

TOWARDS A NEW STORY OF THE EUROPEAN SELF. AN INTERVIEW WITH DR. IVER NEUMANN



Dr. Iver B. Neumann was born in 1959, is married and lives in Oslo, Norway. His education took place at the Oslo University: he took undergraduate studies in anthropology, Russian and English, majored in political science, and graduated 1987. He did his masters studies at the University of Oxford and obtained the M.Phil. degree in 1989, and Ph.D. at the same university in 1992. He published eight books in Norwegian, mainly on policy issues. He has three major academic books: *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, Routledge 1986, based on the doctoral thesis; a co-edited volume with Ola Weaver, *The Future of International Relations. Masters in the Making?*, Routledge, 1987; an edited volume, *Regional Great Powers in World Politics*, Routledge 1992; and *The Uses of the Other. The "East" and the European Identity Formation*, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Dr. Neumann was Head of Foreign Security Policy at the *Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs* (Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt, NUPI), and is currently Head of the *Russian Centre* at the same institute. He was a Jean Monet fellow at the *European University Institute* in Florence in 1995-96. In Fall 1997, he has been appointed in-house researcher at the *Norwegian Foreign Ministry*. The interview took place on July 13, 1997, on Olib island in Croatia.

Q: Dr. Neumann, you were up to recently the Head of the *Russian Centre* at the *Institute of Foreign Affairs* in Oslo. What does your work entail?

A: Norway is a smallish country on the border of the former Soviet Union, and we used to be the only bordering country that did not have a separate institute for Russian studies. Somewhat belatedly, after the end of the Cold War, it was decided to make a separate little cell, a department, within the *Norwegian Institute of Foreign Affairs* devoted to Russian studies. Our Institute is one of the twenty-three national think-tank institutes throughout Europe, government-run but not government-directed, as it were, half-way between academic life and state life. The *Russian Centre* consists of three full time researchers and myself, and then a couple of guest researchers and a student, and also a conscientious objector who does most of our paperwork because we cannot afford a secretary.

Q: You would frequently visit Russia, even nowadays.

A: I am in and out of Russia a couple of times a year, because things are changing so rapidly you have to be there. You have to dip your hands in the trough in order to follow what is going on. Even so I find it almost impossible to understand it all - it is too rough and too big.

Q: You did quite a bit of research on the topic. What would be the major point here nowadays: The end of Soviet Union, the beginning of Russia?

A: (laugh). Well, I like the way you phrased that question. Perhaps the history of this work can explain it. I got interested in the beginning of the 1980s when I started to study political science at the University of Oslo. I had two rather quirky interests: it was the European Community, and the Soviet Union. The EU was quirky because everybody was speaking of Eurosclerosis at that time, meaning that Europe was not a very active scene, and Soviet Union was quirky because everyone wanted to do solidarity work on Latin America. So if you were a political scientist, you either did work on party systems in Western Europe, or you did solidarity work on Latin America. I am parodying, of course. So I first did my thesis on how the Soviet Union controlled other members of the Warsaw pact and the CMEA, the *Council on Mutual Economic Assistance*. Then, having done that, I needed to stock up more knowledge on Soviet Union and Europe, so I went to Britain and did a masters in philosophy on the specific relationship between the Soviet Union and the European Community. The problem was that this work commenced in 1987, and I finished the degree in 1989, and as I was finishing it, it was quite obvious that the theme was historically not very interesting, because it was changing by the day. You will recall that the summer of 1989 was when just about everybody knew that the whole thing was coming to an end. Very few people knew it before, but in Spring and Summer of 1989, it dawned on everybody. So I re-cast the whole project and did a study on Russian representations of Europe. The work is called *Russia and the Idea of Europe*, which is rather a misleading title since it is not merely the ideas that the Russians have had about Europe, it is the whole way they have related to Europe, the way they have discussed this. This is of course known to every schoolchild as the debate between the *Zapadniki* and the *Slavophiles* from 1840s and 1850s, but what I am showing in my thesis is that the Russian debate about Europe (or rather the discourse, as it should properly be called as it is an institutional thing) is a vital part of how the Russians talk about themselves, and how they try to find their own identity, because they are forever relating Russia on the one hand, to Europe on the other. It is not necessarily so that Russia is on the one side of the limit and Europe on the other: for instance, some people would always talk about Russia being a normal European country. Even so, when they speak about Europe, they speak about themselves. One could draw a parallel to Slovenia, for example, when Slovenians talk about Germans, or when they talk about Croats and Serbs. It is also a question of representing them in such a way that it becomes obvious what it is to be a Slovene. You are a Slovene, among other things, because you are not a German or Croatian or Serb. You are a man, because you are not a female, etc. But this is of course a theoretical take on things and you will of course recognise French post-structural thinking, which was my major profound inspiration. So that study showed how Russian discourse on Europe

was part of how Russians have tried to find their place in the new European order, and how the representations that Russians make of Europe are part and parcel of international relations in Europe. It is not a question of this being a mere intellectual debate, it is a question of what the policy will be. Because what ideas they have about who they are, will be one of the major things in deciding what kind of policy they will follow. In my view, this kind of thing has been understudied in international relations, because everybody has been talking about the logic of the international system. What I tried to show was that what is going on in that particular country, and the way people think about the world and talk about it, actually plays straight into the country's foreign policy.

Q: Two questions come to mind, but let me start with the first one: you mentioned post-structuralism and the French school. And you have spelled out this identity problem in a very anthropological way. Is there a course in it for you?

A: (laugh). There certainly is. I started my work in political science. I went to Britain because I wanted to work inside what is called the English School of international relations. It is a way of thinking about international relations which focuses on the accumulated body of rules and norms amongst states, so that there is a steady growth in the degree of institutionalisation, in how states can relate to one another, as it were. I co-wrote an article with a friend who is an anthropologist in 1991, it is called *International Relations as a Cultural System*. That title rather indicates what the English School was all about also.

Q: This was with Thomas Eriksen.

A: Yes, this was with Thomas Hylland Eriksen. Having studied in Britain, having had a look at the culture of international relations, I sought to explore the implications what I learnt there through my own work, and it quickly dawned on me that why the heck should I stay in political science, stay with the political science ideas, when there was another discipline which had spoken about culture since the end of the last century, namely anthropology. So I found out that anthropology, which I also studied as an undergraduate, was a much more deep-plowing tool to take to this kind of research. Then of course it happened what always happens when you put together two different pools of knowledge: you discover that not only is the interface an interesting place to be, but that there are also lacks on both sides. You are now probably going to ask me what are the lacks in anthropology; so let me proceed. What I find when I go into anthropological literature on culture generally, and on identity specifically, is that there are enormously advanced theoretically, and that there are good empirical works on how these things are actually made socially, how they are socially constructed. But there is also a certain naivete as concerns the role of the state. And I would see this, would not I, since I have been trained with both eyes on the state; after all, political science in Germany, which is where the field very much begun, is called *Staatswissenschaft*, and in its Norwegian equivalent, *statsvitenskap*: the science of the state, really. So what I see when I look at the anthropological literature is a lot of very sophisticated identity work, but without taking into consideration the backdrop which is the state.

Q: Would that entail power problems?

A: When power problems are addressed in anthropology, they are addressed in their immediate setting. Anthropologists have made a virtue of this: I think it goes with two things. The method, the idea of participant observation, which means that you have to lay your hands on something and study it in its actuality, and as Foucauldian, I can relate to that, I think it's fine. But the problem is that you also have to take into consideration how the different parameters are manipulated by the state.

I will give you an example. I did a study of Tadjikistan as a theatre of peace-making operations after the Cold War. You will recall there was a war there which entailed the loss of life running perhaps as high as thirty thousand people in 1991. Now you have these groups in Tadjikistan called *Mahagoroi*, which are often referred to in English as clans. They have been there during the whole Soviet era, or at least since the 1930s. The ethnogenesis is somewhat muddled, of course, as ethnogeneses are want to be. Anyway, there were there: and the *Leninabodi*, which is one of the major clans, more or less held the communist power to itself. So there was ethnopolitics going on also in the Soviet era; but once the Soviet Union collapsed, Tadjikistan became a separate state, at least in name. What meant to be a *Leninabodi*, and what it meant to be a *Kulyabi*, changed radically. And of course, this was brought on among other things by the manipulation of the state.

To give you another example. I made a study of Baschkortostan, which is the ethnic republic in Russia next to Tartarstan. Quite obviously, there were two times when the question of ethnopolitics had exploded in Bashkortostan: in the early 1920s, and in the late 1980s. Both times, it had to do with the reconfiguration of the state in which the Bashkiri were living: first the Russian empire becoming the Soviet Union, then Soviet Union becoming the Russian Federation. An anthropologist would not focus on those kinds of processes, they would look at specific ethnopolitical movements etc, but they would not take the state in earnest, as it were. The reason I think is not only to do with the anthropological method; it also has to do with the normative orientation. Anthropologists have this idea of "my clan", "my people", "my organisation", "my tribe", and they somehow cast themselves in the role of the voice of the margin, giving a voice to those who cannot speak, or are not allowed to speak. Which is fine: I sympathise. But the problem is that you can do a lot of good anthropology on power groups as well. Of course there are problems: power groups would by definition be corrupt, for example, so that you have to wriggle your way into them in some other way. But if you when you put these two things together, anthropology's method, and anthropology's normative, siding with the weak and the downtrodden means that that it is a part of the doxa of the discipline that you should look at the social integration from the bottom up. Now in political science, one would always look at social integration from the top down. The trick, then, would be to see the relationship in a multifaceted way.

Q: How do you then propose to marry these things: the study of power, and the anthropological method?

A: The easiest way to do it would be for an anthropologist to take into consideration how the state manipulates the settings of what is going on. And this is one of the few places where I would look into the old-fashioned Marxist social analysis for inspira-

tion. When you look at the work of some French anthropologists, for instance Maurice Godelier, you have a potential there for looking at the state. They do not of course always do it in the most productive way, being materialists. But they are looking at some questions that other anthropologists should also look at.

Q: These novelties that you are talking about or would like to introduce into your work: I understand you have a book coming out in print in the U.S.* Is that incorporated in the book?

A: I am not there yet. The genealogy of Russian discourse on Europe was in fact my re-fashioned doctorate. I have also explored this question how the categories of Self and Other sustain themselves in specific discourses. This book however, which is called *The Uses of the Other; "the East" in European Identity Formation*, looks at identity formation at three levels: Europe itself, European sub-regions like Central Europe, and national identities. Europe itself, and the formation of European identity, I have tried to study by looking at how Europeans have represented Turkey, and how they have represented Russia. In the case of Turkey, we know all about that: I do not think we have to go further than Bosnia-Herzegovina to see that the representation of Turkey of today is still a live issue of European politics. And when you say Turkey, some people also want to say The East. To call someone a Turk for example is to suggest easternness, and easternness is, to drop into the jargon here, the occluded subterranean Other of European identity formation.

Russia on the other hand is a different kettle of fish: I picked up the story at the time when Russia was trying to form diplomatic relations with countries to its West: Denmark in 1493 and England in 1553. And then I took it up to our time. My major finding is that despite the fact that when you talk about Moscovie, Tsarist Russia, Soviet Union, and modern Russia, the representations would be very different, still there is one lasting theme: Russia was always treated as a country which is just about to join Europe, or has just joined it. It is forever suspended, as it were, in time. So the trick with Russia and European identity formation is not that it is outside Europe territorially, the trick is not in where the Russian territorial boundary starts, the trick is along the chronological axis: Russia was always just about to join in. Engels for example pinpointed that in a fascinating article on Russian foreign policy from 1890. He then fixed the time when Russia will join Europe down to a year, explaining that with the defeat in the Crimean war in 1856, Russia understood that it could not ignore the will of the people, etc - Engels had these heroics about the people - and with the control of the people growing the autocracy which somehow held Russia at arm's length from the general development of Europe would lose its specific traits and Russia was becoming just another part of Europe. So to Engels, Russia became a part of Europe in 1856, to him, recently. But when you hear people talk about Russia now, they would also say things like "Now that Russia has become part of Europe" or "Now that Russia is in the transition" - and this would be the word, transition. How the heck could Russia just become a part of Europe in 1710, just as it became part of Europe in 1856, just as it became part of Europe 1996? There is a deferral going on here: a country that is forever deferred.

You asked me about the book: I have become too enthusiastic in explaining just one chapter of it. But one chapter that would be of specific interest from the Slovenian point

*As indicated in the introductory note, the book is since out of print, see above, p. 277.

of view I think, is the reading of the term "Central Europe". What I am trying to show is that "Central Europe" is an appeal to Western Europe from countries like Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia at one time, and by implication also Croatia and Slovenia, in the sense that they are not Eastern Europe, they are Central Europe. I trace how this idea was first introduced by Central European intellectuals, than picked up by Western intellectuals, then by Central European politicians, and then by Western politicians, so that now one routinely talks about first countries joining the NATO and the EU being the Central European countries. It has become an incredibly important symbolic capital to be able to call yourself Central European. Not that the job is done: if Rumania has been able to successfully pass itself as a Central European country, they and also Slovenia would probably be able to join the NATO in the first round. The material and the ideational factors go together here, and it is a discourse.

Q: Let me pick this one up for a moment: the terminological problem. You mentioned "transition" and the complex of the Mittel Europa idea: what of it? What is your terminological reservoir?

A: In the sense, what do I really mean? It would be the anthropological thing: "do you know it when you see it" thing? I would say there are differences all right. But my main interest - and this is why at present, I am not an anthropologist in my work - is in seeing how things are operated politically. How do these representations actually feed into politics. Of course it is not enough to say about your country that it is Central European. For example, most people in the world would accept Slovenia as a Central European country, but it would not be enough to get accepted in the NATO. It could have been, but it was not, as we have seen.

But as to my terminology, I suppose I am speaking about Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Central Europe like everybody else. But the thing is not whether we use them or not, the thing is to be aware that these are man-made entities. Jenő Szűcs is one of the Hungarian macro-sociologists who has written well on this. He wrote on it in the 1960s and 1970s and was a student of István Bibó. His point was that you should have three regions in Europe rather than two: not just East and West, but East, Central and West. You have to read this as a political project: when he wrote that, it was essentially a Central European appeal to say, Listen, we are not Russia. When it was said then, it functioned very differently from when you say that now. So I use East, Central and West with a clear conscience. We would like to be aware of our own histories here. "Only that can be defined which has no history", as one of my intellectual heroes had said for me (laugh).

Q: In anthropology you have this lingering problem: terminology would always leak and would become "native", or things get, as we say, informed by anthropology and social science in general, and that in turn can create problems, like in the case of the infamous "ethnic cleansing", for instance. Is it due to such leaks, do you think, that one can detect a certain flatness of theory in political science? Is theory, in your opinion, a weak side of political science?

A: Very much so! And it is characteristic that political science does not travel. When you take political science out of the setting of the so-called Western pluralist democracy, out of capitalist economy, it has very little to offer. And I should know, as I have

been applying political science to Soviet Union for fifteen years. And when you look at people doing studies of Latin America or Africa, they somehow do not get to it, because there is an in-built baseline in what they do which says, Aha, the standard against which we measure those things is the Western pluralist democracy with a capitalist economy. And that is a very poor way of getting at the world. Again, one is used to speak badly about Marxist ideas of phases and stages and jumping stages and all that. What one tends to conveniently forget is that these Marxist ideas are very similar to liberalist stuff, as both share a heritage in being 19th century products, and if you go into the liberal litany, their way of looking at things, it would be very similar to the Marxist one. There is this in-built teleological ideology. So this whole idea that you can now free intellectual life in former Communist countries by adopting an American positivist vocabulary in social sciences is mistaken, because you merely swap one 19th century orthodoxy for another. "Change, but not progress", is what I would call that.

Q: You told me earlier that you have an interest in the institution of diplomacy. Why such a separate interest - what does it offer as a study field? And how do you propose to go about studying it?

A: Again, when you look at international relations, they are not supposed to be embodied. Everybody in social science talks about bodies these days. You talk about states, and you talk about *The King's Two Bodies*. This is a fantastic study by Kantorowicz - a king has a personal body, and the body politic. International relations, in turn, are embodied in the diplomats. Diplomats are actually doing a lot of the running, but when you look at how social scientists and historians have studied diplomacy, you see that there are a lot of studies on diplomatic history. They are basically on what one clerk wrote to another. And there are some studies on the evolution of diplomacy as an institution - very interesting, and invariably starting with the change from Middle-Age diplomacy to Renaissance diplomacy to the idea of permanent representation, to such time as the states established networks of permanent representation all over the world. But there are not so many studies of diplomacy as a social institution, an institution which integrates the culture which is world culture. That is one reason why I think I should get into it.

But the other reason is that I am sick and tired of studies on sovereignty. Most people in international relations who are theoretically aware of the problem will do studies on the institution of sovereignty - and they do it very well, and there are many brilliant readings of how sovereignty functions as the principle of the system of states, and how sovereignty is theoretically impossible: from a post-structural view, you cannot have such a thing as a sovereign entity. We are talking flux here, and you cannot be sovereign in the midst of flux. But me being sick and tired is because I think the time has come to say Okay, now we have these things theoretically, but we need to build up a body of empirical knowledge here. And one of the ways of looking at the question of the centrality of state sovereignty to international relations is to look at the diplomacy and ask how central is diplomacy to settling different things. And between which entities is it that the diplomats mediate: is it still the case that diplomats mediate between sovereign states, or do they do other things? And one way of finding out is to do empirical work on what diplomacy is. And this I would like to do.

As to your question of how to go about it, first one can have a look at the organisational structure in the foreign ministries of this world, then compare them to other minis-

tries and other organisational forms. But I suppose that getting into it means observing diplomats at play. It only so happens that I am going to work in the Planning Cell of the Norwegian Foreign Ministry over the next year. So I will have time to see diplomacy unfolding in practice. I expect that to change my outlook in a number of ways; so should anything particularly interesting from an anthropological point of view come out - I would not know yet. But there is this gap in the literature on what diplomats actually think they do, so I do have this working title for the project: *What are diplomats doing between two cocktails?*

Q: You mentioned earlier how political science makes little sense outside the context of Western democratic states. What about the public duty as a scientist - in a country like yours?

A: With your permission, I will pare this question down a bit, because there are many interesting debates about the duties of nuclear physicists, for example, and should they participate in Pugwash, or should they not, etc. Specialists have duties regarding their work. But let us talk about the duty of intellectuals, and what it is to be an intellectual. I think that a number of academics are not intellectuals, because they do not participate in public debates. They are specialists, but not intellectuals.

Q: You are referring to the Voltairean type of intellectuals.

A: Well, Voltaire is not a hero to me. He is historically a very interesting chap, because he brought this kind of specific figure onto the scene. We could use Gramscian terms here and talk about great intellectuals and organic intellectuals. Very few of us end up as great intellectuals, but at least we can try to be organic intellectuals. And frankly, I do not care whether you are an organic intellectual to a feminist movement, or an organic intellectual to the bourgeoisie - the point is, you have to be out there, availing yourself of public space, and also by availing yourself of it, widening it. You have to participate in what is going on. I am frustrated with how many intellectuals sit around talking about the impossibility of using the public sphere for anything. They do not even take up the cudgels of making themselves, in the sense of a private project, into intellectuals. And this does not only entail becoming a specialist in your field, it also entails communicating with a number of different people. Not **the** people. It is fine with me if some intellectuals do not want to speak to the man on the street; but they have to speak to somebody. There are a number of different ways you can do it, if only you are out there trying.

This is particularly important because the time for specialised knowledge is here, which means that someone also has to try to get the general picture. That is exactly the job of intellectuals.

Q: How would that be in Norway, it being a smallish community by Western standards, a small national market?

A: Norway has an economic agreement with the EU which makes it part of the EU market in a number of areas, and as a petroleum-exporting economy it is wide-open to the world. The days of national markets are over. But Norway is a smallish community

by any standard. There are 4.3 million people scattered over a very large area. You will find in Norway academics a strange reluctance to writing in newspapers, and to what I would consider your duty as an intellectual, to write in what the Russians call *tolsty zhurnaly*. I really do not know what one calls that in English, but it refers to belle-lettres journals, as it were. Not necessarily hyper-intellectual, although they can be that as well; more like a journal with wide readership. I understand that *Mladina* at one time, and *Razgledi* currently in Slovenia, would be the typical example. I really do not know enough about this, but I would have a hunch that in order to become an intellectual in Slovenia, you at one point have to publish in such reviews and magazines. In Norway, there are a couple of places where you can write, and most of the people writing there will forever feel that they are not being listened to, which is actually true in the immediate sense. They will also complain that they are not on TV, but when they get on TV, they will complain that they only get five minutes. My point here is that you do not have to do all these things, you do not have to talk to everybody, you do not have to be on TV. And you do not necessarily have to write into those magazines. But you have to do some of these things. I am not really interested in the specialised intellectual who can only talk to the people inside his or her own discipline, so that there are only fifteen people in the world who can relate to his or her speciality.

Q: Do you think we are dealing with a phenomenon here: this is how it would be in Norway. It would be quite similar in Slovenia. Let us go back to the Central European problem for a moment. Do you feel that this would be the problem of the "societies in transition", as it were? Do the intellectuals get enough say?

A: No I do not. That I celebrate intellectuals in this specific sense does not mean that I think intellectuals are the greatest thing since sliced bread. I am actually quite sceptical of intellectuals. Let me quote a chap I am not in the habit of quoting, Vortster, the former South African leader. He says that scientists should be on tap, but never on top. I do not necessarily think that this whole Western thinking tradition of having intellectuals on the top, the Plato project, is a good idea. One should participate in politics, and one cannot stay outside of politics, but it is not necessarily so that countries run by intellectuals are run better. As this interview takes place in Croatia, I do not think I have to spell out that point any further.

If you go to Russia, you can see this thing about intellectuals in politics. Intellectuals were very important in politics from, say, 1987-88 till about 1991. It was a fermenting period when the power of ideas was exceptionally important. And then it turned out that the Russian intellectuals were unable to organise. They sat around and the old joke about three Russians making for four fractions turned out once again to hold water, although this time of course once again in a historically specific way. Characteristically, the reaction from Russian intellectuals when they lost the first impact on the political life was to say Oh, everything is over with intellectuals in Russia. The reason why Brodsky for instance did not go back to Russia before he died was arguably that he could not bear going back and not see the intellectuals sitting around kitchens with their vodka and their tea and discussing into the night. This I find silly when you think of the type of intellectuals: intellectuals in Russia have always had this idea that politics is dirty, that it was not something you should work with. Then for once, they found themselves in the thick of politics, and once that disappeared, they were saying that everything is over for intellectualism, that capitalism is

killing off intellectual life altogether. Even a highly intelligent chap like Vladimir Slyapentokh, who used to be perhaps the foremost sociologist in the former Soviet Union before he emigrated would say things like that. But you cannot think of a state-formation which does not have its intellectuals. You really cannot think of any human formation without something of the kind. It may well be that the priest class is the oldest specified profession of the world: it certainly is not prostitutes: priests must be an older profession than prostitutes. - So why should it be impossible to have intellectual life in Russia or anywhere else for that matter? Right now, it is a question of the job being different. The main job right now in my opinion is to think through alternative worlds. This perhaps sounds too grand, let me rephrase that: the job is to think through the implications of the end of modernity. Uhhh, that sounds even grander, but well, we have a lot to do.

Q: Can you elaborate some of this alternative world projects?

A: Uugh... should we write a book together? (laugh). I am not yet good enough to say what exactly those would be. In a sense, it is now up to every human to create him or herself in a much much more inclusive sense than before. This is obvious on a number of levels. Some time ago, we were talking about the change between classes. Classes are still there, but they are not linked to production in the same way that they used to be. When people say class these days, you would not know whether he or she means a Bourdieuan class, of people who make up a taste community, as it were, or a group of people who are linked to a mode of production in a specific way. Same goes for gender, for example: I was born in 1959, and when I became a young man, it was still possible to walk into the fairly straightforward role of a young man in Norway. When I look at my students now, they have to make themselves into sexual creatures in a much more thorough sense than was previously the case. This means that there is much work in looking at what is going on, and participating in seeing how these new categories come to life. Again, one of my intellectual heroes, Michel Foucault - I call my latest book *The Uses of the Other* as an homage to his work on sexuality - made a major point in his late years: you have to make yourself as a sexual being. That was an avantgarde thing to say fifteen years ago; now it is all over the place.

Q: There is an obvious question here. What would post-modernity mean for the project of the national state, and state nationalism?

A: This is one of my main worries, and the question that propels my latest work. Globalism and European integration as processes opened up a whole new set of categories that people can identify with, and a whole new set of processes. However, they also triggered a reaction from the people who are acutely uncomfortable with the idea that straight categories inside which they identify themselves are now being shot down. Let me put it this way: ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia is part and parcel of globalisation, because it is exactly the possibility of having other identities with which the nationalists cannot live. What propels them forward is this need to defend - this is the word they would always use - the fixed categories of yesteryear. Slavoj Žižek writes very well on this: how there is a logic in nationalism that says, We had a golden past; and we could once again have golden future, were it not for the minorities who are here right now; should we do away with these, we would be able to realise our goal. And that impossible project has become acute because of globalisation.

I think it was summed up well in an American book-title: *Jihad vs. McWorld*. The idea being, you have McDonalds spreading all over the world, and you have a Jihad movement in Algeria, with variants in Iran etc., but you also have the Serbs-Croats problem. They would really be the same phenomenon: rallying around essentialised identities. And this is the future of European politics, I think. I do not think that there is this big divide between, say, the Balkans and Europe, or the East on the one hand, and the West on the other. So I think when Slovenes congratulate themselves on having extricated themselves from this kind of essentialised politics, they are congratulating themselves perhaps too early: it is all over Europe. You have politicians who look back to an idealised, essentialised ethnic past: Le Pen in France comes to mind as a good example. And these people have a future in terms of politics: if not for themselves, then for their followers there would always be a bright future. The political field is by definition antagonistic: there is no politics without antagonism, and antagonism is an endemic part of the human condition.

This means that certain conflicts must format the political field. It used to be class, which was fine, because you can negotiate class - if you are not Stalin, you can negotiate class, you can have fluent borders between classes, and you can relate classes to one another. Now when the class is gone, something else has to take up the antagonistic role of the class in politics. And about the best candidate we have is ethnicity. That creates problems: ethnicity freezes categories in a very rampant way. It is much much harder to negotiate between groups if identity is based on ethnic conflict rather than class conflict. So the new political field in Europe is on the one hand composed of those who celebrate globalisation, European integration, and cosmopolitanism, and here we find intellectuals like ourselves: on the other hand, you have people that are the power that be in this country, Croatia, dr. Franjo Tudjman: an essentialising ethnic politician. This kind of clash, this kind of conflict, is the present, and increasingly the future of European politics. And this is rather a grave situation. Again, we have to come up with ideas of how to deal with this politically. So do not tell me there is not enough work to do for intellectuals. (laugh)

But if you ask me about solutions, this is where I become impatient with post-structuralism. It is not enough to show that identities which traverse the context are impossible. It is not enough to say that Slovenia in the 1990s is completely different than Slovenia in the 1920s, and that Slovenia did not even exist before the word "Slovene" was first used. This is of course totally true on the ontological level. But in order to be politically effective, you have to tell stories about communities being tolerant in some ways. Look at, for instance, the situation in Bosnia: once the ethnic thing exploded and you had three clear ethnic programmes, the only way to combat that was to tell alternative stories of a Bosnian self that consisted of ethnic groups which have always lived in peace with one another. But that is obviously an untrue history, an untrue story to tell, because ethnic groups have not always lived in peace with one another. Ethnic groups come to the fore in hostile fashion, in friendly fashion, and sometimes ethnic groups have been somewhat parenthetical. But in order to combat the essentialising Croat-Serb-Muslim project, you needed an alternative story of what the history of the Bosnian self was, for an obvious reason: history is the chronological axis of identity, just like territory is its spatial axis. And you do need to tell the history.

So it is not enough to sit around and say, it is impossible to have a coherent identity, such as cannot go from one context to another, you have to have a story to tell which

will bind people together. And what would these stories be? Well, let us have a story on European identity; just let us not have it in a national way.

Q: In your opinion, is it possible?

A: Well, I am trying in my own little way, and in the Norwegian political setting, which has so far not met with great success; a big political defeat in my life was in November 1994, when there was a referendum on EU membership in Norway, and Norway said no. But this is not serious compared to what is going on in Bosnia, Croatia and Serbia. But on the other hand, although one has global responsibilities, and European responsibilities, one also has to act locally. So this is what I have engaged myself in from the beginning of the 1980s till that referendum, and I am still at it. But I do believe that the reason for that referendum's failure was that one did not have a story about a European self to tell which Norwegians would believe in. So Norwegian nationalists carried the day.

So what we need is a story on the European self that is as little antagonistic as possible. One way of doing it of course is to make the U.S. the Other of Europe, not to make a country like Russia or Turkey or Iran or Iraq the other of Europe. And of course not to make the Muslim minority of Europe the Other, or the Jewish minority. But to make the U.S. the other of Europe could do - because they can somehow handle it, they are the hegemonic power after all.

Q: Is this not a bit of a dangerous idea, fashioned somewhat in Huntington's terms?

A: Huntington celebrates the clash of civilisations, which is exactly what we should not do. But Huntington has seen something: that after the end of classes, other things will format the political field. His way of describing it is politically very harmful, because he celebrates it. When you read what he says about Bosnia in his latest book for example, the way he talks about borders and the clash between the cultures, it is simply erroneous, uninformed historically. And it is also impossible to do it the way he suggests, because he believes that identities can be ontologically essentialised; of course they cannot be. We must make-believe that they can be, but we must not believe it ourselves. (laugh)

Q: Finally, what would be your comment on the talk of loss: nationalists would always talk about culture loss, language loss?

A: When you start speaking of something as needing defence, because the alternative is that the thing will be lost, you have somehow already lost. It relegates things into an ethnographic museum, as it were. It is no coincidence that ethnographers are now so interested in nationalism, just as they are interested in iron and steel production. These are yesterdays, phenomena that the ethnographers, given the doxa of their way of producing knowledge, are now interested in.

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