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Supranationalism in the European Union: what about multilingualism?

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1. Introduction

The European Union is a much debated matter. Unique or not, it is the most successful supranational arrangement since the end of the second world war and, as such, it has generated an ever expanding literature on European context. However, not much attention has been paid to the linguistic issue in this language. This is extremely surprising when you are aware of the importance of linguistic disputes in multilingual political systems. This paper considers the consequences of multilingualism for the supranational arrangement known as the European Union, its implications for its shape, its functioning, its legitimacy and its further evolution.

The first section introduces the European Union and its linguistic configuration. The next step will be to explore the supranational character of the European Union. There is no consensus on what the European Union really is (and what it should be) and at least three basic models can distinguished according to the meaning given to supranationality and supranationalism. It will be argued that ‘supranationalism’ is not only referring to an arrangement above states or nations, but also to a program to overcome nationalism. As a result it is especially fruitful to consider the abundant literature on language and nationalism. Finally the paper will examine how different conceptions of supranationalism, in other words different visions of Europe, sheds different lights on the issue of multilingualism and its accommodation in political institutions.

2. The European Union and its linguistic configuration

2.1 The European Union: still in the making

It is safe to state that the European Union is a supranational arrangement, but begin any more specific is getting into trouble: is it an international organisation? a state in the making? A new way of institutionalising political authority? The European integration has always disrupted the hedges between academic discipline. Although the European Communities were originally conceived and analysed as international organisations of a rather specific nature, their heir, the European Union is more and more understood ass a state in formation, be it a state of a rather specific nature.
Whatever the European Union is, it is generally presented as achieving the most elaborated institutional form of integration\(^1\). It is the most successful supranational organisation in terms of broadness, depth, size and strength. Broadness refers here to the fields the organisation covers, depth to its tasks and competencies, size to its membership and strength to its duration (Van der Wusten & Mamadouh 1995)\(^2\).

Characteristic for European integration is its state of perpetual unfulfilment: Europe is in the making (Abélès 1996b). Nevertheless there is no blueprint of the expected outcome of the process. To paraphrase a famous slogan, the process is the message. The milestones of this process can be summarised as follows\(^3\). The easiest to assess is the large increase in size of the Communities since 1952: in four enlargements (1973, 1981, 1986, 1995) it went from six to fifteen members\(^4\). Broadness and depth are less clearly determined. Since the Treaty establishing the Europe Coal and Steel Community has been signed in Paris in 1951, the scope of the activities of the European institutions has grown first as to include atomic energy (Euratom) and general economic matters (EEC) in 1957, after a treaty for a defence and a political community were rejected in national parliaments, it is only with the Maastricht Treaty (1991) that a political and monetary union was institutionalised. Regarding the competencies of the supranational organs, the evolution was even more erratic: the strong powers allowed to the Commission in the ECSC were much more mitigated in the EEC while the governments in the Council retained decisive powers during the sixties. In the seventies, new arrangements were made regarding budgetary and monetary matters, and foreign policy, the direct election of the European Parliament, where as the Single European Act (1986) and the Treaty on European Union (1991) have increased the competencies of the Parliament. Finally, the European Communities/Union have survived the major rearrangement of its geopolitical context: the end of the Cold War and the partition of Europe. What matters for linguistic issues is both size, that affects the number of languages involved, and both broadness and depth, that determine the amount and the repercussions of the decision making at the EU level.

Whatever the European Union is at present and will become once the process of integration stabilises , it is much more than an agreement between states, it is a political arrangement that affects not only the political system of its Member States but also has tremendous implications on the economic and cultural evolution of their societies.

The Europe integration did generate an ever expanding literature in various fields of social sciences and humanities. Nevertheless not much has been written on language.

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\(^1\) (e.g. in Knox & Agnew 1998: 376-7: free trade association, customs union, common market, economic union, and supranational political union).

\(^2\) These four dimensions offer a more finer tuned scheme than the conventional opposition between widening and deepening (e.g. Bull 1993) in which ‘widening’ refers to enlargement with new member states (size) and ‘deepening’ conflates broadening and deepening as defined above, while durability is ignored.

\(^3\) for details see the many textbooks on the European integration and European Union (for example Archer 1994, or Toulemon 1994).

\(^4\) In terms of population the enlargements of 1973 and that of 1986 were the most important, whereas in term of surface that were the enlargements of 1995 and that 1986. And both population and surface increased with the German reunification in 1990.
Jurists are concerned with supranational law making and the jurisprudence from the European Court of Justice. At a few occasions jurists have been interested in linguistic matters because they were at stake in legal procedures\(^5\) (such as Niedobitek 1997).

Political scientists were next in line to study the process of integration and the decision making process in the European Communities and subsequently the European Union, but at least three distinctive disciplines can be distinguished: international relations, comparative politics, and policy studies. First the topic was mainly addressed in the context of International Relations, while comparative politics ‘discover’ the Communities/Union much later. Hix reviewing systematically approaches from comparative politics to European Communities concludes that international relations may provide the best framework to study European integration, while comparative politics might be most fruitful to study EU politics (Hix 1994, 1996, Hurrell & Menon 1996, Torreblanca 1998). In addition, there has been a growing body of research from policy sciences (such as the policy network approach) which have been focusing on specific policy sectors in which the EC/EU institutions have been gaining competencies (Kassim 1994). Political scientists have been neglecting language all together.

Geographers have been mainly interested in regional differentiation within the European Communities, in regional policy and its impact and in the transformation of border regions, they do not pay much attention to languages either. In their Geography of the European Union, John Cole & Francis Cole provide a limited view of the linguistic configuration of Europe, under two headings ‘costs of multilingualism’ and ‘non-economic obstacles to cohesion in the EU’ (Cole & Cole 1997).

(Socio-) linguists are much more interested in language teaching (second language teaching of migrants and their children, foreign language), the disappearance of dialects, and language uses in bilingual communities, than in the European Union as political system (e.g. Truchot 1994). A remarkable exception has been the study of language planning in the European Communities by the French speaking Canadian Normand Labrie (1994). He examines the effect of lawmaking on language change. He introduces four concepts: linguistic change, linguistic regulation, linguistic policy and linguistic planning (Labrie 1994: 23-24). Linguistic change refers to an effective change in the position of a language. Linguistic regulation refers to the unintended linguistic effects of non-linguistic policies. Linguistic policies address implicitly linguistic issues (such as policies regarding language use in administration, school, or court). Finally linguistic planning is about planned linguistic change and consider both linguistic regulation and linguistic policies. Although providing a broad review of the status of the many languages in the European Union, Labrie addresses the nature of the political system itself only superficially.

Last but not least, anthropologists have discovered Europe at the beginning of the nineties, that is at the moment a single market was formed (‘1992’ as planned in the Single European Act) and the European Union was established (TEU, or Maastricht Treaty signed in 1991, implemented as from November 1\(^{st}\) 1993) (Wilson & Smith 1993, Goddard, Llobera & Shore 1994 especially Wilson 1993 and Boissevain 1994, Shore 1993 and Shore & Black 1994). If they are interested in language, this is much more to discuss the appearance and the

\(^5\) For example, the case Groener versus the Ireland in which a German citizen passed a complain about Ireland, regarding a language exam in Gaelic necessary to obtain a job as a civil servant, the plaignant was dismissed as the test was compulsory for all applicants, including the Irish ones (Labrie 1994).
significance of the so called ‘Eurospeak’ (Abélès 1996a, 1996b, Shore & Black 1993), a neologism referring to the terminology originating in Brussels which is often perceived as obscure and esoteric. Much of it consists of new juridical and technical terms related to EU institutions, procedures and policies, and to the detailed technical contents of much of the harmonisation lawmaking induced by the realisation of the Single European Market. Among the first are words such as co-decision, assent procedure, comitology, subsidiarity, harmonisation, cohesion funds, structural funds, or the untranslated *acquis communautaire*, while another exponent of this socioclect is the ever expanding collection of catchy acronyms to label various EU programs (EMU, EPU, LINGUA, ERASMUS, etc…). To the second category belong extensive terminologies that have been developed for technical details (Labrie 1994; see also Schmitt 1996, Gondrand 1991). But ‘Eurospreak’ exposes the problem of communication between the EU insiders and the rest of society in each linguistic community, and there are indeed eleven eurolects, one for each official language.

### 2.2 The languages in the European Union

The linguistic configuration of the European Union is characterised by a high number of strong institutionalised languages.

The different types of languages are:

- official and working languages of the European Union
- official and national languages of the Member States
- regional languages with an official status in regional constituencies (such as Basque in the Basque Country in Spain, German in South Tyrol in Italy)
- regional languages with no such status (such as Corsican)
- non-territorial languages (such as Yiddish or sign languages)
- non-territorial languages of (recent) immigrant communities (such as Turkish).

Only the languages with some official status are shown on map 1.

* map 1 *

**Official and working languages of the European Union**

There are many reasons to assess that the European Communities and since 1993 the European Union, form an extraordinary supranational arrangement. One of them is multilingualism in the EU institutions. At present, this linguistic regime of the European Union is characterised by a very large number of official and working languages. There are now eleven official and working languages (Danish, Dutch, English, Finish, French, German, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish), and a supplementary treaty language (Irish).

The linguistic regime of the European Union has not been established in the founding treaties but in the first Regulation ever passed by the Council of Ministers in 1958. The Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community and Euratom had been adopted in four linguistic versions using the official languages of the founding Member States, all equally valid 6, a grandiose symbolic gesture (especially when one realised that the Dutch and the Italian versions were not completed when the treaty was signed in 1957, Tabura 1980).

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6 For the Paris Treaty creating the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, the French version was the official one.
Regulation #1 stipulates the official and working languages of the European Communities. It is however rather vague. For example a distinction is established between official and working languages but no definition is provided. In addition it is not clear when which languages had to be used. In other words, the list of languages does not necessarily imply that all languages should be used all the time. Finally the text does not mention oral communication. As a result, there is a considerable liberty for the different EU institutions and organs to set their own linguistic regime. The linguistic regime of each EU institution is established in its Rules of Procedure. The Council of Minister and the European Parliament applies institutional multilingualism in full: at the European Parliament each document is translated into all official languages and simultaneous interpretation is available at all formal meetings of the Parliament and its components (standing committees, political groups, etc.). The Court of Justice uses a limited number of working languages at a time, but not always the same: a language of procedure is chosen by the defendant at the begin of a procedure among the eleven official languages and Irish. The proceedings are translated into French the permanent working language of the Court. The Commission publishes its official documents in all official languages but internally the working languages are French, English and to a lesser extent German.

The large number of official languages has been established gradually. When the principle of institutional multilingualism was adopted, there were ‘only’ four languages, Dutch, French, German and Italian, the official languages of the six states that founded the European Communities. Due to the successive enlargements (1973, 1981, 1986, 1995), the number of official and working languages has risen to six, seven, nine and eleven. Included are the official languages of the Member States, with the exception of Irish which is ‘only’ a treaty language and Luxembourgian which has become one of the official languages of Luxembourg in the eighties, long after Luxembourg joined the project. Irish, the national and first official language of the Republic of Ireland, is not an official and working language of the European Union because Ireland did not require it. It is however important for legislative matters due to its position in Irish national law.

At the occasion of each enlargement, the increase of the number of official and working languages have been discussed, among other institutional reforms that might be necessary to accommodate enlarged membership. Although fears of impracticability were strong, each time the adhesions resulted in the adoption of new languages and the continuation of the inclusion of all (official) national languages. The EU institutions are the largest recruiter of translators and interpreters in the world! (Cole & Cole 1997: 59).

**Languages of state**

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7 The Irish language has been used only once between 1973 and 1990 according to a report of the European Parliament (quoted in Labrie 1994).

8 This does not apply to studies such as the reports of the EU-wide opinion pools in the Eurobarometer series. Such are generally published in French and English.

9 Which means that the treaties are translated into Irish.

10 If the Irish and the English version diverge, the Irish settles the matter.

11 The practical difficulties to organise translation and interpretation rise exponentially with the number of languages because what matters for translation is the number of combinations. With nine languages (1986-1994) there were 72 combinations, with eleven (since 1995) there are 110.
‘Multilingual states’ is not a straightforward expression as it can be interpreted in a broad and in a narrow sense. The broad definition would refer to the languages used on the territory of the state, while the narrow definition points at the languages used in the administration of the state, e.g. in government and parliament, in court, in public administration (including local agencies) and in the army, at school and whenever other public linguistic situations regulated by the state at different level\(^\text{12}\).

Of course there is probably no state in the world with a monolingual population, a situation that would imply that 1) all individuals are monolingual and 2) all are monolingual in the same language. Using the narrow definition, monolingual states are more common and even more important, often conceived as a norm\(^\text{13}\). State formation and nation building in England and France led to one single state language which has spread into the ‘national’ society destroying other languages and dialects\(^\text{14}\).

Most of the Member States of the European Union are monolingual states, although some of them allows for specific linguistic arrangements in certain regions, regarding education in regional languages and the use of these languages in administration.

Four of the Member States are multilingual at the national level: the Republic of Ireland (Irish/English), Luxembourg (French/German/Luxembourgian), Belgium (Dutch/French) and Finland (Finnish/Swedish). In these cases, each child is exposed to the other language during basic education. Only in Luxembourg all three languages are used in school not as teaching matters but as teaching languages so that we can expect the population (of Luxembourgish origin at least) to have a reasonable command of all three languages. There is a situation of disglossia\(^\text{15}\) which applies to the few speakers of Irish in Ireland too. In the other two bilingual states, linguistic communities are territorially rather concentrated in monolingual areas.

**Regional languages with an official status**

In addition, other languages have obtained an official status at the regional level. The important exceptions are the Spanish bilingual regions (the Basque Country, Catalonia, Valencia and the Baleares, Galicia), Italian regions (Val d’Aoste, South Tyrol), the German-speaking Community and status of the bilingual Capital Region Brussels in Belgium, but there are also more modest arrangements in the Dutch province of Friesland, in the German/Danish border area, etc. Most often\(^\text{16}\) linguistic settlements are quite recent, following cultural and political mobilisations from below and the decentralisation of administrative tasks and the devolution of power from the central state (such as in Italian or Spanish regions). In some cases, such as Catalan, regional authorities have implemented radical linguistic policies as to reduce the use of the language of the central state which cause not only in the rehabilitation of the regional

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\(12\) Regulations are common in the field of commerce such as advertising, billboards (such as the exclusive use of French in the Canadian province Québec), in the media (French music quota on French radio broadcasting, Catalan soundtracked movies quota in the Spanish Autonomous Community of Catalonia) etc.

\(13\) To a large extent, monolingualism is often see as a norm in individuals too. This idea has European nineteenth century roots, but is still quite pervasive. Bilingualism or multilingualism is still seen as a deviant attribute.

\(14\) In some countries, the disappearance of dialects is more recent than in others (see Perridon 1997 on the disappearance of Scandinavian dialects since the sixties and the hardening of land borders as language borders).

\(15\) Disglossia is a form of bilingualism in which different languages are used in different domains of social life.

\(16\) An important exception form the Aland-islands (Finland) where Swedish is the official language since the independence of Finland.
language because of its use in all domains of social life, but also in the gradual exclusion of the language of the central state, and consequently in the decrease of bilingualism among the younger generations.

Other territorial or non-territorial languages
Many more languages are spoken in the European Union: some of them are minority languages which have been marginalised during the process of state formation and nation building (e.g. Bretons) others have been introduced more recently on the territory of the European Union. Most of the larger cities in the European Union have to provide education to children speaking dozens and dozens of different languages at home. These languages have no formal status, although those spoken by the largest communities may be used in public relations by local agencies of the welfare state (housing, health etc.) and may be introduced at school.

All by all, the position of the languages of state in the Member States is very strong. These state languages are among the most wide spread in the world: either as state languages, or language of wider communication.

The linguistic configuration in each Member State has remained largely unaffected by the European integration (until now), the position of the language(s) of states has been however undermined by three concurrent phenomena: the intensification of world wide communication with the growing use of international English as second language; the strengthening of regional languages concurrent to the decentralisation of administrative tasks and devolution of political power to linguistically distinct regions; and the massive migration flows.

The institutional multilingualism maintained at the EU level until present, comforts the dominant position of the official languages of state. As such, it has remained politically unproblematic. Nevertheless the practice of multilingualism has been subjected to severe critiques, that fall into three main categories:

- those who want institutional multilingualism to be expanded to include more languages. It is no coincidence that the largest group of proponents are the Catalans, who have pointed at the historical strength of the language, its official status at the regional level (in several Spanish regions) and the size of its speakers’ community (which is larger than that of two of the official and working languages: Danish and Finnish) to lobby for the recognition of Catalan as an official and working language of the European Union.

- those who want institutional multilingualism to be applied more thoroughly. At the one hand the German government and the Bundesrat have been insisting for an equal treatment of German with French and English. Complains from the German side have been intensified since the reunification, which both made German by far the most spoken mother tongue in the European Union and gave Germany its position back, as the pivot state in Central

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17 At the beginning of the nineties, English was the language of state in 42 states, French in 28, Spanish in 21 and Portuguese in 7, the only other language so widely used was Arabic with 21 states (Laponce 1992: 595).
19 In some societies such as Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, the use of English as second languages in certain domain of higher education and business have gave way to speculations about the generalisation of bilingualism and substantially the eventual abandon of the national language, at least by the elite (for a reassuring view on this eventuality: Perridon 1997).
20 Until now without much success, notwithstanding the support of the European Parliament. For the European Commission, the initiative to amend Regulation #1 lies fully at the Council: Spain would have to ask formally for the adoption of Catalan before the topic can be discussed in the Council.
Europe. Completely different are the complaints of the users of other official languages, especially the Dutch and the Dutch speaking Belgians, but also the Danes. They oppose the neglect of certain official languages at certain occasions, and the existence of *de facto* working languages at the European Commission (English, French and to a lesser extent German).

- those who want institutional multilingualism to be drastically reduced\(^{21}\). This voice is by far the loudest but this group is also the most divided, regarding both what is assessed to be wrong with multilingualism and what solutions are put forward.

The main reasons put forward to limit the number of official and working languages is that it does not work well and/or that it is too expensive. It is my conviction that financial costs should be left out of the discussion, because whatever there are, they are marginal as compared to other functioning costs or to the costs of ‘non-Europe’. Reducing or abolishing institutional multilingualism because it is expensive is as foolish as cancelling elections for the same reason. But the issue of malfunctioning is much more important: complaints focus on errors of translation and interpretations, delays caused by the necessary translation of documents, delays caused by the interpretation of oral communication and its paralysing effects on discussions, and the opacity of the resulting documents. Miscommunication is however not caused by the translators and the interpreters, but is of course rooted in the cultural differences between language communities which have joined into the European Union\(^{22}\). There is no reason to believe that this problem would disappear, or at least weaken, if the switch between languages was not done by professionals but by amateurs, that is civil servants or people’s representatives originating from the different language communities.

So far, empirical research has focused on the practices of linguistic multilingualism at the Commission (Abélès 1996a, 1996b, Abélès & Bellier 1996, Bellier 1995, 1997, Gehnen 1991, Haselhuber1991, Quell 1997), at the European Parliament (Abélès 1992, Habeland & Henriksen 1991, Mamadouh 1995) or both (Schloßmacher 1994). These authors uses surveys, questionnaires or participant observation to assess the linguistic abilities of Members of the European Parliament and/or civil servants, the actual use of languages in the EU institutions and/or preferences for a reform of the linguistic regime. The future of institutional multilingualism has been discussed in terms of costs, efficiency and practibility (e.g. Duthoy 1993, *Civis Mundi* 1994, Nederlandse Taalunie 1997, all three dealing more specifically with the future of the Dutch as a working language. Translators and interpreters have documented the complexity of the organisation of multilingualism (for the European Parliament see Gómez de Enterría 1992).

Still the linguistic issue in the European Union, is more than the Babel-like experience\(^{23}\) of 25 000 civil servants or 626 representatives at the European Parliament ‘condemned’ to multilingual communication in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg. Because the European

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\(^{21}\) Or at least to prevent any further expansion at the occasion of further enlargements.

\(^{22}\) For a similar account of the importance of culture on language itself, see the study of invective in 21 European tongues (including the 11 official languages of the European Union) published by Burgen (1996), especially chapter 1: Babel Talk.

\(^{23}\) The institutional multilingualism is often depicted as a Tower of Babel. In his history of the quest for one single and perfect language, Umberto Eco explains how this biblical myth has been detrimental to multilingualism, which is perceived in Western culture as a punishment, rather than a resource (Eco 1994). Linguistic diversity should be valued as languages are different ways to see the world (hence the parallel between the preservation of linguistic diversity and the preservation of biological diversity).
Union is more than an international (between states) organisation; because of the scope of the law and policy making at the EU level; and because EU citizenship has been formerly introduced in the Treaty on European Union (or Maastricht Treaty) the linguistic arrangements in core institutions are relevant in a much wider context. But what does institutional multilingualism mean to the 370 millions citizens of the European Union? Probably nothing as most of them are living and working in a monolingual context, are not interested in EU politics, or may be unaware of its influence on their lives. Just the same, any linguistic arrangement regulating the EU institutions necessarily has consequences for the relations between these institutions and political actors from the Member States and eventually consequences on language use in the European Union.

Multilingual political systems are necessarily affected by the relations between languages (Lapoune 1992: 587) but before assessing the consequences of the linguistic configuration described in this section on the European Union as a supranational political arena, we need to explore the nature of this political system and the meaning of its supranational nature.

3. Supranationalism: above state and nation, and beyond nationalism

The term ‘supranational’ refers ambiguously to nations but, as ‘international’ and ‘transnational’, is generally associated to the relations between states, rather than between nations. It is generally used to refer to an authority above a number of states. Without entering the debate of what exactly is a state, suffices here to refer to entities consisting of a political authority exerting a sovereign authority upon a territory and the population living there.

In that sense any international organisation in which states are co-operating is supranational. Nevertheless, the term is used to refer to international organisations in which some devolution of competencies has occurred from the member states to the supranational authority. In addition it is also used to described the decision making procedures in an organisation: opposing ‘supranational’ to ‘intergovernmental’ procedures. When the decision making is intergovernmental, each member state can veto the deal, while a supranational decision is binding for the member states. The supranational character is thus varying with the specific rules in use: from decision making between representatives of the governments of the member states (as long as consensus is not required) to decision making by an autonomous college, board or assembly.

The intensifying international interactions in the frame of the European Communities since the first Treaty in 1951 and consequently the European Union are generally conceived in terms of an antagonism between intergovernmentalism and supranationalism (e.g. in Corbey 1992), and the complex set of EU decision making procedures can be seen as a compromise between the two logics.

Supranationality can be also used slightly differently, as a concept that applies to the juridical makeup of the European Union. In that case it refers to the autonomy of European law, the direct application of European law, not only upon the Member States, but also on persons, and the prevalence of European law on national law (e.g. in Labrie 1994: 160).

There is a third way to use the concept, less conventional, but fruitful, as I hope to show below. Supranationalism does not only describe a situation in which an authority above the
states has been granted specific competencies the Member States. It also describes a doctrine about what it believed to be an effective way to regulate international relations. The devolution of competencies to a supranational authority and the application of rules and laws stemming from that authority which are, in the short term, not necessarily benefiting the national interest, need to be legitimated. This is done in discourse invoking long term interests, such as the maintenance of peace and the benefits expected from expanding and closer economic and cultural ties between nations. In other words, supranationalism is a program to overcome nationalism. But then again what is nationalism?

3.1 Nationalism and Supranationalism

For our purpose, it may be useful to turn to Peter Taylor’s summary of the fundamental assumptions of the common nationalist doctrine:

“A1: the world consists of a mosaic of nations
A2: world order and harmony depends upon expressing this mosaic in a system of free nation-states.
B1: nations are the natural units of society
B2: nations have a cultural homogeneity based upon common ancestry and/or history.
B3: every nation requires its own sovereign state for the true expression of its culture.
B4: all nations (rather than states) have an inalienable right to a territory or homeland.
C1: every individual must belong to a nation
C2: a person’s primary loyalty is to the nation
C3: only through the nation can a person find true freedom.” (Taylor 1993: 197)

This presentation has a major advantage when dealing with supranationalism: nationalism is not presented as a doctrine regarding a specific nation, but as a doctrine about a proper world order. In addition, it is useful to identify which proposition(s) are rejected and which are still accepted, and by doing so to distinguish different degrees of supranationalism.

Most often, supranationalism is limited to an adjustment of Taylor’s proposition A2. Supranational arrangements are supposed to neutralise national competition and ensure peace, as (nation-)states have pursued their (conflicting) interests into terrible wars. This interpretation leaves assumptions about the nations themselves, and about the relations between individuals and their nation intact. If these assumptions remains strong, supranationalism may soon transmute into nationalism at the former supranational level. Because different political identities (local, regional, national, supranational) are conceived in a definite order and the most important political identity (national identity) is able to supersede all others in time of dangers (e.g. a war situation, Attiná 1997), the top of the hierarchy is bound to move from the national to the supranational level if such supranationalism is successful.

A much stronger version of supranationalism would deny the very importance of nations for organisation of politics (B-propositions) and/or the primacy of the relation between individuals and their nation (C-propositions) 24.

24 This type of supranationalism enters a self-reinforcing process, just as nationalism, but in the opposing direction (does it make it a virtuous circle instead of a vicious one?). While nationalism generally produces new nationalist demands (such as it is the case for smaller ethnic groups in the new states in the former Soviet Union), supranationalism generates more supranationalism.
So, when supranationalism is said to overcome nationalism, it may mean that it overcomes a specific breed of nationalism (e.g. German, French, British nationalism), which may be done by a kind of supernationalism (e.g. EU nationalism) and the formation of a (nation) state at the EU level, or it may mean to overcome the importance of nations in politics. Which type of supranationalism is found in the European Union?

3.2 Nationalism and Supranationalism in the European Union

To begin with, the European Union associates (nation) states on a continent which was the cradle of the modern states and nationalism. No doubt that at the aftermath of the Second World War, the main concern of the European politicians who laid the fundaments of the European Union as we know it, was overcoming nationalism. Nationalism had led Europe twice to global war in twenty-five years. But these politicians had different ideas about what supranationalism would imply. The ambiguity regarding the very nature of the European Union (which is echoed in the boundary dispute between internal relationists and political comparativists touched upon above) can be clarified by distinguishing different arrangements compatible with supranationalism.

There are at least three ways of regarding the European Union as an arrangement beyond the existing Member States:

• the European Union as an Union between states (a confederal Europe)
• the European Union as a Super State in the making (a federal Europe)
• the European Union as a new political arrangement, fundamentally different from the modern state, a institutional form beyond the modern state.

Corresponding to these, there are three ways of defining supranationalism as a program beyond nationalism:

• supranationalism as complementary to nationalism
• supranationalism as neonationalism
• suprationalism as postnationalism.

In the first model, supranationalism is instrumental, it is a way to mitigate the negative effects of nationalism (the military expression of competition between nations) by forging ties between nations, and it is also a way to deliver services the national state cannot provide anymore (Attinà 1997). In that case the European Union is not weakening the states but strengthening them (Mann 1993). Such Europe corresponds to De Gaulle’s Europe des patries.

In the second model, the European Union is a potential nation and proponents of a federal Europe are proponents of a European nationalism (Varenne 1993) quite similar to the form of

25 Despite Anderson’s efforts to demonstrate that the first modern national experiences occur in the creole societies of the Americas (Anderson 1991) the French Revolution is conventionally acknowledged as the mother of modern nationalism. If they were not the first, Western Europeans certainly contributes the most to the formation of a nationalist doctrine that sustains the equation: ‘one state, one nation, one language’ (Laponce 1992).

26 One may wonder how long it will take before the disciplinary boundaries may be acknowledged as irrelevant (see Dijkink 1996, Paasi 1996 for examples of the close connection between foreign policy matters and national identity).

27 Competition may continue on other grounds: economy (see on geoconomics Foucher 1997), football, etc.
nationalism we have experienced before in this part of Europe. If a nation is an imagined community (Anderson 1991), then the European Union is already a nation. The full definition is: “it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 1991: 6).

It is clear that the European Communities and European Union have been imagined political communities. They even demonstrate that imagination can challenge successfully centuries of national rivalries (France and Germany, France and England, England and Holland, England and Germany, Denmark and Sweden, Spain and Portugal, to name only the most disrupting ones in the recent history of Europe). No doubt the community is then harder to imagine when ‘memories’ of older national identities and geopolitical visions in which today’s friends were foes are still alive and when language keep peoples apart, but it is not impossible.

‘inherently limited’? Although the European Communities and the European Union have been expanding territorially (from six to fifteen members in 1973, 1981, 1986 and 1995) and many new states are applying for membership, there is a some sense of the limitation of the potential territory of the Union. Membership of Morocco and Turkey have been played down on the ground that there were not ‘European’, e.g. not (fully) localised on the European subcontinent.

‘sovereign’ is the most difficult part of Anderson’s definition. Is the EU sovereign? But then again: are the Member States sovereign? And is sovereignty located somewhere else than in the imagination? No doubt the sovereignty of the European Union is disputed, but it was no different for the sovereignty of the French nation for at very least the first century after 1789. And at present, the sovereignty of most of the states (especially in Europe) seems to be radically by their supranational commitments.

Whether this demonstrate that Anderson’s definition is not specific enough or that the European Union really is a nation, is not important. What matters here is to underline that European Union may not be a nation yet, but could become one. In other words, the community building meant as a way to implement a supranationalist program can be interpreted as a sign of nation formation. This process may in a (not too far) future be ‘naturally’ re-interpreted as the first steps toward a European nation, while older periods of unification such as the Roman Empire, the German Holy Empire, Napoleon’s Europe and the Hitler’s Third Reich could be re-interpreted as the harbingers of European integration.

It can even be argued that more nation building will be needed soon. The lack of affective ties of EU-citizens is perceived as a problem by politicians and civil servants (e.g. the low level of knowledge and affective support for the EU institution, the low turnout at elections of the European Parliament, the small majorities supporting the ratification of treaties where there have been referenda) it will be even more needed when the common currency, the Euro, is introduced in eleven of the member states. A common currency ties even more closer than before the fate of the populations of the different countries, and the only way to legitimate massive redistribution of resources from some part of the Union to the other is to point at some sense of solidarity, common history and common destiny….in short, some sense of nationhood.

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28 And indeed have been, see for example a cartoon of the British anti-EC movement reproduced in Dijkink 1996: 47.
Cultural policies conducted by the European Commision have been identified as nation building policies (e.g. Shore 1993, Shore & Black 1994). Although it would be excessive to say that the nation building process is overwhelming in the European Union, there are timid attempts to nurture a sense of EU citizenship: the direct election of the European Parliament, the blue flag, the anthem, the common passport, and much is expected on this point of the common currency.

The theory of nationalism developed by Ernest Gellner (1983) to comprehend the economic background of state and nation formation in Western Europe, could be put forward to support such an interpretation, the economic process making uniformisation necessary at an ever increasing level (Parman 1993). However, the numerous and obvious qualitative differences between present days economic structures make any comparison with the Industrial Revolution precarious. In addition, history and geography are unlikely to repeat themselves so literally, albeit because the new nationalism has to deal with the old. Therefore the emergence of a new kind of a political order is much more likely.

The third model has been much discussed by those who try to grasp the true nature of the European Union and who wants to escape the dichotomy between international organisation (Union between States) or federal state (Super State Europe).

Much has been written about the specific character of the political decision making in the European Union, and one can safely said that new forms of decision making have been introduced, involving a large number of political actors operating at different administrative levels with varying degree of political legitimacy.

The European Union can be described as a network state (to use an expression introduced by Castells 1998), as opposed to the hierarchic state that the modern state is (was). It is a world of shard sovereignties The power structure of the European Union is much more obscure than the neat division of powers between executive, legislative and judiciary, because of the many networks of experts, civil servants, politicians, lobbyists etc. involved, and even more because of the puzzling relations of shared executive and legislative powers between its key institutions: the Council, the Parliament and the Commission, and the dual and conflicting roles of governments as individual government and part of a collegial council.

Similarly the European nation in formation, may be well different from the classic image of European nations, allowing for much more plural loyalties than it was the case in the monolithic conception of the end of the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century, and it will probably not be expressed in patriotic sacrifice such as we have seen in the Great War.

But can we be more specific about the qualities of this new political order. The German political scientist Philippe Schmitter for example has introduced new ideal types of institutional arrangements (1996, also Marks et al. 1996). He distinguished two dimensions referring to functional and territorial constituencies. Territorial constituencies can be either fixed, contiguous, hierarchical, identical; and irreversible; or the opposite (variable, tangential,

29 As for the flag and the anthem, one should be cautious, they are not exclusive attributes of nations and states: most large companies have flags and in Japan anthems too. The EU blue flag may be seen as a promotion campaign for a trade-mark.

30 No one is willing to die for the common market (Anderson 1991, Schnapper 1997).
egalitarian, differentiated, reversible). Functional constituencies can be either fixed, cumulative, separate and coincident or the opposite (variable, dispersed, shared, and overlapping). Combining the dimensions he obtains four political configuration: two of which are quite familiar to use: the state (stato/federatio) and the confederal state (confederatio): the state combines fixed territorial and fixed functional constituencies whereas the confederatio combines fixed functional constituencies with variable territorial constituencies. A consortio is the a combination of fixed territorial constituencies with variable functional constituencies (often between actors of contiguous states). Finally much more difficult to imagine is the condominio, a combination of variable constituencies. These last two types describes configurations corresponding to variants of our network state. Schmitter does not assert which is to be the likely outcome of European integration, but shows EU arrangements pointing into all four directions. It is worth mentioning that Schmitter, although he was primarily interested in the effect of the European Union on the fate of the Nation State, did not discuss the issue of its language of state.

From another perspective, much has been written on citizenship, especially since the concept of EU-citizenship has been introduced in the Treaty on European Union (1991). In the treaty EU citizenship is granted/imposed to the citizens of the Member States, but its content, that is the rights and obligations tied to it remain unclear. The meaning of supranational citizenship is at stake, but the discussion is closely linked to the debate on transnational citizenship which deals with the political position of migrants and their descendants (when there are not full citizens) in the host society (Bader 1998, Lehning 1998, Cesari & Fulbrook 1996, Habermas 1994, 1996).

In his account of the debate on citizenship, Dominique Schnapper differentiates between classical (or national) and new (supranational?) citizenship (1997). At the core of the debate is the dissociation of nationality and citizenship, the first refer to a community of culture the second to political practice. Another point is the dissociation of civic and social rights: instead of the conventional sequence of rights introduced by T.H. Marshall in the early sixties (civic rights, then political rights, and social and economic rights), foreigners in the EU (residents excluded from EU citizenship) have broad social rights but are excluded from civic rights. The main worries Schnapper expresses is that the principle of citizenship is too weak to keep the European polity together. ‘No society can exist as a purely civic society’ (Schnapper 1997: 219), there must be some emotional binding, a ‘we’. In addition, he insists that some place is needed where the political space materialise: institutions which can take legitimate decisions. Such seems to disappear completely in the abstract rhetoric on postnational citizenship. What matters for us, is that Schnapper do think that such is feasible in the European Union, for example in his discussion on citizenship (see above), Schnapper does not mention linguistic diversity as a specific obstacle to the establishment of some European identity: “The nation is no more natural or artificial than the region or Europe; they are all historical constructions. If one favors the creation of a new political entity at the European level, one must build it” (Schnapper 1997: 219).

How different the new Europe may be from the old, it has to be constructed and ‘imagined’. Although political and ethnic identity are to be dissociated, and the state have to be neutral, it

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31 Schmitter uses Latin neologism to ‘remind the reader of the novel arrangements they represent’ (Schmitter 1996:223).
32 Telò (1995) argues that it is a special case of dual citizenship.
33 A few specific rights are mentioned: free circulation (article 8A), voting rights at local and EP elections (8B), diplomatic protection (8C), and petition (8D).
does not mean that it should be indifferent to culture, however linguistic diversity is less often discussed than religion (Bader 1998, Lehning 1998).

4. Nationalism and Languages

If supranationalism is a program to go beyond nationalism, it is meaningful to revisit the abundant literature on language and nationalism. Much has been written on language and nationalism. Benedict Anderson for example presents different types of nationalism, and their relations to languages (Anderson 1991). What matters to us is the importance of monolingualism in state nationalism, and the role of multilingualism in the legitimation of ethnonationalist movements.

**Language and state nationalism: state and nation building**

Historically, languages have played an important role in the evolution of modern nationalism. If we follow Anderson’s interpretation the evolution of print capitalism, reformation, literacy, and political institutions, state formation has been transforming some vernaculars into high culture languages, some of them being earlier languages of state, others being newly promoted to high status. That process has led to the standardisation of the language of state and the extinction of local and regional dialects and to the marginalisation of languages at the periphery of the state. Ernest Gellner also highlights the importance of cultural homogenisation (through language) in the period of industrialisation and its importance for the rise of nationalism (Gellner 1981).

Due to the adoption and the diffusion of state languages in the past five centuries, and to the evolution of the printing business and the Reformation, certain vernaculars have been promoted to high culture languages, eroding both the languages of the clerks, Latin, and plenty of local and regional languages and dialects. It is why the number of languages spoken in the European Union is relatively small (as compared to Africa for example).

What is crucial to acknowledge is that language has been linked to political loyalty as never before, as a core value of most nationalist discourses that build on the motto ‘one state, one nation, one language’ (Laponce 1992). The case for a standard language was democratic: (Hobsbawn 1996: 88) it was meant to guarantee access to the democratic arena (about the examplary case of France, see Ford 1993).

The state contributes to this consciousness for example by asking linguistic information in surveys and censuses (Van Gennep in Llobera1994, a topic also extensively dealt with in colonial contexts in Anderson 1991) meant to monitor the diffusion of the language of state, they increase the awareness of the speakers of marginalised languages and contributed in the end to the grassroots mobilisations voicing linguistic demands.

**Language and nationalism against the state**

Language (linguistic grievances and linguistic demands) often plays a major role in ethnonationalist movements. It is also a clear marker of the distinction between the ethnic group the movement represents, and the majority group in the central state it opposes (it applies to both self-distinction or externally imposed distinction). Since the end of the sixties there has been a resurgence of linguistic demands in peripheral regions of West European states.
John Coakley distinguishes four phases in the evolution of ethnic demands and this applies to linguistic groups also: equal access, recognition of groups separateness (cultural rights), institutionalisational political recognition (such as autonomy), secession (Coakley 1993). He further distinguishes between ethnic groups according to their territorial features, identifying two dimensions: territorial concentration and cohesiveness, which affects the practicability of various territorial settlements of ethnic demands for different type of states (centralism, regionalism, federalism, confederalism and asymmetrical devolution). Settlements to accommodate ethnic demands in centralistic states takes various forms: assimilationist policies (and the negation of ethnic demands), consociationalism (sharing the centralised state), cultural autonomy (decentralisation of power along non-territorial line), state wide bilingualism, separate linguistic regimes in different parts of the state. With the later two, Coakley has shifted, without saying, to specifically linguistic arrangements, but others apply to linguistic groups too.

The geolinguist Colin Williams have studied extensively the fate of linguistic minorities in Western Europe, the diversity of the arrangements and the recognition of their rights at different level (1993, 1994). Considering the importance of language in state nationalism in France, it is not surprising that cultural demands from linguistic minorities has been the most difficult to accommodate for the French state (Safran 1989).

Are all tongues equal? Hobsbawm asked in an analysis of language, culture and national identity (1996) in which he pleads against what he calls Balkanization (the granting of an official status to ever smaller languages). All what official recognition will do is to ‘multiply the occasions for conflict’. His conclusion is puzzling:

“So long as language is not as firmly separated from the state as religion was in the United States under the American constitution, it will be a constant and generally artificial source of civil strife” (Hobsbawm 1996: 98).

But how could a state be speechless! His idea is that the state should used a standard language of communication which should avoid becoming culture language because ‘the less we let the poets get their hands on such communication languages, the better, for poetry encourages both incommunicability and linguistic nationalism’ (p. 96). The titanic task of making people learn a communication language and preventing them to use it for anything expressive will be complicated by yet another piece of advise, avoiding these languages to be dominated by bureaucratic or technical jargon.

In conclusion, linguistic demands have a highly disruptive capacity to generate ethnic tensions and demands that put heavy burden on the political system. It does not necessary lead to secession. Nations are not necessarily monolingual, but separatist demands are unlikely to disappear. Of course, linguistic differentiation may be constructed, such is the case when closely languages in oral form are written in different alphabet (Serbian and Croatian, Urdu and Hindi). But language is ‘the most striking and pugnacious symbol of differentiation, continuity and collective cohesion (the anthropologist Van Gennep at the aftermath of the Great War, quoted in Llobera 1994: 99). Clearly language is the primordial medium of communication, formation and diffusion of the nationalistic discourse. Nations, nor states, can not be without any language.

34 At the European level, the Council of Europe plays an active role in the recognition of regional and minority languages (see the European Charter drafted in 1991).
5. Supranationalism and Languages

Language is an important issue in any (multilingual) political system. Regarding the specific situation of the European Union, unique features can be distinguished:

- the strong position of languages of states (eleven at present) which have been recognised at the EU level from 1958 until present
- the strengthening of certain languages at the regional level
- the segregation of the linguistic communities in such ways that monolingualism is the rule in national, regional and local political institutions, and multilingualism the exception.

Many issues are intertwined to the linguistic issues because language is a mean of communication, a mean of cultural identification and differentiation and a mean of control. In the context of the European Union we can distinguish (at least) the following key issues:

- communication (especially communication inside EU institutions, communication between these institutions and other political actors, from Member States to individual citizens, and communication between political actors from different Member States)
- identity (especially national identities, but also local, regional and non-territorial identities bound to the use of a specific language)
- power (especially the development of democratic practices at the EU level)

This may be specified further.

Regarding the functioning of the EU institutions, the question is whether the actual regime of institutional multilingualism works well and whether it could be maintained at the occasion of future enlargements.

Regarding the relations between EU institutions and political and administrative actors from the Member States, the stake is the adequacy of the actual regime to accommodate linguistic diversity and to facilitate vertical communication, that is to facilitate access to and control of EU institutions for the EU-citizens.

Regarding transnational communication, that is between actors across the internal boundaries of the European Union, the problem is much more difficult to grasp. This goes beyond the scope of institutional multilingualism. No transnational organisation is able to finance full multilingualism with 11 working languages\(^{35}\), but should there be any facilities provided by the European Union to facilitate transnational communication? Or should we be able to rely on some language of wider communication?

Regarding identities, language and linguistic practices interfere with the strengthening and the eroding of European, national, regional and local identities, as well as non-territorial ones. Regarding democracy finally, language may limit the access of certain groups of citizens to political representation and eventually affect the legitimacy of the European institutions: Can people vote for a MEP they cannot understand without a professional intermediary? Can they feel represented by a judge, a commissioner, a civil servant or a MEP from other linguistic communities? Are they be able to control the work of these political representatives and the civil servants, if those do their work in a language unknown to them?

The communication issue is generally the one put forward, because it is the most neutral. Who is against communication, apart from oppressors? Identity and democracy are much more

\(^{35}\) European political parties do, because they use the accommodation o the European Parliament.
sensitive topics. Besides, the urgency of these issues varies with the vision of Europe under consideration as will be discussed in the next section.

6. How visions of Europe could accommodate multilingualism

The main aim of the founding fathers of the predecessors of the European Union was to make Europe safe for national competition. Their main tool was supranational commitment. It seems that this purpose have give way to three discourses: one in which the European integration is meant to maintain nationalism by peaceful means, one in which European integration is the first step toward nation building continent-wide and one in which nations has lost its predominance in politics. These different visions of Europe shed different lights on multilingualism and its accommodation in political arrangements. In this section, each will be discussed not only to reveal the differences between these visions of Europe but, even more important, to show how sharing a conception of Europe does not imply sharing a common view on multilingualism.

6.1 A Confederal Europe: an agreement between Nation States

If Europe is seen as an arrangement between States, multilingualism seems the easiest to accommodate. The status quo is to be maintained in the Member States, preserving the predominance of the language(s) of state and the existing linguistic configuration inside each Member State. Horizontal communication across internal borders is not meant to increase, and if necessary it is best mediated through the states.

At the EU level, two options are available: maintain the current regime of institutional multilingualism which can be explained as a symbolic acknowledgement of national identities or introduce a regime with a limited number of working languages. Although the latter is no problem for the sake of communication in international (inter state!) relations, it has been made problematic precisely by the linguistic practices and traditions in the European Union so far. Indeed, through the practice of multilingualism in the EU institutions, multilingualism has acquired an important symbolic function. A step back would be interpreted as an attack on the language(s) of state being excluded from the list of official and working languages of the EU.

Whether institutional multilingualism is sustainable with eleven working languages or more is difficult to tell. International organisations work generally with many less languages. In that context, multilingualism has been questioned too, in relation to problems due errors of translation and diverging linguistic versions of treaties (Tabory 1980) a problem that should submerge the European Union as a result of the very number of languages and the amount of laws involved. But even in more modest international organisations, the Babel set of syndrome has been exposed by those pleading for one auxiliary language such as Esperanto (Piron 1994).

Apart from financial and organisational matters, there is another reason to abandon institutional multilingualism. That is to maintain the EU decision making away from domestic politics, in other words to sustain the State as the mediator between citizens and Europe.

One factor that would facilitate a settlement on language use in this model, is that the nation state is competent to negotiate compensations, if the national language is to be dropped. For example some states may accept to give up the official status of their official language as a
working language at the EU level, providing they obtain some compensations, financial, symbolic, or otherwise\textsuperscript{36}.

Not only this model of Europe is at odd with the actual evolution of the European Union, it is also rather naive to think that linguistic patterns will never changed, even if modern (nation) states have been quite successful in stabilising the linguistic evolution of standard languages over the past century\textsuperscript{37}. If this model is not likely to mobilise citizens to support any institutional arrangement at the European level, it is powerful as a guideline for counter-mobilisations against both EU institutional reforms and EU policies. It may even be fuelled by linguistic grievances not related to the European Union (such as the diffusion of American English), the European Union acting as lightening conductor.

6.2 Super State Europe

Multilingualism is much more difficult to accommodate for a Super State Europe, because the people(s) of Europe have to share a common political identity. Vertical communication between citizens and their federal state is not monopolised by the (federalised) states anymore but should develop its own ways.

The EU may become a (federal) state, but it will remain a multinational state or at least a multilingual state in the broader sense distinguished above. But will the federal state not need to limit the number of official and working languages? Multilingual states in the rest of the world may provide more interesting material for comparison with the linguistic regime of a Super State Europe.

One of them is Switzerland, the enclave at the heart of the European Union. It has four official languages, two (German and French) are largely ‘more equal’ than the others (Italian and Romansch). Characteristic for the Swiss linguistic arrangements is the strong positions of the cantons which are almost all monolingual and bilingualism at the federal level. In supra-cantonal (e.g., federal) and cross-cantonal encounters, one generally speaks her/his own language and is supposed to have passive knowledge of the other language\textsuperscript{38}. (Dürmüller 1994) Obviously such an arrangement is not applicable in a system with eleven official languages (of which five may be declared ‘more equal than others’: English, French, German, Italian and Spanish)\textsuperscript{39}.

At a completely different scale, the Soviet Union and Russia provide another example. In that case, Russian is the core language of the constellation of national languages\textsuperscript{40} with differential status, first among equals. It was the lingua franca of the Soviet Union and of the Communist

\textsuperscript{36} When such compensations are considered, financial arrangements are generally meant such as the financing of translation of final documents by the states that would maintain their language as a working language, but other compensations are conceivable such as the host of prestigious institutions or programs.

\textsuperscript{37} This is especially true of the French language, under the authoritative rule of the Académie française.

\textsuperscript{38} There is a big difference between the right to use a language and the right to be understood (for example speaking French was allowed in the Canadian parliament but it took almost one century before simultaneous interpretation was made available (Laponce 1992: 597).

\textsuperscript{39} This refers to the proposition put forward by the French Minister Alain Lamassoure by the end of 1994, to limit the number of working language to these five. The informal proposition was immediately withdrawn due to protest from several Member States and the European Parliament.

\textsuperscript{40} For the importance of the establishment of national official languages in the republics for the rise of nationalism in the eighties an the nineties, see Kaiser 1994.
Party. No language could hold the same position in a EU constellation of languages, although French would be the most suited candidate due to the importance of that language in the experimental phase of the integration (the ECSC) and of the canonisation of Jean Monnet as the founding father of the enterprise. However, the European Union seems to lack the political appeal of the Soviet project to attract learners of French, or of any language that would be identified to the Europeanist project.

Multilingualism is also important in countries of massive immigration, such as Canada, the United States and Australia. In these settlers colonies, autochtonous languages have been completely marginalised, and the competition between languages have involved the languages of the major groups of settlers, especially in the United States (in the first century between English and German, nowadays between Spanish and English) and in Canada (English and French). However the primacy of the main language have been only seriously challenged when linguistic minorities are territorially so concentrated that they from linguistic majorities in certain entities: this is true of French speakers in the Canadian province of the Québec and of Spanish speakers in certain counties of the Southern and South-Western states of the US. Although there are extensive arrangements to facilitate education in the mother tongues of the children in the US, the Canadian experience of bilingualism at the federal level and the many arrangements protecting linguistic minorities (including the English speaking minority in Québec) are more relevant to the European context. Unfortunately, the arrangements seem not to be satisfactory as shows the large movement for Québec independence (but just short of a majority at referenda). Surely the North American experience provide useful lessons for the broader issue of multilingual and multicultural character of West European society as a result of immigration and globalisation. The main difference between North America and the European Union is that linguistic diversity at the level of the Member States is combined with a high degree of cultural homogeneity inside these entities.

Finally, multilingualism has put a heavy burden on the states established during the decolonisation of Africa and Asia. These countries had to deal with large numbers of languages (see Fishman 1971 O’Barr & O’Barr 1976). South Africa has eleven official languages since the adoption of the new Constitution in spring 1996. However, the Rainbow Nation uses only two of them as working languages at the national level: English and Afrikaans. Although the change is recent, it seems that multilingualism has eroded the position of Afrikaans related to English. By contrast, the Indian Union has been ‘wrestling’ with multilingualism for fifty years, since independence. It has fifteen official languages, and two working languages: English and Hindi. English was meant as a temporary arrangement but has been maintained, because it is ethnically neutral. Although the use of English may have prevent ethnic competition, the settlement is socially extremely unsatisfactory: only a small minority of the Indian population is able to speak English fluently. Any one can learn a language of course, but it would be naive to forget about unequal access to education and the effect of social environment, especially as linguistic competencies providing sufficient command to conduct politics request long term investments. Therefore language teaching in basic and secondary education are essential issues in multilingual societies. The official language is a tool of power and control, a mean to access

41 And Puerto Rico where joining the union is debated again.
42 For a review of the differences between the US and Europe see also Holm 1994:31-32.
43 That is at the level of the federation. Most of the states have one official language only, sometimes English, some are bilingual such as Gujarat where the official languages are Gujarati and Hindi, which was not spoken by a significant group in the state (Apte 1976: 161-163).
political and economical power for those who master it, an insurmountable obstacle for others. Some think it is worth paying for ethnic neutrality\textsuperscript{44}.

The experiences from developing countries are of limited interest because of the obvious differences regarding the status of the languages of states in the European Union (as compared to that of indigenous languages at the end of colonial rule) but also the high rate of literacy and nearly perfect rate of participation in basic and secondary education, the very development of their political institutions and their democratic traditions. The problems of translation between central authorities and the rest of society have been much larger in these countries that it will ever be in Europe, and left much more rooms for brokers to control the political arena using language as a political resource. In addition, these countries lack the resources to introduce and maintain the representation of many all (many?) languages at the central level, because of their limited resources, of the large number of languages involved and the language planning necessary to develop adequate administrative vocabulary and (writing systems) in most of these languages. No doubt the linguistic situation is the European Union is much more easier to accommodate and the European Union has much more resources to do so. Nevertheless this superficial review shows the importance of the linguistic issue in multilingual states, if such demonstration was necessary, and the unlikeliness of the maintenance of eleven working languages or more.

The density of law making, (political and other forms of) communication, and democratic practice in a federal state may require a more radical linguistic policy. Basically one can hesitate between one and two languages, before starting a dispute about which language(s) are to be selected. The easy way out may be the option chosen by most newly independent states after decolonisation: a language of wider communication, ethnically as neutral as possible.

English is obviously the language of widest communication in Europe, it is by far the modern language most taught in secondary education (Europese Commissie 1994). But there are two major flaws: 1) it is the language of global communication, thus not specific for Europe (which can be problematic in terms of nation building) 2) it is the language of two Member States, which means a significant preferential treatment of these States and their citizens). However English has a master card: it a language widely known, a language people want to learn\textsuperscript{45}, due to the hegemony of the United States in the world economy and the popularity of American culture since the second World War.

A realistic option would be to use and abuse the popularity of American English as the language of the hegemon and develop a European variant of international English: Standard European English? Continental English? Eurospeak? if dropping the reference to its English origins is necessary thereby facing the task of turning the so far pejorative term into something attractive. Whatever its name, this lingua franca should be clearly different from British English, and of course from American English. Some agency should be trusted with the task of introducing an extensive vocabulary to deal with specific EU topics (institutions, policies,

\textsuperscript{44} Hobsbawn is among them, although he adds to his discussion of the Indian case: “Nevertheless, imagine the effect on Europe if Hindi were the only language allowed in the European parliament, and both The Times, Le Monde, and the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung could be read only by those literate in Hindi” (Hobsbawn 1996: 94).

\textsuperscript{45} Beware of compulsory learning, see the low level of reported fluency in Russian in Hungarian surveys despite the fact that it was a compulsory matter, and more surprising the rise of these levels of knowledge after the fall of the Iron Curtain (Hartkamp 1998).
laws), transnational communication and multilingual relations. Teaching material should be developed with no reference to British/English or American culture, habits etc…Teaching some kind of Standard European English would imply that the cultural information carried with the language does not relate to British or English culture (e.g. Mr and Mrs Wilson, cups of tea, fish’n’chips, cricket, Westminster parliamentarism, etc.) but to cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe and transcultural communication. Finally, penalties (as opposed to compensations) should be considered for the native speakers of English, at least as long as the new breed of English is not firmly established

Such a choice has far reaching consequences, what is introduced first as a working language but could become the second language of a new generation and eventually the mother tongue of most EU residents.

Several variations are thinkable, selecting a different language, a more ‘neutral’ one when it comes to national identities such Latin, Esperanto, but then again the Europeanist project itself does not seem strong enough to attract second language speakers on its own!

Other possible reforms often mentioned include more than one language, such as the combination French and English or the use of different languages of communication in different parts of the European Union (for example French as communication language in the South, English in the North and the West, and German in Central Europe). But they do not present any direct advantage: the undermining of the languages of state will remain (except of course in France and in Germany) but the linguistic configuration at the EU level will be complicated, especially if some Swiss model of passive understanding of all official languages is expected.

Obviously the main problems and the main pitfalls of the introduction of a common language of communication will be its elitist makeup restricting the access to EU arena and transnational communication to certain elite mastering the working language(s). Such policy may only create linguistic minorities, linguistic resentment and tomorrow’s conflicts.

The radical alternative is to maintain and expand institutional multilingualism in combination with different linguistic regimes in different territorial entities, e.g. linguistic subsidiarity. In that case, it would be urgent to make institutional multilingualism visible and to increase its legitimacy. Apart from the recruiting and training of ever more translators and interpreters and the managing of institutional multilingualism, this implies investments to teach and inform about languages, linguistic diversity, and transcultural communication. Familiarity with all the official languages is already impossible at the individual level, so an extensive mediating framework must be maintained. The shortcomings of such a regime are obvious: there are no provisions for mediation in horizontal communication in the European Union, that is between citizens of the emerging Super State. They will remain largely segregated in the old linguistic communities.

6.3 The postnational network state

46 These would not necessarily be the former Member States: Catalonia could become monolingual in Catalan, or Alsace bilingual in German and French.

47 Anyone can learn any language, but no one can learn all the languages, and the European Union has institutionalised much more languages already than a person can physically learn.
In the postnational network state, multilingualism is even more difficult to accommodate than in the Super State! A central authority to implement radical linguistic policies is lacking in the first place.

The uplifting discourses on the network state (Castells 1998) and postnational citizenship (e.g. Habermas 1994 1996, Lehning 1998, Bader 1998) seem to ignore multilingualism. But the world is languaged! Dialogue presupposes a common language. It may be no coincidence that the examples of consortio named by Schmitter (see above) Norway/Sweden Canada/US (Schmitter 1996: 226) are not only contiguous states, but also sharing a common language or languages with a high level of intercommunicability.

If there is no legitimate institution to decide which language is to be used, we may imagine a differential linguistic configuration, where the selection of languages in use varies both in quantity and quality with the participants. It could go from all (!?) languages at the European Parliament to one in most encounters, international English in many cases, but not necessarily for example in local and regional exchanges across internal borders. Ideally, there will be flexible solutions: different linguistic regimes in different domains. But how different will they be?

In the network state, multilingualism is expected to occur at the individual level. Individuals are expected to switch languages as they wish. How ideal this may be, it is a pretty elitist vision, if not socially (as even the elites may fail to teach their children so many languages) at least intellectually. Learning local languages, the languages of state and international English, would turn pupils in the European Union into linguistic wonders!

And guaranteeing equal access to the network is a contradiction in terms. Language becomes an asset in competition between individuals and groups. In such a Europe we came close to the ideal situation of rational language choice described by Abram de Swaan in his work on the world language constellation (1993, 1998). Considering that language is a hypercollective good (its value increases with the number of users), De Swaan quantifies the utility of learning different languages. If there is no policy, the likely outcome will be the universal use the language of widest communication: international English, at first in transnational communication, and gradually in more and more domains of social life.

Again the outcome of a single EU language surfaces. Some think that one language is necessary and homogenisation will pursue: after the harmonisation of industrial norms, after the introduction of a common currency and the harmonisation of taxes, comes necessarily language. In other words, linguistic harmonisation can conceived as a regular spill over, directly related to the facilitation of internal market! It would improve the position of the European Union in its geoeconomical competition with the monolinguistic United States and the monolinguistic and monocultural Japan. The costs of multilingualism are indeed not limited

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48 This is, as far as I know, a neologism, but it makes the point perfectly. It has been used recently by Paul Treanor in a message on the ‘geopol’ discussion list hosted by the University of Kentucky in which he was criticising the degree of monolingualism in Anglo-American academia (message dd. Friday 26 June 1998, from the list <geopol@.lsv.uky.edu>).

49 Not to mention classical languages and important non EU-languages (that of its neighbours such as Russian, Arabic or Turkish) that should be teached too, to avoid isolation,
to the maintenance of a large body of translators and interpreters in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, but are much and much higher as the linguistic diversity is accounted as an obstacle to the development of a genuine single market: it impedes the free movement of goods, of services and of workers\textsuperscript{50}.

A completely different picture is conceivable for a political union. Erik Holm has addressed linguistic diversity explicitly in his discussion of a constitution for the European Union (Holm 1994). Democracy presupposes dialogue and dialogue presupposes a common language\textsuperscript{51}, but Europeans do not have a common language and are unlikely to ever achieve one (Holm 1994: 27). This makes democracy at the European level impossible. English may serve as a lingua franca for the elites but it won’t help to generate a genuine dialogue. He assesses that the introduction of cultural rights is necessary to the establishment of a European citizenship. Cultural rights are extremely disruptive for political institutions as we know them. Because they implies that individuals live within the culture of their choice. It undermines the common nationalism doctrine as it contradicts both the dogma of territorially bounded homogenous culture (the nation state) and the state systems as world order (Holm 1994: 30). These cultural rights will bring the European Union toward our network model, For Holm, the trick is ‘to develop political cultures which can reconcile the cultural community with the political community’ (1994: 33). Although Holm does not provide concrete suggestions, this is the sketch a network state is which linguistic and cultural diversity is actively protected. This implies the transmission of such a ‘political culture’ through education. If there is no central institution to legislate in these matters, the many institutions sharing sovereignty will have to find new ways to achieve satisfactory settlements for their constituencies, these would probably include the facilitation of flexible linguistic regimes and the protection Babel against linguistic harmonisation. So, as for the other two visions of Europe, there is no single accommodation of multilingualism conceivable for the network state: both linguistic diversity and harmonisation are possible options.

7. Conclusion

Discussing Political science, language, and politics in relation to developing countries, Henry Bretton concluded his essay with an observation worth quoting:

“Language may be the most explosive issue universally and over time. This mainly because language alone, unlike all other concerns associated with nationalism and ethnocentrism - with the possible exception of sex-related issues where those are relevant - is so closely tied to the individual self. Fear of being deprived of communicative skills seem to raise political passion to a fever pitch” (Bretton 1976: 447).

\textsuperscript{50} But market actors do not necessary neglect smaller languages: software gigant Microsoft releases versions of its software in all languages of the European Union, included the smaller ones It would be interesting to know how much copies they sell of the international English version in Denmark or in the Netherlands as compared to releases in Danish or Dutch.

\textsuperscript{51} Language is not enough of course to foster dialogue. Dialogue across state borders has proven difficult. So it is characteristic that Dutch media won’t interview a Dutch speaking Belgian MEP or German media an Austrian or vice versa. It is also a common phenomenon that the French speaking Belgian news will broadcast regularly about French politics while the reverse is not true.
Obviously no such passion has been observed in the European Union. But where there is an overt linguistic conflict (such as in the Catalan case) passion is strong enough to produce demands at the EU level as well.

The most probable explanation for this lack of passion is that the European Union is not perceived as a danger to anyone’s communication skill. But, although the European Union did not change anything in the daily communication patterns of most EU citizens, it has redefined the political space in which they live to such an extent that an important deal of decision making has been displaced to the EU political arena: this arena is multilingual and therefore already introduces a change in political communication. In a near future, linguistic reform at the institutions is likely to be discussed and may affect even more the access to this political arena. For now, the linguistic regime of the European Union is undisputed, and seen as a practical matter regarding of minuscule group of supranational civil servants and politicians in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg. This can be interpreted as yet another indicator, of the huge gap (democratic deficit in Eurospeak) between the EU institutions and the citizens in the European Union.

National politicians have avoided the linguistic issue: there are many reasons for that. They may be reluctant to put language on the political agenda to avoid to fuel nationalist counter-mobilisations against the European integration, and to escape from having to present unambiguously the vision of Europe they stand for. They may also be concerned by playing down the growing competition between the rising EU elite and national political elite. The maintenance of the status quo ensures the continuation of a linguistically segmented polity which facilitates the control of EU matters by the national political elite, who remain the main mediators between citizens and the European Union.

Less easy to explain is why social scientists have been neglecting the linguistic issue. Is it too prosaic? Too banal? Is it not important enough? Indeed those interested in problems of communication deals with cultural differences and tend to neglect language itself, because cultural differences is what matters. It is true of course but communication may help mutual understanding because sharing a language is the only way to exchange points of views. May, or may not! Most probably a common language would only reveal the painful differences in discourses and visions about Europe and its future among political actors from different backgrounds.\(^{52}\)

If there is no common language of wider communication commanded by all participants in the political arena, mediators could do the trick. At present, the European Union has developed an imposing mediating infrastructure at the supranational level. As the discussion of different variants of supranationalism has shown, they do not correspond to different clearcut accomodation of the linguistic diversity. In the three `visions of Europe’ continuation of the present regime of institutional multilingualism may be the best thing to do, but it must be done with confidence and provisions should be done to meet its most obvious shortcomings (the difficulties of communication across the linguistic boundaries).

The research on the effects of such mediations (prejudice, errors, acculturation) is in infancy, it has not left the walls of the EU institutions in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg. We do

\(^{52}\) “L’erreur fondamentale, c’est de croire que les hommes s’entendent mieux parce qu’ils se comprennent mieux” De Swaan 1998: 21.
not know yet if institutional multilingualism functions adequately and if it is sustainable in the eventuality of a further increase in size (new official languages), depth and width (new competencies).

There is no linguistic issue (yet) in the European Union, at least there is no public debate about the linguistic arrangements in the European Union. It is not the intention of the author to trigger an overt linguistic conflict in the European Union and to fuel ethnoregionalist or nationalist agendas. But whatever linguistic arrangement is chosen or developed, it will be vulnerable to linguistic resentments and demands. As for anything else to be decided in the obscure committees and networks of the European Union, more transparency is imperative, and even more than for any other issue, legitimacy of the institutions taking decisions is crucial. And therefore a public debate is necessary.

The bad news is that the linguistic issue is an extremely difficult problem which is likely to hamper the further evolution of the European Union toward more accountability and democracy. It can not be ignored, but it can not be tackled either. The prospects are not bright because “Like religion, language does not lend itself easily to compromise” (Laponce 1992: 599-600). Lessons from multilingual states prevent us to hope for an easy and durable settlement. Nevertheless, because as we saw the three basic visions of Europe are not paralleled by three corresponding linguistic orders, compromise is possible. Different views on what the European Union is and should be, may lead to common views on the linguistic regime while people agreeing on institutions may favour different options. This is good news, because it fits the seemingly erratic pattern: Europe integration so far has always taken steps forward by compromises that were acceptable to political actors with contradictory purposes. Therefore it is not impossible that a linguistic agreement will be found, most probably the continuation of the status quo: institutional multilingualism and international English as informal lingua franca inside the EU institutions and in cross borders encounters. However, the linguistic changes it will trigger, may be very different from the intended goals of the partaking parties!

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