconservative unilateralism. In this view, ‘more Europe’, as in more supranational EU integration, is said to be the key solution, paving the way for a progressive, human rights-based ‘cosmopolitan Europe’ capable of transcending the vices of national self-interest. This article offers a critique of such an EU-based cosmopolitan promise, focusing primarily on asylum policy. Since there has been an increased EU involvement in asylum policy in recent years, it makes for an ideal context to discuss and ‘test’ the cosmopolitan ‘more Europe’ thesis. It is argued that, while there are as many good reasons to remain critical of the nation state as there are injustices committed in its name, recognition of this fact cannot be allowed to spill over uncritically into the nowadays fashionable contention that progress will automatically result from diminishing national sovereignty and the shift of policy-making to the EU level. As the case of ‘Europeanised’ asylum policy demonstrates, there are no guarantees whatsoever to that effect.

*Keywords:* cosmopolitanism, European integration, nation state, refugees, Sweden

Since the beginning of the 1990s, successive Swedish governments – both right-wing and social democratic – have been hard at work trying to wipe out Sweden’s reputation as a ‘moral superpower’ in world politics. How scandalous, wrote the incoming right-wing premier Carl Bildt in 1991, that the 1970s and 1980s saw ‘more Swedish cabinet members and official delegations going to Gaborone than to Brussels’. Indeed, Bildt continued, ‘it became more natural for Swedish prime ministers to give speeches at meetings in Mozambique or before the revolutionary masses in Managua than to hit on the idea – nobody did it! – of going to the European parliament in Strasbourg’. ‘Europe’, then, ‘was a white spot on the map of Swedish foreign policy and public

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debate.’ It seemed, Bildt went on, ‘as if South-East Asia was situated just east of Stockholm’ and ‘Southern Africa just south of Malmö’.<sup>i</sup> The greatest scandal of all for Bildt – who is today the foreign minister in the government – was thus to be found in the refusal on the part of consecutive postwar social democratic governments to anchor Swedish foreign policy unequivocally in the western camp.

That such a camp was not only seen as a worldly political, economic and security community but also as a cultural and moral community, lent a novel sense of zeal to the struggle of the Swedish Right. There was something culturally repugnant to the Right to hear Social Democrats ‘speak of “Sweden and Europe” in the same manner as they spoke of “Sweden and Africa”’.<sup>ii</sup> In the eyes of the Right, Sweden’s social democracy can thus be said to have stood for a perverted *cosmopolitanism* – which extended moral community to humanity as a whole, instead of abiding by the rules and reserving it for Sweden’s fellow Europeans and westerners. Bildt and his growing following were indignantly determined to put an end to the allegedly preposterous development in which, from the 1970s, ‘Swedish politicians became increasingly knowledgeable about development in Namibia, while fewer and fewer had any contacts or could assess development in western Europe’.<sup>iii</sup> For the Swedish Right, such a curiosity about African affairs was considered to be no less than treasonous to the European spirit. Obviously, a key part of the solution for the Right, but also for the new breed of so-called renewer Social Democrats – who were making headway in the party in the early 1990s – was to be found in Swedish membership of the EU. Such a move was meant to act as a restraint on Sweden’s bad habits of international solidarity and relative independence from the western powers.<sup>iv</sup> By the same token, Europe would be the corrective to Sweden’s morally and culturally distorted cosmopolitanism; it would serve to disarm the moral superpower, reducing its striking power to that of a regular European country.

From today’s vantage point, there can be no denying that the struggle to reroute Swedish foreign policy has been successful. Under social democratic leadership, Sweden became a member of the EU in 1995, joined with other EU members in support of NATO’s bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999 and, today, Sweden participates in the NATO-led war in Afghanistan. It would be ‘natural’ for Sweden, says the current Swedish defence minister, to join NATO in the not-so-long run. In addition, Swedish governments no longer spend time improving their knowledge of Namibia; on the contrary, Sweden now has a minister for development assistance who refers to African nations as ‘Hottentot countries’.<sup>v</sup> It goes without saying that the Swedish prime minister no longer compares US war crimes to those of Guernica, Sharpeville and Treblinka – as Olof Palme did in the

1970s. And the in-house epithet that used to be the White House's way of referring to Palme – 'that Swedish asshole' – is no longer applied.<sup>vi</sup>

### **Welcoming Iraqi refugees?**

Sweden's reputation as a moral superpower never faded completely and has lingered on, despite attempts to consign it to the dustbin of history through the Europeanisation of Swedish foreign policy. From 2006, this reputation experienced an unexpected renaissance thanks to Sweden's involuntary transformation into what numerous voices in the global media lauded as a 'safe haven' for Iraqi refugees. Under the headline, 'Sweden offers safe haven to Iraqi refugees', *CBC/Radio Canada* extolled 'generous Sweden', emphasising that: 'No country outside the Middle East has been as welcoming to the refugees of this war.'<sup>vii</sup> Similarly, *Spiegel Online* depicted Sweden as a land of milk and honey for Iraqi refugees: 'Life is so good in Sweden that families are encouraging their relatives and friends to follow their example and move there.'<sup>viii</sup> Scores of other reports from, among others, *ABC News*, the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* have all commended Sweden for its generosity towards fleeing Iraqis.<sup>ix</sup>

Of course, the global media's rosy depiction of Sweden belies a long list of wrongs committed by the Swedish state against individual asylum seekers.<sup>x</sup> However, when speaking of asylum policy in today's EU, it must be kept in mind that adjectives like 'good', 'welcoming' and 'generous' long ago lost their applicability as descriptors. These days, one can only discuss asylum policy 'comparatively speaking' or 'relatively speaking'. A country *not* routinely detaining asylum seekers or stripping them of social provisions can thus look very decent in comparison to those that do impose such measures. When taking this into consideration, the media's depiction of Sweden's handling of the Iraqi refugee crisis in 2006 and 2007 has some validity. During this period, almost 28,000 Iraqi refugees came to Sweden; as of autumn 2007, Sweden had taken 60 per cent of all Iraqi asylum seekers who had come to the EU. In 2006, over 80 per cent of those Iraqis whose asylum applications had been processed were granted permanent residence in Sweden, jumping to over 90 per cent the following year. This can be compared to the situation in Germany, where just over one per cent of roughly 2,000 Iraqi asylum seekers had their applications granted in 2006. As the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) reports, since 2004, Germany has repealed the refugee status of approximately 18,000 Iraqis, 'leaving them no means of supporting themselves'. Similar conditions and treatment of Iraqi refugees constitute the norm across the EU.<sup>xi</sup>

## **Towards a common European asylum policy**

But how has the Swedish government responded to the situation? To begin with, it should be said that the government has reacted with relative composure. Despite dismal ratings in the opinion polls, it has abstained from the sort of tirades against asylum seekers that are everyday fare in so many other EU countries. But, again, this picture only holds true comparatively speaking. The Swedish government has voiced alarm and irritation concerning the alleged ‘flood’ of Iraqi asylum seekers. The minister for migration and asylum policy, Tobias Billström, has blamed the large increase in Iraqi asylum seekers on the former social democratic government and its enactment of a temporary asylum law, in force from November 2005 to March 2006. The law’s introduction was pushed forward by a grand coalition of grassroots movements, religious communities, labour unions and political parties, with the exception of Billström’s own right-wing party and, ironically enough, the Social Democrats. According to Billström, the law – which, thanks to the Right and Social Democrats joining forces, was a watered down version of what the coalition had advocated – ‘gave thousands of Iraqi people, who had previously received negative responses to their asylum application, a second chance. Their applications were heard again and many of them received positive responses.’<sup>xiii</sup> In the minister’s view, it is precisely such positive responses that Sweden today pays dearly for. That is, they helped spread the word that Sweden was a sanctuary or, to use Billström’s expression, they ‘created a signal effect’.<sup>xiii</sup> When asked in an interview for *Middle East Online* whether this ‘signal’ is now causing problems, the minister answered that the government is worried, foreseeing problems in the labour market, in schools and with integration. Given the sombre mood of the minister, the interviewer then asked if this should be taken to mean ‘that Sweden is slowly turning away from its much lauded, liberal Swedish immigration policy’. The migration minister’s answer is interesting and worth quoting at length:

We do not have immigration laws that are more liberal than any other European country. However, the effect of our laws was, unfortunately, that people who left Iraq and came to Sweden were given a resident’s permit sooner or later. This was an unfortunate signal because it meant that the shared responsibility ... also means that we have to have the same set of rules and the same kind of practice in applying these rules. And this is something that Sweden works hard for in the EU. I never go to a council of ministers’ meeting in Brussels without speaking about the importance of creating this common asylum policy for Europe.<sup>xiv</sup>

The quote raises two questions of particular interest. First, the minister felt compelled to reprimand the interviewer for assuming that Sweden somehow has a less restrictive immigration/asylum policy

than other EU members. In Billström's view, Sweden's Iraqi refugee problem is rather the result of a series of 'unfortunate' circumstances. Technicalities aside, however, the chief reason for the reprimand stems from the fact that the impression the interviewer's question conveyed is exactly what the Swedish government wants to dispel, namely Sweden's 'much lauded' international asylum reputation. What the minister was doing was taking the opportunity to rid Sweden of its cosmopolitan reputation before an international audience, so doing his bit to short-circuit the 'signal effect'.

Second, the question of 'Europe': it is the EU that is taken to be the solution to Sweden's Iraqi 'refugee problem'. In this sense, the Swedish situation in 2007 shared some important similarities with that of Germany in the early 1990s. Germany then took in the great majority of the refugees coming to western Europe due to its then uniquely generous asylum policy, laid down in Article 16 of the Basic Law (constitution) and instituted as a response to the lessons of Nazism. Commenting on this policy, interior minister Wolfgang Schäuble proclaimed Germany the 'reserve asylum country of Europe'.<sup>xv</sup> As in Sweden today, German politicians at the time were greatly annoyed with their fellow EU members for failing to share the 'refugee burden'; it was a predicament that came to work in favour of those advocating the abrogation of Article 16. After a long and agonising domestic debate and an upsurge in neo-Nazi violence against asylum seekers, the Kohl government finally managed to strike a deal with the Social Democrats that resulted in a revision of Article 16, enabling Germany's asylum policy to be tightened up. Germany then gained full access to the restrictive instruments provided by the Schengen Agreement and the Dublin Convention.<sup>xvi</sup> In consequence, this also meant that Germany fell into line with regular EU asylum policy and was no longer 'burdened' with limitations imposed by its Nazi past. While the debate triggered by German reunification in the early 1990s pointed to the importance of establishing a normalised *European Germany* rather than a portentous *German Europe*, few heeded the fact that Germany's compliance with the European norm on asylum policy was tantamount to a violation of the memory of the stateless in Europe's refugee catastrophe of the 1930s and 1940s. If governments in the EU had wanted to honour this memory, one option would have been to call for the opposite: the Germanification of EU asylum policy rather than the Europeanisation of German asylum policy.<sup>xvii</sup> But Germany was not alone in deciding to leave behind the lessons of the past. Indeed, it was actually the last to do so; other EU governments had already produced asylum policies and rhetoric which did not betray the slightest remorse over their own behaviour during the refugee crisis of the 1930s. Germany thus decided to turn its back on history in order to emerge as a fully-fledged member of the new Europe. Interior minister Schäuble's explanation of this decision to join Europe

reads like a lesson in the art of *realpolitik*: ‘If we change our constitution, ... *we*, and not the others, would profit from our geographical location. Then our European neighbours, and not only we, would quickly want to find a joint solution.’<sup>xviii</sup>

### **Reducing asylum numbers through European integration**

It hardly needs to be mentioned that Schäuble’s prophecy came true. During the past two decades, the search for common European ‘solutions’ to the ‘refugee problem’ has been fairly successful, given both EU governments and Brussels’ explicit purpose of considerably reducing the number of asylum seekers entering the EU. In 2006, the EU recorded the lowest number of asylum applications in twenty years.<sup>xix</sup> In 2007, Germany, the former ‘reserve asylum country of Europe’, processed the lowest number of asylum requests for thirty years. Likewise, the UK had a record-breaking fall in asylum requests in 2004, prompting Home Secretary David Blunkett to issue the following, apparently exuberant, statement: ‘These figures show the very significant progress that has been made in dramatically reducing the number of asylum seekers entering the UK last year as a result of the tough reforms we have put in place.’<sup>xx</sup>

As noted, Sweden has recently been an exception to this trend and is now working hard to impose tougher measures in order to destroy its apparently cosmopolitan reputation among would-be asylum seekers in Iraq, Somalia and elsewhere. Results have not been long in coming: a sharp decline in the rate of approvals was reported in early 2008. Moreover, in spring 2008, the government decided to shift from being the least restrictive country in the EU for family reunification to one of the most restrictive. As one of the chief reasons for this volte-face, the migration minister simply cited the need to fall in line with Europe: ‘Sweden stands out today by being the only country in the EU, apart from Belgium, that imposes no maintenance obligations in cases of family reunifications, and that constitutes quite an absurd situation.’<sup>xxi</sup> At the same time, Sweden signed a readmission agreement with Iraq in order to enable the forced return of rejected asylum seekers.

Since the 1980s, practically all EU members have been doing their utmost to secure a bad international reputation for themselves over asylum. As illustrated by Germany in the early 1990s and Sweden more recently, a good asylum reputation in the EU is seen by governments as no less than a betrayal. This trend does not result from a series of independent decisions by individual member-state governments but, rather, from the process of EU harmonisation and cooperation. As such, the project of realising each and every member state’s objective of reducing the number of

asylum seekers has, from the outset, been abetted and rendered more effective by European integration.<sup>xxii</sup> In this equation, ‘more Europe’ meant ‘less asylum seekers’. By the same token, ‘more Europe’ has come to mean ‘less cosmopolitanism’ – that is, less of the type of cosmopolitanism that is not compromised by provincial concerns.

### **The European cosmopolitans**

But how did European integration come to this? Or have I got hold of the wrong end of the stick? For a large crowd of Left-liberal scholars, intellectuals and NGOs have, for some years, been propagating the exact opposite claim. From their post-national and cosmopolitan stance, ‘more Europe’ is seen as the one and only solution to a range of problems facing European societies as well as the wider world, from welfare retrenchment and disgraceful asylum policies to the disastrous consequences of a neoliberal economic world order and US neoconservative unilateralism. As one of the chief proponents of this outlook, Ulrich Beck, puts it:

There is no doubt that the current state of the European Union merits criticism. But where can we find suitable standards of criticism? In the national self-image, in laments over the loss of national sovereignty? No. The concept of a cosmopolitan Europe makes possible a critique of EU reality which is neither nostalgic nor national but radically European. ... The diagnosis of the crisis is ‘too little Europe’, and the cure, ‘more Europe’ – properly understood, that is, in a cosmopolitan sense!<sup>xxiii</sup>

In this view, ‘Europe’ and the nation state must be approached as each other’s opposites, the former the antidote, the latter the poison. Accordingly, it is virtually impossible to exaggerate the negative influence of the nation state, which Beck likens to an ‘experimental chamber of horrors’, responsible for ‘two world wars, the Holocaust, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Stalinist death camps and genocides’. Moreover, today’s nation state has given rise to ‘a fundamentalist outlook with paradoxical commonalities with the anti-modern fundamentalism of an Osama bin Laden’; and so it continues.<sup>xxiv</sup> Of course, many of those advocating a cosmopolitan Europe do not go as far as Beck in demonising the nation state and national sovereignty. A large group of Left-liberal scholars and intellectuals rally under the banner of a cosmopolitan and post-national Europe and their views should rather be plotted on a continuum, ranging from moderates of a more realist bent (such as Archibugi and Köhler)<sup>xxv</sup> to those with more doctrinaire outlooks (such as Beck and Braidotti).<sup>xxvi</sup> Many also figure prominently in high-level policy debates on matters such as European and global governance: for example, Anthony Giddens, David Held, Mary Kaldor

and Jürgen Habermas.<sup>xxvii</sup> Even so, they all share the view that the nation state and national sovereignty – to a lesser or greater extent – constitute moral mistakes, perpetuate exclusion (such as racism and xenophobia), block the realisation of human rights and are outmoded as solutions to the problems of an increasingly globalised world.<sup>xxviii</sup> Equally, they all share the conviction that European integration – by definition, as it were – proffers a progressive counter to the detrimental logic of the nation state; in any case, they argue, in the age of globalisation, there is little choice but to hope for the European project’s eventual realisation of this promise.

But how does ‘criticism’ of the EU project – which, after all, Beck and others do concede is justified – fit into this picture? The answer is that it is deemed justified only insofar as it sets out by first honouring the historical spirit of the EU project and its founders – those ‘who reinvented Europe beyond the national cemeteries and mass graves’<sup>xxix</sup> – and then follows this with an endorsement of the current EU as the harbinger of hope for a better future, ‘the last politically effective utopia’.<sup>xxx</sup> Anyone daring to question these decrees is ruled out as, at best, a political dinosaur ‘living a national lie’ of nostalgia and, at worst, as ‘extremely dangerous’ in their indifference to the risk that their self-deluding propaganda might ‘reopen the Pandora’s box of Europe’s war-torn history’.<sup>xxxi</sup>

This, of course, suggests similarities to the European cosmopolitans’ reactions to the ‘no’ vote in the Dutch and French referenda on the EU’s constitutional treaty in 2005 (as well as to the Irish ‘no’ in 2008), in which naysayers were branded nationalist, anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim and anti-Turkish – to mention just a few of the epithets hurled at those who failed to do the right thing. True, such sentiments did exist amongst those voting ‘no’.<sup>xxxii</sup> But the claim – made by scores of politicians, media pundits and intellectuals – that virulent nationalism, or even racism, had a decisive impact on the solid majority of the ‘no’ voters – made up, by the way, of Leftists and greens in both France and the Netherlands – did not stand up to scrutiny.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Also noteworthy was the lack of attention paid to the irony of the Dutch and French governments branding no-voters as nationalists and xenophobes. Hardly any commentators mentioned these governments’ long-standing anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim agendas, not least the nationalist pursuit of attempting to inculcate certain immigrant groups (particularly Muslims) with allegedly superior Dutch or French values. Above all, however, the accusations of backwardness, chauvinism and nationalism served to relocate the referenda beyond the pale of liberal democracy. The referenda were thus cast as inverted votes of moral confidence: instead of respecting citizens’ free political choice to decide whether or not they supported the proposal put before them, it was governments, Brussels and their

partners in the media, business and academia who, in the end, decided that the voters were morally incapacitated. Accordingly, you were either with the enlightened European cosmopolitans or you were with the bigoted nationalists. In essence, such was also the message from Jürgen Habermas – European post-nationalism’s most renowned interpreter – who, together with a group of other intellectuals, called on voters to do the right thing and vote ‘yes’: ‘We owe it to the millions and millions of victims of our senseless wars and criminal dictatorships.’<sup>xxxiv</sup> ‘If we look at Auschwitz’, said the Dutch Prime Minister Balkenende, ‘we know why we must accept the European Constitution.’<sup>xxxv</sup> First vice-president of the European Commission, Margot Wallström, issued a similar admonition when advocating a ‘yes’ in a speech in the former Jewish ghetto Terezin. As if this was not enough, the Dutch minister for justice went on to warn that naysayers were paving the way for ‘Balkanisation’ and war in Europe.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

### **Testing the thesis: the Europeanisation of asylum policy**

One way to ‘test’ the cosmopolitan ‘more Europe’ thesis is to return to the question of asylum policy. Since some of the most conspicuous victims of national chauvinism and sovereignty have been refugees, immigrants and minorities, there should be, according to the cosmopolitan contention, a gradual improvement in asylum policy in tandem with increased EU involvement. However, no such progressive dynamic has come to fruition in the land of Europe. Rather, the exact opposite has taken place.

A qualification needs to be added here concerning the fact that many cosmopolitans are not content with merely more European cooperation *in general*. For them, a truly post-national cosmopolitanism demands the erection of a supranational regime in the EU, one that elevates policy, decision-making and law *above* the national level and thus above the lowly logic of national self-interest. This approach has had a particular resonance amongst those who have been alarmed at the restrictive *intergovernmental* cooperation on asylum and migration policy in the EU from the 1980s onwards. With the important exception of the policy of free movement for member-state nationals, the supranational level was not entrusted with any competence in asylum and migration policy until the late 1990s – this made the intermittent EU harmonisation of this area of policy the sole prerogative of the member states and their intergovernmental cooperation. Due to migration policy’s intimate relation to the very definition and logic of the sovereign nation state (that is, to borders, security, citizenship, identity, and so on), migration was often alleged to be (and still is described as) a ‘sensitive’ area for national governments, one they ‘jealously guarded’ against any supranational meddling.

However, much to many analysts' surprise, a gradual supranationalisation of asylum and migration policy in the EU did take place – with the Amsterdam Treaty (ratified in 1999) and the EU's Tampere Programme (agreed in 1999) paving the way. These landmark agreements were received fairly positively by many of those who had earlier been worried by the detrimental consequences of intergovernmental cooperation. Many suggested that the introduction of supranationalism would beget a less restrictive and more human rights-based approach to asylum in the EU. Trimming the national influence on what was always a delicate issue for the nation state, it was argued, held out the possibility of subduing the inherent nationalist and xenophobic impulse. On this view, which was put forward by many prominent NGOs working in the field of asylum and migrants' rights, supranationalisation could produce a counterweight to the kind of intergovernmental decision-making that was built around the lowest common denominators of each nation. For example, ECRE, one of the principal migration NGOs, saw the supranationalisation of immigration and asylum policy 'as a favourable development, as more progressive, and as a positive restraining force on member state actions that have tenuous regard for international legal standards'.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

But ECRE's optimism soon gave way to resentful pessimism: in its 2004 evaluation of the development of migration policy after the Amsterdam Treaty and the Tampere Programme, it did not mince its words:

The promise of protection delivered by the EU Heads of State at the Tampere Summit in 1999 left many of us full of hope that harmonization would bring better protection for persons fleeing persecution ... ECRE's assessment finds that the EU has adopted a package of laws that will not ensure that asylum seekers and refugees will get effective protection across the whole of the newly enlarged European Union.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Contrary to what many had predicted or hoped, supranationalisation has so far not reversed the intergovernmental 'race to the bottom' set in train from the 1980s. Nor has the increased mandate of the supranational European Commission shown any sign of producing a more human rights-oriented asylum policy. Commission proposals and initiatives, *from above the nation state*, are essentially as restrictive and security-obsessed as their national counterparts. Indeed, the Commission's 'vision' for a European asylum policy is a future in which practically all routes to asylum in the EU have been sealed up. To be sure, the Commission admits that a very small number of what it refers to as 'spontaneous arrivals' will continue to seek asylum in the EU. But the general rule is that practically all refugees will be confined to 'protection zones' in the 'regions of origin'.

While the Commission is clear that, within the foreseeable future, it is not realistic – due, *inter alia*, to a lack of resources – to expect such regional solutions to offer anything like satisfactory protection and social conditions for refugees, it is nonetheless adamant that the EU should quickly proceed to implementing the instruments needed *in and around* the EU territory to realise this unrealistic plan – hence, for example, further militarisation of external borders and stronger utilisation of forced return instruments. The Commission has suggested that the EU might decide to admit a select small cohort of refugees from these regional protection zones, not to alleviate the global refugee crisis (the number of those resettled in the EU is projected to be very small) but to boost public relations and fight racism! As the Commission asserts:

[T]he managed arrival of persons in need of international protection would also constitute an efficient tool in *combating sentiments of racism and xenophobia*, as the public support for those positively screened outside the EU and then resettled in the EU is likely to be increased. This is significantly different to the current situation where a majority of the persons applying for asylum are not found to require any form of international protection. The lack of clarity in terms of public perception of this group threatens the credibility of the institution of asylum.<sup>xxxix</sup>

In addition to this, the Commission seems unable to emphasise enough that ‘[a] policy on returns or effective removal from the territory is an absolute necessity for the credibility of the common asylum system’.<sup>xi</sup> A major reason for the ‘forced return’ of rejected asylum seekers, it argues, is that this can ‘help to ensure public acceptance for more openness towards new legal immigrants against the background of more open admission policies particularly for labour migrants’.<sup>xii</sup> The Commission is thus very keen to use returns policy to send a message of resolve to the general public, which is imagined to be hankering for reassurance that the authorities will crack down relentlessly on ‘bogus’ asylum seekers.

### **Testing the thesis: the Europeanisation of integration policy**

As for immigrant ‘integration’, here too the supranation has been eager to embrace many national sentiments and policy measures to ensure that already marginalised minorities, particularly Muslims, know their place in the European cultural community. As the then Commissioner in charge of migration and asylum policy (and vice-president of the European Commission), Franco Frattini, remarked in 2006, discussing the integration of Muslims: ‘We are not governed by sharia,

after all.’<sup>xliii</sup> At the Lisbon High-Level Conference on Migration in 2007, Frattini elaborated on this message:

The dark side of the ‘old’ migration strategy includes the fact of integration problems, often taking the form of the deliberate denial of Europe’s founding values and principles. Until a few years ago, our chosen multicultural approach allowed some cultural and religious groups to pursue an aggressive strategy against our values. The targets of this ill-conceived ‘attack’ were individual rights, equality of gender, respect for women and monogamy. We have to combat this dangerous attitude, which can destroy the fabric of our societies, and we have to work hard to build up and pursue a positive integration approach. All too often we neglect to strengthen our fundamental roots, the principles we inherited from our Founding Fathers.<sup>xliii</sup>

This illustrates Eleonore Kofman’s point that, in today’s Europe, ‘the fear of divided loyalties’ is largely projected on certain minorities, particularly Muslims, who ‘must demonstrate that they are not truly cosmopolitan’. ‘As with Jews in the past’, Kofman goes on, ‘they are both insufficiently national and excessively international’;<sup>xliiv</sup> in addition, Muslims are insufficiently European. Commissioner Frattini’s language was indistinguishable from the ‘integration speak’ now propagated in many member states. The Dutch, French or Danish cultural values, which are glorified in national ‘integration’ policies, are articulated as being fully in accord with European cultural values.

It should be kept in mind, though, that EU governments still differ in the degree to which their integration policies foment ethno-nationalist chauvinism, particularly against Muslims. Frattini’s depiction of European culture as under threat of annihilation by aggressive immigrant ‘cultural and religious groups’ (barely concealed code for Muslims) cannot at present be said to be representative of the EU’s governmental opinion as a whole. The Swedish government, for instance, has so far not adopted a fully Islamophobic outlook.<sup>xlv</sup> Those who want to safeguard a more open attitude towards Muslims in Swedish society should therefore think twice before insisting that integration policy is better managed above the level of the nation state.

As with asylum policy or foreign policy, there are *no guarantees* that integration policy will take on a more human face just because it gets elevated to the supranational level. Rather, the outcome of any such conversions will always be an open question, the answer to which ultimately depends, not on the metaphysical qualities we wish to assign *a priori* to the nation state or the European

supranation, but on the concrete political interests and leanings of the participant actors and forces. To cosmopolitan reasoning, however, there is little room for such shilly-shallying. For many within this school of thought, a major intellectual task is the veneration of the EU's past achievements and the presentation of hopeful visions for the EU's future. Given, moreover, that this enterprise is founded on a passionate conviction that the EU project will eventually yield a progressive cosmopolitan turn, it cannot afford to be ambivalent about the benevolence of the EU project's founding intentions or its teleology; all of which suggests an ironic similarity with nationalist intellectuals' refusal in earlier periods to question the national project. Today's cosmopolitans commonly assert that Islamophobia can only be tackled above the nation since, as Beck asserts, it is 'utterly un-European' to be anti-Muslim. In sharp contrast to the nation state, says Beck, '[r]adical openness is a defining feature of the European project and is the real secret of its success'.<sup>xlvi</sup> Yet, the cosmopolitans do not explain how such 'radical openness' actually manifests itself in more concrete terms and how it serves to mitigate the current plight of Muslims.

### **A European hypernationalism**

Given the countless atrocities committed in the name of the nation and national sovereignty, there is good reason to adopt a critical approach towards national projects; and, needless to say, intellectuals and scholars have been industrious in pursuing such criticism in recent decades. But it is a serious mistake to see this critical task as marking the end of history and, from there, simply to assume that human rights and cosmopolitan values will automatically fare better once national sovereignty recedes and policy-making moves to the EU level. For those sporting a progressive and cosmopolitan outlook, it borders on self-deception. But it also verges on transcendentalism in its sometimes tacit, sometimes explicit, supposition and hope that the displacement of national sovereignty, through, for example, the EU's supranational regime, also leads to the transcending, or at least alleviation, of its vices. The cosmopolitan, in other words, is bent on civilising the European nation state by dissolving its sovereignty, particularly in areas where state sovereignty has, all too often, enabled the most inhumane acts. Supranationalism, then, does not only refer to the realm of concrete political and technocratic arrangements but, as Joseph Weiler argues, also forms an 'ideal' within the EU context, entailing a vision of 'a regime which seeks to tame the national interest with a new discipline'.<sup>xlvii</sup> No wonder, then, that supranationalism (or 'institutional cosmopolitanism' as Ulrich Beck and Edgar Grande term it)<sup>xlviii</sup> is not only construed as a superior form of political order but also as being antithetical to the nation state.

However, rather than corroborating the thesis that supranationalism and the gradual curtailment of national sovereignty in the area of asylum policy have served to tame the big bad wolf of national self-interest and its hereditary xenophobic impulses, an examination of recent developments suggests that supranational solutions have been agreed on precisely because governments believe they offer a more efficient way of advancing their national (and indeed anti-cosmopolitan) interests of, *inter alia*, shutting out asylum seekers. A consensus exists amongst member-state governments that holds their common immigration ‘problems’ to be more effectively solved by means of supranational policy; and the European Commission is ready to adapt itself to this consensus. This state of affairs suggests that national governments do not ‘jealously guard’ national sovereignty. Had national sovereignty really constituted the ‘sanctity’ that countless scholars argue, there would have been no EU in the first place, no single market and certainly no swapping of national currencies for a common currency – so much for the national currency being one of the crown jewels of national sovereignty. Rather, national governments guard their political interests by dressing them up as national interests. When such political interests are deemed to be better met through a transfer of certain policy competencies to the supranational level, national sovereignty proves to be a stumbling block to be overcome rather than something to be ‘jealously guarded’.

A seeming paradox in all of this lies in the fact that, whereas current policy developments occur in the name of supranationalisation or ‘European cooperation’, and thus easily evade any accusations of national egoism, their foundations nonetheless lie in an aggregate of very traditional nationalist components and sentiments. For example, Commission proposals for supranational migration policy are teeming with the traditional weapons of national sovereignty: militarised border controls, forced deportations, visa requirements, rigorous surveillance and demonisation of migrants.

Moreover, what is now taking place, in the shift from the national to the supranational level, is not simply ‘more of the same’; the shift is qualitative not quantitative. When a group of national governments merge some of their basest inclinations into a supranational framework, the result can exceed the sum total of individual national interests. Instead of *supranationalism* (and *post-nationalism*), the current harmonisation may thus institute ‘*supernationalism*’ or, better, ‘*hypernationalism*’ in Europe. This is a nationalism which not only seems to be devoid of nationalists but also prides itself on having outgrown or rationalised petty national concerns in favour of a more universal European common good: in short, an unbounded nationalism busying itself with solving, once and for all, a borderless ‘problem’ – and all under the protective cloak of unselfish *supranational* European cooperation.

In this putative post-national order, moreover, governments need be less concerned with their individual reputations, accountabilities and international obligations. At the supranational level, democratic accountability is far weaker. Governments can thus have their cakes and eat them, getting what they want without having to take responsibility or be held accountable to the same extent. While the EU is currently taken to offer new and more rational ways to solve the ‘asylum problem’, it simultaneously offers governments a way to evade democratic accountability. With all EU governments and the European Commission pulling in roughly the same direction, under the guise of an allegedly benevolent ‘European cooperation’, this is, arguably, also conducive to an environment in which either the buck is passed or no one needs to assume responsibility for the content and consequences of the policies enacted. It is not surprising that such an environment has been not only a hotbed for a succession of far-reaching proposals on ‘unwanted migration’ but also highly conducive to the rapid adoption of these proposals by the EU.

### **A new vanguardism**

Cosmopolitans, however, share practically none of the qualms addressed here. Instead, they are busy envisioning all the positive things that might result from national syntheses at the EU level. ‘The triumphal procession of cosmopolitan Europe’, Beck writes, ‘speaks the utterly clear language of the political surplus value which results from the cooperative fusion of the nation-states.’<sup>xlix</sup> In more concrete terms, Beck and Giddens contend, this means that ‘[t]he EU is better placed to advance national interests than nations could possibly do acting alone: in commerce, immigration ... and many more areas’.<sup>l</sup> That is certainly correct and precisely the point being made here but with the critical question added: does such EU advancement actually guarantee the progressive and cosmopolitan results that Beck and others seem to take for granted?

This vision of a cooperative and thus cosmopolitan ‘surplus value’ has also found an advocate in Jürgen Habermas – for example, in his jettisoning of his old vision of an EU built democratically from below and endorsing instead one built from above by ‘avant-gardist’ governments, primarily those of Germany and France, thereby generating a ‘momentum’ for a common EU foreign policy that other member states ‘will not be able to resist in the long run’. While it is made clear that ‘there can and must be no separatism’, this seems a minor caveat since, once laggard governments see the results of an emerging EU foreign policy, they will realise their best interests and jump on board the German-French ‘locomotive’.<sup>li</sup> No mention here of German and French geopolitical interests, of Balkan dramas, African adventures and huge arms industries arming dictatorships to their teeth. In addition, there is (yet again) no explanation of why a European foreign and security policy by

definition *guarantees* benevolence, in a progressive and cosmopolitan sense. Has, for instance, Swedish foreign policy become more cosmopolitan, more progressive and more critical of US ‘unilateralism’ since it lost much of its national footing and jumped on the European train?

Cosmopolitans have little time for such negative ‘nation state nostalgia’, which is regarded as leading only to European paralysis.<sup>lii</sup> In embracing Habermas’ appeal, Beck and Grande instead insist that ‘only an avant-garde committed to integration can break down Europe’s national self-misunderstanding and open up a common transnational European space of action for all’.<sup>liii</sup> A gift, in other words, from the few who have seen the European light to the many still slouching in national darkness; and, by the same token, a plea for the dictatorship of the cosmopolitans. As plenty of EU referenda have revealed, ‘false consciousness’ seems to persist in Europe’s nation states to such an extent that impatient cosmopolitans have fallen for the vanguardist temptation. But this is certainly not history repeating itself – far from it. In sharp contrast to the vanguards of the past, today’s cosmopolitans are placing their hopes in national and supranational establishments that increasingly reveal their contempt for progressive cosmopolitan beliefs and democratically founded rights and freedoms, which are seen only as impediments to the passing of ‘necessary’ measures to promote economic growth and fight terrorism.

For many cosmopolitans, however, contempt for the nation state trumps the glaring anti-cosmopolitan risks involved in such a vanguardist gamble. Cosmopolitans can afford to dismiss mobilisations in defence of democratic rights *within the nation state* as not only by definition outmoded and foul but also as working to the detriment of a cosmopolitan and democratic constitution of the EU in some yet-to-be-determined future. But since when have intellectuals been able to rest assured that ‘Europe’ harbours a progressive cosmopolitan and democratic teleology? ‘Even if we wish for a more cosmopolitan world order’, argues Craig Calhoun, ‘we should be realistic enough not to act on mere wishes.’<sup>liv</sup>

## References

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<sup>i</sup> C. Bildt, *Hallänning, svensk, europé* (Stockholm, Bonniers, 1991), pp. 105–6. All translations from Swedish sources are mine.

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<sup>ii</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>iv</sup> I describe its independence as ‘relative’ because of Sweden’s close relations and semi-secret cooperation with the western powers and NATO during the cold war. Even though the Swedish Right was perfectly aware of the fact that, when it came down to it, Sweden was solidly positioned within the western camp, it nonetheless persisted in trying to make it appear as if Sweden’s western commitment always hung in the balance. This may suggest that what most upset the Right had little to do with any real fear of Sweden abandoning the western camp altogether but, rather, was to do with the Social Democrat’s audacity to be *of* western Europe while simultaneously being a frequent immanent critic of western countries’ foreign policy. In the eyes of the Right, Social Democrat Sweden personified precisely those traits of disloyalty and treachery that cosmopolitans had traditionally been accused of in Europe.

<sup>v</sup> *Expressen* (22 June 2007).

<sup>vi</sup> B. Elmbrant, *Palme* (Stockholm, Fischer & Rye, 1989); ‘Sweden’s Olof Palme: “neutral but not silent”’, *Time* (29 January 1973).

<sup>vii</sup> ‘Sweden offers safe haven to Iraqi refugees’, *CBC/Radio Canada* (14 September 2007), <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/reportsfromabroad/arsenault/20070914.html>>.

<sup>viii</sup> ‘Iraqi refugees in Sweden: “anything is better than Baghdad”’, *Spiegel Online* (18 April 2007), <<http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,477952,00.html>>.

<sup>ix</sup> ‘Iraq war refugees turn to Sweden, not US’, *ABC News* (15 March 2007),

<<http://abcnews.go.com/WNT/IraqCoverage/story?id=2954702&page=1>>; ‘Iraqi refugees find sanctuary, and fellow Iraqis, in Sweden’, *New York Times* (16 January 2007); ‘Iraqi refugees: our problem or Sweden’s?’, *Washington Post* (18 June 2007).

<sup>x</sup> Shahram Khosravi, ‘Sweden: detention and deportation of asylum seekers’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 50, no. 4, April 2009).

<sup>xi</sup> European Council on Refugees and Exiles, ‘Europe must extend solidarity to Iraqi refugees in the EU’, PR2/2/2007/Ext/RW (15 February 2007).

<sup>xii</sup> ‘Billstrom interviewed on Iraq refugees in Sweden’, *Middle East Online* (26 September 2007), <<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=22365>>.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>xv</sup> Quoted in C. Joppke, *Immigration and the Nation-State: the United States, Germany, and Great Britain* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 93.

<sup>xvi</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

<sup>xvii</sup> A. Sivanandan, ‘Racism: the road from Germany’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 34, no. 3, January 1993), pp. 72–3.

<sup>xviii</sup> Joppke, op. cit., p. 93, emphasis in original.

<sup>xix</sup> Statistics Netherlands, ‘Lowest number of asylum requests in EU for 20 years’ (24 April 2007), <[www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2007/2007-2182-wm1.htm](http://www.cbs.nl/en-GB/menu/themas/bevolking/publicaties/artikelen/archief/2007/2007-2182-wm1.htm)>.

<sup>xx</sup> Home Office, ‘Asylum numbers down, new drive on removals – home secretary’ (24 February 2004), <[http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Asylum\\_Numbers\\_Down,\\_New\\_Drive\\_O](http://press.homeoffice.gov.uk/press-releases/Asylum_Numbers_Down,_New_Drive_O)>

<sup>xxi</sup> *Studio Ett* (7 February 2008),

<<http://sr.se/webbradio/webbradio.asp?type=broadcast&Id=1000533&BroadcastDate=&IsBlock=1>>.

<sup>xxii</sup> F. Webber, ‘Europe 1992’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 31, no. 2, October 1989); L. Fekete, ‘The deportation machine: Europe, asylum and human rights’, *Race & Class* (Vol. 47, no. 1, July 2005).

<sup>xxiii</sup> U. Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge, Polity, 2006), p. 166.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Ibid., pp. 170–1, 167.

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- <sup>xxvi</sup> R. Braidotti, 'Gender and power in a post-nationalist European Union', *NORA – Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research* (Vol. 12, no. 3, 2004).
- <sup>xxvii</sup> A. Giddens, *The Third Way: the renewal of social democracy* (Cambridge, Polity, 1998); D. Held, 'Global social democracy', in A. Giddens (ed), *The Progressive Manifesto: new ideas for the centre-Left* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2003); M. Kaldor, 'Reconceptualizing organized violence', in Archibugi, Held and Köhler (eds), op. cit.; J. Habermas, *The Divided West* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006).
- <sup>xxviii</sup> For a thorough delineation and critical scrutiny of the various cosmopolitan and post-national perspectives and positions, see C. Calhoun, *Nations Matter: culture, history, and the cosmopolitan dream* (London, Routledge, 2007).
- <sup>xxix</sup> Beck, op. cit., p. 168.
- <sup>xxx</sup> U. Beck and E. Grande, *Cosmopolitan Europe* (Cambridge, Polity, 2007), p. 2; see also Giddens, op. cit., pp. 142–7.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Beck, op. cit., p. 174; Beck and Grande, op. cit., p. 22.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> P. Hainsworth, 'France says no: the 29 May 2005 referendum on the European constitution', *Parliamentary Affairs* (Vol. 59, no. 1, 2006).
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> For a substantiation of this point, as well as a comprehensive analysis of the referenda, see S. Watkins, 'Continental tremors', *New Left Review* (No. 33, 2005).
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 7.
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- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Watkins, op. cit., p. 7.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> A. Geddes, 'Lobbying for migrant inclusion in the European Union', *Journal of European Public Policy* (Vol. 7, no. 4, 2000), p. 640.
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- <sup>xlvi</sup> Here a proviso should be added: one of the coalition partners in the current Swedish government, the Liberal Party (*folkpartiet*), has been flirting with Islamophobia for several years; and, as the holder of the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, the Liberal Party has been pushing for policies of this kind. Until recently, however, the Moderate Party (the largest coalition partner) and

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the prime minister have, for the most part, only shown lukewarm interest in such an agenda. Developments from autumn 2008 indicate, however, that the Moderate Party seems to be gearing up to play the ‘integration’ card in the 2010 election, calling for stiffer ‘cultural value-related’ integration demands to be placed on certain groups of migrants and minorities.

<sup>xlvi</sup> Beck, op. cit., pp. 166–7.

<sup>xlvii</sup> J. H. H. Weiler, *The Constitution of Europe* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 244, 251.

<sup>xlviii</sup> Beck and Grande, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>xliv</sup> Beck, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>1</sup> U. Beck and A. Giddens, ‘Nationalism has now become the enemy of Europe’s nations’, *Guardian* (4 October 2005).

<sup>li</sup> J. Habermas and J. Derrida, ‘February 15, or what binds Europeans together: a plea for a common foreign policy, beginning in the core of Europe’, *Constellations* (Vol. 10, no. 3, 2003), pp. 292–3.

<sup>lii</sup> Beck, op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>liii</sup> Beck and Grande, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>liv</sup> Calhoun, op. cit., p. 1.