REGIONALIST PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

Edited by
LIEVEN DE WINTER & HURI TÜRSAN

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REGIONALIST PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

Regionalist parties are an increasingly influential political phenomenon in many Western European countries. Despite this there has been little systematic study of these important political parties. This volume fills the gap with an exploration of the successes and failures experienced by ethnic and regionalist parties in post-war Europe.

Regionalist Parties in Western Europe looks in detail at the fortunes of twelve regionalist parties in:

- the Basque country
- Corsica
- French-speaking Belgium
- Scotland
- Wales
- Catalonia
- Flanders
- North Italy
- South Tyrol

Using these in-depth case studies and a common conceptual framework, the contributions focus on a number of factors that influence party identity and electoral and policy success. The study also addresses other key areas such as how they operate at the European Union level, their future evolution, and the implications for the party system and the larger political system of which they are part.

This comparative analysis is an important addition to the study of ethnic and regionalist parties. The findings lead to a number of surprising conclusions which point to the continued growth of these parties as a serious political force in Europe.

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TO SEMIHA AND NURETTIN TÜRSAN
AND EMIEL DE WINTER

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SERIES EDITOR'S PREFACE

Regularly one comes across debates among political scientists that claim that the traditional format of political parties is outlived, in particular in the 'New Europe'. In the same vein one can often read about the 'end of ideology', the movement towards 'catch-allism', and the evaporation of the traditional cleavages that have shaped party systems in most European democracies. In other words: the analysis of political parties in terms of their role and function as regards 'civil society' and the nation-state is extinguishing. Instead, we are now facing an era of New Politics in an emerging New Europe where there is less and less place for the 'old' parties, traditional 'cleavages' and related modes of interest aggregation and representation. In my view these recurring debates about the end of parties and related forms of politics in European democracies are rather characterised by wishful thinking and scarcely supported by evidence that stands up to the standards of conventional practices of comparative politics. What, for instance, is more often than not overlooked is that parties and their organisations are quite capable of adapting to societal change and to external challenges, like for example the processes that accompany the political development towards a 'new' Europe (like its extension in geographical terms as well as influencing national policy-making). Hence, so it could well be argued, the era of the political party is not over yet.

This volume of the European Political Science Series can be considered as a living proof of the above contention. Exactly the central theme–the political mobilisation of Ethno-Regionalism–demonstrates that political parties are not only still alive, but also that this type of political organisation appears to remain an adequate vehicle to such phenomena. The editors argue convincingly on the basis of comparable case-analysis, reported in the separate chapters, that new parties do emerge on the basis of cleavages, and can be effectively organised to influence (sub-)national politics. And, however paradoxical it may be, the coming into existence of a new Europe has resulted in the *re*-emergence of Ethno-regional parties as well as the re-vitalisation of existing ones. In addition (and this shines through many of the case studies), ethnic and regional identities are gaining political weight at the level of national politics. The analyses convincingly demonstrate that the explanatory value of concepts like mass-mobilisation on the basis of socio-cultural and economic cleavages are still important analytical tools for understanding politics in contemporary Europe.

Yet, however valuable their insights are, it would not do justice to the other obvious merits of this collection of case studies, namely the analysis of EthnoRegionalism *per se*. Although this cleavage is a recognised issue in the standard literature on party-formation and party systems, it has hardly been studied in a comprehensive manner. This is actually surprising, since many conflicts in the present European democracies (and the emerging ones in the East) often revolve around ethnicity and territorial identity. Apart from the atrocities we have observed in Yugo-Slavia, we need only think of Nothern Ireland, ETA separatism, the divorce between the Czechia Republic and Slovakia and the recent devolution of power to Scotland and Wales. In all these events ethno-regional parties played a crucial role, not only in mobilising the population, but also in influencing politics and related forms of state-society relationships. Apart from the other merits, mentioned earlier, this volume is therefore an important contribution to European Political Science, since it puts this particular party succinctly on the political map of Europe. Of course, this map is not yet complete. There are various white spots that are obviously in need of filling in. However true this observation may be, it obscures the fact that not only are the case studies in this volume a good start but also that it contains an analytical framework for comparative analysis of this type of parties, which can and will be instrumental for future research of the *non*-main-stream party families in Western Europe.

Prof. Hans Keman
Science editor
Amsterdam, September 1997

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PREFACE

This book is the outcome of several 'events'. To start on a personal note, it emerged from the joint interest and concern of the two editors in the question of politics of 'territorial boundary drawing', i.e. in ethnicity, subnationalism, regionalism, political parties, and systemic implications of party activity. Such shared interest united them in the joint venture that eventually produced this book.

En route to this book were several other 'events'. Lieven De Winter first developed his project on studying ethnoregional parties in the summer school on parties and party systems, Lüneburg, 1992. Several of the eventual contributors of this book then took part in a workshop on the premises of the Institut de Ciencies Politiques i Socials in Barcelona in October 1993. Subsequently, a further group was formed for the workshop on ethnoregionalist parties in Europe directed by Lieven De Winter and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel at the joint sessions of workshops of the European Consortium for Political Research in Madrid, on 17–22 April 1994. Meanwhile, Huri Türsan's research on democratisation increased her concern with ethnicity as a mobilising force and led her to study the variable nature of party politics in contributing to the escalation or appeasement of ethnic conflict.

The guiding theme of the launching of this project was the realisation that in spite of their fluctuating popularity among voters and their influence on the fragmentation of several party systems in Europe, ethnoregionalist parties had hardly been investigated using systematic comparative frameworks. We set ourselves the task of providing an analytically coherent set of case studies grounded in a theoretical context. We decided to start by making a detailed analysis of both the emergence and the political success of twelve important ethnoregionalist parties in five West European countries (Spain, Great Britain, Belgium, Italy and France).

Since the beginning of the concern with ethnoregionalist parties that started the first study group, the group of participants has been somewhat modified, leaving us with what has eventually constituted a 'core group' that continued to be interested in the questions that were at the roots of the launching of the Barcelona workshop. Other scholars have been added to the core group, finally forming the contributors to this volume.

The key question launched at that workshop was: what is at the roots of the rise, continued electoral and policy success and/or decline of ethnoregionalist

parties? This book constitutes what we hope to be a deepened understanding of the questions then posed. We argue in this volume that the success of ethnoregionalist parties is contingent both on cleavage salience (cleavages between left and right, and centre and periphery among others) and on the internal and external opportunities, resources and constraints that allow ethnoregionalist parties as entrepreneurs to transform the electoral scene.

As the framework of 'opportunity structures' has partly guided the authors of this book, we would like to conclude this preface on the same tone. Of 'constraints' there have been many, but at this point none worth mentioning. We have, however, been able to benefit from several important 'resources'. First, we are grateful to the institutions that hosted the events mentioned above. Second, we would like to thank the former European Political Science series editor Hans Keman, who showed interest in our project and extended us his support, facilitating the realisation of this book. Third, we would like to thank the staff of Routledge, especially Patrick Proctor and Mark Kavanagh, whose kind help regularly calmed our forebodings about editing a thirteen-chapter book. Above all, we thank Patrick Dumont, research assistant, Department of Political Science, Université Catholique de Louvain, for his tireless efforts in the translation of the chapter on Corsica and his valuable assistance in the editing of this book. To our parents, who have always given us their unwavering support, we dedicate this book.

Lieven De Winter and Huri Türsan
Brussels, July 1997

ABBREVIATIONS

Note: This list includes only the most significant regionalist parties, i.e. those discussed at length in the book. 'Mainstream' parties referred to in individual chapters, such as Belgium's CVP (Christian People's Party) are omitted, as are minor regionalist parties mentioned in passing.

AN	*Alleanza Nazionale* (National Alliance)
AP	*Alianza Popular* (Popular Alliance)
ARC	*Action Régionaliste Corse* (Corsican Regionalist Action)
CDC	*Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* (Democratic Convergence of Catalonia)
CiU	*Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union)
CN	*Corsica Nazione* (Corsican Nation)
DPPE	Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe
DUP	Democratic Unionist Party
EA	*Eusko Alkartasuna* (Basque Solidarity)
EE	*Eusko Ezkerra* (Left of the Basque Country)
EFA	European Free Alliance
ERC	*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (Republican Left of Catalonia)
FDF	*Front Démocratique des Francophones* (Democratic Front of Francophones)
FI	*Forza Italia* (Go Italy)
FLNC	*Front de Libération Nationale de la Corse* (National Liberation Front of Corsica)
FRC	*Front Régionaliste Corse* (Corsican Regionalist Front)
HB	*Herri Batasuna* (People's Unity)
IU	*Izquierda Unida* (United Left)
LLN	*Lutte de la Liberation Nationale* (National Liberation Struggle)
LN	*Lega Nord* (Northern League)
MCA	*Mouvement Corse pour l'Autodétermination* (Corsican Autodetermination Movement)
MSI	*Movimento Sociale Italiano* (Italian Social Movement)
PC	*Plaid Cymru* (Party of Wales)
PDS	*Partito Democratico di Sinistra* (Democratic Party of the Left)
PNV	*Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (Basque Nationalist Party)
PP	*Partido Popular* (People's Party)
PSC	*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* (Party of the Socialists of Catalonia)
PSd'A	*Partito Sardo d'Azione* (Sardinian Action Party)
PW	*Parti Wallon* (Walloon Party)
RW	*Rassemblement Wallon* (Walloon Rally)
SDLP	Social Democratic and Labour Party
SF	*Sinn Féin*
SFP	*Svenska Folkpartiet* (Swedish People's Party)

SNP	Scottish National Party
SVP	*Südtiroler Volkspartei* (South Tyrolean People's Party)
UDC	*Unió Democràtica de Catalunya* (Democratic Union of Catalonia)
UPC	*Unione di u Populu Corsu* (Union of the Corsican People)
UUP	Ulster Unionist Party
UV	*Union Valdôtaine* (Union of the Aoste Valley)
VB	*Vlaams Blok* (Flemish Bloc)
VU	*Volksunie* (People's Union)

1

INTRODUCTION

Ethnoregionalist parties as ethnic entrepreneurs

Huri Türsan

The comparative analysis of ethnoregionalist parties as a specific party type has until now attracted little scholarly attention. This is partly due to the neglect of European political party research, which, afflicted with a 'professional handicap' (Weiner 1992:317), often looked upon ethnicity in modern societies as 'vestigial phenomena' (Esman, 1977:371). In addition, European political party studies have been widely influenced by a static interpretation of the 'freezing' of party systems around settled cleavages of region, class and religious denomination. Thus one of the crucial lessons of party research, namely that 'parties themselves might establish themselves as significant poles of attraction and produce their own alignments independently of the geographical, the social and the cultural underpinnings of the movements' (Lipset and Rokkan 1967:3), almost fell into oblivion.

The new wave of salience of the ethnoregional cleavage in recent years and its reflections on the party scene poses a set of problems which the authors of this book make a preliminary attempt to analyse. The case studies collected in this volume address a common set of problems from a common perspective and aim to arrive at conclusions that hold comparative value. This introductory chapter defines some of the concepts that will be employed throughout the book such as ethnicity, regionalism and ethnoregionalism. The definition of these macrosociological phenomena is followed by the designation of political parties as agents of ethnoregional mobilisation, i.e. as ethnic entrepreneurs. The next section of the chapter exposes the most important research questions that guided the book. The presentation of the specific chapters is made in the final section of the introduction.

Apart from the interest in addressing issues of scientific lacunae, the analysis of ethnoregionalist parties is highly relevant for several other reasons. First, ethnoregionalist parties exist in virtually all of the West European countries. In many of them, if we apply Sartori's (1976:121–123) standards, they are party system relevant, whether in electoral strength, coalition potential or blackmail potential. Second, since the end of the 1980s, ethnic-based politics in Europe has once more grown in importance (Smith 1995:44), making ethnoregionalist parties stronger than before. Third, recent research on ethnoregionalist parties shows

that we can expect this party family to grow even further in electoral importance and system relevance (Hearl, Budge and Pearson 1996). Finally, the resurgence of ethnoregionalist party politics once more defies what, drawing upon the work of several authors (Connor 1977:19–21; Heisler 1990:21), we would call the 'end of ethnicity in Europe' thesis that keeps being–since the 1920s–periodically advanced.

Ethnoregionalist parties build upon the recent outbursts of disaffection of electorates with existing political elites and traditional party politics, and channel these outbursts with varying levels of success. The level of this success has implications for the future of national states in Europe since European integration and regional policy nourish the hopes of most ethnoregionalist parties. Ethnoregionalist actors can assume that the framework of a politically and economically united Europe permits their region to achieve greater autonomy or even full independence and yet still prosper economically and remain integrated in the international political community.

Retrieval of ethnicity as a mobilising force

The changing political landscape of the post-Cold War era demonstrated that nations throughout the world are facing new problems, some of which are closely linked to transformations in national state systems. One such problem concerns the emergence of an 'unexpected link between changes in the world state system and mobilised ethnic claims' (Tilly 1991:575). This trend is observable in both stable democracies and unstable political regimes. Ethnicity is once more a salient basis for political mobilisation.

The scale of the growth of identity politics in the shape of the defence of ethnic boundaries is yet to be identified. One researcher singled out 589 ethnic groups in the world in 1985 (Nielsson 1985:33). Others maintain that there exist around 250 'minorities at risk' and 8,000 languages in the world, many of which could be used to advance nationalist claims (Hall 1993:22). Furthermore, it is argued that almost all countries in the world are ethnically divided, not only those that have been recognised as divided (Lijphart 1990:491).

As a result of the re-emergence of ethnic cleavages, a growing number of countries around the world are beset by conflict or ethnicity-based wars. As ethnic conflict increases, prospects for democracy in unstable political regimes remain illusory (Türsan 1996:225). This is arguably the case also because the ascriptive character of ethnic identity renders interethnic compromise especially difficult to achieve (Horowitz 1985:54), above all in non-institutionalised, unstable political 'regimes' where political elites are not habituated to making compromises.

Europe has not remained immune to the global trend of ethnic and political fragmentation. The explosion of ethnic strife during recent years in East-Central Europe carries the warning that in Europe too, ethnic identity and nationalist sentiments can constitute time bombs ready to explode. In its turn, in Western Europe a second wave of ethnic revival has been growing in several countries

since the end of the 1980s. Recently, scholars of comparative politics identified forty-four ethnic parties in Western Europe (Lane, McKay and Newton 1991:125–132). This revival of latent ethnicity finds its expression, above all, in political parties representing ethnic identity. The revival is also accompanied by new institutional arrangements and modifies voting patterns.

We can observe the most striking examples of the current wave of politicisation of ethnic cleavages in the growing importance of regionalism and ethnicity, for instance, in the electoral breakthrough of the regionalist party in Italy *(Lega Nord)* and the re-emergence of the separatist Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP). The electoral strength of these parties is on the rise in the UK, Spain, Switzerland and Italy (Lane, McKay and Newton 1991:139). In Belgium and Italy ethnoregionalist parties have contributed substantially to dismantling existing party systems and may eventually have the same impact on the countries themselves.

The rise of ethnicity in Europe is, however, distinct. In several European countries, an objective revival of imagined communities (Anderson 1983) is taking place. Although in Western Europe the incidence of ethnic differences is as great as in other parts of the world and very few countries are immune to ethnic division, the problems are less severe and in most instances are managed peacefully without leading to 'severe ethnic conflict' (Heisler 1990:21)—in other words, violence.

The universal versus the particular

The current wave of the surge in identity politics which manifests itself in the retrieval of the ethnic theme occurs simultaneously with two interrelated political developments: deterritorialisation via globalisation of market forces and resurgence of the salience of territoriality of political forces. On the one hand, not only is the 'global village' (McLuhan and Powers 1989) reinvented, but we are forcefully informed that the world is compressed and there exists an 'intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole' (Robertson 1992:8).

During the process called 'globalisation', the remotest corners of the world enter the world market as consumption markets. Paradoxically, to accompany this development at the market level, a counter-tendency has emerged at the cultural and political level: the downplaying of global problems and the focusing on just one place. Theories of economic globalisation are countered by the reinvention of territory and the discovery of the territory in economic adaptation (Keating 1996:47). Globalisation refers to the universal emergence and spread of a supranational dimension of social relations witnessed institutionally in the proliferation of transnational organisations (Scholte 1996:46). Particularism that finds its expression in polyethnicity is, however, the other side of the coin of globalism cum universalism (Robertson 1992:98).

To pass from the image of the globe to the geographical boundaries of this book, i.e. Western Europe, in the so-called post-nation-state European system, decision-making moves both to the global and local levels. Devolution of power away from

the national state is occurring simultaneously both to a larger transnational political system, namely the European Union, and to a reduced scale in which regions become loci of decision. In other words, in Europe 'globalisation' is replaced by the visions of 'Europeanisation' (Rosamund 1995:401).

In Western European societies, where in contrast to other parts of the world conflicts concerning territorial partitioning are dead, this trend in transnationalisation is accompanied by the reawakening and reassertion of ethnic and cultural specificities which foster ethnoregionalism. Although the term 'ethnicity' is anathema to many Europeans, who perceive ethnicity as a form of pre-modern, even primitive identity (Urwin 1983:221), ethnicity keeps coming back regularly in Europe and demonstrates that ethnic identity politics has changing connotations over time and space. Furthermore, one of the specificities of European democracies is in the successful power-sharing between different ethnic groups, i.e. multiethnic democracy (Lijphart 1995:853–865). Thus ethnicity is as much a feature of Europe as it is of other regions of the world.

Article 185a of the Treaty on European Union pays lip-service to parties at the European level as a factor of 'integration, that would contribute to forming European awareness and expressing the political will of the citizens of the Union'. It should be safe to assume that this phrase in the said treaty expresses expectations from parties at the national level. Paradoxically, parties are still 'nationalist' and oriented to 'home' (Greven 1992:92). This sometimes means oriented 'subnationally'. Given that both the European Union and, even more so, European-level parties still have an uncertain future, we are not concerned with the implications of transnationalisation and European regional policy for political parties and vice versa. While manifestly European politics is regionalising, regional politics is Europeanising and national politics is both regionalising and Europeanising (Keating and Hooghe 1995), what is happening at the level of existing political parties? In this book, we address ourselves to the problem of the rediscovery of territorial identity and its representation in ethnoregionalist political parties. In other words, the direct concern of this book is ethnoregionalist parties in Western Europe. It is a book about their internal and external constraints, electoral strategies and success in achieving office.

Ethnoregionalism and its organisation in political parties

To what does the term 'ethnoregional' refer? Despite the proliferation of regionalist parties after the 1970s and in the 1980s, ethnoregionalism remains a relatively neglected phenomenon in the party studies subfield. The widespread neglect in recent years of the doctrinal aspect of party politics has led to a parallel neglect of the significance of ideology and doctrine, of a party 'label' which identifies groupings of political parties (Macridis 1967:10). In addition to the revival we are witnessing in ethnoregionalist parties, the recent success of extreme-right parties is an indication of the importance of ideology in party politics rather than the

exhaustion of political ideas. In this book we endorse the position that parties sustain an identity that is anchored in the cleavages and issues that gave rise to their birth (Klingemann, Hofferbert and Budge 1994:24). In other words, to underline an often overlooked banality, political parties stand for something that defines their identity. We maintain that the parties we study in this book belong to a specific category that we call ethnoregionalist and they stand for the empowering of the (ethno)regional groups they claim to represent.

The coincidence of ethnic and regionalist movements in Western Europe has led to the coining of the term 'ethnoregionalism'. Nevertheless, sociopolitical phenomena similar to those we study in this book are also defined differently. A non-exhaustive list of analogous terms includes 'regionalist', 'peripheral regionalist', 'subnational regionalist', 'peripheral nationalist', 'substate nationalist', 'mini-nationalist', 'minority nationalist', 'ethnic peripheral nationalist', 'ethnonationalist' and 'ethnoregionalist'. For reasons we shall explain below, from among the plethora of definitions that exist, we choose to use the term 'ethnoregional'.

In this chapter we focus on the two defining characteristics of the parties studied in this book: ethnoregionalist parties endorse a nationalism whose core is based on ethnic distinctiveness and territorial claims within established states. To stress the obvious, as we understand it, ethnoregionalism rests upon regional identity claims to ethnic distinctiveness, as opposed to other kinds of regionalism (Hooghe 1992:21).

We therefore adopt a parsimonious definition of ethnoregionalist parties based on the two common denominators that unite them: (1) a subnational territorial border; (2) an exclusive group identity. If we break down the components of this definition, the question of what is ethnic is highly disputed. Almost all definitions of ethnicity refer to one or more of the following components: a people united by a *Gestalt* of interrelated primordial bonds, kinship, affinity, attachment and grounds for self-esteem. These grounds are the subjective experience of ethnicity, the self-definition of a people (Snyder 1990:94). In other words, the creation of a sense of community which can consequently become the basis for collective action is a necessary condition for ethnoregionalism.

Borrowing from Urwin (1982:427), we maintain that the salience of the consciousness of group membership identity and the identification with some piece of territory is the *sine qua non* of ethnoregionalist parties. Horowitz (1985:291) defines as 'ethnic' a party that receives its support from an ethnic group and serves the interests of that group. Regionalism also has several connotations. In contrast to the connotation of regionalism as a voluntary fusion of separate national units acting as one unit (Snyder 1990:341), or areas that span different national borders but are united by common economic interests, we use 'ethnoregionalism' to denote ethnically based territorial movements in Western European national states that aim to modify relations with the state. Thus ethnoregional parties serve not only ethnic group interests but also regional interests.

A narrow definition does not include the programme features or the objectives of ethnoregionalist parties. Much like nationalism, ethnoregionalism is a

mobilisational concept. It shares with nationalist philosophy the priority of the interests of the persons within the national unit (citizens) *vis-à-vis* those external to it. The most prominent feature of ethnoregionalist parties is undoubtedly their demand for political reorganisation of the national power structure, or for some kind of 'self-government'. In addition to the defining characteristics of identity and territory, the centrality of the demand for empowerment of the regional group distinguishes this type of party from other party 'families' that translate sociostructural cleavages to the party competition arena.

The kind of self-government sought varies considerably from one ethnoregionalist party to the other. Although every ethnic group is a 'potential nation-group' (Nielsson 1985:28) that may aim to form its own national state, it is important to underline that not all ethnic groups have the ideology or the programmatic aims of nation-groups. More precisely, ethnic activism can have objectives varying from ethnic-based interest group claims to demands for nationhood and claims for a separate state (Weiner 1992:318–320).

Ethnoregionalist parties as ethnic entrepreneurs

A discourse on the cultural specificity of a population is translated into political assertiveness under certain conditions among which political organisation is the most crucial. Ethnoregionalist organisation, however, can take many forms varying from terrorist groups to political parties, social movements and interest groups. It can adopt a variety of strategies including the collection of votes, protest or violence.

In the advanced democracies of Western Europe the dominant organisation representing ethnic identity is the political party and the strategies predominantly peaceful. The way political parties in Europe have related to ethnicity is one of the factors distinguishing ethnicity in Europe from that in other parts of the world. As is typical of ethnic parties, the boundaries of ethnoregionalist parties are exclusive group boundaries (Horowitz 1985:298). Nevertheless, ethnicity in Western Europe does not displace all other forms of group difference. Supra-ethnic identities tend to have salience: language, class, religion, region all characterise the political debate and appeal to loyalties (Horowitz 1985:19).

As organisations, ethnoregionalist parties play a crucial role in mobilising ethnic sentiments. However, do they lead or follow ethnic movements? The translation of ethnic identity to party identity may have implications for the strategies adopted by the parties to meet ethnoregional demands. First, although in Western Europe ethnicity does entail more than conflict (Heisler 1990:28), ethnoregionalist parties fulfil the role of 'ethnic entrepreneurs' (Tilly 1991:574) for successful conflict regulation as both dependent variables influenced by their environment and independent institutional forces affecting political development. In addition, parties are not only actors of the mitigation of conflict, they may also instigate conflict or, as Lipset and Rokkan (1967:3) proposed, establish themselves as polesof

attraction acting as professional brokers of ethnicity. What, therefore, is the role of ethnoregionalist parties in handling ethnoregional claims?

In other words, to what kinds of outcomes do ethnoregionalist parties contribute? Are they 'Trojan horses' which tend to provoke extremist leanings and conflict? Or are ethnoregionalist parties one of the ways of translating the bonds between state and society (Hooghe 1992:43) without resorting to conflict, and do they in reality tend to restrain violent expressions of ethnic demands? As agents of mobilisation, within a conflict-integration dialectic parties can emphasise either strategy and translate it into the party system (Lipset and Rokkan 1967:4–5). Hence, between the extremes of intransigence on the part of the ethnic groups and intolerance on the part of the state, a vast terrain of possibilities exists within which ethnic conflicts can be resolved.

To cite a few possibilities, patterns of ethnic settlement can vary between territorial solutions of the carving of land to non-territorial solutions of repression or accommodation. The latter type of 'positive' settlement can range from federalism to ethnopluralist patronage distribution, thus including a multitude of methods. Separatism and irredentism are among the categories of negative approaches or 'solutions'. Strategies aiming at the official recognition of the rights of the ethnic-regional population—autonomy, federalism—are among those most often adopted by European ethnoregional parties (Safran 1994:62–63).

Research questions

The following is a book on ethnoregionalist parties that adopts a specific framework. The main focus of the chapters is the internal and external resources of ethnoregionalist parties. The authors are interested in the opportunities that contribute to electoral success, and success in gaining office and carrying out the parties' policies. To cite a few elements distinguishing specific ethnoregionalist parties, they can differ in terms of: (1) 'confining conditions' (Kirchheimer 1965); (2) basis of identity (clan, ethnic group, language); (3) ideology (left-right); (4) organisational strength (opportunity structures); (5) popular support (links with social, economic, and political groups); (6) electoral support; and (7) level of influence.

The authors of the following chapters have attempted to answer a common set of questions about the cases this book deals with. Like other sociopolitical phenomena, cleavages seem to acquire salience in waves. In the 1960s, Lipset and Rokkan (1967:41) observed that some territorial conflicts thought to have been resolved during nation-building had recently intensified. They also predicted that the conditions for the emergence and consolidation of territorial counter-cultures were most likely to develop in three sets of circumstances: heavy concentration of one counter-culture within one clear-cut territory; few ties of communication, alliance and bargaining experience towards the national centre and more external centres of cultural or economic influence; and minimal economic dependence on the political metropolis.

As we are now witnessing another wave of ethnic revival in several of our

cases, the case studies have first tried to identify the conditions for the (re-)emergence of the ethnoregionalist cleavage. The individual chapters of the book were guided by the main concerns exposed below. All the authors of this volume have addressed the question of how ethnic identity emerges. On this question, the authors have looked at the historical trends that produce ethnoregionalist parties. They have described the kind of constellation of the political scene that determines the timing of the breakthrough moments of ethnoregionalist parties. In other words, they asked why and how latent ethnic sentiments were converted into organisational structures. A correlate question in this area is the stage of ethnic tensions when ethnoregionalist party or parties emerge. They have therefore identified, in their respective regions, the historical origin of the ethnoregionalist party or parties, in terms of circumstances of party formation, main phases of development and the evolution of the electoral success.

As most of our authors agree with the proposition that there are definitive social coalitions behind the rise of (ethno)regionalist parties (Kitschelt 1995:266), the authors of the individual chapters were intrigued by the social alliances that favour the rise of ethnoregionalist parties. Although it is too early to tell whether identity politics will fill the void of class politics, in this framework the class support and the nature of ethnoregionalist parties' programmes are given prominence. The authors have therefore also sought to discover the types of factors in which ethnic conflict is most rooted: whether they are predominantly psychological, cultural or socio-economic ones. Thus we are concerned with, first, the objective circumstances of the territory in which ethnoregional demands emerge. Do they emerge in economically underdeveloped regions or relatively wealthy regions of Europe? The wider international context of ethnoregionalist electoral upsurge and the identifying of the catalyst in the upsurge of ethnicity is treated in each case.

In reply to the question, what are the internal and external constraints and resources by which ethnoregionalist parties try to achieve their goals?, the following chapters deliver standard comparative data. They also introduce, however, a more detailed discussion of the internal resources which regionalist parties can mobilise for gaining electoral support. More precisely, the case studies focus on the parties' programmes and policy stances with regard to the centre-periphery cleavage, socio-economic issues, 'new politics' issues and European integration.

The authors of this volume also study the organisational attributes of ethnoregionalist parties. These include party membership, party finance, internal party behaviour, leadership (recruitment and style), and party strategies. They equally address questions related to the electoral sphere. The determinants of ethnoregionalist party votes and the characteristics of the electorate are also among the points of focus.

The strength of ethnoregional identity, whether measured in terms of prevalence of a specific language, feelings of belonging to the region instead of to the national state, or the strength of the demands made for self-government, is proposed to be the main determinant of ethnic votes. We loosely adopted the proposition that it

makes a difference whether a broadly based party counts on the votes of a given ethnic group or depends solely on the support of a single ethnic group (Horowitz 1985:293–295). Therefore, the relation between high identification with regional identity and the strength of ethnoregionalist parties is investigated in terms of how the party's support is distributed and how ethnic group support is distributed.

The impact of ethnoregionalist parties on the electoral system and party system is a crucial variable in terms of their future prospects. Currently we are witnessing not only an upsurge of ethnoregionalist politics, but in some cases also the counter-trend, i.e. a visible decline in the regionalist vote. Therefore, the individual chapters deal not only with the determinants of the rise of ethnoregionalist parties but also with the conditions which impede their success or lead to their decline. This perspective obviously involves the salience of other cleavages, especially the class cleavage that renders the fate of ethnoregionalist parties uncertain (Kitschelt 1995:266).

Finally, we are concerned with the question of the future of ethnoregionalist parties or, more precisely, whether ethnoregionalism will continue to be a major cleavage or whether ethnoregionalist parties are likely to wither away. It is a possible scenario that the votes for ethnoregionalist parties express protest votes and/or votes for a pressure group and hence are ephemeral; voters will eventually return to traditional parties. An alternative scenario is also possible. As ethnoregional interests are currently predominantly aggregated by political parties rather than by spontaneously appearing and disappearing social movements, it is also likely that we shall continue to witness a conversion of ethnic demands on the governmental sphere through the activity of political parties.

To sum up, our guiding questions are based on the questions of geographical distribution, the timing of the retrieval of ethnicity as a mobilising force, and the prospects of ethnoregional parties (which have intrigued several earlier scholars, e.g. Levi and Hechter 1985; Newman 1994). Such questions are still relevant today, and this book constitutes an attempt to study the party organisational aspect of the issue.

Case studies

The cases dealt with in this book aim to give an overview of the variations in ethnoregionalist party competition that we find in Western Europe. Our cases span the spectrum of Corsican violent separatism with no political party organisation to appease ethnicity at one extreme, to the highly successful and therefore fading ethnoregionalist party organisation represented by the *Volksunie* in Belgium at the other extreme. They cover a wide range of strategies adopted by parties such as that of outright secession (Scotland, Catalonia, northern Italy); consolidation of federalist structures (Belgium); and achievement of greater autonomy *(Plaid Cymru)*. In all the cases, with the exception of *Lega Nord,* minority nationalism is strong and they are distinguished by a historical identity. Even in the case of *Lega Nord,* there have periodically been attempts to create myths of

ethno-linguistic identity (Tripodi 1997). When this strategy made no obvious contribution to the success of the League, regional economic differences monopolised the *Lega Nord* ideology as the moving force.

What theoretical resources can research on ethnoregionalist parties draw on? A wide variety of conceptual and theoretical frameworks attempt to explain the emergence, development and success of ethnoregionalist parties. Ferdinand Müller-Rommel surveys these theoretical approaches. His chapter shows how some scholars argue that the rise of ethnoregionalist movements and parties is caused by failures of modernisation and nation-building. The counter-argument is that ethnoregionalist parties and movements are associated with higher rather than lower levels of modernisation. Institutionalists link the emergence and success of ethnoregionalist parties to institutional and political opportunity structures. Finally, the political culture approach perceives the supporters of ethnoregionalist parties as dissatisfied voters who see ethnoregionalist parties as the only effective anti-system pressure group. In concluding his review, Müller-Rommel maintains that a combined approach taking account of both resource mobilisation and political opportunity structure can best help us understand the electoral success and future potential of ethnoregionalist parties.

In Belgium, ethnoregionalist parties set in motion a chain reaction in party formation, consequently exerting a centrifugal impact on the party system of a kind that Horowitz (1985:333) pointed to as being a plausible systemic impact of ethnic parties. Lieven De Winter's chapter on the *Volksunie* (VU) depicts how through the success of ethnoregionalist parties, Belgium was transformed from a unitary state into a federalised state. He argues that in the 1990s ethnoregionalist sentiments and their parties are so important that scholars can no longer speak of a party 'system', but have to refer to two party 'systems' in Belgium. He concludes that in the long run, this centrifugal extreme pluralism may even lead to the breakdown of the Belgian state. De Winter's case study of the VU also presents the variety of dilemmas and trade-offs between electoral success, offices and policies *regierungsfähige* regionalist parties (i.e. those eligible for participation in government) are confronted with.

To some extent, the decline of the *Front Démocratique des Francophones* (FDF) can be explained along similar lines. Ruth Van Dyck and Jo Buelens show that in policy terms, while relatively less successful than the VU, the FDF did manage to obtain a fully fledged regional status for its Brussels constituency. In order to survive electorally, however, the FDF chose to align itself with the Francophone Liberals, i.e. the strongest traditional party in Brussels, and to profit from the rewards of office this strategy offered at the regional and local level. Its francophone ally, the *Rassemblement Wallon* (RW), did not survive long enough to see its main demands met: a Walloon region that controls the instruments of social and economic policy and halts the decline of the region's political power. Van Dyck and Buelens maintain that the RW, or at least its leadership until 1976, was strongly policy oriented. Hence, once the traditional parties split into autonomous Francophone and Flemish wings and adopted the RW position

on federalism, the RW's historical mission was judged to have been fulfilled as the traditional parties would in fact implement the RW programme in the following two decades.

The chapter about the Scottish Nationalist Party contributed to this volume by James Newell illustrates how a region with a strong nationalist tradition and identity resources nevertheless has been unable to influence the policy of the centre, even though the nationalists perform relatively well electorally. The majoritarian electoral system that sanctions smaller parties and weakens their coalition potential is the major factor contributing to this outcome. However, given the region's pivotal position for delivering the necessary seats for a Labour majority in Westminster and the SNP competition for Labour Party votes, Labour is obliged to accommodate some of the SNP's claims for self-government. Newell maintains that this state of affairs may culminate in another attempt at devolution through the creation of a Scottish parliament. (In view of the result of the referendum of 11 September 1997, in which Scots voted decisively in favour of the setting up of a parliament, a Scottish parliament now appears a certainty.)

Although *Plaid Cymru* (PC) does not voice as strong a claim for full independence, its more moderate stance does not produce better electoral results than those of the SNP. Thomas Christiansen's chapter illustrates that PC was most successful in rebuilding the Welsh feeling of identity and incorporating European integration as a credible strategy for more decentralisation and the final goal of shared sovereignty. He holds that the promise of the new Labour government to hold a referendum on the creation of a Welsh assembly is not only a modest success of the PC's moderate strategy. It is not improbable that the PC strategy will backfire and an erosion take place in the *raison d'être* of the party. (The referendum was held on 18 September 1997, and resulted in a narrow vote in favour of an assembly.)

The contributions of Juan Marcet and Jordi Argelaguet on the Catalan nationalist parties (*Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya* and *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya,* ERC) and of Beatriz Acha and Santiago Pérez-Nievas on the Basque *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* and the *Eusko Alkartasuna* (EA) indicate that there is not always a dilemma of trade-off between policy success and party survival. In spite of the major move towards autonomy that these two regions managed to impose upon the centre, the electoral strength of Spain's main nationalist parties has not decreased significantly. Neither did a further radicalisation of their initial programme for autonomy take place. The conquest of executive positions in their region sufficed to give them the rewards of a party in government. In addition, given their pivotal power in the national parliament, more radical nationalists often consider these parties the best guarantee for further devolution of power to the regions. In fact, the smaller independence-seeking parties in the Catalan and Basque regions—the (ERC and EA)—did not manage to capitalise on the waning *raison d'être* of the moderate nationalist parties.

Among the ethnoregionalist parties that are included in this book, the *Lega Nord*(LN) or Northern League is the party that can and does make the weakest

claims to being an ethnic-based political party in the sense we previously defined. All the regions treated in this book have a sense of ethnic identity underlined by at least linguistic differences. Only the League focuses on the regional economic identity dimension. Nevertheless, Marco Tarchi's chapter on the League exposes the party's attempts to instrumentally create an identity. The case of the League is especially significant as it demonstrates the evolution of social movements into parties when they do correspond to a structural cleavage, in this case the regional one. Ethnoregionalism is used by the League as a vehicle of a deeper political divide between a prosperous and industrious region against the supposedly unjustified transfers of its richness to the central areas and the south. The LN thus constitutes a flagrant case of 'welfare chauvinism' (Kitschelt 1995:263). Among the ethnoregionalist parties, the League is a precursor of the shift from identity politics to interest-oriented regional coalitions obviously supported by social coalitions. Thus the League is an example of the success of an ethnoregionalist party despite the fact that the ethnic component had to truly force the imagination.

In terms of electoral performance, office-holding and policy achievement the most successful party among the cases studied in this book is the *Südtiroler Volkspartei*. Anton Holzer and Barbara Schwegler demonstrate that the SVP has managed to control a majority of seats in its region, owing to its monopoly over the electoral support of the German and Ladin minorities in the South Tyrol province since the end of the Second World War. This ethnic catch-all party also succeeded in obtaining an extensive autonomy status and considerable transfer of sources from the centre. Despite the apparent erosion in its *raison d'être,* the SVP managed to maintain its hegemonic position by entrenching itself in the executive power structures in the entire province through a consistent use of political patronage. Holzer and Schwegler argue that this also explains why nearly one out of every two South Tyrolians is a party member.

If the Northern League represents a success story of the fusion of various movements (leagues) to form a coherent party, the Corsican case presents the other extreme. In Corsica incessant fission has impeded the 'translation handling' of the ethnic cleavage by political parties. Again, in contrast to the League, Corsica is situated at the extreme end of virulent ethnic identity and party failure. As author Claude Olivesi shows, whereas a substantial proportion of the adult population express sympathy for the Corsican case, fragmented parties do not succeed in capturing the support of the electorate and channelling ethnic demands to the party arena. We hope that the chapter on Corsica contributes to an understanding not only of the failure of regionalist party organisation, but also of the failure of a national state to adapt, aggravating the ethnic issue. It also demonstrates the difficulty of creating lasting institutional arrangements when they are not mediated by political parties and the ground that political parties need to cover before ballots can replace bullets in Corsica.

Although analysts indicate that regionalist parties escape classification along the left-right continuum, this dimension often comes to the fore. Peter Lynch indicates in this volume that the ideological bundle of regionalist parties creates a

problem for the European Free Alliance (EFA), especially where the endorsing of anti-modernist issues is concerned. He argues that the EFA does offer a forum for political co-operation inside and outside the European Parliament and gives regionalist parties a voice in European integration. It gives its member parties political and logistical support, publicity, financial resources and moral backing in difficult times. His analysis also addresses intra-family fragmentation problems that contributed to the failure of the EFA to create a regionalist political group in the European Parliament and turn regionalists into serious competitors.

The variations in our cases allow us to draw an analytical contrast between different patterns of ethnoregional party politics and the diversity in political outcomes. Lieven De Winter's concluding chapter does precisely this. His analysis is based on an expert opinion survey he made with the authors of the case studies. He addresses the questions of how regionalist parties relate to the problems of the emergence, mobilisation, development, management, escalation or demobilisation of ethnic demands. He puts to empirical test the hypotheses drawn from the theories on the rise of ethnoregionalist parties presented by Ferdinand Müller-Rommel. Within the analytical framework of opportunity structures at work in the emergence, rise and decline (i.e. the life cycles) of ethnoregionalist parties, he concludes that the leadership factor emerges as more important than party organisation as one of the main determinants of electoral success. Another crucial conclusion that De Winter draws concerns the trade-off between electoral and policy success. The hypothesis advanced by Lipset and Rokkan (1967:41), that territorial-cultural conflicts feed into the overall cleavage structure and help to condition the development not only of each nation-wide party organisation but even more of the entire system of party oppositions and alignments, is confirmed by his comparative study. Therefore, one of his most significant conclusions concerns the implications of the surge and decline of ethnoregionalist parties for party systems and political systems as parties inadvertently become a victim of their own policy success.

Conclusion

To conclude by recapitulating some of the major themes of this introductory chapter, ethnicity is ubiquitous and not only does ethnic politics have different connotations through space, it also has different connotations over time. Most of the cases that are studied in this book demonstrate that, in several countries of Western Europe, while ethnic identity can be salient, identity questions have been mitigated through settlements mediated by political parties and without so-called ties of blood leading to rivers of blood (Horowitz 1985:684). This is a particularly significant lesson to agencies of mobilisation of newly democratising countries as during disjunctive moments of regime change the mismanagement of ethnic conflict can jeopardise the chances for institutionalising a democratic regime.

Second, the retrieval of the ethnic theme by ethnoregional parties in recent years and their lasting, albeit unstable electoral success confirm the continued

importance of cleavages in party politics and lead to the questioning of the interpretation of these parties as products of electoral dealignment or party disarticulation. Ethnoregionalist party politics in Western Europe defies the thesis that structural cleavages were declining in favour of 'new issues'. The cleavage salience or dominance perspective still appears to be the most appropriate one in explaining the 'confining conditions' for the upsurge of ethnoregionalist parties as well as their decline.

However, cleavages do not by themselves explain variations in the translation of cleavages on the site of party competition. As several cleavages can coexist, the activities of agents are crucial in the way they are perceived and are rendered salient. We argue that the variations in single cases are also determined by parties as entrepreneurs. The opportunity structure approach that is adopted in this book offers a tool of analysis that combines structural conditions (cleavages) with party-specific resources and constraints that determine the behaviour of actors (parties).

Finally, the paradox of the relative universalism of both the global village and the village of Europe does not signify an end to the salience of particularism of ethnoregional identity politics and parties that translate the ethnoregional conflict on the electoral and policy sites. The major question for the future of ethnoregionalist parties hinges on whether in the hierarchy of cleavages the one represented by regionalist parties will have primacy or whether it will become a secondary conflict mobilised by parties on the fringes of party systems. As the European cleavage (supranational governance/power versus national sovereignty) is still emergent (van der Eijk and Franklin 1996), we will resist the temptation to speculate about the future, but we will end by indicating a contingency scenario.

The future of ethnoregionalist parties depends on the balance of power between the European and ethnoregional cleavage. If the hypothesis that the multi-layered construction of Europe encourages the resumed salience of dormant particularistic identity is confirmed, we can expect further growth in ethnoregionalist parties. Just as the centralisation of the 1940s and 1950s provoked the regional policies and the politicisation of the ethnic question in the 1960s and 1970s (Newman 1994:39–40), it is not unlikely that the same scenario will be repeated during the supranationalisation of Europe. Although we are still far from a recomposition of ethnic groups in a federal Europe (Lafont 1967) culminating in a *Europe des ethnies,* the mushrooming of regional offices in Brussels is an indicator of the impact of growing regional mobilisation in the European Union. In the joint operation of the two sets of cleavages, multi-level governance is congruent with the imagining of multi-layered identities (ethnic, regional, national and European); however, to reiterate, the question hinges on the malleability of social identities and the politicisation of regional and ethnic identity (Newman 1994:54). The impact of the development of regional policies in Europe could also lead to an evolution enhancing the regionalist component and downplaying the ethnic component of these parties as European integration advances.

The willingness of traditional political parties to work within a federal Europe of the regions has other implications. Policies adopted by traditional parties could

preempt the further rise of ethnoregional parties by implementing the projects of the latter in a federal Europe. Will the EU lead to an increase in regional identity that consequently increases regional demands expressed by regionalist actors which in turn leads to strengthened regionalism consolidating the regional identity? The 'recreated' identities would then be more 'regional' than 'ethnic'. In this sense regional parties may be harbingers of future trends in party politics in the EU if regionalism acquires a prominent position in the hierarchy of cleavages.

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2

ETHNOREGIONALIST PARTIES IN WESTERN EUROPE

Theoretical considerations and framework of analysis

Ferdinand Müller-Rommel

Why study ethnoregionalist parties?

Since the early 1980s much research has been conducted towards developing theoretical explanations for party system change in Western Europe. Transformation processes have been linked to many courses; and given many names, for instance, 'electoral volatility' (Pedersen 1983), 'new value based polarisation' (Inglehart 1987), 'realignment/dealignment' (Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1984), and 'competition and identity' (Bartolini and Mair 1990). On the whole, all these approaches indicate that some basic characteristics of contemporary Western European party systems have changed.

Despite the diverse labels, however, these approaches have not been able to give us significant insights into ongoing changes in some Western European party systems linked to the existence or the re-emergence of ethnoregionalist parties. Moreover, the political function and legitimacy of ethnoregionalist parties in national and regional party systems have not yet been sufficiently defined and analysed.

The comparative analysis of ethnoregionalist parties has become important for at least two reasons. On the one hand, it seems important to analyse whether the 'centre-periphery' cleavage is once again becoming more prominent in contemporary European party systems. In fact, ethnoregionalist parties have gained significant electoral success over the past few years. On the other hand, cross-national research needs to examine the conditions under which ethnoregionalist parties challenge the current characteristics of political systems in Western Europe (e.g. value change in the mass public, national and regional coalition-building, degree and direction of party competition, etc.).

This chapter seeks to continue the debate on the importance of ethnoregionalist parties in Western European party systems (Lijphart 1977; Newman 1994). Its principal objective is threefold: first, to identify the important ethnoregionalist

parties in Western Europe; second, to classify these parties according to their electoral performance; and third, to find reasons for their electoral success.

What are the ethnoregionalist parties?

Although ethnoregionalist parties play an important role in some political systems, little systematic cross-national research is available on the recent development of these parties. Aside from the studies by Levi and Hechter (1985), Rokkan and Urwin (1983), Urwin (1983), Seiler (1982) and–more recently–Newman (1994), the literature on ethnoregionalist parties is uneven in scope and method, and largely descriptive. Quite often, the various publications date back to the 1970s and early 1980s without covering the significant recent development of these parties. In addition, most case studies are based solely on a compilation of some empirical findings (for example, on a party's policy, organisation and voters; Mair 1991:65). Moreover, the relevance of the various political and societal functions of ethnoregionalist parties in certain geographical territories has often been ignored.

The lack of research on ethnoregionalist parties can be traced back to at least two reasons. First, ethnoregionalist parties are often seen as politically unimportant because of their size and the low electoral turnout they command on the national level. This assumption, however, has been disproved by recent regional electoral results, for example in Spain, Great Britain and Italy. Second, most scholars perhaps inevitably focus their research on political parties for which information is more likely to be available. The study of ethnoregionalist parties obviously entails some unique problems, especially when it comes to gathering information for cross-national research on the regional level over time (e.g. data collection on party organisation and voters).

Overall it can be argued that the great need for research on ethnoregionalist parties at present is indeed for an empirical definition of the universe of these parties and for approaches which provide a framework for analysis on the basis of which it will be possible to summarise, incorporate and interrelate various characteristics or functions of ethnoregionalist parties' 'structure' and 'life' in comparative and national perspective.

Nominal definition

The first difficulty which is encountered when studying ethnoregionalist parties cross-nationally is the lack of a commonly shared definition. In Lane and Ersson's view, an ethnic party is defined as a body that was 'formed for the purpose of protecting the interests of the group it represents. Often the orientation appears in the choice of party denomination. Perhaps the orientation is marked still more strongly in their programmes' (Lane and Ersson 1991:104) More precisely, Urwin (1983:227) argues that regionalist parties are more disparate in their policy demands than any other party genre. Indeed, emphasis on different policy fields varies

considerably between ethnoregionalist parties in Western Europe. For instance, religious affiliation has been an important mobilising factor for the ethnoregionalist parties in Northern Ireland, but not so much for the parties in other European countries. Along the same lines, the preservation of the indigenous language claimed by ethnoregionalist parties in Wales, the Basque Country and Italy has served as a rallying point for the parties in those regions but not in others.

For the purposes of this chapter, a relatively restrictive definition is used: ethnoregionalist parties are defined as referring to the efforts of geographically concentrated peripheral minorities which challenge the working order and sometimes even the democratic order of a nation-state by demanding recognition of their cultural identity. In this sense, ethnoregionalist parties can be viewed as 'anti-sentiment' parties (Poguntke 1996). In this definition, we exclude parties acting as the political exponent of fascist nationalism and nationalism directed against immigrants (Fennema 1996). In addition, parties which carry in their programme regionalist, autonomist or separatist goals but for which this goal is subject to other major goals, such as socio-economic policies, are also excluded from the definition.

Table 2.1 provides a list of sixteen ethnoregionalist parties in five Western European countries, which is rather limited compared to the list of 115 post-1945

Table 2.1 Ethnoregionalist parties: a nominal definition

Belgium
Volksunie (VU)
Front Démocratique des Francophones (FDF)

Finland
Svenska Folkpartiet (SFP)

Italy
Partito Sardo d'Azione (PSd'A)
Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP)
Union Valdôtaine (UV)

Spain
Partido Nacionalista Vasco (PNV)
Unió Democratica de Catalunya / Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (CiU)
Herri Batasuna (HB)
Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC)
Eusko Alkartasuna (EA)

United Kingdom
Sinn Féin (SF)
Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)
Ulster Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)
Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)
Scottish National Party (SNP)
Plaid Cymru (PC)

regionalist parties in seventeen European countries identified by Urwin (1983:228) or forty-five ethnic parties in twelve Western European countries listed in the recently published *Political Data Handbook* (Lane, McKay and Newton 1997:125–132). The list is restricted to include ethnoregionalist parties which contested at least two national and regional elections during the period 1980 to 1996. Second, only those parties are considered which polled at least 3 per cent or more of the regional vote for national and regional elections. Third, only those ethnoregionalist parties which have gained seats in the national parliament are included in the sample.

Electoral performance of ethnoregionalist parties

Several measures of regionalist voting strength are available. Urwin has, for instance, introduced an index of cumulative regional inequality,

> which controls for the effect of differences in the size of the regions as well as in the size of parties. The index compares the proportion of a party's vote that it receives in a region with the proportion it would expect to receive if it drew support nation-wide in proportion to the size of each region.
>
> (Urwin 1983:229)

Although this might be a very appropriate measure for a macro analysis of differences and similarities among ethnoregionalist parties' electoral strength, it is nevertheless an index which–in the first place–does not provide exact percentages of electoral results on the regional level. For the purpose of this study, which starts with an initial comparative exploration of ethnoregionalist parties, a less sophisticated but more descriptive approach has been applied. Ethnoregionalist parties are classified on two dimensions. First, they are classified on the dimension of electoral results, ranging from low (10 per cent of the regional vote or less), medium (11 to 20 per cent of the regional vote), to high (21 per cent of the regional vote and above. Second, a differentiation is made between two types of elections: national and regional elections.

Once applied, this approach yields four types of electoral performance. First, there are parties with high electoral strength at national and regional level. Among them are the SVP and UV (Italy), the DUP (UK), and the PNV, and CiU (Spain).

Second, there are parties with medium electoral strength on national and regional level. Among them are the PSd'A (Italy), the HB and EA (Spain), the SF (UK), and the VU and FDF (Belgium).

Third, there are parties with low electoral strength on national and regional level. Among them are the SFP (Finland), the ERC (Spain), and PC (UK).

Fourth, there are parties that score high, medium and/or low on national and regional elections. Among them are the SNP and the SDLP (UK).

Explanations for electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties

Theoretical approaches

The existing literature on ethnoregionalism differentiates between theories that focus their attention on the emergence of ethnoregionalist parties and those which claim to explain the electoral success of these parties. The distinction between the two theoretical approaches is important because it cannot be assumed that the conditions which determine the formation of ethnoregionalist parties will necessarily explain their electoral success. Overall, four theoretical approaches have been introduced for analysing ethnoregionalist parties in contemporary Western European party systems (see Table 2.2).

Development and centre-periphery approaches

The body of literature on the emergence and persistence of ethnoregionalist movements and parties has already been widely summarised by John Coakley (1992) and Liesbet Hooghe (1992). According to them, two approaches seem to be relevant for analysing the existence of ethnoregionalism: the development and the centre-periphery theories.

Both approaches link the emergence of ethnoregionalist movements and parties with the process of modernisation and nation-state building. Karl Deutsch (1953), Ernest Gellner (1964, 1983) as well as Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan (1967) argue that the development of ethnoregionalist groups is a function of the socio-economic and political development of nation-states. The emergence of ethnoregionalist movements and parties is, according to these authors, most likely if an economic and cultural centre remains on the political periphery and if the centre does not adjust state structures to the actual economic and cultural needs of the periphery.

An alternative but equally important approach has been introduced by Michael Hechter (1975). For him, the existence of ethnoregionalist movements

Table 2.2 Theoretical approaches: an overview

Unit of analysis	*Theoretical approach*	*Author(s)*
Emergence of ethnoregionalist parties	Development	Deutsch (1953) Gellner (1964, 1983)
	Centre–periphery	Lipset and Rokkan (1967) Rokkan and Urwin (1983) Hechter (1975)
Electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties	Competitive	Hauss and Rayside (1978) Nielson (1985)
	Rational choice	Levi and Hechter (1985)

is a result of central capitalist control over commerce and political life in the peripheral areas of the state ('internal colonialism'). The intensity of ethnoregionalism, he argues, increases in economically dependent territories with ethnically distinctive populations that are characterised by a hierarchical and cultural division of labour.

Overall, the development and centre-periphery approaches suggest that the existence of ethnoregionalist groups is caused by failures of the modernisation and nation-building process or—more precisely—by the durability of a segmental society. Although these approaches may be applicable for explaining the emergence of ethnoregionalist groups, they nevertheless cannot predict the relative electoral strength of these parties in single European party systems.

Competitive approach

According to the competitive approach the re-emergence of ethnoregionalist parties and their electoral success are caused not by a failure of modernisation but by its success. Modernisation, it is argued, breaks the frontiers between different ethnic and social groups in a geographic territory and encourages competition for the political or economic resources within a region. The collapse of a segmented society, Nielson (1985) suggests, has provoked new ethnoregionalist conflicts and cleavages. Consequently, it is predicted that ethnoregionalist parties are likely to be electorally stronger in modernised areas where a new, rising social stratum becomes the main potential actor in the revival of the ethnoregionalist conflicts.

Since modernisation creates only the potential for ethnoregionalist parties' electoral success, the competitive approach emphasises the importance of political opportunity structures as explanatory factors for the rise of these parties. The approach distinguishes between two major political opportunity structures in which ethnoregionalist groups can implement their aims: institutional and political facilitators. Charles Hauss and David Rayside (1978:43–53), for instance, have developed the hypothesis that the electoral success of ethnic and/or linguistic parties is higher in electoral systems with proportional representation and in decentralised federal systems (institutional facilitators). Furthermore, according to the authors, considerable electoral success can be achieved with the help of four political variables: a highly popular and/or charismatic leader; a strong party organisation; existing parties which fail to provide a solution to the demands of ethnoregionalist movements, and a low political identification of the mass public with the existing parties and the party system (political facilitators).

In a cross-national study on the electoral success of 233 new parties formed in nineteen West European and Anglo-American democracies from 1960 to 1980, Robert Harmel and John Robertson tested the impact of twelve different social, political and structural variables on the electoral success of new parties. They concluded: As for the hypothesised explanations of new party success, only that concerning the nature of the electoral system receives support from our data.' (Harmel and Robertson 1985:516). Overall, the general thrust of the competitive

approach is that structural factors of the party system and the political system determine the electoral success of political parties.

Rational choice approach

The rational choice approach holds that people do not participate in political action unless their expected 'benefits' exceed the 'costs' of their participation. Since ethnoregionalist parties do not generate private benefits for their voters (except for some members of the party elite), there need to be other explanations for the electoral success of several ethnoregionalist parties in Western Europe. According to Levi and Hechter (1985:139), the benefits which ethnoregionalist parties offer to their voters are those public goods that promise political change. Many voters demand political change because they are dissatisfied both with the traditional political institutions and with their experiences with parties in power that have repeatedly broken their promises of change.

The electoral choice of ethnoregionalist parties' adherents is highly influenced by the retrospective evaluation of competing parties' policies. It can indeed be supposed that an accumulated evaluation of the policy stands of the parties and individual leaders has a substantial effect on the voting behaviour of ethnoregionalist parties' followers. And yet, supposedly rational voters are guided in their electoral behaviour not merely 'retrospectively' by the substantive policies of the competing parties, but also 'prospectively' in relation to the parties' future political direction as foreshadowed in party programmes and public statements (Müller-Rommel 1990).

Those ethnoregionalist parties which function as promoters of ethnic and linguistic issues as well as issue positions on minority problems which larger, established parties are not able to take fully into consideration gain the highest electoral support. This is because many voters find rational expression for their views in the policy stands of these parties. Thus Levi and Hechter view votes for ethnoregionalist parties not as normal but as protest votes. Once the established parties have adopted the voters' demands for political change in their policy-making, voters will return to their traditional voting behaviour. This explains–according to Levi and Hechter–the cycles of high and low electoral support for ethnoregionalist parties in some countries over the past forty years. In sum, the rational choice approach predicts that ethnoregionalist parties are here to stay as long as the political issues of the ethnoregionalist movements followers remain on the political agenda and are not adopted by a major party.

A framework for analysis

Our framework tries to combine the aforementioned approaches for explaining the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties. The underlining theoretical assumption can be summarised as follows: cultural change in contemporary Europe has–among other things–a very strong impact on the rise of a 'collective

identity mood' among citizens. The contemporary rise of ethnoregionalism is not simply the re-emergence of old 'centre-periphery' conflicts which could largely be explained by economic inequalities. Rather, ethnoregionalism seems to be a territorial protest against established political institutions' behaviour. The new cultural mood is to some extent mobilised by ethnoregionalist parties and leads to their electoral success. The electoral strength of ethnoregionalist parties is, however, dependent upon the parties' capacity to accumulate various internal and external political resources.

The rise of a 'collective identity mood' in geopolitical territories

It has been pointed out in various empirical studies that the new wave of democratisation and mass participation in the 1970s and 1980s has changed the attitudes and values of many European citizens. Political protest against established political institutions and dissatisfaction with traditional political parties in government and opposition are increasing. This 'cultural change' (Inglehart 1987) in Western Europe has produced two streams of thought which have been labelled as 'silent revolution' (Inglehart 1977) and 'silent counterrevolution' (Ignazi 1992; for a discussion of these approaches see Müller-Rommel and Poguntke 1995).

Both cultural movements have become highly influential all over Western Europe during the past century and have strongly supported the rise of a 'collective identity mood' among citizens. It is well known that many adherents of ethnoregionalist parties in Europe are more critical of governmental and party politics than the average voter and identify themselves with one of the new cultural movements. However, the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties depends not so much on the pure existence of a new 'collective identity mood' among the mass public as on the organisational capacity of ethnoregionalist parties to mobilise this potential within the framework of national political opportunity structures.

Strategies to mobilise the 'collective identity mood'

The resource mobilisation in combination with the political opportunity approach provides valuable suggestions for analysing the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties. Both approaches are based on the assumption that the political power of social movements and political parties is highly dependent upon the capability of these groups to mobilise political resources. Tarrow (1994:16) has empirically operationalised this approach by distinguishing between internal and external resources available for mobilisation. Among the internal resources he summarises are leadership, organisation and group solidarity. The major external resources are access to the political system, stability of political alignments and presence of influential allies or supporters. In applying Tarrow's assumptions it is argued that the strength of ethnoregionalist parties' electoral success is dependent upon the capacity with which these parties might mobilise the following three internal and three external resources.

The *strength of party organisation* operationalised by party membership and followers is one major internal resource which might determine the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties. An open and flexible party organisation with a high possibility of formal political participation on all levels of the hierarchy should produce a high level of political mobilisation among members and followers.

The availability of skilled *political leaders* has been mentioned as a second internal resource in Sidney Tarrow's model. Although there is little agreement on what constitutes a skilled leader it seems plausible to argue that ethnoregionalist parties can mobilise their voters most effectively by introducing a peripheral party elite that has close relationships with both the political elite in the centre and the subordinate classes in the region.

Third, several ethnoregionalist parties have been plagued by dissension within their own ranks. Although it is still an open question in party research whether *factionalism* supports or hinders the electoral strength of political parties, the literature on the development of ethnoregionalist parties tends to empirically support the view that factionalism within ethnoregionalist parties produces organisational splits, a low level of mobilisation, and low electoral success for ethnoregionalist parties.

Aside from these three internal factors the approach focuses on three external resources which ethnoregionalist parties might mobilise. First, one can argue that *decentralised structures* of political decision-making provide better access to the political system in the peripheries than do centralised structures. The process of decentralisation in decision-making is seen to be the essential precondition of meaningful participatory opportunity at all levels of the party organisation, because it distributes power to more units and makes politics more transparent and hence intelligible. The degree of neocorporatism, for instance, taken as an indicator for centralised decision-making, is linked to the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties. In countries with a medium degree of corporatism (Belgium and Finland) the electoral results for ethnoregionalist parties are comparably lower than in countries with weak neocorporatist structures (Italy, Spain, Great Britain).

Second, major structures of European *party systems* do not correspond with the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties. For instance, the polarisation index, which is highly sensitive to the ideological distance between the political parties as well as the strength of electoral support for extremist parties, cannot explain why ethnoregionalist parties receive more votes in Great Britain, Spain and Italy than in Belgium and Finland. In addition, volatility among the electorate, measured by the Pedersens index (1983), also does not differ significantly between countries with good and poor electoral results for ethnoregionalist parties.

Yet the resource mobilisation approach predicts that the stability of political alignments in a party system has an impact on the mobilisation capacities of political movements and parties. In systems with stable political alignments ethnoregionalist parties find it more difficult to mobilise voters for their party policies than in

dealigning party systems. In many Western European countries, one can observe a 'new politics' realignment which means that 'new politics' issues divide the voters along a new cleavage dimension. At the same time a 'regionalist' dealignment becomes apparent in some European party systems for basically two reasons. First, the major governing and opposition parties were forced to manage a national economic crisis with its subsequent increase in unemployment rates. In order to fight the decreasing economic growth most political decision-making processes were centralised. Therefore, the issues of decentralisation and increased autonomy for the regions, which were brought up by some ethnoregionalist parties, have not figured prominently in the established parties' policy stands.

Second, the hierarchical, bureaucratic organisational structure and 'catch-all' character of most established parties have made it almost impossible for followers of regionalist movements to implement any major policy change in a short period of time. By and large, Michels's classic analysis of the 'iron law of oligarchy' still contains much truth about the internal life of major established political parties in contemporary Europe (Koelble 1991). The negative experiences of the regionalist groups with the established political parties, as well as the perceived lack of responsiveness of other national political institutions in coming to grips with the policy approaches of ethnoregionalist parties, became major reasons for their electoral success.

A final external resource which might effectively be mobilised by political parties is the presence of *influential allies*. For ethnoregionalist parties it is extremely important to maintain close contacts with the various regionalist movements. In fact, ethnoregionalist parties often give assurance to adherents of ethnic or linguistic groups that they are doing something about the causes of their discontent on the parliamentary level. As such, ethnoregionalist parties might mobilise many followers of minority groups by making it possible for them to find rational expression for their views at the ballot box.

Overall, the assumptions formulated above about the reasons for ethnoregionalist parties' electoral success are tentative rather than definite. They need to be tested against empirical evidence.

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3

THE *VOLKSUNIE* AND THE DILEMMA BETWEEN POLICY SUCCESS AND ELECTORAL SURVIVAL IN FLANDERS

Lieven De Winter

Among the three Belgian regionalist parties, the *Volksunie* (VU, People's Union) is probably the one most relevant to comparative research as this party represents the political expression of the oldest regionalist movement in Belgium, and the first one to be successful. To some extent, the electoral success of the VU stimulated regionalist movements in the two other regions of the country. Of the three regionalist parties, the VU has probably also had the largest impact in terms of the implementation of its policies and on the political system. Finally, the VU is a typical example of a 'mature' regionalist party that has become a victim of its own success.

In order to explain the electoral, office and policy success of the VU, we will not only examine its programmatic and organisational features, but also make comparisons with the VU's main competitors. These are the 'traditional' parties in Flanders, i.e. the Christian-Democratic CVP (Christian People's Party), the SP (Socialist Party), and the Liberal PVV (Party for Progress and Freedom).

Historical background of the Flemish nationalist movement

For the theories on the emergence and success of regionalist parties (Hooghe 1992), the Belgian case is particularly interesting. In contrast to most other 'classical' cases of regionalism, the Flemish nationalist movement has managed to reverse the initial centre and periphery positions of regions and ethnic groups.

From its creation in 1830, the Belgian state was ethnically mixed, with a Flemish community in the north and a French-speaking Walloon community in the south. Until the seventeenth century, Flanders was a prosperous region, but then it started to decline economically and culturally. By 1830, it had practically no elites who were integrated culturally with the Flemish people and identified with the Flemish community. In fact, the Belgian independence movement resulted

from an alliance between different groups of the French-speaking elites: aristocracy, gentry, provincial bourgeoisie and an emergent industrial bourgeoisie in the growing urban centres.

The new state was governed by a French-speaking elite. As Flanders was a poor, agricultural region, while Wallonia became the first industrialised region of the Continent, the hegemony of the French culture was overwhelming. In spite of a Flemish demographic majority (60 per cent), the official language (used in administration, military affairs, politics, the legal system, education and the media) was French. Brussels, chosen as the administrative and political capital, soon also became its financial centre. Through this French hegemony Brussels—a former Flemish city situated in Flemish territory—slowly became a predominantly French-speaking city, and the centre of the new state. Wallonia was linked to this centre through its industrial development and language, while Flanders was in all respects peripheral.

Yet this centre-periphery definition slowly changed, and today has been almost entirely reversed, as a result of socio-economic structural changes and the reaction of the Flemish nationalist movement. Opposition grew against the Francophone nature of the Belgian state and society. First, recognition of Dutch as an official language was demanded and received. Eventually, Dutch became the only official language in Flanders. Hence the Frenchification of the region was halted (with the exception of Brussels).[1] Other measures guaranteeing a fair(er) representation of Flemings in the state apparatus were taken. Finally, demands for cultural and political 'autonomy' were voiced.

Conversely, Wallonia declined in economic terms after the Second World War. While the post-war industrialisation of Flanders was based on small and medium-sized enterprises and multinationals, Wallonia's economy was based on heavy industry, and slowly started to de-industrialise. The Flemish elites who were slowly integrated into the Belgian state also tried to direct economic policy towards an even greater expansion of Flanders. This political and economic emancipation of Flanders forced the Walloons to react against eventual political and economic subordination, and to voice demands for more autonomy in determining socio-economic policy.

By the 1960s the centre-periphery situation had changed drastically. Linguistically, Dutch had acquired equal footing with French. Politically, owing to their growing demographic importance and a fairer electoral system, the Flemish voters and their representatives in Parliament constituted also a large political majority.[2] Economically, Flanders was in full expansion, while the economy of Wallonia declined.

Electoral performances of Flemish nationalist parties

Flemish nationalism was expressed for the first time in a genuine nationalist party only after the First World War and the introduction of universal suffrage with proportional representation in 1919, when the *Frontpartij* won five seats in

Parliament with 2.6 per cent of the national vote. Its programme became more radical during the 1920s and 1930s. This caused the more moderate nationalists to leave the party and strive–with some success–for the Flemish cause within the traditional parties.

In the 1930s, the main Flemish nationalist party was the VNV (Flemish National Union), a radical separatist, explicitly Catholic party, sympathising with national socialism. At the 1936 general election, it captured 10 per cent of the Flemish vote, but at the 1939 election suffered a decline. Eventually, the VNV collaborated with the Nazis, who recognised it as the only representative of the Flemish people. This open collaboration of a faction of the Flemish nationalist movement with the German occupants would seriously compromise the political re-emergence of a Flemish nationalism in the post-war period.

At the 1949 general election, the *Vlaamse Concentrate* (Flemish Concentration) put up candidate lists but did not win any seats. It was predominantly an 'antirepression' party, without a genuine Flemish nationalist programme. In 1954, the *Christelijke Vlaamse Volksunie* (Christian Flemish People's Union) was founded. It got one MP elected at the 1954 and 1958 elections. In the 1960s, the party–now called just *Volksunie*–grew considerably, and reached its peak in 1971, with 11 per cent of the national vote, i.e. 18 per cent of the Flemish vote, its target electorate (see Tables 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). After this rather sudden success, the party stalled, and even declined slightly at the following elections of 1974 and 1977. Its first experience of governmental participation cost the party about one-third of its voters in 1978. But surprisingly it managed to recuperate most of its losses in the following elections in 1981. Since then, the trend has been gradually downwards. At the most recent general election, that of 1995, the VU captured only 4.7 per cent of the national vote.

As the VU did not present lists of candidates in the French-speaking constituencies, its share of the Flemish target electorate represents a more exact image of its electoral performance. Measured in this way, at the peak of its success (1971) the VU was supported by one out of five Flemish voters. If we compare the VU's regional scores in relative terms with the strength of the major parties, Table 3.3 shows that between 1968 and 1977, the VU performance approached or surpassed that of the third party, the Flemish Liberals.

The VU generally scored worse in local than in general elections (Ackaert 1995).[3] At the 1976 elections it obtained only 14.7 per cent of the Flemish vote (in the communes in which VU candidates were presented), in 1982 14.4 per cent, in 1988 11.6 per cent and in 1994 9.1 per cent. The CVP always scored better at the local level, so all other parties did worse at that level. The VU presented fewer candidate lists (in only six out of ten communes) than the traditional parties. In some communes it did not manage to put up a local section sufficiently strong to attract candidates and run a campaign. In many communes, VU candidates campaigned under a non-partisan ticket (or an electoral coalition), in order to appeal to a wider audience. Given these structural constraints, the VU did not score at all badly at this level.

Table 3.1 Results of Belgian parties in the post-war period for the elections of the House of Representatives (as percentages of national vote)

Year	*CVP*	*PSC*	*BSP*	*PSB*	*PVV*	*PRL*	*FDF/RW*	*PCB*	*VU*	*Agalev*	*Ecolo*	*VB*	*UDRT*	*FN*	*Rossem*	*Other*
1946	42.5		31.6		8.9		—	12.3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4.3
1949	43.6		29.8		15.3		—	7.5	2.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.9
1950	47.7		34.5		11.2		—	4.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.8
1954	41.1		37.3		12.1		—	3.6	2.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	3.5
1958	46.5		35.8		11.0		—	1.9	2.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.8
1961	41.5		36.7		12.3		—	3.1	3.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.9
1965	34.5		28.3		21.6		2.2	4.6	6.7	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.1
1968	22.3	9.4	28.0		20.9		5.9	3.3	9.8	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.1
1971	21.9	8.2	27.2		9.5	7.2	11.4	3.0	11.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.7
1974	23.3	9.1	26.7		10.4	6.0	10.9	3.2	10.2	—	—			—	—	0.2
1977	26.2	9.8	27.0		8.5	7.8	7.1	2.1	10.0	—	—			—	—	2.3
1978	26.1	10.1	12.4	13.0	10.4	6.0	7.3	3.3	7.0	—	—	1.4	0.9	—	—	3.0
1981	19.3	7.1	12.4	12.7	12.9	8.6	4.2	2.3	9.8	2.3	2.2	1.1	2.7	—	—	2.4
1985	21.3	8.0	14.6	13.8	10.7	10.2	1.2	1.2	7.9	3.7	2.5	1.4	1.2	—	—	2.3
1987	19.5	8.0	14.9	15.7	11.5	9.4	1.2	0.8	8.0	4.5	2.6	1.9	0.1	—	—	0.9
1991	16.8	7.7	12.0	13.5	12.0	8.1	1.1	0.1	5.9	4.9	5.1	6.6	—	1.0	3.2	2.0
1995	17.2	7.7	12.6	11.9	13.1		10.3[a]	—	4.7	4.4	4.0	7.8	—	2.3	—	3.4

[a]Since the 1995 election, the FDF has joined the PRL in a federation

Notes: CVP=Christian Democratic Party (Flemish); PSC=Christian Democratic Party (francophone); BSP=Belgische Socialistische Partij; PSB=Parti Socialiste Belge; PVV=Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang; PCB=Parti Communiste Belge

Table 3.2 Distribution of seats in the Belgian House of Representatives, 1946–91, by party

Year	CVP	PSC	PSB	BSP	PVV	PRL	PCB	VU	RW	FDF	Agalev	Ecolo	VB	UDRT	Other
1946	92		69		17		23								1
1949	105		66		29		12								
1950	108		77		20		7								
1954	95		86		25		4	1							1
1958	104		84		21		2	1							
1961	96		84		20		5	5							2
1965	77		64		48		6	12	2	3					
1968	50	19	59		47		5	20	5	7					
1971	47	20	61		20	14	5	21	14	10					
1974	50	22	59		21	12	4	22	13	9					
1977	56	24	62		17	16	2	20	5	10					
1978	57	25	32	26	22	15	4	14	4	11			1	1	
1981	43	18	34	26	28	24	2	20	2	6	2	2	1	3	
1985	49	20	35	32	22	24	0	16	0	3	4	5	1	1	
1987	43	18	40	32	25	23	0	16	0	3	6	3	2	0	
1991	39	18	35	28	26	20	0	10	0	3	7	10	12	0	4
1995	29	12	21	20	21	16*	0	5	0	2*	5	6	11	0	2

* Since the 1995 election, the FDF has joined the PRL in a federation

Table 3.3 Regional results of Glemish parties, 1958–95, for the elections to the House of Representatives (as percentages of the regional vote)[a]

Year	*CVP*	*(B)SP*	*PVV/VLD*	*VU*	*Agalev*	*VB*	*Other*[b]
1958	56.6	29.1	10.7	3.4	—	—	
1961	51.0	29.7	11.6	6.0	—	—	
1965	44.3	25.2	16.5	12.0	—	—	
1968	39.0	26.4	16.1	17.0	—	—	
1971	37.8	24.5	16.3	18.8	—	—	
1971	37.9	24.3	16.1	19.4	—	—	
1974	40.1	21.8	17.2	17.4	—	—	
1977	43.9	21.9	14.3	16.8	—	—	
1978	43.7	20.7	17.3	11.7	0.3	2.3	
1981	32.0	20.5	21.3	16.2	3.9	1.8	
1985	34.7	23.7	17.5	12.8	6.1	2.3	
1987	31.4	24.0	18.6	13.0	7.3	3.1	
1991	26.7	19.0	19.2	9.4	8.5	10.4	5.1
1995	28.7	21.0	22.0	7.8	7.4	13.1	—

Source: Van Den Daele (1968), Billiet and Matthijs (1990), and author's calculations.

Notes:

[a] Figures before 1971 include only the sixteen Flemish constituencies, and not the large semi-bilingual constituency of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde. Since 1971, most major parties have presented separate lists in the latter constituency. Since then, votes cast in the entire country can be divided accurately between those cast for Flemish lists, and those for francophone lists, and serve to enable the regional strength of each party to be calculated.

[b] 'Other' includes only the percentage score of parties that gained at least one seat in the House. This occurred only with the Rossem list (three seats in 1991)

Profile of the *Volksunie's* programme

During the VU's first ten years, its programme focused nearly exclusively on federalism and related issues.[4] It was gradually forced by its competitors to voice opinions on issues stemming from the other two traditional cleavages. It also managed to cash in on 'new politics' issues. Finally, growing governmental ambitions forced the party to draft a fully fledged programme defining a policy position on all salient issues. Hence by the 1970s the VU had grown from being a single-issue 'pressure' party into a multiple-issue party with a full governmental programme inspired by integral federalist principles.

Perceptions of the centre-periphery cleavage and reforms sought

In the party political expressions of the Flemish nationalist movement, moderate and radical objectives have 'cohabited'. While for tactical reasons more moderate claims have often dominated the VU's-agenda, once those were achieved, more radical ones were adopted.

Flemish nationalism started as a protectionist movement. However, in the interwar years, an important faction of the Flemish movement moved to an irredentist position, aiming at the creation of a Greater Netherlands. Another faction aimed at the absorption of Flanders into the Third Reich. Because of the protofascist nature of these factions, the defeat of fascism also meant the end of the irredentist option.

When the VU was created in 1954, it opted for a federal reorganisation of the unitary state, in which linguistic communities would acquire autonomy in cultural matters. In the 1980s, it moved to the confederal model. Currently, it is calling for complete Flemish independence and full membership of Flanders of the European Union.

Positions on the left-right cleavage

Owing to the conservative orientation of the first generation of party elites and rank and file, the VU tended towards the right or centre-right until the mid-1960s (Hearl 1987). As a result of the intake of a generation influenced by 'May '68' ideology, it moved in the 1970s to the centre-left, and defined itself as a 'socially progressive justice party'. During the 1980s, the VU gradually moved to a 'liberal-left' profile. However, the current party president, Bert Anciaux, radicalised the party programme towards the left and green spectrum of the Flemish political landscape, locating the VU somewhere between the Ecologists and the Socialists.

Denominational programme

Starting from an explicitly Catholic and morally conservative position in the early 1970s, the VU evolved to a moderate conservative position by the end of that decade. While being predominantly Catholic (as is true of other parts of the Flemish movement), the VU defended traditional Catholic values less fiercely than the Christian Democrats on moral issues like abortion and homosexuality (Van Den Bossche 1991). On education, traditionally the most salient issue of the denominational cleavage, it, like the CVP, defended equal treatment between state and private (i.e. Catholic) networks, but more recently it campaigned for an integrated 'pluralist' educational system. This 'less Catholic' position was basically due to the historical hostility of the Belgian Church towards Flemish nationalism. The higher Church hierarchy fiercely opposed it (preaching until 1958 that voting for Flemish nationalist parties was a grave sin), while the lower clergy were divided. This turned the VU into a Catholic but rather anti-clerical party.

New politics and anti-modernist issues

The VU was the first Belgian party to adopt new themes such as environmentalism,[5] concerns about the Third World and even anti-US imperialism. It paid particular attention to the development of a more democratic society: increasing opportunities for political participation, decentralisation, a 'new

political culture'. It criticised the basic features of the Belgian political system: *particratie,* with its clientelism, corruption, party patronage (De Winter 1996), 'pillarisation', neo corporatism and the monarchy.

As far as anti-modernist politics are concerned, like most ethnoregionalist parties the VU nurtured hostile feelings towards inhabitants of its region who identified with the centre or other regions. Once Flemish became the only official language in Flanders and the linguistic borders were fixed by the language laws of 1963, the VU became increasingly intolerant towards breaches of this division, especially in the Flemish communes around Brussels[6] and the problematic area of the Fourons. The propaganda against the Frenchification of these parts of Flanders, as well as the general and traditional propaganda directed against the predominance of Francophones in the Belgian state and against the socio-economic transfers between the north and the south, provoked feelings of xenophobia. These sentiments even facilitated the appeal of the extreme-right *Vlaams Blok,* which since its creation in 1978 has campaigned for 'Our Own People First'.

Nevertheless, the VU refused the *Vlaams Blok's* policy of forced return of migrants to their country of origin, and advocated measures to help assimilate migrants into Flemish public life and culture. Likewise, the VU refused the *Blok's* 'law and order' solutions to the problem of growing feelings of insecurity and called for the abolition of capital punishment. Some VU MPs have been the most outspoken defenders of the rights of prisoners and political refugees, and most recently also of prostitutes.

European integration

European integration has boosted the hopes of Flemish nationalists. While the VU was initially against European integration, its leadership became pro-European when they started to believe that Flanders could more easily achieve full independence yet still prosper economically and remain integrated in the international political community within the framework of a politically and economically united Europe. European integration, which is seen as weakening the Belgian state 'from above' by passing more competences to 'Brussels', will complement its weakening 'from below', through the ongoing process of federalisation. Therefore, the VU calls for a fully federal organisation based on regions and peoples, and not a Europe based on the national states.

Organisational features

Voters, members and activists

Surveys generally indicate that the VU initially scored better among male voters than among female ones, and noticeably better among the younger voters. Since the end

of the 1970s, the gender difference has disappeared, while by the end of the 1980s the VU had even become strongly underrepresented among the youngest voters (Delruelle-Vosswinkel 1984; Gaus and Van Der Voort 1992; ISPO–PIOP data 1995 elections). The VU became predominantly the party of the generation that was politically socialised in the 1960s and 1970s when linguistic issues were most salient. However, the 1995 election surveys shows that the VU is once again overrepresented among the young, while the 1960s and 1970s generation is underrepresented. Probably, this shift is due to the new Green-left line and nonconformist style of president Bert Anciaux, and defection of old-style Flemish nationalists to the *Vlaams Blok* and the traditional parties (ISPO-PIOP data 1995). While at first the VU was best represented among professionals and shopkeepers, it scored badly among workers. By 1981 its underrepresentation among workers was reversed to come to a clear overrepresentation, and the support of shopkeepers declined. The latest analyses indicate that high-status professions and the upper middle classes are again overrepresented (ISPO-PIOP data 1991 and 1995 elections).[7]

Surveys indicate that the average VU voter generally places him- or herself on the centre or centre-right, slightly to the left of the Christian Democrats and Liberals. This right-of-centre position contrasts with the direction of the current leadership (Claeys and Loeb-Mayer 1984; Gaus and Van Der Voort 1992; ISPO 1991, 1995).

Post-materialist concerns are dominant with a third of VU voters. This is three times higher than the national average (ISPO 1991 data). As far as motivations for the vote is concerned, the 1991 electoral survey indicates that about a third of people who voted VU claimed to do so for communitarian reasons, a motivation almost absent in the case of all other Flemish parties (Billiet, Swyngedouw and Carton 1992). In 1995 more than one out of five voted VU in support of Flemish independence, but other, more traditional concerns were predominant (unemployment, taxes, pension, security and corruption). The party appeals to its voters basically for reasons of principle and programme, as is the case for the other new-issue parties (the Greens and the *Vlaams Blok*). This 'programmatically voting' electorate is reflected in the fact that VU voters have enjoyed a higher level of education, have more than an average interest in politics and are more knowledgeable about it (Gaus and Van Der Voort 1992:177; Maddens and Dewachter 1993:144; ISPO data 1995).

Membership of the VU increased from 2,500 in 1960 to a peak of 53,000 in 1978 and then slowly declined to 43,000 in 1989 (Maes 1988). In its period of electoral strength (1971–87) about 10 per cent of VU voters were party members, which came close to the average for all Flemish parties. This was true in spite of the VU's relative inability to offer the benefits of patronage. This suggests that VU membership is motivated more by the party's programme than is the case for the traditional parties, where a considerable proportion of members join primarily in return for individualised patronage benefits.[8] The easily mobilisable membership in the VU constitutes a formidable asset for extraparliamentary political action.

Surveys indicate that among VU activists, in contrast to the voters[9], 36 per

cent situated themselves towards the left of the political spectrum, 36 per cent in the centre, and only 29 per cent on the right (Claeys and Loeb-Mayer 1984). This places the VU activists closer to the centre.

Party structure and functioning

Centralisation

The main components of the VU national party organisation are a national congress, a national council, and a national executive.[10] Until 1988, the Party Council was formally the most important body. It decides on all important matters not discussed by the National Congress, defines the party line and statutes, and elects and controls the president and vice-president(s), the national executive and top party cadre. It includes all chairpersons and some delegates of constituency and provincial parties, all MPs and national party cadres, and some delegates of the youth organisation (total about 150 members). It meets about once a month. In practice, it serves as a sounding-board for members of the party executive and ministers, whose points of view carry most weight (Bogaert 1993).

The Party Executive[11] is elected by the Party Council and implements the decisions of the latter. It usually meets once a week and is responsible for the daily leadership of the party and control of the party's finances, organisation and publications, and can take decisions on all urgent matters. Within this executive a Daily Board (comprising the president and secretary and some other top leaders) used to be responsible for the day-to-day leadership and met every week. The Daily Board was abolished in 1988.

Finally, the National Congress includes delegates of the 370 local branches, all members of the Party Council and all elected officials at the provincial and national level. It numbers about 1,200 members. It meets at least once a year to discuss current problems. In 1988 it formally became the party's 'highest organ', as has always been the case in the traditional mass parties. Since then, it has taken all final decisions within the party, including decisions concerning participation in government and fundamental ideological reorientation.[12]

As in other parties, the constituency committees of the VU draw up candidate lists that must be approved by a constituency congress composed of delegates of local branches. These lists must then be approved by the Party Council, which can - unlike in other parties–alter candidate lists by a simple majority vote, which is a more centralised procedure than in other parties.[13] In addition, it is also more hierarchical. Members do not have a direct say through a member poll, the method the traditional parties used (at least until the end of the 1960s) for selecting their candidates for general elections as a means by which all due-paying party members could participate (De Winter 1988). Too large a say for the rank and file could jeopardise attempts to open the party's ranks to new candidates of prominent status hitherto not involved in the party.

To summarise, the VU national leadership structure accords a relatively large

amount of power to national (and constituency) party office holders, and relatively less to the local activists or their delegates.[14] It seems that this smaller body of participants has a stronger say than in the traditional parties, where the party executive and the party president are predominant in the intra-party decision-making process, rather than the Council. This organisational model has probably facilitated the rapid expansion of the VU, as well as its smooth adaptation to its environment and the swift exploitation of new opportunities as they present themselves. Yet, it seems that this structure also caused decision-makers to lose touch with ordinary members and voters.

Leadership

Unlike in most traditional parties, the Party Council, not the National Congress or the ordinary members, selects the VU's president, who holds office for a 3-year term (Sels 1984; De Winter 1993). A president cannot become a cabinet member during the normal term of mandate. This should prevent presidents with ministerial ambitions from manoeuvring the party into taking part in government for the sake purely of personal ambitions to hold office. As in the traditional parties, the same individual cannot hold simultaneously the position of national party secretary and treasurer, and that of leader of the parliamentary party (since 1974). Contrary to practice in other parties, until 1974 the party president was also the leader of the parliamentary group in the House of Representatives.

In its forty years of history, the VU has had only six presidents: Walter Couvreur (1954–5), Frans Van der Elst (1955–75), Hugo Schiltz (1973–9), Vic Anciaux (1979–86), Jaak Gabriels (1986–92) and Bert Anciaux (since 1992). Couvreur stepped aside after one year. His successor, Van der Elst, remained in office for twenty years. His charismatic leadership style managed to maintain cohesion between the old core of nationalist puritans and the consecutive waves of newcomers. While his reappointment was never openly contested by a challenger, all later presidents had to cope with serious competition, at least at the moment of their first election. Once Van der Elst stepped aside, no leader was able to supersede factional conflicts. Schiltz and Gabriels were challenged every time, even as incumbents. In most contested elections, two or more voting rounds were needed, indicating that competition was real and fierce.

Factionalism

In the 1970s, three ideological tendencies of about equal strength played a vital role in party life (Van Den Bossche 1991). The oldest tendency, predominant in the 1950s and 1960s, comprised the hard-core conservative nationalists, who wished the party to remain pure, not compromise itself by joining government, and pay attention only to linguistic-federalist issues. The rapid expansion of the party in the 1960s gradually attracted politicians with a different profile, i.e. left-liberal radicals and participationists. The latter believed that the merit of the

uncompromising opposition strategy had reached its limits, and that, in order to affect policy, the party had to become *regierungsfähig* and therefore be willing to accept compromises in power. On other issues, they could be qualified 'left-liberal', opting for a non-conformist party that would pay attention, apart from to traditional Flemish themes, to post-materialist issues.

In the 1970s, on major questions (participation in the government party programme and the election of the party president) decisions were taken along factional lines, usually the last two tendencies joining forces against the first one. This period of pronounced factional competition corresponds to a stalling of the VU's electoral scores, and to its first defeat.

However, during the 1980s, the VU lost most members of its extreme wing (extreme rightists and separatists) to the *Vlaams Blok,* while at the beginning of the 1990s another tendency emerged, led by the acting president Gabriels, favouring a merger between the party and the Flemish Liberals. The current president is supported by the progressives and, owing to his anti-participationist rhetoric, by the remaining hard-line nationalists.[15]

Party finance

The VU receives state subsidies according to the size of its parliamentary group, and recently also according to the number of votes obtained at the last elections. Other sources of income traditionally include members' fees, and tax-deductible gifts from individuals, organisations and enterprises. The VU received in the 1985–91 period only slightly less in such gifts than the CVP, the largest party and the one that received most in gifts. This strong financial position is surprising, since the VU only rarely participated in government, and therefore has less patronage to offer to enterprises in terms of public contracts. Unlike those of other parties, the party income and expenditures of the VU have always been quite transparent.

Estimates of campaign expenditures indicate that in the period 1977–85 the VU spent on its parliamentary campaigns about half as much as did the largest party, the CVP, and about two-thirds as much as the SP and VLD (Flemish Liberals and Democrats) (Hooghe, Verminck and Dewachter 1987). In 1991, its campaign costs amounted to about 80 per cent of those of the traditional parties. Thus, the VU usually managed to spend, and correspondingly to raise financial resources, disproportionally in comparison to its electoral strength. Most of this income was spent on professionally managed electoral campaigns.

Media relations

The VU has never had a newspaper of its own, unlike the traditional parties, which until recently could count on the support of one or more papers belonging to their 'pillar'.[16] It tried to capture media attention through spectacular actions and public demonstrations. Its leaders could also often count on the implicit

support of the main Catholic newspapers, and more in particular from their chief editorialists, who were very sympathetic to the Flemish nationalist cause.

Strategies

Whereas its pre-war predecessors (the VNV and the *Verdinaso*) followed a clear anti-system strategy, rejecting the democratic (non-violent) rules of the game, the strategy of the VU combined tribune and governmental strategy (Seiler 1982).

Tribune strategies

Tribune strategies characterise parties that adhere to the democratic rules of the game, but prefer to exert pressure on policies only from opposition, within the traditional parliamentary arena as well as outside parliament. In the extraparliamentary arena(s), a wide variety of party actors can be involved. Because of the lack of data for other actors, the focus of analysis will be on behaviour of the VU MPs.

Parliamentary strategies

The VU tended to focus its attention and activities on the parliamentary arena, launching new ideas, politicising new issues and fighting the policies of the traditional parties. Several analyses (Goossens 1976; Deweerdt 1978; De Winter 1992) indicate that VU MPs were more active than the members of the traditional parties with regard to participation in debate, activities aimed at controlling the government, and initiation and amendment of legislation.

As far as maximising influence through vote trading is concerned, the few existing studies indicate that in the period 1961–5, the VU—while in opposition—supported the government in about half of the votes taken (Langerwerf 1980). However, data for 1985 show that support was given in only one out of five cases (Verminck 1986). As far as institutional reform is concerned, the VU in opposition did not always support reforms. When it was included as a partner in government (as in 1988) it extended support. Yet the 1993 constitutional reform was also supported by the VU, in spite of its opposition status, in return for the accommodation of some of its demands.

Extraparliamentary strategies

Volksunie MPs have also been more active in contacting the media than MPs of traditional parties and therefore have managed to attract more media attention. They also spend more time on contacts with pressure groups and on constituency and local party work. As their party organisation has usually been less developed at the local and constituency level, MPs are more expected to act as the motor of local and constituency party life. Being MPs of a small party, they also have to

take up more responsibilities at the national party level and figure more often as spokesmen of their party at meetings and debates (De Winter 1992).

The VU has made intensive use of extraparliamentary means of political opposition, especially in the period of its electoral breakthrough. Of all the street demonstrations organised by political parties in the period 1960–7, 61 per cent were organised by the VU (Smits 1984)!

VU MPs are also most active in nurturing good contacts and in exercising leadership functions within the organisations of the Flemish movement (De Winter 1992), of which the *Volksunie* is one of the political exponents. Apart from the Flemish cultural organisations affiliated with the three 'pillars',[17] a large number of huge and non-'pillarised' organisations operate as militant defenders and guardians of the 'Flemish cause'.[18]

VU MPs are active case-workers and serve more than 1,000 individuals a year, which is still less than half the number helped by their colleagues in the traditional parties (De Winter 1992). This underactivity is related to the party's lack of patronage resources rather than to a basic hostility towards case-work. Although the VU has always been critical about the party politicisation of public services in Belgium, when in government the party behaves much like a traditional party, and it did not refrain from using its share of promotions of higher civil servants.

Government participation strategies

The VU attempted at different moments of its history to try to implement its policies through direct involvement in the command posts of the state apparatus.[19] In 1974, the centre-right Tindemans I cabinet invited the three regionalist parties to join in order to implement the reforms announced in the 1970 constitutional reform.

In 1977, the VU, together with the *Front Démocratique des Francophones* (FDF), for the first time joined the centre-left Tindemans IV government, having agreed on an ambitious programme aiming at a profound regionalisation of the unitary state. This unsuccessful first experience, which lasted only a year and was heavily punished by the electorate in 1978, kept the VU out of governments until 1988.

In 1988, the VU joined the centre-left Martens VIII government. It supported the government for more than three years, and saw the voting and implementation of the first two stages of the institutional reform. The reform was never completed, however, as the VU eventually withdrew from the government, owing to internal conflict over arms sales to the Middle East.

External determinants of the electoral success of the *Volksunie*

Apart from its organisational strength (in terms of membership, quality and structure of leadership, financial resources, factionalism), the success of the VU

has been determined by external structural opportunities and constraints, and a number of conjunctural opportunities arising from the course of events.

Structural strength of Flemish nationalism

In Flanders, the feelings of belonging towards the nation-state are traditionally weaker than in the other regions of the country. In the period 1975–86, on average more than half the inhabitants of Wallonia and Brussels defined themselves primarily as 'Belgians', but only 35 per cent of the Flemings did so, with 39 per cent seeing themselves first as Flemings. However, since 1986 Belgicist feelings have become increasingly predominant (De Winter and Frognier 1997).

The relatively high degree of organisation of the Flemish people into social clubs, social movements, pressure groups and institutions that act as agencies of cultural reproduction of regionalist feelings undoubtedly had a strong impact on the creation of this Flemish identity. The extent to which the VU's success is determined by this strong regionalist identity is less clear. The first identity these agencies reproduce is that of the 'pillar'. The Flemish nationalists have never managed to create their own 'pillar' organisations, which would have boosted Flemish nationalist feelings even more.

Still, until the beginning of the 1970s, most non-'pillarised' Flemish nationalist organisations considered the VU their sole or major representative on the political scene, and felt that the positions defended by the VU closely corresponded to their own. This 'honeymoon period' between the VU and the Flemish movement came to an end in the mid-1970s, when the Christian Democrat party split, and the Flemish Christian Democrats (CVP) started to take a more radical position on Flemish issues. In 1977–8, the VU and the Flemish movement nearly came to an open war, as most Flemish nationalist organisations rejected the Egmont pact, the governmental programme supported and actively defended by the VU in office. In the 1980s the relationship was lukewarm, and undoubtedly the VU had by then lost monopoly of the movement's political representation. Currently the relationship has become rather unclear, especially because the Flemish movement itself has lost its impact on political agenda-setting, partially as a result of the current lack of consensus between these organisations (due to an open conflict between moderates and *Vlaams Blok* supporters) and the progress made towards a federal state. In fact, the 'Flemish political agenda' is now predominantly set by the traditional political parties and their leaders, rather than by the Flemish nationalist organisations.

Opportunities arising from events

The breakthrough of the VU came at a moment when the ideological links between the Catholic population and the Church began to weaken (after the Second Vatican Council), and when traditional conflicts between the Catholics and non-believers lost importance, as a result of the 'rapprochement' pursued

by the political elites after the conclusion of the so-called school pact (1958). And the economic boom of the Golden Sixties reduced tensions between workers and other social classes. Therefore, as the hitherto two main cleavages lost their predominance, the political agenda became more open to issues stemming from the centre-periphery cleavage.

In addition, the VU managed to exploit a number of conjunctural issues. The splitting of the Catholic University of Louvain came as a welcome present, especially since the pro-Flemish politicians in the unitary CVP-PSC could not capitalise upon this issue given the strong opposition of the French-speaking Catholics to this split. The closing down of coal mines in the Limburg province was also successfully exploited, as the VU criticised the government for not closing down mines in Wallonia that were even more unprofitable. Hence the VU could profile itself as a party with a 'social conscience'. Finally, the economic difficulties since the mid-1970s have made public resources more scarce, causing the socio-economic transfers (in terms of social security, public investments and subsidies to private enterprises) between the more affluent Flanders and the poorer Wallonia to become an important issue on the political agenda.

The VU's electoral success also occurred in a period in which no other significant protest parties competed for the votes of those who were discontented with traditional politics. The decline of the VU which started at the end of the 1970s, correlates with the emergence of the Greens and the *Vlaams Blok* in Flanders. The VU lost many left-wing or progressive protest voters to the Greens, and right-wing 'anti-system' voters and nationalist hard-liners to the *Vlaams Blok*.

The electoral growth of the VU occurred when the traditional parties were still unitary actors, trying to arrive at compromises within their ranks between their Flemish and French-speaking wings. After the CVP-PSC split in 1968 and the PVV-PLP in 1971 into a Flemish and a Francophone Christian Democrat party and a Flemish and a francophone Liberal party respectively, the electoral progress of the VU stalled, as the Flemish Liberals and Christian Democrats could subsequently take up policy positions that were much more in tune with Flemish public opinion. Therefore, the electoral success of the VU in the 1960s is clearly related to the (temporary) incapacity of the traditional parties to respond properly to regionalist and linguistic demands.

Finally, in the 1960s the Walloon and Brussels French-speaking movements started scoring well electorally and radicalised the demands of the French-speaking population, and this was evidently interpreted in Flanders as a menace to Flemish interests. This further boosted the fortunes of the VU, the most vigorous defender of Flemish interests.

Trade-offs between electoral, policy and office success

The VU, as well as the *Rassemblement Wallon* (RW), was invited to participate in the government only when the traditional parties in power decided to reform the

constitution, and needed the support of a surplus party to reach the required two-thirds majority in both houses. Still, this was not the only possible coalition formula. In fact, two of the four major constitutional reforms (1970, 1980) were carried through without regionalist parties in government, with the support of the three traditional political families. A tripartite coalition of the traditional parties was always possible. The VU, like the FDF and RW, gained governmental office when the traditional parties judged such inclusion to represent the politically most preferable coalition formula capable of giving a majority on the unavoidable question of constitutional reform. Most likely regionalist parties were preferred as coalition partners over the third traditional party family, because they were less demanding partners with regard to other salient issues, especially the socio-economic ones.

The inclusion of federalist parties could also be interpreted as a deliberate strategy on the part of the traditional parties to break the electoral strength of these parties. In fact, the RW and the VU suffered badly from their participation in government. First, these parties did not manage to reform the state as fast and profoundly as they had been promised would be the case, which was the manifest reason for their participation. Second, for the first time in their existence, they had to make and defend coalition compromises between Flemish and Francophone politicians, which blemished their radical, puritan profile. Third, they had to define a clear position and accept policies on other (socio-economic) matters that disaffected some sectors of their electorate.

Hence, every time the VU was invited by other parties to govern, it seized the opportunity. Therefore, in terms of office-seeking and coalition behaviour, the VU behaved quite like the traditional parties, but without ever having had their power of initiative, freedom of manoeuvre or power of blackmail. In fact, after the VU, the RW and the FDF decided to leave the government (or were repulsed), the remaining parties just went on without them.

The VU's main policy achievement clearly lies in the transformation of Belgium from a unitary into a strongly federalised state, which constituted the core of its original programme. Yet research indicates that on a wide variety of other issues, VU views carried more weight than those of other opposition parties (Dewachter, De Graeve-Lismont and Tegenbos 1975).

This remarkable policy success is due to its role as 'whip party'. The VU managed as a small party, through menacing the electoral power of a large party, (i.e. the CVP, in which a substantial faction is sympathetic to the ideas of the whip party), to force the latter to take the VU's policy proposals into account. The realisation of these proposals was accomplished by the CVP, since the VU did not want or was not invited to take up governmental responsibility. In addition, the VU enhanced its power as opposition party by engaging strongly in extraparliamentary actions, therefore forcing public policy-makers to respond to the demands of 'the street'.

Hence, the VU's policy success cannot be explained by the short duration of its government participation, nor by strategic portfolio-holding while it was in

office. In fact, the VU never managed to hold those portfolios that were crucial to its interest (De Winter, Timmermans and Dumont 1998). In addition, during its first period in office (1977–8) the VU ministerial delegation lacked political skills and co-ordination. Yet during 1988–91 it allocated the portfolio of vice-PM and Budget to Hugo Schiltz, the party's most skilful and experienced politician. This time, the impact on cabinet decision-making was more important, and clearly not restricted to policies related to his departmental competences or linguistic/regional issues (Dewachter and Das 1991). As vice-PM and Minister of Budget, he could have his say on any policy matter relevant for his party.

Conclusion: the VU and the difficult trade-offs between policy, offices and votes

The history of the VU illustrates well the variety of dilemmas and trade-offs between electoral success, offices and policies that *regierungsfähige* regionalist parties (like the *Lega Nord*, CiU and PNV) are confronted with. A refusal to participate in government when the opportunity arises could be punished electorally, taken as indicating a lack of responsibility when progress with regard to the implementation of the regionalist agenda is within reach. On the other hand, government participation, in spite of its office rewards and policy output potential, can damage a single-issue party in two ways. If the policy rewards are insignificant, the party's rank and file can revolt and sanction a strategy apparently beneficial only to leaders aspiring to ministerial office. In 1978, the VU fell victim to this trap. If, on the other hand, the policy pay-offs are significant, then the party can lose its *raison d'être*. Currently the VU has become more and more a victim of its latest policy success, the 1993 constitutional reform that implemented the bulk of the VU's original programme for federalism. Voters, activists and politicians who saw the VU merely as a Flemish nationalist party now turn to other parties and issues. It came as no surprise that in 1993 a former VU vice-president launched the idea that all VU members and politicians should be allowed to redefine their adherence, and eventually be free to join other parties. The party *éminence grise* Schiltz called for a rapid evaluation of the new party line, and he believed that if the opinion polls failed to indicate a recovery, the party should collectively decide whether to continue, disappear or merge with another party.

Hence the VU has recently tried a variety of solutions to this dilemma. One of its strategies has been the search for closer contacts, and even the possibility of a merger with other Flemish parties. Party president, Jaak Gabriels had talks with the Flemish Liberals, but was recalled by other members of the party hierarchy. Eventually, he and several other prominent MPs did join the Flemish Liberals, when the latter transformed their party into the Flemish Liberals and Democrats-Party of the Citizen. The VU leadership countered this drain by organising an 'I stay' campaign aimed at all its members asking them to publicly confirm their loyalty to the party. For a year, secret talks were also conducted with the Christian Democrats. The *Vlaams Blok* simultaneously launched a 'welcome home' campaign,

trying to make right-wing members and nationalists defect from the VU and work within the VB around nationalist issues. The left wing of the political spectrum was also courted. Maurits Coppieters, the left-wing *éminence grise* of the VU, together with the most Flemish-feeling leader of the Socialists, launched a platform for a radical democratic project, trying to integrate Socialist, Ecologist and democratic-nationalist principles. It envisaged the foundation of one progressive political movement, including the Flemish Socialists, the VU, the Greens and the Christian workers' movement. Yet as this was perceived as an operation by the Socialists to expand their electoral recruitment basis, and given the strong attachment of each party to its own identity and organisation, the initiative remained at the level of intellectual discussion and search for practical co-operation on specific issues.[20]

The attempts to find a safe haven for the party were suspended by the results of the 1995 elections. Party president Anciaux said before the elections that the VU needed to win 300,000 votes (or 82 per cent of the disastrous 1991 score) in order for the party to survive as an independent actor. As this objective was reached, in spite of the numerous defections in the previous years, discussion about possible mergers ceased.

The poor chances of survival of the VU had an impact on most of the other Flemish parties. In order to receive a slice of the shrinking VU electorate, the traditional parties radicalised their Flemish profile. Some second-order leaders openly outbid the VU. The main leaders, however, remained loyal to the federal model in order not to upset the 'Belgicist' part of their electorate and not to disturb their Francophone partners, with whom they would in any case have to arrive at compromises in the current government and succeeding governments. So even in its death throes the VU is managing to further polarise the party system.

Another strategy to overcome the survival crisis was radicalisation. Since the 1991 defeat and the 1993 constitutional reforms, the VU added to its claims the splitting of parts of the social security system, the representation of Flanders in European and international organisations, and finally Flemish independence in the form of a confederal Belgium in which Flanders and Wallonia would jointly administer the bilingual Brussels region. This Flemish radicalisation, especially where non-nationalist issues are concerned, illustrates the desperate search for a new reason for existence, and a way to resist disintegration or take-over attempts by other parties. The next general elections (1999) will indicate whether the current strategy only delayed the demise of the party, or was a courageous choice during its lapse of self-confidence.

Notes

1 In the inter-war years Dutch was recognised as an official language in Belgium, and education in Flanders was now given in Dutch. The, 'linguistic laws' of 1963 constitute the final step in this process. The gallicisation has even been reversed as the elites in

Flanders have gradually become Dutch-speaking. Yet Brussels became more and more a Francophone city, a Francophone 'island' in Flanders, gradually expanding into the Flemish countryside. Therefore this issue remains on the agenda of the Flemish nationalist movement.

2 In 1890, Flemings represented 50 per cent of the Belgian population, Walloons 42 per cent and Bruxellois 8 per cent. In 1970, the figures were 65 per cent, 33 per cent and 11 per cent respectively (Frognier, Quevit and Stenbock 1982). For some time, this demographic predominance was blocked by the non-adaptation of the allocation of parliamentary seats to constituencies in accordance with the number of inhabitants.

3 At European elections the VU scores on the average a little less than it does at the national level, probably owing to the low profile of its European candidates. Unlike the lists of most traditional parties, the VU's list is headed by its incumbent MEP(s) rather than the party's eyecatchers in national politics (Ackaert, De Winter and Swyngedouw 1996).

4 For information concerning the evolution of the VU's programme, I have relied on the analyses of Viaene (1972), Kuijpers (1986), Moyaert (1986), Seynaeve (1989), T'Sijen (1992), Bogaert (1993) and Govaert (1993), and on newspaper reports for the post-1993 period.

5 The VU held a congress on environmental issues as early as 1968! The 1974 manifesto focused on green issues and a 'clean' democracy. The 1987 election manifesto advocated a stop to the expansion of nuclear plants and nuclear waste, and the promotion of the use of natural gas and lead-free petrol.

6 Owing to the depopulation of the inner cities, the Flemish communes around Brussels attracted more and more affluent Francophones, up to the point where they became a demographic, cultural, economic and political majority. More recently, this problem has been aggravated by the influx of wealthy EU migrants working in Brussels.

7 The most recent analysis of the VU electorate dates from the 1991 general elections. This multivariate analysis shows that the VU is overrepresented among the voters with high professional status and who have had higher education, and among regular church practitioners (Swyngedouw *et al.* 1993). As far as income is concerned, the VU scores better in the higher echelons (Gaus and Van Der Voort 1992).

8 According to an internal survey, 36 per cent of the members are female, and 86 per cent are Catholic, of whom 34.5 per cent are regular churchgoers (VU 1984).

9 In 1991 the VU counted 3,500 party officers, and in 1992 2,900. According to Moors (1993) nearly all active party members also occupy party offices, which points to difficulties in developing or maintaining a set of activists situated between the mere party member and the party office-holder. The few genuine militants do not seem to exert much of an influence on decision-making within their local party and only execute practical tasks.

10 Parallel party organisations include the *VU-Jongeren* (party youth organisation), the party research centre, the centre for training of party cadres, the association of public office-holders, and the institutes responsible for the party weekly and the party television and radio programmes.

11 Its composition varies over time, but usually it counted around twenty members, and included the party president and vice-president(s), the general secretary, six delegates of the Party Council, some delegates of the parliamentary parties, a representative of the youth organisation, and the persons responsible for party finance, organisation and propaganda.

12 The congress of 11–12 September 1993 which defined the new radical party programme, was exceptional in the sense that all members could attend and participate in the discussions and vote on the final decisions. On the original proposals, 1,600 amendments were introduced during the consultation phases in the constituencies, which were all published in the party's weekly.

13 Between 1973 and 1988, incumbents were automatically assigned the same place they held on the previous electoral list, unless two-thirds of the constituency congress voted otherwise. In other parties incumbents are not formally protected, and have to stand for reselection at the eve of each election.

14 This is probably due to the fact that at the subnational level, the constituency party is the most important and best-organised party level, rather than the local level (Bogaert 1993). In addition, an informal meeting of the presidents and secretaries of the constituency parties prepares the agenda for the party council. They are the main links between the national party and the other constituency and local party office holders.

15 However, by the end of the 1980s, the principle of governmental participation was no longer questioned by any faction. Hence, when the VU joined the government in 1988, only 7.7 per cent of the congress delegates voted against, which is definitely less than in 1977. Discussion continues, however, on the price to be paid in terms of policy concessions and votes. Hence, while he has questioned more strongly the participation of the VU in the Flemish regional government than his predecessor, Bert Anciaux's opposition to participation and policy compromises is 'more bark than bite'. After the 1995 regional elections, he tried in vain to keep his party in the centre-left coalition. As an opposition party in the national parliament, the VU participated in the negotiation on (and voted) the so-called Saint-Michel agreement, finalising the constitutional reforms on federalism (1993). Finally, one should not forget that Anciaux's father was until November 1997 a minister in the Brussels regional government.

16 The VU has a weekly magazine *Wij* (We) primarily intended for its members and sympathisers. It was promoted by local activists, who encouraged members and sympathisers to subscribe. As the number of subscriptions is far less than the number of members, clearly this publication does not reach all members (but only activists), let alone the wider public to which it intended to appeal.

17 The Catholic *Davidsfonds* (founded in 1875, around 71,000 members and 670 local sections), the Socialist *Vermeylenfonds* (founded in 1945, 6,000 members) and the Liberal *Willemsfonds* (founded in 1851, over 6,000 members). Membership figures refer to the beginning of the 1970s and are drawn from Deleu *et al.* (1975).

18 They include the *Ijzerbedevaartkomittee* (pacifist-nationalist pilgrimage organisation, founded in 1920, around 35,000 'pilgrims' each year), the *Algemeen Nationaal Zangfeest* (founded in 1948, organises a Flemish song festival drawing about 15,000 participants yearly), the *Vlaamse Toeristenbond-Vlaamse Automobilistenbond* (main tourist and automobile organisation founded respectively in 1922 and 1924, 192,813 members in 1974), the *Verbond van Vlaamse Oudstrijders* (veterans' organisation founded in 1917), the *Vlaamse Volksbeweging* (founded in 1956, pluralist political co-ordinating organisation, around 9,000 members in 1963), the *Taal Aktie Komitee* (linguistic action group, founded in 1972), and educational organisations such as *Stichting Lodewijk De Raet* and the *Dosfelinstituut* (Deleu *et al.* 1975).

19 The VU also participated in the regional executives created after the institutional reforms of 1980 (the Flemish Executive from 1981 to 1985, and 1988 to 1995 and the Brussels Regional Executive since 1989).

20 Given its swing to the left-Green side of the political spectrum, the VU now tries to focus on collaboration with the Greens on social, ecological and citizenship issues, in spite of the fact that the Greens are the least pro-Flemish party in Flanders.

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4

REGIONALIST PARTIES IN FRENCH-SPEAKING BELGIUM

The *Rassemblement Wallon* and the *Front Démocratique des Francophones*

Jo Buelens and Ruth Van Dyck

Introduction

According to Lipset and Rokkan (1967:13–14), the early waves of popular mobilisation in some countries 'may not have brought the territorial system to the brink of disruption but left an intractable heritage of territorial-cultural conflict', including 'the conflict between Flemings and Walloons in Belgium'. It is therefore not surprising that Belgium is often cited as one of the classic examples of societies in which the cleavage between interests of the centre and interests of the periphery caused the rise of regional movements and parties.

We shall deal with the two regionalist political parties on the Francophone side of the political system: the *Front Démocratique des Francophones* (FDF) and the *Rassemblement Wallon* (RW). A joint analysis is appropriate as both parties were a reaction against the threat coming from a Flemish population emancipated from its underprivileged position, and both gained considerable socio-economic and political power. Against the Flemish threat, the FDF and the RW formed a coalition in the national parliament from 1968 until 1981. However, their respective fate and successes differ substantially.

The *Rassemblement Wallon*

Historical origins

The *Rassemblement Wallon* was created in 1968. It was a union of the small political parties, associations and pressure groups that comprised the 'Walloon movement'. This regional movement favoured an autonomous Wallonia within a federal Belgian framework.[1] The creation of the RW was mainly a reaction against Wallonia's relative economic and political decline.

The role of president François Perin in the creation of the RW was crucial. He was the co-president of the *Parti Wallon* which was founded in 1965 as a merger of several small Walloonist parties. His charismatic leadership helped to pursuade the *Parti Wallon,* which had strong socialist roots, to seek expansion to the right of the Walloon political spectrum. Yet for a long time the consequent ideological heterogeneity of the party did not constitute a problem, given the electoral success of the RW: it very soon became the second party of Wallonia (see Table 4.1).

In 1965 the *Parti Wallon* obtained 3.3 per cent of the votes in Wallonia (two seats in the House of Representatives). In 1968 the RW gained 10.5 per cent (seven seats), and reached a maximum of 20.9 per cent in 1971 (fourteen seats). At that time only the Socialist Party received more votes in Wallonia. The first, unexpected reverse in 1974 (17.8 per cent, thirteen seats) was the turning-point, as the RW was no longer the second party in Wallonia.

In spite of the disapproval of the members (63 per cent were against) the party leaders entered government in June 1974, willing to accept any compromise to obtain greater autonomy for Wallonia. In 1976, after a long period of tension between activists and ministers, a split in the party became inevitable. The three ministers (including Perin) and most Francophone Liberals created the Walloon Liberal Party. What was left of the RW returned to its roots: a party with a strong socialist ideology and programme. This shift to the left was rejected by the electorate in 1977 (9.2 per cent, five seats) and 1978 (9.4 per cent, four seats). During this same period, the Belgian Socialist Party split into a Flemish and a French-speaking Socialist Party. The *Parti Socialiste* became the first defender of the Walloon cause. In 1980 the Walloon Green party *(Ecolo)* was founded and was joined by what remained of the 'new politics' members of the RW. The 1981 results (5.6 per cent, one seat) were disastrous. Though the RW was never officially dissolved, and many small parties and local lists would use the name in the 1980s, the RW no longer carried weight.

Table 4.1 Electoral results for the House of Representatives in Wallonia, 1965–85

Year	Socialists	Chr.- Dem	Liberals	Communists	RW	Greens
1965	35.7	23.5	25.5	10.5	3.3	—
1968	34.5	20.9	26.7	6.9	10.5	—
1971	34.4	20.5	17.6	5.8	20.9	—
1974	37.4	22.2	15.0	5.9	17.8	—
1977	39.0	25.2	18.8	5.5	9.2	—
1978	36.7	26.9	17.4	5.9	9.4	1.2
1981	36.2	19.6	21.7	4.2	5.5	6.1
1985	39.4	22.6	24.2	2.5	0.6	6.2

Profile of the party's programme

The centre-periphery cleavage and the institutional demands

In Belgium the centre-periphery cleavage is both a linguistic problem, opposing two language communities, and a regionalist problem, opposing the Dutch-speaking region of Flanders, the Francophone region of Wallonia and the bilingual region of Brussels. The RW claimed a high degree of (mainly economic) autonomy as this would protect Walloon interests against the central state, which was perceived as being dominated by the Flemings. The symbol of this central state was Brussels, the capital of Belgium. Although the Francophone community is by far the largest in the Brussels region (80–85 per cent), the *Bruxellois* saw the central state—allegedly dominated by Flemings—as a threat to their position both within Brussels and within the Belgian state. Yet the alliance between the RW, which stood for the defence of the economic interests of the Walloon region, and the Brussels FDF, which stood for the protection of the Francophone community and especially the *Bruxellois,* was not generally endorsed by the RW members. A common enemy (Flanders) was the catalyst to an uneasy alliance, based on divergent underlying interests. The FDF feared an alliance between Wallonia and Flanders, 'behind the back of Brussels'. So, after all the FDF-RW alliance was not an evident choice for the RW (as it was for the FDF), which could instead have opted for an autonomous Wallonia and the defence of the French language. The fact that this did not happen, in spite of the predominance of socio-economic problems, is due to the fact that Wallonia, with strong parochial feelings of belonging, lacked a common ethnocultural identity. So only anti-Flemish feelings were capable of uniting Walloons, which was also the attitude that boosted the success of the FDF.

Socio-economic policy

The Walloon region, with its coal mines and steel industry, was the first industrial region on the Continent. After World War I the decline of Walloon industry started. The RW suggested that one of the main reasons for the lack of new investment was the domination of the Flemings in the national government. The RW strongly believed in an economically active state, in which both private investors and public authority participate. At the regional level this policy could be sustained by measures that made the region attractive for investors and new factories.

The RW was based on different ideological backgrounds and a shared strong 'Walloon' or 'anti-Flemish' sentiment. Yet a Walloon 'mythology' barely existed, which made it difficult to mobilise people under this common denominator (Kesteloot 1993:37). Although at the beginning a majority of voters came from the left and the extreme left, for electoral reasons references to socialist ideology were hidden, and until 1976 Perin tried to keep his party in the centre of the left-right cleavage. Perin was strongly influenced by the French president Charles de Gaulle, who

believed that capitalism and socialism could be reconciled through *cogestion,* a system in which decisions are jointly taken by capital owners and workers.

'New politics' issues

The RW did certainly pay more attention to 'new politics' issues than the traditional parties. It propagated the enlargement of traditional civil rights with the right to work, to receive education, to enjoy a cultural life, the right of the unemployed to receive a minimum subsistence support. It defended consumer rights, women's rights, protection of the environment, grassroots democracy, etc. Even so, these new politics issues did not rank high on the party's agenda. In fact, some members were excluded from the RW for their criticism of the lack of internal democracy. A few years later, they founded *Ecolo* (Kitschelt and Hellemans 1990:43).

European and international issues

The RW opposed Belgium's membership of Benelux, because they felt that Dutch presence in this organisation would increase Flanders' influence. The RW was also hostile to both the USA and the USSR, and supported a free and independent Europe. Aware of the danger of a strong Germany or Great Britain within that structure, the RW always supported France, except for De Gaulle's vision on Europe. The RW called for a Europe based on the regions, not on nation-states.

Internal organisation

Sociodemographic and political background characteristics

Surveys revealed that 58.7 per cent of the RW voters considered themselves on the left of the ideological spectrum. In spite of the more leftist programme of the RW *vis-à-vis* the PS, on the left-right scale RW voters were situated to the right of the Socialists (Frognier and Goffart 1977:34–40; Claeys and Loeb-Mayer 1984:94–101).

In terms of Sociodemographic backgrounds, research indicated that the RW had the highest overrepresentation of male voters (60 per cent), young voters (48 per cent were under 40) and employees (32 per cent), and was well represented among white-collar workers (20 per cent) and the self-employed (17 per cent) (Delruelle, Evalenko and Fraeys 1970:49–52). It had less support among blue-collar workers (30 per cent), and negligible support among farmers (1.4 per cent). A 1979 survey revealed that the self-employed group in particular had become larger, in spite of the party's shift to the left (Frognier and Stenbock 1980). It also indicated that RW voters took particularly little interest in politics, did not decide to vote for the RW until the last moment, were highly volatile (36 per cent had voted for another party in the previous election), and voted RW predominantly for its defence of Walloon interests.

Maes (1988) estimated the number of party members (which the RW never declared) at 10,000 in the first period until 1976, declining to 7,000 at the beginning of the 1980s. Internal party surveys indicate that in 1970 their average age was 45, that the membership consisted of 17 per cent blue-collar workers, 26 per cent employees, 20 per cent members of the educational professions, 11 per cent self-employed, 10 per cent in the liberal professions, 7 per cent civil servants, 9 per cent other. Only 23 per cent were women, of whom 70 per cent were employed.

Perin was the charismatic leader who led the party from its founding in 1968 until 1976. He was a great orator, the 'thinker' and the creator of the RW ideology. Although his personal popularity was immense, he refused to exploit this position electorally, judging his message to be more important than his personal or his party's success. The party and its members were only means, not goals in themselves. When he abandoned the party in 1976, his successor Gendebien never managed to give the RW the prestige it had enjoyed under Perin. The programme shifted to the left, and the RW rhetoric for a more independent Wallonia was no longer successful, as by then the Francophone Socialists too had become fierce defenders of the Walloon cause.

Organisational structure

The organisational structure of the RW was based on the electoral constituencies. The local branches had considerable autonomy with respect to organisation, financial matters and propaganda. The statutes and the political programme of the party were fixed by the *Congrès général,* composed of 600 members, which also elected a president and a general secretary for two years. It created many internal committees on a wide variety of issues. Their purpose was to elaborate programmes to be submitted to the Congress.

The *Bureau exécutif* was composed of one member of each constituency, the president and the general secretary, those in charge of the internal party committees and MPs (who only had an advisory role). The day-to-day problems and the political line of the party journal were discussed here.[2]

The MPs had their own group, which, because of the electoral alliance, also included all FDF MPs. There was also a *Conseil général,* which dealt with the parties' common problems in national politics, counting an equal number of FDF and RW participants.

Leadership style, competition and turnover

Perin's personal influence was paramount. Despite the emphasis on internal democracy (many important decisions were preceded by a membership referendum) Perin behaved in an autocratic manner, by not acknowledging the results of such referenda. When the RW was in government, internal communication became problematic, as RW ministers were acting independently from the party organisation. The participation in the centre-right government

frustrated many party members who felt that their ministers were interested only in their own political career, instead of defending the party programme. Perin and his supporters did not believe in internal democracy. In fact, they wanted a party with more voters, but with fewer members, and therefore less interference.

Concerning candidate selection, the chairperson at the local level invited party members for candidacy. The inclusion and ranking of candidates on the final candidate list was decided by secret vote by all dues-paying members in a constituency primary. The regional party board could change that order, if the candidates approved.

Factionalism

Apart from regionalism and anti-Flemish attitudes, on all other issues a coherent vision was lacking. The party programme was literally a *rassemblement* (rally). It was a mixture of Socialist, Liberal and Christian Democratic elements.[3] It was a continuous compromise, held together by Perin's charisma.

Material resources

Most of the financial resources came from the state in the form of subsidies to parliamentary groups. After 1974 the party had a part-time secretary at its disposal, and no offices. The party magazine was not self-sufficient, which caused its demise after only a few years (in 1977).

Access to the media

The regionalist problem was constantly featured in the media from the 1960s on. As the RW was initially the only party to defend the Walloon cause, it gained good media coverage. Perin used his skill in public debates and media events whenever possible. Also a press release was distributed after nearly every party meeting.

The Front Démocratique des Francophones

Historical origin

Only a year after its creation in 1964, which was primarily triggered by the 1962–3 national language legislation on administrative and educational matters and by two preceding massive demonstrations by the Flemish movement in Brussels, the FDF was already labelled a 'phenomenon', something 'new' in ideological and organisational terms. It was a party (not a movement) composed of people with a different ideological background (liberals, socialists, Catholics) united by one common goal: the defence of the interests of the Francophone citizens of Brussels.

The electoral life of the FDF can be divided into four periods: a period of rapid rise (1965–71); a period during which the FDF became the largest party in

Brussels (1971–8); a period of sharp decline (1979–84), during which the party nevertheless managed to maintain its relative overall (Brussels) 'pole position'; and finally, since 1985, a period of relative stability in which the party has been pushed back to third position and thereby has been reduced to its initial size.

The period of rapid rise started with the first post-war critical general election (1965), in which the Socialists and Christian Democrats lost nearly a quarter of their votes to the regionalist newcomers (the FDF and the *Parti Wallon*) as well as the *Volksunie* and the Liberals. With 10 per cent of the votes in the Brussels electoral constituency, the FDF obtained three seats in the Chamber of Representatives. At the 1968 elections, which were dominated by the 'Louvain affair',[4] the FDF and the RW formed an electoral alliance that was to hold until 1981. The FDF almost doubled its votes (18.6 per cent, five seats). The 1970 municipal elections were held in the aftermath of a constitutional crisis concerning the state reform, in which Brussels played a pivotal role. The FDF secured 27.5 per cent of the total Brussels electorate (ranging from 12 per cent to 39 per cent in the nineteen communes) and became the first-ranked party in the Brussels region.[5] During

Table 4.2 Electoral results for the House of Representatives in the Burssels electoral district,[a] 1965–95

Party [b]	*Socialists*	*Chr. Dem.*	*Liberals*	*FDF*	*VU*	*Greens*	*Ext. Right*	*Other*
1965	26.2	19.6	33.5	10.0	2.2	—	—	8.4
1968	20.0	27.6	26.3	18.6	4.3	—	—	3.2
1971	20.7	20.1	16.0	34.5	5.6	—	—	3.0
1974	20.5	22.7	(5.9)	39.6[c]	5.9	—	—	5.4
1977	17.1	24.3	11.8	34.9	6.2	—	—	5.6
1978	16.2	24.1	10.2	35.4	3.6	1.8	1.6	7.2
1981	15.8	16.0	21.5	22.6	4.4	5.6	0.7	13.5
1985	19.8	17.3	30.6	10.9	3.4	6.5	1.0	9.2
1987	25.1	16.5	31.1	10.8	3.7	7.2	2.2	3.2
1991	18.4	15.5	27.1	11.9	2.8	11.1	9.6	3.6
1995	21.2	12.6	(2.8)	34.7[d]	1.2	11.4	11.3	4.7

Notes: [a] The territory of the electoral district of Brussels also comprises (parts of) adjacent Flemish municipalities (though with a substantial francophone population) as a result of which the share of the FDF votes is probably (a little) less than if the electoral district were to coincide exclusively with the territory of the nineteen Brussels municipalities

[b] The process of (linguistic and other) fragmentation in Brussels started in the Socialist Party in 1965, in the Christian Democratic Party in 1968 and in the Liberal Party in 1971. The shares of votes in this table are the totals of the different parties of the same ideological family (except for the FDF and the VU)

[c] In 1974 the FDF formed an alliance with the (smaller) Brussels Liberal Party (PLDP). The remaining 5.9 per cent is the total of the votes cast for the other Liberal lists

[d] The figure of 34.7 per cent is the joint share of the vote of the Francophone Liberal Party (the PRL) and the FDF. The remaining 2.8 per cent in this cell is the share of votes gained by the Flemish Liberal Party (the VLD)

the 1970s the FDF kept growing at both municipal (33.7 per cent in 1976) and general elections.

Unlike the RW, the FDF was not punished by the voters for its first participation in government, namely as part of the 1977–8 centre-left coalition (which also included the *Volksunie*). However, the party would pay dearly for its second participation (1979–80), when in 1980 the FDF ministers were dismissed from the centre-left coalition. At the second 'critical' election of 1981, the FDF lost one-third of its voters (22.6 per cent, seven seats). Yet unlike the RW, the FDF did not disappear from the political scene. Since 1985, its performance has consolidated at around 11–12 per cent of the Brussels votes.

Electoral evolution at the municipal level, the site of the FDF's strength, followed the evolution on the national level. While with 28.2 per cent at the 1982 municipal elections, the FDF remained the first-ranked party in Brussels, by 1988 its votes had halved (14.1 per cent), but eventually stabilised (13.2 per cent in 1994).[6] Although the FDF lost its pole position in most communes, the party managed to retain an important position in many local executives (Buelens and Deschouwer 1996:107).

In order to stop electoral decline, in the mid-1980s the FDF made fierce but unsuccessful attempts at inviting the major Francophone political parties to closer co-operation. This was especially important after a number of prominent FDF leaders had left the party and joined the ranks of the Liberals or Socialists. Eventually, in 1993, an alliance was formed with the Francophone Liberals (PRL). It brought in two extra seats in the Brussels Regional Parliament in 1995, making the PRL-FDF its largest group,[7] granting the FDF a ministry and a secretary of state in the regional government.[8] With 34.7 per cent of the votes in the Brussels district at the 1995 general election, the electoral position of the FDF (in alliance with the PRL) was fully consolidated.

Profile of the party's programme

The centre-periphery cleavage and institutional demands

It took some time for the FDF to develop a coherent global political programme.[9] This was to a great extent due to the fact that the party was founded by a few hundred intellectuals from different ideological backgrounds, among whom were prominent leaders of the Brussels branches of various organisations of the Walloon movement. The only unifying factor was their aversion to the national language legislation that strengthened the use of Dutch in the national and the municipal administration in Brussels. The vague party doctrine aimed to protect the French-speaking inhabitants of Brussels by eliminating the alleged discriminations against them. The Brussels Francophones, especially white-collar workers, most of whom at that time did not speak Dutch, feared the loss of their privileged position when bilingualism became a legal requirement for certain jobs (Deschouwer 1982:154), as most of the Dutch-speakers did speak both languages.

As a result of their electoral success in the beginning of the 1970s, both parties

(first the RW in 1974 and later the FDF in 1977) were integrated into the government to reform the Belgian state structure. Some far-reaching reforms were agreed upon, but, owing to disagreements, never found their way to Parliament. The ongoing source of dispute was Brussels. And those reforms that did make it to the constitution were not supported by the FDF and the RW.

It is not surprising then that initially the FDF, in contrast to the RW, vigorously opposed the transformation of the unitary Belgian state into a federal state where the political position of the Flemings and their language would become stronger. This attitude changed as the specific situation of Brussels in the Belgian political framework on the one hand and alliance between the RW and the FDF on the other brought the FDF Congress in 1970 to support federalism (Lefèvre 1980:388–389).

After the first constitutional reform (1970–1) had given some autonomy to the three (Flemish, French and German-speaking) 'cultural communities', the FDF almost passionately wanted Brussels to become a full-fledged region: '*Bruxellois*, master in your own house' became the campaign slogan in 1989. Since then, the FDF has been part of the Brussels regional government, which suggests that the party is not entirely unhappy with the latest constitutional reforms.[10]

However, the FDF is still actively mobilising Francophone opinion concerning the communes surrounding the Brussels 'periphery'. The Brussels region has been territorially restricted to nineteen communes, excluding some of these peripheral ones in which a substantial minority or even a majority of Francophones live. They are deprived of the bilingual statute of the nineteen Brussels municipalities, as the periphery belongs *de jure* to the unilingual Dutch-speaking region. In six of these municipalities the Francophone population was given a limited number of 'language facilities' (education, administration), but the FDF wants these facilities to be extended to other matters and to other municipalities. Their annexation to (bilingual) Brussels was and is still the FDF's ultimate goal.

The relations between Walloons and *Bruxellois* continue to be strained, as they were after the split of the FDF–RW alliance in 1981 (Vagman 1994:50–57). From the very beginning of the federalisation process, the FDF defended the French community's competences in certain fields (such as culture and education) both in Brussels and in Wallonia. By contrast, parts of the Walloon movement (and the RW) wanted the community competences to be usurped by the regions (Wallonia and Brussels).

With respect to the type of institutional reforms demanded, the programme of the FDF is a mixture of instrumentality and mythology. Concerning Brussels and its periphery, the FDF cannot invoke mythical arguments since historically a 'Flemish' dialect was spoken by the people inhabiting this territory. Therefore rational arguments have to be used: 'Brussels and a large part of its periphery are predominantly Francophone now. It doesn't matter what the situation was (half) a century ago.' With respect to Wallonia though, their solidarity appeal relies on a mixture of common ethnicity (the Walloon origins of a substantial part of the Brussels population), the fact that they have the same mother tongue and the alleged political domination by the Flemings.

Socio-economic policy

From the very beginning the party paid considerable attention to socio-economic issues, often focusing, however, on the linguistic aspect. Its present economic ideology is a form of moderate liberalism in which the state and the private sector should collaborate (Deschouwer 1993:102).

The FDF argues that in economic affairs, there is discrimination (as there is against Wallonia) by the central state to the advantage of Flanders. For instance, it claims that despite the high contribution of Brussels to state revenues, there is a low return by the 'Belgian-Flemish' central state in terms of expenditures. Therefore, in order to save the Brussels economy, Brussels had to be enlarged to the periphery. This larger economic reality should acquire the same regional competences as Wallonia and Flanders.

The promotion of employment in Brussels is the most important theme of the FDF economic programme. Two aspects have always been emphasised: the linguistic aspect connected to employment in administration, and the role of small and medium-sized enterprises and the self-employed. It is argued that the language legislation deprives the *Bruxellois* from thousands of jobs in the national, regional and local administration. The FDF wants these jobs to go to the *Bruxellois,* certainly not to the tens of thousands of Flemish commuters who work in Brussels but live in Flanders.

The programme of the FDF advocates a social policy based on justice, equality and solidarity, linked to a fundamental reform of the social security system. In this field there is also a moderate 'liberal' view: social and economic rights (employment, housing, health care, education, financial and moral aid) are regarded as fundamental rights of every individual. Special attention is paid to old people, the family, the 'real' poor and disabled, and the self-employed. Finally, the FDF wants to reform the social security system, ending its partitocratic organisation, in which the large health insurance organisations–closely linked to the traditional party families–play a central role (Deschouwer, De Winter and Della Porta 1996).

'New politics' issues

Although the FDF is definitely not a 'new politics' party, since 1970 the party has clearly expressed its concern for the environment. At first most attention was paid to energy, with the party defending its more rational use. For the FDF, this required the regionalisation of some environmental competences, as it judged Brussels to be unjustly deprived in terms of investments in the energy sector to the advantage of Flanders. The party also demands the maintenance and, where possible, improvement of living conditions in the city. Although in the early 1980s the FDF's environmental interest was rather tepid, in 1989 it was revived as the FDF concluded an alliance, the *Europe-Région-Environnement* (ERE), with a tiny Francophone ecology movement for the European elections as well as for the first elections of the Brussels Regional Council, which were held that year. Also,

as the FDF has ever since held the environment portfolio within the Brussels regional executive, the party has gradually developed a broader and more integrated environmental vision. Finally, gender equality in all domains and at all levels is endorsed.

European and international issues

Concerning European and international issues two themes have been prominent: European unification, and international solidarity among French-speaking countries/regions (*la Francité* or *L'espace francophone* as the party calls it). Like all Belgian parties, the FDF has always been an advocate of European economic, political and cultural co-operation. From the beginning it opposed the existence of Benelux because of the influence of the Netherlands and its alleged hostility to France. Europe had to be free and independent of all international groups and power blocs in military, economic and political terms. Membership of NATO has never been questioned, but the FDF has always stressed the necessity of the development of a complementary yet autonomous European defence system that guarantees a politically united Europe. This politically united Europe has to be a federal union of regions and communities on the one hand and national states on the other. It seeks support in the Committee of the Regions, with which it wants to develop a strong co-operation, especially between Francophone regions and states.

As European unification progressed, the FDF has become an even stronger advocate of an enlarged and economically, socially and politically united but culturally diversified Europe. Brussels as the capital of Europe is perceived as advantageous for its inhabitants. It is also hoped that Brussels as the capital of Europe can contribute to strengthening of the French language within the city, within the European Union (*vis-à-vis* English), and in general (promotion of the French language and culture throughout Europe). Finally, European unification can help the FDF to reach a goal it did not manage to realise within the Belgian framework, i.e. the expansion of the linguistic rights of the Francophones in the Brussels periphery. In addition, the emphasis of the FDF on international solidarity among French-speaking countries extends towards the Francophones in Canada and Switzerland.

Internal organisation

Electorate, membership and leadership: background characteristics

Analyses made in the late 1960s and 1970s[11] indicate that the FDF had a predominantly middle- and upper-middle-class profile. This socio-economic group tended to be more sensitive to 'status panic', a phenomenon which occurred when the national language legislation, which relatively weakened the position of

French, was put into effect. Initially the FDF attracted relatively few university graduates, blue-collar workers, and independents. Nevertheless, the share of the latter two had risen sharply by 1981 (blue-collar workers from 12.2 per cent in 1968 to 28.9 per cent, members of the liberal professions from 12.7 per cent to 31.6 per cent). Furthermore, the FDF attracted relatively more voters for whom a *Weltanschauung* did not play a major role. They harboured a strong anti-Flemish sentiment, a feeling of solidarity with the Walloons and some kind of Brussels 'nationalism'. A relatively large proportion defined themselves as Belgians, in contrast to the RW voters, who were more attached to Wallonia or the Francophone community. The FDF attracted a large proportion of women (64.1 per cent in 1968), by far the largest proportion in the Brussels region. Yet ten years later this profile had vanished. In terms of age, people over 35 were more attracted to the FDF in 1978 than those under 35 (Elchardus 1978:159–162).[12] But here too the FDF voter profile has become more representative of the population at large (except for the characteristics of religion and profession). In 1974 and 1979, the majority of the FDF electorate situated itself in the centre of the left-right cleavage, thus to the right of the RW. According to party documents the number of members has remained fairly stable, ranging from about 10,000 (1973) to 14,000 (1986) (Maes 1988:83). Since 1990 the party has refused to disclose its membership numbers.

Internal party decision-making

The FDF is a centrally and professionally led party where local sections—at least formally—are influential. The electoral alliance with the PRL did not imply that the two party organisations merged. On the contrary, they kept their organisational structures and internal decision-making autonomy.

The Congress elects the president and the general secretary of the party. Before 1975, the president was either chosen by an inner party circle (1964, 1967) or appointed by acclaim of the Congress (1972). Since 1975 the president has been elected from among the members of the *Conseil général*[13] by all due-paying members (there was between an 8 per cent and a 14 per cent turnout in the 1980–93 period). In three of the elections there was only one candidate. Georges Clerfayt, who won three elections, led the party from 1984 to 1995. The end of his term was dominated by a serious debate over the issue of the FDF-PRL alliance. This alliance was consolidated by the election of the hard-liner Olivier Maingain as president.

During the 1960s and 1970s, huge American-style mass meetings were held for party members and sympathisers. These meetings, where no real decision-making took place, disappeared completely in the 1980s. The Congress became the only place where ordinary members could raise their voice, but their contribution there was no greater than at the meetings of the 1970s, which had attracted so much media attention. In the 1980s and 1990s there were on average one or two (statutory and thematic) congresses. Although the party officially

favours membership participation, the level of this participation at the party's statutory congresses is not particularly high. The FDF nevertheless seems to have a small though active cadre of people running the party at both the local (sections) and the regional level.

The second highest decision-making body, the *Comité directeur,* initially reflected a balance between the different ideological tendencies within the party. Yet by 1985 most dissenting forces had left, and the unmediated influence of the sections was less potentially destabilising. Hence the *Comité directeur* was abolished (until 1995) and the sections were allowed to elect their own representatives for the *Bureau permanent* (whereas before they had been appointed by the *Comité directeur*)[14] The *Comité directeur* meets twice a month and its decision-making authority relates to medium-term decisions.

The *Bureau permanent* deals with the party's day-to-day decisions (weekly reunions). It is composed of the party's top cadres: president, vice-president and general secretary, minister(s) and secretary/ies of state, (representatives of) the party's office holders and the president of the youth organisation and the women's organisation of the party. Whereas before 1995 the *Bureau permanent* was on average composed of sixty-five members, it now counts only twenty-six, as the sections representatives have been transferred to the *Comité directeur.*

The *Bureau permanent* can be enlarged with extra representatives of the party sections and associated organisations composing the *Bureau permanent élargi.* Its most important task is the approval of the candidate list for the Brussels regional, legislative and European elections (two-thirds majority is needed). The party's sections collect the names of non-incumbent candidates, while incumbents communicate their candidature directly to the central party. These former candidatures, to which the section can add an appreciation, are then sent to the *Commission electoral.* This electoral committee, which is constituted of five members, drafts the candidate list, after which it is submitted to the *Bureau permanent élargi* for approval (a two-thirds majority is needed).

The party's financial means mainly come from state subventions and from contributions of members and sympathisers. According to Van Bunder (1993), the party–including its parliamentary groups–had a total income of more than BFr. 30 million in 1992. If calculated in relation to the party's national share of votes (in the 1991 election), the FDF has the largest share of financial means.[15]

As far as factionalism is concerned, as the party grew older, internal differences that were originally hidden came to the fore. Consequently, important people left the party, and mainly joined the (renewed) Francophone Liberal Party and the Francophone Socialists. Today there are two factions in the party: a moderate faction willing to compromise with the Flemings, and hard-liners, including the current president, who adopt a confrontational attitude.

The FDF has no close links with pressure groups, but there is a network of local organisations around the party (Deschouwer 1982:145; Monteyne 1978:379). This kind of 'pillar' assured the FDF, despite its electoral losses, of a

relatively strong presence in the sociocultural and sociopolitical life in several Brussels communes. In these municipalities and in the Brussels region (since 1989), the FDF is a governing party, controlling considerable patronage resources, which in Belgium have always been an important incentive for party membership.

Hence, the present FDF comes close to the type of the 'modern cadre party' (Koole 1994:299); that is, it is a professionally and centrally led political party in which the involvement of active members (the 'cadre') is nevertheless important. It is a party that stresses–at least formally–the internal democratic nature of the organisation and is financed by both public (subsidies) and private (membership fees, donations) resources. It is characterised by the absence of strong relations with pressure groups, and the growing interest of the party in controlling outputs.

The political behaviour of the RW and the FDF

Tribune strategies

From the very beginning, the RW had chosen a peaceful and conventional form of political action. The few street demonstrations organised by the RW concerned economic topics (Smits 1982). A substantial number of congresses were organised to keep this discussion going.

The FDF never tolerated violence to attain its goals. Until the beginning of the 1980s the party used a number of peaceful unconventional extraparliamentary political means. First, there were lively electoral meetings. Second, the FDF organised several petitions on linguistic/institutional demands for Brussels and the periphery (Rowies 1981:906). According to the party, these 'referenda' were very successful (there was a participation rate 36.1 per cent among the Brussels-registered voters at the last one in 1981). An overwhelming majority approved the demands of the party. Yet, in contrast to the 'Volksunie', the FDF was never really an organiser of street demonstrations (Smits 1982).[16]

In the 1980s, the FDF abandoned unconventional political strategies. Primarily because it became a government party it focused its actions on the Brussels parliamentary and governmental arena.

Government participation strategies

The RW agreed to join the 1974 government in exchange for the founding of a department of constitutional reform. At first this seemed an empty box. Later, party president Perin considered this an opportunity for federalisation to start and as a victory for the RW, despite the internal crisis of the party that resulted directly from this participation. Its main goal was to push other parties towards federalism.

The FDF was three times[17] involved in centre-left coalitions that aimed at

reforming the unitary state. As constitutional amendments require a two-thirds majority in both Houses, and the FDF at that time was the strongest party in the Brussels region, it was invited in 1977 by the Walloon Socialists to join government. The FDF accepted because it believed it could in turn persuade the Socialist Party to accept its institutional demands. Yet the governmental programme offended Flemish public opinion and provoked major disagreements within the government. The coalition collapsed and the institutional reform programme was never approved by Parliament. After the parliamentary elections (1978) the FDF was again included in the government by demand of the Walloon Socialists as well as the Christian Democrats. That government finally agreed upon the federalisation of Belgium in three phases. Nevertheless, when in 1979 the Flemish Christian Democrats refused to give Brussels the same regional competences as the Flemish and Walloon regions, the Francophone parties closed ranks. One month later, however, the FDF ministers were dismissed from the government and the federalisation process was delayed.

The FDF has been part of the Brussels regional executive since 1989 and has adopted a fairly co-operative attitude, despite the fact that since 1989 the Brussels coalition has included the 'Volksunie'. This cohabitation works remarkably well as there are few linguistic catches in strictly urban policies. For most cultural matters, including education, both linguistic communities have their own institutions and do not need each other's consent.

Political impact of the RW and the FDF

The political impact of the RW and FDF has been threefold. First, their creation promoted the existence of Wallonia and Brussels, as distinct entities, on the national political agenda. This put so much pressure on the traditional parties that within ten years they all split, first into separate wings, then into separate parties. Furthermore, not only did the number of parties double, so did the party system. Since then, except in Brussels, parties have competed only against the parties of the same language group.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the electoral success of all three regional parties eventually forced the traditional parties to address the issue of regional self-government (Newman 1989). In a relatively short period of time, the traditional parties not only were convinced of the necessity to federalise the country, but also became the engine of the decision-making on federalisation. Thus it was the traditional parties that finally federalised the country, not the Walloon or the Brussels regionalists. Hence the central policy demands of both parties for self-government have largely been met.

Yet there were also some drawbacks. Regionalism became a major part of Walloon political discourse, but the RW did not live to see it. The FDF did not manage to expand Brussels into the Flemish periphery. The high degree of protection for the Flemish minority in Brussels is also hard to accept for the FDF, which keeps denouncing this protection as utterly undemocratic.

Conclusion

The RW and FDF had one major belief in common that made them in 1968 decide to form an electoral coalition: the perception of domination by the Flemings within the Belgian state. Therefore both the RW and the FDF advocated the federalisation of the country in order to give Wallonia and Brussels a large degree of autonomy. Yet, while the RW had chosen federalism as a priority from the very beginning, the FDF initially defended the unitary state. Moreover, the RW was first and foremost preoccupied with the socio-economic problems of the Walloon region. Despite the broadening of its ideology, the FDF keeps hammering on concerning the alleged discrimination against its linguistic and cultural community, in order to distinguish itself from other Francophone parties. The RW was also far more leftist and radical than the FDF, whose ideas are pragmatically liberal.

The RW and its alliance with the FDF were kept together solely by a common enemy (the Flemings) since there was no strong common identity. The internal problems that developed within the RW between 1974 and 1977 made its electoral audience decline sharply. The RW had hoped to win votes from the Walloon Socialists, but eventually the latter became even more radically Walloon, and the RW lost its monopoly as the prime defender of the Walloon cause *vis-à-vis* the Flemish Christian Democrats and the VU. Yet when, after the split in 1976, a part of the RW returned to the PS, they were able to exert quite considerable pressure on the latter. Currently, José Happart, the most popular PS politician, can still push the party into a more extreme Walloonist position by threatening it with the re-creation of a regionalist party like the RW. So, even though the RW disappeared from the political scene, its political heritage is more alive than ever.

In contrast to the RW, the FDF managed to consolidate its position as the most radical defender of the interests of the Brussels Francophones. Thanks to patronage and ideological 'mainstream' policies, the party has maintained a relatively strong position, especially at the municipal level. At the regional level, the FDF has become a government party, especially since its close alliance with the Brussels Liberals, the largest party in Brussels. The FDF programme has been only partly realised. It did get a fully fledged Brussels region, but one without the Francophones of the periphery and with an obligation to govern Brussels together with the Flemish minority. Since linguistic tensions are now reduced to a minimum, the FDF accepts this as the only rational way to proceed. Sticking to the alliance with the PRL, or even opting for total fusion, might then well be the best way to survive.

Notes

1 The Walloon movement had its roots before World War I, with its own historical leaders such as Jules Destrée and Abée Mahieu. Until the 1960s, this movement was not strong enough to create an autonomous regional party (Fonteyn 1994:85).

2 There was a *Bureau fédéral* of sixty-nine members, comprising the president, three vice-presidents, a general secretary, fifty-seven delegates from the regional federations,

all MPs and some members of the constituency councils. This Federal Bureau, which met once a month, was the only decision-making body between two congresses.

3 Although the RW had its roots in the Socialist trade union, the party opted for an independent position after the electoral success of 1971. Consequently, there were no official contacts with other social movements. Individual relations with women's liberation or environmental pressure groups existed but were not officially sustained nor encouraged.

4 After successful Flemish mobilisation, the bilingual Catholic University of Leuven (Louvain in French), situated in Flanders though close to the Dutch-French language border, was split into two separate, unilingual universities. A brand new university was built in Wallonia. Yet the 'expulsion' of the Walloons would leave them traumatised.

5 In four of the nineteen municipalities it became the first party; in all others but one it was the second party. Four FDF candidates became the mayor of their municipality.

6 In some municipalities the FDF formed an electoral alliance with other parties. The alliance with the Brussels Liberals was especially successful in 1988 and 1994. This success compensates to a certain extent for the general dramatic losses in 1988.

7 Together they won 35 per cent of the Brussels vote, and twenty-eight seats (thirteen FDF, fifteen PRL) of the total of sixty-five seats won by Francophone parties in the 1995 regional elections, compared to 14.7 per cent for the FDF (twelve seats, but one representation defected to the *Parti Socialist*) and 18.9 per cent for the PRL (fifteen seats) in 1989 (+1.4 per cent). The alliance enabled the FDF to recapture a seat in the European Parliament in 1994.

8 Owing to an electoral alliance between the Francophone parties, the FDF also holds a seat in the Flemish regional parliament. This alliance won 1.2 per cent of the votes (predominantly from Francophones living in the Flemish periphery around Brussels) in two constituencies in the elections for the Flemish regional parliament.

9 Unless mentioned otherwise, this analysis is based on the following documents: (1) periodicals intended to keep the members and/or cadres of the party informed: *FDF Contact* (1980–3), *La Gazette de Bruxelles* (1984–June 1985), *FDF Actualités* (1985–91), *Espace Francophone* (1992–5); (2) congress documents (1980–95); (3) electoral programmes (legislative elections 1981, 1985, 1987, 1991, 1995; municipal elections 1982, 1988, 1994; elections for the Council of the Brussels Region: 1989, 1995 and elections for the European Parliament 1979, 1984, 1989, 1994).

10 Yet the party rejects the protection of the Flemish minority in Brussels. The Flemish are overrepresented in the Brussels government since both language groups there are equally represented (except for the president) and decisions are taken by consensus. Moreover, for some matters a double majority is required in the Council. Hence the Flemish minority has a real veto power.

11 This part is based on the analysis of Frognier (1975a:479–490; 1975b:491–500), Delruelle (1975:501–516), Delruelle-Vosswinkel and Frognier (1980:23–24), Van Malderghem (1981), Deschouwer (1982:141–165), and Bouillin-Dartevelde *et al.* (1984).

12 Elchardus (1978) found that, in 1970 and 1976, the electoral chances for success of the FDF rose as the (Brussels) municipality had an older age profile. This was a logical finding since older people were more sensitive to the status element which identification with the Francophone community (still, in the 1970s!) entailed.

13 The *Conseil général* is composed of the local sections' and the associated organisations' (women, youth, elderly people) elected representatives and of all the office holders (four reunions per year; more or less 300 members). This kind of interim congress settles the important long-term political decisions, determines the 'strategic choices' of the party and votes the budget.

14 Today the local sections are represented in the *Comité directeur* (and the *Conseil general*).

These representatives, who are chosen by the *Conseil général,* make up one-quarter (fifteen) of the number of members (sixty-one) of this assembly.

15 All parties represented in the federal parliament receive a fixed amount of money from the state, irrespective of their number of MPs. In addition, parties receive money according to their number of votes. Smaller parties, like the FDF, thereby receive relatively more money. Second, groups also receive money from the different parliaments (federal and regional), and again there is a lump sum for every group. Third, the FDF is a large group in the Brussels regional parliament, which is furthermore a disproportionately larger legislative assembly (i.e. compared to the other regional parliaments). Since the Francophone parties have seats in more regional parliaments (two or three) than the Flemish ones–the Flemings have only one parliament, i.e. for both the community and the region–this also explains why all the Francophone parties' indexes are higher than their Flemish counterparts'.

16 Even in its mobilisation phase, the FDF only initiated 4 per cent of all the street demonstrations that were organised by a political party in the period 1965–74 (Smits 1982).

17 The third one was the Vanden Boeynants II government (from 13 October to 17 December 1978), installed after the prime minister, Léo Tindemans resigned. This caretaker government differed from the previous one only in terms of the prime minister.

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5

NATIONALIST PARTIES IN CATALONIA

Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya and Esquerra Republicana

Juan Marcet and Jordi Argelaguet

Introduction

The political change that has taken place in Spain since 1975 has two fundamental features: the re-establishment of democracy and the transformation from a unitary, centralised state into a 'state of autonomies' that explicitly recognises the existence of nationalities and regions within it.

The political parties in Catalonia have to be situated and analysed within such a judicial-political framework (Fossas and Colomé 1993). Although the majority of Catalan political forces have their roots in the past, the period of political transition of 1976–7 has to be considered as the origin of the present Catalan party system. The results of the 1977 elections strongly affected the evolution of these parties and caused a great shift for all of them at the time leading up to the second elections of March 1979 (see Table 5.1).

Between 1979 and the most recent elections (March 1996), there have been five general elections (1982, 1986, 1989, 1993 and 1996) and five elections to the Catalan Parliament (1980, 1984, 1988, 1992 and 1995). Only five political forces have managed to stabilise their electoral results and their parliamentary representation (at either state or regional level). Two of them, the PSC (*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* (PSC– PSOE), Party of the Socialists of Catalonia, Socialist Party of Catalonia-Spanish Socialist Worker's Party) and the CiU coalition (*Convergència i Unió,* Convergence and Union, formed by the CDC, *Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya,* Democratic Convergence of Catalonia, and UDC, *Unió Democràtica de Catalunya,* Democratic Union of Catalonia) maintain electoral dominance, depending on the type of election: the general or 'autonomist' ones respectively. The other three political forces, IC (*Iniciativa per Catalunya,* Initiative for Catalonia), ERC (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*, Republican Left of Catalonia) and *Partido Popular* (People's Party, PP), although they also suffer some variations in their electoral strength depending on the

Table 5.1 Electoral results in Catalonia, 1977–96

Year	*CiU*	*ERC*	*PSC*	*PSUC/IC*[c]	*AP/PP*[d]	*UCD*	*CDS*	*PSA*
1977g	16.9 (11)[a]	4.6 (1)	28.4 (15)	18.2 (8)	3.5 (1)	16.8 (9)	—	—
1979g	16.2 (8)[b]	4.1 (1)	29.3 (17)	17.1 (8)	3.6 (1)	9.1 (12)	—	—
1980c	27.9 (43)	8.9 (14)	22.5 (33)	18.8 (25)	2.4 (0)	0.6 (18)	—	2.7 (2)
1982g	22.5 (12)	4.0 (1)	45.8 (25)	4.6 (1)	14.6 (8)	2.0 (0)	2.0 (0)	0.5 (0)
1984c	46.8 (72)	4.4 (5)	33.1 (41)	5.6 (6)	7.7 (11)	—	—	—
1986g	32.0 (18)	2.7 (0)	41.0 (21)	3.9 (1)	11.4 (6)	—	4.1 (1)	—
1988c	45.7 (69)	4.1 (6)	29.8 (42)	7.8 (9)	5.3 (6)	—	3.8 (3)	—
1989g	32.7 (18)	2.7 (0)	35.6 (20)	7.3 (3)	10.6 (4)	—	4.3 (1)	—
1992c	46.2 (70)	8.0 (11)	27.6 (40)	6.5 (7)	6.0 (7)	—	0.9 (0)	—
1993g	31.8 (17)	5.1 (1)	34.9 (17)	7.5 (3)	17.0 (8)	—	0.8 (0)	—
1995c	41.0 (60)	9.5 (13)	24.8 (34)	9.7 (11)	13.1 (17)	—	—	—
1996g	29.6 (16)	4.2 (1)	39.4 (19)	7.8 (2)	18.0 (8)	—	—	—

Source: 1977–88: ESE ('*Equip de Sociologia Electoral*'-UAB); 1989–96: *Anuario de 'El País'*
Notes: PSUC=*Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya* (Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia); UCD=*Unión de Centro Democrático* (Union of the Democratic Centre); CDS=*Centro Democrática y Social* (Social and Democratic Centre Party); PSA=*Partido Socialista de Andalucia*. For other abbreviations, see the list at the beginning of the book. 'g' means 'general elections'; 'c' means 'Catalan elections'. Figures in parentheses are the number of seats won. The Parliament of Catalonia has 135 seats.

[a] In 1977, CDC (*Convergència Democrática de Catalunya*) was in a coalition with PSC-r, *(Partit Socialista de Catalunya (reagrupament)), EDC Esquerra Democràtica de Catalunya)* and other small parties; and UDC (*Unió Democràtica de Catalunya*) presented its own lists in Catalonia under the name of UCDCC. It got 5.6 per cent and two seats.

[b] CiU *(Convergència i Unió)* is an electoral coalition formed in 1979 by CDC and UDC

[c] PSUC (Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia) between 1977 and 1984. In 1986, PSUC, together with a small political party of some leftist Catalan nationalists, formed an electoral coalition called UEC (Union of the Catalan Left). In 1987, PSUC with other small parties formed a federation of parties called 'Initiative for Catalonia' (IC).

[d] AP *(Alianza Popular)* has participated in the elections under different names depending on whether it has electoral allies. In 1977, it was AP; in 1979, 'Democratic Coalition'; in 1982, AP in coalition with PDP (*Partido Democrático Popular*, Democratic People's party, a conservative Christian Democratic party); in 1984, AP; in 1986, AP-PDP-UL (AP=*Alianza Popular*, UL=*Union Liberal*); in 1988, AP. In 1989, AP was refounded under the name of Popular Party (PP). In 1980, AP did not present lists to the Catalan elections. The result given in the table belongs to a list whose ideological position is very similar to that of AP

type of election (especially the PP), appear to be situated on a lower level in terms of their electoral and political representation (Pallarès and Font 1994).

The Catalan political parties today

Owing to the special features of Catalan politics, which are based on the coexistence of two main political cleavages expressed by the left-right continuum and by the Catalan nationalism-Spanish nationalism continuum, the majority of the current political parties are not state-wide (Molas 1977; Seiler 1982; von Beyme 1986).

A classification of the Catalan parties can be made according to the scope of their organisational structure and on their relation to state-wide organisations. In this sense, there are three different groups of parties:

1 Parties that in Catalonia are organised in the same way as in the rest of Spain (nowadays, this is the case of the conservative centre-right *Partido Popular* in Catalonia, which is trying to open the PP to those parts of the Catalan population who are looking with distrust at what they call the 'nationalist excess' of CiU in order to recover the strength of the now extinct UCD, the centrist party led by Suárez during the Spanish transition);
2 Parties that maintain a relationship of a federal type with state-wide organisations. These are, with some differences, the cases of the PSC and IC since they maintain relations of this kind with their state-wide counterparts, the PSOE (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) and IU (*Izquierda Unida*, United Left), respectively. More important is the PSC, owing to its primacy in Catalonia in the general elections, and likewise at the local level (since 1979, PSC has been the party that has received most votes in Barcelona and in almost all the big cities of Catalonia), while it has been the second party in the Catalan elections (Colomé 1989). At a lower level we find IC, a federation of small parties which has its origin in an electoral coalition of the same name for the local elections of 1987. The leading member is the historic PSUC (Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia), a communist party founded at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War, along with EV (ecologists), PCC (Party of the Catalan Communists) and ENE (a Catalan nationalist party of the left);
3 Parties with no relation with state-wide organisations, i.e. those parties whose organisational domain and performance are exclusively limited to Catalonia or, at least, to a domain below the state level, and those that do not maintain any type of organic links with state-wide parties. CDC and UDC fit into this category. Because of the way in which they choose to intervene in Spanish politics, they can be labelled pressure parties (Molas 1977)—parties which assume the concept of nationalist solidarity as fundamental and whose overriding aim at state level is to pressurise rather than to govern. ERC can also be placed within this category, despite the fact that its goal—almost exclusively in recent years—is to seek an independent state, separating Catalonia from the existing state unit through a practice which tries to link national unity towards independence with the use of state mechanisms (electoral campaigns, presence in the state institutions, etc.), mainly with the aim of obstructing or confronting those in power.

Catalan nationalism, since it first appeared as a political force at the end of the nineteenth century, has always had a plural nature (Balcells 1996; Keating 1996). Although almost all Catalan parties are to a greater or lesser degree influenced by it, CiU and ERC currently represent its two faces. CiU is located on the centre-right of the political spectrum, but with some penetration in all directions. The ERC, with much less electoral support, is on the left and on the more radical wing of Catalan nationalism, enjoying a certain presence in the political institutions.

Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya

Since 1979, CDC has formed, along with UDC,[1] the coalition CiU, which has constituted the Catalan government since the first elections for the Catalan Parliament in 1980.

The historical evolution of CDC

CDC was created at the end of Francoism. As a political force, it has no direct precedents either in the parties in Catalonia during the Second Republic, or in the different groups that emerged after the Civil War (1936–9). Rather, its origins lie in the Catalan nationalism with a Catholic influence that emerged in Catalonia during the 1940s, and, since the beginning of the 1960s, CDC has been personified by Jordi Pujol, its until now unquestioned leader.

CDC, which formally came into being in November 1974 as a result of the efforts of the UDC itself and of some sections linked to Pujol during the previous years, was built from the beginning as a broad umbrella, open to various sections of the population, but with the Catalan *petite bourgeoisie* and middle classes as the main body of support. Pujol wanted to create a party which would be the structural axis of the political panorama of Catalonia.

This middle-class base had to be, in Pujol's initial thesis, the core of a modern party that aspired to becoming a broadly based, but from the beginning there was a dilemma: to become a party articulating the 'conscience of people', or one articulating 'class conscience'.

The refusal of some social democratic groups to be integrated into the CDC project (they eventually went on to form the *Reagrupament Socialists, i Democràtic* of Josep Pallach) and the withdrawal of UDC reduced this goal to the stimulus provided by the followers of Pujol and the group of liberal professionals headed by Miquel Roca. These two groups agreed to formally constitute CDC as a political party in March 1976, reaching a phase characterised by the rhythm of the political events after General Franco's death.

In the 1977 elections, CDC, along with liberals, social democrats and nationalists, formed the PDC coalition (*Pacte Democratic per Catalunya*, Democratic Pact for Catalonia), with relatively little electoral success. Apart from weakening the electoral coalition itself until its formal disappearance, this lack of success imposed a reorientation process on CDC as a party. This process began in June 1977 with an attempt to reinforce the growth of the party and to reorganise the internal structure, while ideologically CDC attempted to consolidate its image as a nationalist party, with some progressive elements seeking in addition to attract the Catalan centre-left. These aspects would be used as a means of rallying support, together with Pujol's consolidation as an unquestioned leader, during the period of organisational establishment that ended with the Fifth Congress of the party in April 1978.

The fusion in June 1978 with *Esquerra Democràtica de Catalunya* (Democratic Left of Catalonia), a left-liberal group led by Trias Fargas, and the stable agreement

with UDC, both during the elections and in government (September 1978), would be important factors in achieving the goal of creating a unique centre-left force in Catalonia. This aim, however, was frustrated, first by the integration of the social democratic sections into the new PSC, second by the refusal of ERC to form a coalition with CDC, and finally through the formation of another group within the same electoral space, the CC-UCD (Centrists of Catalonia-Union of Democratic Centre), linked to the erstwhile governing party in Spain.

CDC—already inside the coalition CiU—fared badly in the 1979 general elections, but its fortunes improved in the local elections of the same year (the first after the death of Franco), especially in the small and medium-sized towns. It finally achieved its first outright electoral success in the 1980 'autonomic' or Catalan elections. Precisely for these elections, CDC had highlighted the features which had been shaping it as a party in the previous two years: the personalisation of the party in the image of Pujol; the nationalist definition as an alternative to the left-right option; and the formulation of a moderately reformist programme for the 'construction of Catalonia'.

The party which was built upon these ideas was intermediate between a party of social integration (as had been the intention at the outset) and one with broad appeal, into which it was eventually transformed by the translation into practical politics of the political reorientation that concluded with the electoral victory in 1980.

This victory turned the coalition of CDC and UDC into the force that has governed Catalonia until the present day (electoral victories in 1984, 1988, 1992 and 1995, all of them except the last with an absolute majority), as well as into the main adversary of the PSC in the general elections, despite CiU not having a political counterpart in the rest of Spain. However, in 1986, CiU's spokesman in the Spanish Parliament, Miquel Roca, made approaches to the PRD (*Partido Reformista Democrático*, Democratic Reformist Party), thus pursuing the option of forming ties at the Spanish level. The PRD's electoral failure forced CiU to return to its former situation, which was consolidated by its victories in the Catalan elections and great stability in the general elections in 1989 and 1993 with only a slight decrease in 1996. The results of the last two general elections (those of June 1993 and March 1996) presented CDC and UDC, for the first time, with the dilemma of whether to accept the offer to enter a coalition government or to remain outside the government, only giving its parliamentary support through a prudent policy of pacts and agreements, thus allowing CiU to keep its pressure-party characteristics.

Indeed, this question over the policy of political alliances and direct intervention in Spanish politics was at the core of the crisis which overtook CDC during the party congress of October 1992. It was in that congress that a hitherto latent crisis inside the direction of the party and inside the coalition clearly emerged. Despite the various leaders' public statements, three different strategies emerged.

The first, favoured by Roca, defended an interventionist or Spanish projection approach, which is the traditional form of Catalan nationalism (especially relevant

during Spain's Second Republic (1931–9) and during the leadership of Francesc Cambó). The second strategy, favoured by Pujol, put the emphasis on maintaining the philosophy of a political movement rather than a party and retaining the possibility of deciding alone whether and when to form alliances with other parties. The third possibility was put forward by Josep Antoni Duran, leader of UDC, which had been more or less an appendix of varying importance, of the larger partner in the coalition. Duran came into the political arena with his own political weight, presenting alternative political positions after having built a political party just as well structured as CDC and with a new but scarcely explicit ambition of becoming heir to Pujol's leadership.

These controversies, used repeatedly by Pujol, are holding back Roca's increasing political concentration in Madrid. They have had two consequences: first, the progressive removal of Roca from active political life (he is to leave the General Secretariat of CDC and has turned down the possibility of leading the candidature of CDC for Barcelona city council); and second, the heightening of the tensions between the two parties in the coalition (CDC and UDC), especially after the agreement to give parliamentary support to the Popular Party, in the light of the results of the March 1996 general election.

The ideological profile of CDC, and the nature of its programme

CDC defined itself from the outset as a nationalist party. 'Constructing Catalonia' was the basic element of this definition and the basis of its political manifestos. Nationalism was defined by CDC as 'the will and the possibility of being', thus summing up Pujol's elaborate version of 'personalist nationalism'.

The ideology of Pujol connects with a great part of the historical Catalanist tradition, and is located within post-Civil War Catholic Catalanism. The Christian roots of this ideology give it a certain proximity to the conservative Catalanism of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Such roots allow him to talk about a pure nationalism, without ideological justifications.

The combination of a variety of influences and the effort to place the ideological foundations in a contemporary setting led Pujol to insist on elements of modernisation, to build up an integrating project of 'constructing Catalonia', to outline some elements of social transformation–although modest–and to determine the different aspects of the relations with Spain. In this way, the nationalism of CDC, shaped by democracy and by a programme of economic and social transformation, is permanently at the centre of any characterisation of CDC as a political force, and serves to differentiate it from the rest of the Catalan political parties given its insistence on the integrationist nature of its political offer.

CDC was formed with the idea of integrating and representing the Catalan middle classes. This aim was achieved quickly, and would be stressed through the years. The main constituency of CDC, as a party, and CiU, as an electoral force, revolves around the social sectors composed of managers, businessmen, executives,

traders, the self-employed and liberal professionals. This socio-economic profile is confirmed by the political self-location in the left-right continuum, in which membership is placed basically in the centre-left field and the voters of CiU have been moving from this point towards the centre and centre-right.

From the historical and ideological precedents of Pujol, to the direct allusions to the Catholic world and the stable agreement with Catalan Christian Democracy, the issue of the Catholic roots of CDC has always been present, for example in its political orientation and in the sociological compositions of its voters. This situation has not implied, by any means, that CDC is to be defined as a confessional party. Nevertheless, it expresses some contradictions inside the party around such polemic issues as education and the legalisation of abortion.

The electoral and political consolidation of CDC, mainly at the Catalan level, reinforced its self-affirmation as a political force which is exclusively nationalist. This fact is related to the parallel substitution of the modernising elements by simple pragmatism. The party's ideology and programme identify 'pure nationalism' as the only defining element, without attributes, with no ideological justification nor shades, and combine with a pragmatism which dominates the party's political action and with a populism which floods all its electoral projection.

These two elements, pragmatism and the strengthening of its nationalist definition, which is polarised and expressed through the leader's image, constitute the main axis of the evolution of CDC's programme and ideology. CDC has fluctuated from being the model of a party of social integration, to being a voters' party which adopts forms and elements of a fluid and scarcely fixed political movement in its environment. This has meant that, with the approval of Pujol, CDC has been defined more as a political movement than a classical political party (Marcet 1984).

This pragmatism, demonstrated on both the ideological and the governmental level, implies an ambiguous attitude or pure tactical manoeuvring when some decisions have to be taken on new issues or new political demands. Thus, environmental policy, policies of equal gender opportunities, co-operation with the Third World, or positions on immigration, for example, have been broached by CDC with almost no prior reflection on CDC's ideology or programme. The creation of an environment department or a Catalan Institute of Women in the domain of the government of Catalonia may be interpreted more as a practical answer to social demands than as a programmatic conviction. The controversy surrounding the establishment of an item in the budget of the Catalan government devoted to co-operation with the Third World or the ambiguous attitudes of some local representatives of CDC concerning the presence of African immigrants in their respective municipalities also demonstrates a lack of definition and consistency on those issues.

On the other hand, the favourable position of CDC towards European integration is very explicit. In its policy of constant collaboration with the Spanish government, and in the policy developed in the European Parliament, to name but two examples, CDC has defined itself as an unconditional supporter of the

process of the integration of Spain in European institutions, of the consolidation of the European Union, and of the incorporation of Spain in the leading group of countries as monetary union proceeds. Pujol, from the Presidency of the Association of Regions of Europe, and later from the Council of European Regions, has favoured the role of becoming one of the protagonists of the European integration process rather than seeking confrontation between the 'Europe of regions' and the 'Europe of the nation-states'.

The organisational structure of CDC

The organisational structure of CDC since its constitution as a political party has been a relatively classic one, with groups set up to attract membership territorially (territorial teams at local level and county groups) and also sectorially (sectorial teams and branches which group the members who are working in a certain professional field (sports, education, trade, etc.). They have their respective leaders and executive organs (local, county and sectorial executive committees). At the central level, the party is ruled by the National Council, integrated by a non-fixed number of members, which combines the representation of the party's Congress with direct representation from the party base (from the territorial groups and sectorial branches). Also, members of the parliaments belonging to the party are automatically members of the National Council. This National Council is the political ruling organ between the party congresses, and it chooses the National Executive Committee, except for the president, the general secretary and the organisation secretary, who are directly elected by the party's Congress. The whole of the party's ruling organs tend to form and to fix an inner circle which, through continuity in office, shapes those who constitute the basic core when political decisions have to be taken.

The combination of the different elements that compose the organisational structure, the relatively dominant role of the members of the parliaments–who enjoy certain disciplinary autonomy, and to some extent, a decision-making autonomy in their domains and inside their corresponding parliamentary group–and the concentration in the leader's figure of a great part of the decision-making power make CDC a party which contains characteristic elements of both classic types of parties: a 'party of cadres' and a 'mass party', and it is difficult to fit CDC into either. Instead, to relate this structure to the orientation and evolution of its political performance, it seems even more the case that CDC is close to being a model party of social integration and a voter's party. The evolution of its growth (in terms of membership and in the electoral arena) and of its social composition are presently its key elements.

The growth of CDC

Affiliation to CDC has taken place in three different phases, with one of the most important impulses to be found in the drawing up of the list of candidates for

local elections. Membership evolution can be seen from Table 5.2, which shows how from having little more than 100 members present at its foundation in 1974 CDC has grown to the 26,000 registered members at the most recent party Congress (November 1996).

This overall evolution of membership from a quantitative point of view must be qualified by looking at figures for territorial evolution, which while being progressive has been far from uniform. Though a limited, basically urban party at the 1977 general elections, CDC nevertheless had a real presence in one municipality in twenty-four of the thirty-eight Catalan counties then in existence, mostly the more heavily populated ones. Through the drawing up of lists for the 1979 elections, CDC achieved an important territorial advance, achieving a presence in 510 of the 937 towns in Catalonia. This presence rapidly spread through Catalonia as a whole and by the end of 1980 CDC had members in all Catalan counties, although their distribution was far from homogeneous. In the 1980s, again owing to the drawing up of lists for local elections, CDC stabilised its penetration of Catalan territory, overcoming the difficulties it had faced in the counties of Tarragona and Lleida, where it had initially been more difficult for the party to establish itself. However, it should be noted that the electoral results of CDC bear little relation to die growth of the party's organisation. The ratio of members to voters is similar to that of almost all the other political parties in Catalonia and in Spain.

CDC's electoral strength–or more precisely that of CiU–has fluctuated between 16.2 per cent of the votes in the general election of 1979, and 46.8 per cent in the 1984 Catalan election. In the last election the vote of CiU seemed to stabilise between 30 and 40 per cent of the total, depending on the type of elections. At the territorial level, CDC has its greatest electoral presence in the counties of Girona and in the inner counties of the district of Barcelona, with some spill over from these counties towards the nearest counties of Tarragona and Lleida. The

Table 5.2 Evolution of CDC's membership, 1974–96

Year		*Number of members*
1974	Founding Assembly	100/125
1975	Second General Assembly	400
1976	Third General Assembly (formal foundation)	600
1977	Fourth National Congress	2,650
1978	Fifth National Congress	6,700
1981	Sixth National Congress	8,870
1985	Seventh National Congress	10,000
1989	Eighth National Congress	15,000
1992	Ninth National Congress	20,000
1996	Tenth National Congress	26,000

Note: The membership figures have been calculated from the data given by CDC, and are based on the number of delegates in each congress according to the ratio of delegates to members

areas that CiU finds more difficult to penetrate are the south of Catalonia, where it faces more competition from other political options from the centre and/or the right, and the counties around Barcelona to the south coast, except for Barcelona itself, where CiU has achieved better results, with the main opposition coming from PSC. This party has been more deeply rooted in the more 'traditional' parts of Catalonia, which are less industrialised, with fewer social contrasts, and with fewer immigrants from other parts of Spain.

The sociological composition of CDC

Studies of the sociological composition of the membership bases of CDC show a fundamentally male party made up of those born in Catalonia, and a party with a high proportion of membership with higher education, especially in the inner circles of the organisational structure. The socioprofessional structure of the different levels of the party reveals support among those sections of the middle class (and, to some extent non-wage earners) to which, since the beginning, the project of CDC has been oriented. The Catholic roots are also a feature of both the membership's and most of its leaders' attitudes, despite the potential competition from other groups, above all its own electoral ally: the UDC. Finally, it must be emphasised that the records of the former political activity of the different members of the various bodies are relatively limited, but there are some important links between the members of CDC with the socio-economic elites of Catalonia. These links are particularly strong with the banking sector, which itself holds a key position in the Catalan economic structure as it relates to small and medium-sized enterprises, trade and the liberal professions, which together constitute the bulk of Catalonia's economic structure.

All these considerations on the sociological composition of the inner party levels are confirmed by the profile of the average CDC voter: a middle-aged male or female, born in Catalonia, who speaks Catalan and who feels Catalan, with a moderate level of education, a manager, or a white-collar or skilled worker, Catholic and considering themselves belonging to the centre of the political spectrum (Table 5.3, which refers to all CiU voters).

Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya

The historical evolution of ERC

ERC, founded in 1931, was the dominant party in Catalonia during the Republican period, when it won all the elections in Catalonia and formed the autonomous government of Catalonia until its abolition by Franco's regime. The origins of ERC lie in the merging of several republican and left-wing parties and political groups which included republican federalists, Catalan separatists, labour leaders, workers and intellectuals (Ivern 1989; Sallés 1986).

At the end of the Civil War, the majority of its members were dead or were

Table 5.3 Political and sociological variables of the voters of CiU, ERC and PSC, and of Catalunya as a whole 1995

	CiU (n = 453)	*ERC* (n = 110)	*PSC* (n = 213)	*Catalonia* (n = 1,598)
Sex: male	46.3	58.6	49.1	48.0
female	53.7	41.4	50.9	51.9
Age: 18–24	10.3	31.9	8.2	14.6
25–34	17.6	24.6	10.9	19.3
35–50	25.4	27.2	36.6	27.9
51–64	23.5	13.0	16.8	19.8
65 +	23.2	3.3	27.4	18.2
Born in Catalonia:				
both parents born in Cat.	52.1	69.2	17.8	36.6
one parent born in Cat.	11.1	15.0	8.1	19.4
both parents born outside Catalonia	17.1	10.7	18.7	10.6
Born outside Catalonia:				
both parents born in Cat.	0.7	1.6	0.1	0.9
one parent born in Cat.	1.6	—	—	0.8
both parents born outside Catalonia	16.5	3.5	55.2	31.6
Religion:				
Catholic	83.1	52.5	76.4	73.2
other religion	1.2	0.4	1.3	1.8
indifferent	9.9	20.3	9.8	10.0
not-believer	1.6	16.9	4.7	6.9
atheist	1.7	4.7	5.0	4.1
other answer	1.6	3.2	2.1	3.1
Level of studies:				
less primary	4.1	1.6	2.7	3.4
primary	60.7	40.3	64.1	58.0
secondary	18.1	39.8	12.7	19.1
further	13.2	17.9	7.0	13.0
DK/NA	4.0	0.4	13.5	6.6
Knowledge of Catalan language:				
spoken and written	56.7	79.6	35.1	48.2
spoken	35.9	15.7	20.9	29.8
understood, not spoken	6.9	1.6	37.3	19.1
not understood	0.4	1.6	5.7	2.4
Feeling of belonging:				
Only Spanish	7.4	1.6	20.2	13.7
More Spanish than Catalan	2.2	—	11.7	7.0
As Spanish as Catalan	36.2	12.6	47.7	40.9
More Catalan than Spanish	33.9	42.1	14.1	23.0
Only Catalan	19.8	42.1	5.3	13.4
DK/NA	0.5	1.6	0.9	2.0
Left–right axis:				
extreme left	3.8	21.3	9.7	8.5
left	16.4	61.0	65.1	31.6
centre	54.5	15.7	19.4	34.6
right	12.5	—	2.2	8.6
extreme right	1.4	—	—	1.8
DK/NA	11.4	2.0	3.5	14.9
Level of Catalan nationalism:				
Minimum 1	5.2	—	17.1	13.6
2	7.3	0.3	13.2	10.5
3	32.0	14.6	45.6	35.0
4	30.8	31.7	15.3	21.1
Maximum 5	23.4	53.5	6.5	15.8
DK/NA	1.3	—	2.3	4.1

Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas. Study no. 2,199, Nov.–Dec. 1995. Post-electoral of Catalonia.

forced into exile to avoid execution or imprisonment. Despite its almost total disappearance, ERC managed to survive during the Franco regime, acting either secretly underground or from exile. In 1974 it was re-formed by Heribert Barrera.

In the 1977 Spanish elections, ERC–still illegal–formed a coalition with PTE (Party of Work of Spain, Maoist) and other left-wing forces, under the name *Esquerra de Catalunya* (Left of Catalonia). It won one seat in the lower house (Barrera) and had one senator in the upper house. Some months after these elections, ERC was legalised. Its first important advance was in the 1980 Catalan elections, when ERC gained 8.9 per cent of the votes and Barrera was subsequently elected President of the Parliament of Catalonia. In the following Catalan elections, in 1984, ERC suffered a significant drop (to 4.4 per cent of the votes), confirming the tendency which had appeared in the previous elections (1982 general elections). This occurred as a consequence of the support given by ERC to the CiU government, which had been able to rule in Catalonia between 1980 and 1984, also with the help of UCD. The option taken by ERC led to a popular perception that the party was too linked to the centre-right bloc in the Parliament of Catalonia, instead of being part of the left bloc, with PSC and PSUC. After the Catalan elections of 1984, ERC made another political error: it decided to give its support to CiU once more, even though CiU already had an absolute majority in the Parliament of Catalonia. ERC entered the Pujol government and received the Department of Industry portfolio, which it would hold until 1987.

ERC's political disorientation led it to failure in the 1986 general election, when it lost the representation it had had in Madrid since 1982 (one deputy). In this climate, some pro-independence groups led by Angel Colom and Josep-Lluís Carod-Rovira decided to join ERC in order to articulate a pro-independence political proposal, using its name and its historical tradition. In 1987, Joan Hortalà left the Department of Industry and was elected general secretary of ERC, with the support of the newcomers from the pro-independence groups. Gradually, these tendencies would capture the high places in the party. In the 1988 Catalan elections, three of the six ERC deputies elected were openly pro-independence.

A few months later, in December 1989, in a very tense National Congress, the pro-independence wing finally imposed its political thesis. Colom was elected general secretary of ERC. The historical leader of the party, Barrera, was proclaimed *de facto* president of the party. Immediately afterwards, the more moderate section (led by Hortalà) left the party. Any potential damage was, however, overcome by the party's becoming the centre of the political debate. ERC became the point of focus when it forced the Parliament of Catalonia to approve a motion–with the votes of ERC, CiU and IC and the abstention of PSC–proclaiming that Catalonia maintained the right to self-determination. Also, the arrival of new members from different groups of the pro-independence movement (some of them after leaving behind a strategy of armed struggle and accepting democratic methods) limited the damage.

Simultaneously, the new pro-independence strategy of ERC allowed the party to reach out to new voters (especially youth). This caused the membership to

increase (to approximately 6,000 in 1992), and established an ERC presence in all the territories where the Catalan language is spoken: the Balearic Islands, the Valencia region, and Northern Catalonia the département of Pyrénées-Orientales in France), where it received, in March 1992, 1.1 per cent of the votes.

In the Catalan elections of the same year, ERC, with its pro-independence message, managed to focus the electoral campaign almost entirely around its political proposal, winning third place in the Parliament with more than 200,000 votes and eleven deputies. In the 1993 general elections, ERC recovered its representation in Madrid, with one deputy for Barcelona, and even presented an electoral list in the Balearic Islands, where it obtained 0.7 per cent of the votes.

In the 1995 Catalan elections, ERC slightly increased its score (9.5 per cent and thirteen deputies). Despite this small advance, all other Catalan parliamentary forces obtained more votes. In the same elections, CiU lost its absolute majority of seats and began to look for an ally in Parliament (Pallarès, Soler and Font 1996). This scenario opened two possibilities for ERC: to offer CiU a coalition based on Catalan nationalist forces against the prospect of a PP victory in the next general elections; or to collaborate with other parties to exercise strict control over the CiU government. A first step in this direction was taken when all the opposition parties (PSC, PP, IC and ERC) chose the president of PSC as the president of the Parliament of Catalonia. Despite this decision, inside ERC there were some doubts about the line taken, doubts that would last until the results of the general elections in March 1996 when Pujol would finally pronounce the political strategy of CiU.

The 1996 general elections gave victory to the PP but it would need the votes of CiU to form the government. ERC, although it kept one seat in the Spanish Congress of Deputies, suffered a setback since some people voted tactically for the PSC to prevent victory for PP or for the CiU, by supporting the Catalan nationalist force that was best placed.

ERC was faced with two new challenges. First, the electoral reversals of ERC meant that its political goals were not to be fulfilled soon. Second, the pact between CiU and PP in the Spanish Parliament (and its consequences in the Catalan Parliament) proved that ERC was unable to reach an overall agreement with CiU in Catalonia. Within this political context, problems arose inside ERC: some groups criticised the political stance of the general secretary and of the deputy in Madrid, pointing to an erratic strategy and a personalistic way of leading the party. Discontent increased throughout the party and forced the general secretary, the deputy in Madrid and some members of the Executive Committee to leave the party and to form a new party. Thus, in November 1996, the ERC National Congress chose a new Secretary-General (Carod-Rovira, the ERC spokesman in the Parliament of Catalonia), reformed ERC's statutes and approved a new political document in order to place the party firmly on the left of the Catalan political spectrum while maintaining its aim to achieve the independence of Catalonia within Europe.

The ideological profile of ERC, and the nature of its programme

ERC is a party which has historically been on the left of the Catalan party system.[2] However, since the re-establishment of democracy in the Spanish state, it has undergone an erratic ideological evolution. Although the founding Basic Principles approved in 1931 have continued to be valid, ERC rejected the Spanish Constitution, and integration in NATO, but it gave its parliamentary support to CiU, jointly with UCD.

This ideological dualism was a big threat for the continuity of the party as some pro-independence groups decided to join ERC, and to reinforce it with a new message. Since then, ERC has been readapting its political strategy, which clearly appears in the electoral manifestos of 1992 and 1993 (with the slogans 'Towards Independence' and For the Catalan People, for Catalonia'[3] respectively), and, above all, in the new statutes of the party (1992) and the Ideological Declaration approved at the end of 1993.

ERC, as is written in article 1 of its statutes, is a party which 'fights for the territorial unity and independence of the Catalan nation through the construction of its own state in the European framework'. It is defined as 'a democratic and non-dogmatic left-wing party whose references are the defence of the environment, human rights and the rights of national communities, and [which] promotes its ideology and political action in the social progress and national solidarity of the Catalan people'. ERC emphasises, in its document of ideological declaration, its will to defend the welfare state and the intervention of the state in the market in order to eliminate social and territorial inequalities.

Thus, the goal of ERC is to achieve independence for Catalonia (understood as those geographical areas where the Catalan language is naturally and historically spoken) through a strictly non-violent and democratic process. Independence will be proclaimed when the pro-independence parties have the majority of the votes in one of the regions into which the 'Catalan territory' is divided. This process is not contradictory to the process of the unification of Europe: ERC wants Catalonia to be recognised with the same rights and duties as other European nations.

The organisational structure of ERC

Since 1989, the recent process of renewal of ERC has implied a modification of its organisational structure. The new statutes (approved in 1992 and reformed in 1996) establish four levels of organisation: local, county, 'regional' and 'national' (i.e. Catalan). In each of them, all the members of the party have the right to participate and to choose directly the president of the corresponding Political Committee.

The supreme organ of the party is the National Congress, to which all members have the right to attend. The National Congress, with sessions every three years, lays down the political strategy of ERC and elects the president, the general secretary and the three general vice-secretaries.

The supreme organ between congresses is the National Council, and it has

the following functions: to adapt the strategy of the party to the present circumstances; to control the executive organs of the party; to approve the basic elements of the electoral manifestos; and to choose the political secretaries and technical secretaries. It is made up of the presidents of the County Federations; the representatives of the County Federations; the presidents of the Regional Federations of theJERC (Youth of ERC); twenty-five members elected by the National Congress; five members co-opted by the same National Council; the main public officers of ERC (deputies, important town councillors, etc.); and the whole Executive Committee of ERC.

The Executive Committee is the main governing body of ERC, being composed of the president (with only symbolic functions), the general secretary, the general vice-secretaries, the president of the National Council, the regional presidents; the president and vice-president of theJERC; the spokesmen of ERC in the different parliaments; four members elected by the National Council; the presidents of the Consultative and Advisory Councils; and the political secretaries. Inside this body, there is a Permanent Political Commission, a restricted organ which holds the real power within ERC.

The electoral results of ERC

ERC is a small party, but with some influence owing to its pivotal location inside Catalan politics. Its best results came in the 1995 elections with a clear pro-independence message (Table 5.1). ERC has quite a homogeneous territorial distribution, which, except in 1984, has allowed ERC parliamentary representation in all the electoral districts in all Catalan elections. However, there are some differences in the distribution of the ERC vote: while it is quite strong in the interior of Catalonia (where it is the second party behind CiU), it is very weak in those areas around Barcelona inhabited by Spanish-speaking immigrants. In general terms, then, the implantation of ERC is very similar to that of CiU; that is, where CiU is stronger, so is the ERC, but in different degrees. The main features of ERC's voters are shown in Table 5.3.

Conclusions

As we have seen, CiU and ERC represent two faces of Catalan nationalism, which is characterised by:

1 its historical tradition and continuity, which has its origins in the nineteenth century;
2 a nationalism based on an integrating force which makes it difficult to describe as an appeal to an ethnic vote;
3 pluralism, as not only are these two Catalan nationalist political forces (CiU and ERC), but all the political parties in Catalonia are influenced by Catalanism to a greater or lesser extent.[4]

CiU represents mainstream Catalan nationalism, well in tune with the 'average' Catalan voter. It is moderate in two senses. It is based on regionalism or a non-separatist nationalism, seeking only the recognition of Catalonia as a nation within the Spanish state, which is considered to be a plurinational state. CiU is also moderate in the social sense, because it basically represents the centre-right of the Catalan electorate. Through the CDC and CiU Catalan nationalism managed to change the centralist, unitary state into a decentralised one in the space of a few years, and to become a partner of the governing party (PSOE or PP) aiming at the modernisation of the Spanish economy and society.

ERC represents minoritarian Catalanism, much more to the left of the ideological spectrum and with the clear aim of independence for Catalonia. The ERC has the problems of facing a young electorate that is quite volatile and of being a small party surrounded by larger ones. As long as ERC cannot form a majoritarian Catalan government, it will have to conclude pacts with other parties in order to implement its political proposals. Therefore, given the Catalan power constellation, ERC faces a dilemma: to be loyal to its left-wing 'soul' (and give support to PSC and IC) or to be loyal to its nationalist 'soul' (and give support to CiU).

Notes

1 UDC is a Christian Democratic party which has its roots in republican times (Culla 1990).
2 Its political principles were the recognition of the national character of Catalonia and of human and civil rights, federation with the other Iberian countries and the socialisation of wealth. The social programme was based on trade union freedom, the right to strike and the defence of a minimum wage, an eight-hour working day, compulsory holidays, workers' insurance and retirement, worker schooling, etc.
3 This refers to the last words shouted out by Lluís Companys, President of the Catalan government during the Republic, moments before being executed by the Spanish army in 1940.
4 Compare the formal independence of the PSC and IC from their 'brother' Spanish parties. Also, all parties, except the PP, define Catalonia as a nation within the Spanish state.

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6

MODERATE NATIONALIST PARTIES IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

Partido Nacionalista Vasco and *Eusko Alkartasuna*

Beatriz Acha Ugarte and Santiago Pérez-Nievas

Basque nationalism is difficult to analyse owing to the lack of adequate theories that explain the rise and consolidation of nationalist parties in the area, and, more importantly, owing to the wide variety of nationalisms found. In the 1980s there were more than four different nationalist parties, each' with a very different outlook: the PNV (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco,* Basque Nationalist Party); EA (*Eusko Alkartasuna,* Basque Solidarity), which split from the former in 1986; EE (*Euskadiko Ezkerra,* Left of the Basque Country), a left-wing nationalist party from which another left-wing, more radically nationalist party, EuE (Basque Left) also split in 1993; and finally HB (*Herri Batasuna,* People's Unity), the only anti-system nationalist party in the Basque Country. Since EE has from 1993 been merged with the PSE (the Basque branch of the Spanish Socialist Party) and EuE has become, after an unsuccessful alliance with EA, an insignificant actor in Basque politics, only the PNV and EA, the two moderate competitors and most successful and politically most significant nationalist parties, will be analysed.[1]

The historical origins of Basque nationalism and the birth of the PNV

The historical origins of the PNV can be traced back to the end of the nineteenth century, when Sabino Arana Goiri founded in Bilbao the first *Euskeldun Batzokije,* an association of Basque men which aimed to preserve and promote the historically acquired rights of the Basque people, the old *fueros* (a set of laws which embodied the autonomy of the region from the Kingdom of Spain and which had finally been abolished in 1876), and which preceded the formation of the first PNV organisation, the *Bizkai Buru Batzar.* The PNV, the first and most enduring organisational form of nationalism in the Basque country, drew heavily on the

early ideas of Arana, the unquestioned founding father of the main ideological strand of Basque nationalist thought.

Worried by the effects of fierce industrialisation in Vizcaya, and anxious to offer a solution to the moral and social disruption it brought about,[2] Arana drew upon pre-existing myths in Basque history and culture (such as the noble status of all Bizkaian-Basque citizens in the Middle Ages, the region's independence from other countries and hence the 'purity' of the Basque race) and depicted his ideal Basque country as pure, Christian and independent. His pronounced *anti-maquetismo* (rejection of non-Basque industrial workers), which incited accusations of racism, formed part of a broader and deeper critique of the modern, liberal, progressive and supposedly only Spanish (therefore 'foreign') way of life of which immigrant workers, strong supporters of socialism, were the most prominent representatives. Although later neglected, Arana's first and deepest concern was religion: since religious practices and beliefs were being weakened as a result of growing Spanish influence, restoration could be achieved only by complete independence from the state which had 'invaded' the Basque territory by abolishing its old *fueros*. Only in the light of his almost fundamentalist religious world-view can Arana's slogan *Jaun Goikua eta Lagi Zarra* (God and Old Law) be fully understood.

The founder of the PNV, however, showed no similar ideological consistency with regard to the country's (i.e. the party's) political goals. The dilemma between a radical stance in favour of independence and a more 'realistic' strategy devoted to winning as much autonomy as possible within the Spanish state was a fundamental dimension of Arana's political heritage. This ambiguity about the party's ultimate goal soon came to be a constant and defining characteristic of the policies of the PNV.

In the early stages of its development, and under the leadership of Arana's brother, the party remained ideologically committed to the goal of independence. Soon afterwards, however, tensions emerged between the traditional, Aranaist wing and the more recently incorporated section of the *Sociedad Euskalerria,* led by the famous industrialist Ramón de la Sota. The arrival of the *Euskalerriacos* marked the beginning of continuous internal party strife between the two tendencies, which led to successive splits and re-mergers. Partly as a consequence of the PNV's need for financial support (which was basically provided by the newcomers), in practice its most radical objectives were gradually replaced by a more pragmatic approach to the issue of autonomy within the Spanish state. At the more visible level, however, the official stand of the party remained virtually unchanged for decades (De la Granja 1995).

In the early 1920s the first electoral successes took place, which however did not prevent the emergence of the first major split, when in 1921 the more radical, aranaists abandoned the party and organised around the group *Aberri*. The party continued to maintain the same, in many ways contradictory, policy, at the official level, it continued to adhere to the more radical goals, yet at the same time the party's day-to-day activities were focused on the much more modest objective of

autonomy. The years of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–30) were not easy for the party. Repression led it to concentrate on cultural activities (Mezo 1996) and paved the way for a reunification of the two wings. The new party programme adopted in the Assembly of Bergara did little to clarify its ultimate goals. For while the old slogan 'God and Old Law' was still maintained, in practice the party devoted itself to drafting and securing the passage by the Spanish Cortes of the *Estatuto deAutonomía,* something which did not take place until after the outbreak of the Civil War in July 1936. Nonetheless, the period of the Second Republic consolidated the party as the largest electoral force in the Basque Country.

The outbreak of the Civil War initially faced the PNV leadership with a dilemma: the party's religious, moral and social outlook was hardly compatible with that of the republican forces. But supporting the insurgents would have meant giving up any serious idea of self-government. The defeat of the Republican forces, with which the PNV had finally allied itself, forced most of the party elite into exile.

The Francoist period had long-lasting effects on Basque society. On the one hand, the region experienced a new phase of rapid economic growth that encouraged a second huge wave of immigration, and helped reinforce the already different feelings of belonging and identity, and, in a way, the polarisation of Basque society. On the other hand and perhaps more importantly, the Francoist regime reacted with indiscriminate repression to the first serious violent actions of ETA.[3] This led to social mobilisations that were met with further repression, thus igniting a vicious circle of confrontation that would last well beyond the end of the Francoist period.

With regard to the PNV, the physical division of the leadership, with some of its members in exile and others working in the clandestine units within the country, and the problem of fierce competition that the creation of the much more radical ETA represented for the nationalists, all worked in favour of creating different conceptions of the PNV's future attitude towards the Spanish state and, in a word, of the party itself. Nevertheless, for decades the PNV remained loyal to the basic ideological core of Arana's thought, and internal tensions became visible only after Franco's death in 1975.

The PNV's political strategy and electoral performance from the beginning of democracy to the split of 1986

The PNV held its first congress in March 1977 and defined the main lines of its political programme. The party combined its demand for the restoration of the *fueros* with an aspiration for future integration into the European Community. In the socio-economic sphere it adopted a 'radical moderate' programme that proposed a 'third way' between socialism and capitalism (Letamendía 1994a:27). This congress also served to consolidate the position of a new elite at the central party level: Carlos Garaikoetxea, a businessman from Navarra, was elected president of the party's National Executive. He and Xabier Arzallus, an ex-Jesuit

and also a member of the Executive and the future spokesman for the party in the Spanish Congress, were seen as representatives of the more open, Christian Democrat tradition within the party, somewhat removed from the more radically nationalist, socially conservative, and mildly anti-capitalist Aranaist tradition (Zirakzadeh 1991; Unzueta 1987).

Although the PNV had recommended its followers to abstain in the earlier referendum of 1976 on the Law of Political Reform, the party decided to participate in the elections of 1977. Given that during the previous decade nationalist mobilisation had been mainly led by the more radical forces to the left of the PNV, the party's electoral success (Table 6.1), which consolidated it as a crucial actor, came as a surprise (Ross 1996; Sullivan 1986). A major factor in the spectacular recovery of the PNV after the dictatorship was the rebuilding of the party at its roots, not only as a political organisation but also as a cultural one through the extensive network of *batzokis* (leisure and cultural centres attached to the party's local assemblies) which began following the Francoist law of associations of 1974 (Zirakzadeh 1991; Díez-Medrano 1995).

Throughout the constitutional negotiations the party adhered to *foralismo,* inclusion of the *fueros* in the Constitution, which would have meant the implicit recognition of the 'sovereignty' of the Basque people, who would have consented to forming part of the state through the old formula of the 'Pact' with the Crown. The PNV sought legal recognition of these rights that would not be derived from the Constitution itself but that would be prior to it. This formula was unacceptable to the UCD government; while it was willing to include the *fueros,* their legitimacy would flow solely from the Constitution (Letamendía 1994a:199–203). When this formula was eventually incorporated into the constitutional text, the PNV abstained in the parliamentary vote on the Constitution, a position apparently not unanimously supported by all its leaders. It recommended that its voters abstain in the forthcoming 1978 referendum.[4] The growing climate of violence in the Basque Country may well have constrained the strategies of both the central government and the PNV.[5]

One month later, in the constitutional referendum, high levels of abstention in the Basque Country illustrated that the PNV had become the most influential political party in the Basque Country and that no settlement for the future self-government of the region could be achieved without its approval.

Negotiations over the Statute of Autonomy began as soon as the Constitution was passed. During this new round of negotiations both the party's leadership and the government became aware of the greater bargaining power of the PNV due to the outcome of the referendum in the Basque Country, and the growth of the anti-system vote, represented by HB[6] (Table 6.1). All this helped the party maintain a firm stand throughout the negotiating process. The final version of the Statute was considered satisfactory by the party leadership, as it included two of the PNV's most controversial demands: the provision of an autonomous police force for the Basque Country and the *Concierto Económico,* an economic agreement providing the Basque Country with a high degree of fiscal autonomy.

Table 6.1 Results of general elections in the Basque Country, 1977–96

	1977	1979	1982	1986	1989	1993	1996
PNV	29.3 (8)	27.6 (7)	31.2 (8)	26.4 (6)	23.0 (5)	24.0 (5)	26.6 (5)
EA–EUA	—	—	—	—	11.3 (2)	9.6 (1)	8.4 (1)
EE	6.1 (1)	8.0 (1)	7.7 (1)	9.2 (2)	8.9 (2)	—	—
HB	4.4[a]	15.0 (3)	14.8 (2)	17.8 (4)	17.0 (4)	14.4 (2)	12.7 (2)
Total nationalist[b]	39.8 (9)	50.6 (11)	54.4 (11)	53.4 (12)	60.2 (13)	48.0 (8)	47.7 (8)
PSOE	26.5 (7)	19.0 (5)	29.3 (8)	26.4 (7)	21.2 (6)	24.2 (7)	23.6 (5)
AP–PP	4.4 (1)	3.4	11.6 (2)	10.6 (2)	9.5 (2)	14.2 (2)	18.9 (5)
UCD/CDS	12.8 (4)	17.0 (5)	0/1.8	5.0	3.5	0.7	—
PCE–IU	4.5	4.6	1.7	1.2	3.0	6.2	9.5 (1)
Total state-wide[b]	48.2 (12)	44.0 (10)	44.4 (10)	43.2 (9)	37.2 (8)	45.3 (11)	52.0 (11)

Source: BDISE Data Base (*Ministerio Portavoz del Gobierno*); the number of seats are from *Departamento de Interior del Gobierno Vasco* (1977 and 1982), from *Anuario El País* (1986, 1989, and 1993) and by *El País* (1979 and 1996).

Notes: The figures given are the percentage of the valid vote and, in parentheses, the number of seats gained in the Spanish Parliament. The total number of seats in the Spanish Congress is 350. AP-PP=*Alianza Popular–Partido Popular* (Popular Alliance–People's Party); UCD/CDS=*Union de Centro Democrático/Centro Democrático y Social* (Union of the Democratic Centre/Social and Democratic Centre Party); PCE-IU=*Partido Comunista de España/Izquierda Unida* (Spanish Communist Party/United Left)

[a] HB did not exist in 1977; the electoral result shown in the table refers to ESB (*Euskadiko Sozialista Biltzarra,* Basque Socialist Convergence) and ANV (*Acción Nacionalista Vasca*, Basque Nationalist Action); two of the parties that formed the coalition known as HB the following year

[b] The total percentage of votes obtained by both the nationalist and the state-wide parties is a mere sum of the percentages won by the parties that are shown in the table. This is why the sum of the two indicators is not equal to 100 per cent. In most elections (but particularly in the early years of democracy) there were other smaller nationalist and state-wide parties competing. These measures are meant to be only an approximation of the balance kept between the two types of vote throughout the period.

In the years 1979–80, the party experienced its first important internal crisis of the post-Francoist period. This revolved around ideological differences as well as rival organisational models between the modernists (the 'Christian Democrats') and the traditional, Aranaist wing of the party. The two tendencies were divided by their different conceptions of the party's relations with the central state but also by other issues. The more radical nationalists in the party tended to be more socially conservative while also adopting a mildly anti-capitalist rhetoric. The crisis ended when a number of the Aranaists were expelled from the party, signifying a partial success for the modernists.

The first elections for the Basque Parliament were held in March 1980. The PNV's position as the chief negotiator with the centre was rewarded as it received 38 per cent of the vote (Table 6.2). HB's decision not to take up its seats in Parliament meant that in practice over the next four years the PNV was able to govern the region as if it had an absolute majority, and so to strengthen its institutional position. Despite the positive expectations this situation created, during the first legislature the PNV had to face both internal and external problems. The latter emerged

Table 6.2 Results of Regional elections in the Basque Country, 1980–94

	1980	1984	1986	1990	1994
PNV	38.1 (25)	42.0 (32)	23.7 (17)	28.5 (22)	29.3 (22)
EA	—	—	15.8 (13)	11.4 (9)	10.1 (8)
EE	9.8 (6)	8.0 (6)	10.1 (9)	7.8 (6)	—
HB	16.6 (11)	14.6 (11)	17.5 (13)	18.3 (13)	16.0 (11)
Total nationalist[a]	64.5 (42)	65.2 (39)	67.1 (53)	66.0 (50)	55.4 (41)
PSOE	14.2 (9)	23.1 (19)	22.1 (19)	19.9 (16)	16.8 (16)
AP–PP	4.8 (6)	9.4 (7)	4.9 (2)	8.2 (6)	14.2 (6)
UCD/CDS	8.5 (2)	—	3.5	0.7	—
PCE–IU	4.0 (1)	1.4	0.5	1.5	9.0 (6)
UA	—	—	—	1.4 (3)	2.7 (5)
Total state-wide[a]	31.5 (18)	33.9 (26)	31.0 (21)	30.2 (25)	42.7 (33)

Source: BDISE Data Base (*Ministerio Portavoz del Gobierno*)
Notes: The figures given are the percentage of the valid vote and, in parentheses, the number of seats gained in the Basque Parliament.
[a]The total percentage of votes received by both the nationalist and the state-wide parties is a mere sum of the percentages received by the parties that are shown in the table. Therefore the sum does not add up to 100 per cent since in most elections (and particularly those held in the early years of democracy) there were other smaller nationalist and state-wide parties competing.

when in 1981 the UCD and the PSOE agreed to pass the LOAPA or 'Devolution Standardisation Act'. In essence, this law was intended to slow down the speed of transfers to the fast-track regions (Catalonia and the Basque Country) and link them to that of the slow-track ones.[7] The LOAPA provoked strong opposition in the Basque Country, and although most of the articles in the law were subsequently rejected as unconstitutional, it helped heighten the level of confrontation between the party and the centre.

As for the PNV's internal problems, these years saw some of the crucial events which later provoked the party's most severe internal crisis and the eventual split into two different organisations. The most widely accepted interpretation of this crisis highlights the importance of a personality clash between the *lehendakari* or president of the Basque government, Carlos Garaikoetxea, and the president of the party's National Executive, Arzallus. Over and above this leadership conflict, however, the split also derived from a number of confrontations within the party.

First, there was the crisis provoked by an agreement made in 1983 by the leadership of the party's central office with the *Alianza Popular* (AP), which by then had replaced the UCD. The Navarrese section of the PNV refused to back this agreement and was expelled from the party. Garaikoetxea, however, showed his sympathy for them, so giving a first sign of his disagreement with the leadership of the National Executive, the *Euskadi Buru Batzar* (EBB).

A second issue was the distribution of competences between party and government. The unmodified organisational structures inherited by the post-Francoist PNV contained very strict rules about the incompatibility between

holding public office and holding party office, simultaneously. As a result of this, after the party won power, there were very few mechanisms of communication between the party organisation and the party in government. In addition, the party central office continued to carry out tasks corresponding to a party in opposition, at times openly opposing the policies of the party in government, in particular those regarding Garaikoetxea's plans for industrial adjustment.

These different ideas about the most appropriate economic policies took the form of a dispute over the LTH (Law of Historical Territories), which was meant to distribute fiscal powers between the newly established regional government and the representatives of the provinces *(diputaciones)* that had traditionally been the real holders of fiscal sub state autonomy. The Basque government defended greater powers for the regional level of government while the party preferred to maintain the strength of the *diputaciones.*

In 1984 Garaikoetxea was forced to resign by the party leadership led by Arzallus. Two years later Garaikoetxea led the split from the PNV and created a new party, *Eusko Alkartasuna.* One unexpected result of this confrontation was that some of the old Aranaists who had previously opposed Arzallus followed Garaikoetxea; the result was that EA became a strange mixture of the economic interventionism and organisational principles that Garaikoetxea had defended and the more radically nationalist positions of the Aranaist group.

Profiles of the PNV's, and EA's programmes: two nationalist parties

Mainly as a consequence of the split, which meant that eleven PNV MPs shifted to the EA, but also owing to concern about its poor electoral performance in the 1986 general elections, the PNV called early regional elections. Their outcome (Table 6.2) not only revealed EA's ability to secure a strong following but also initiated a trend towards territorial specificity in both parties' electoral distribution.

Table 6.3 Electoral trends in the three provinces of the Basque Autonomous Community

	Alava			*Guipúzcoa*			*Vizcaya*		
	1986	*1990*	*1994*	*1986*	*1990*	*1994*	*1986*	*1990*	*1994*
PNV	20.0	23.0	21.8	16.0	21.0	22.3	29.0	35.0	35.1
HB	13.0	13.0	10.1	22.0	24.0	23.1	16.0	16.0	13.4
EE	11.0	7.0	—	12.0	9.0	—	10.0	7.0	—
EA	15.0	8.0	7.2	23.0	18.0	16.7	12.0	8.0	7.1
PSOE	25.0	21.0	15.6	20.0	19.0	16.4	23.0	20.0	17.4
PP	7.0	11.0	15.9	4.0	7.0	11.9	5.0	9.0	15.0
CDS	8.0	2.0	—	2.0	—	—	3.0	—	—
UA	—	11.0	18.5	—	—	0.3	—	—	0.3

Source: For 1986 and 1990, Llera (1994:40). For 1994, Anuario Estadístico Vasco, Vitoria-Gasteiz (1994:550)
Note: The figures given are percentages of the total valid vote

Table 6.4 Sociological profile of some nationalist and state-wide parties in the Basque Country, 1990

	PNV	*EA*	*HB*	*PSOE*	*PP*
Sex:					
male	51	48	59	58	65
female	49	52	41	42	35
Age:					
18–24	8	18	17	7	18
25–34	10	22	42	22	10
34–49	33	22	27	23	41
50–64	30	14	10	25	12
64+	19	24	3	24	20
Education:					
none	15	11	9	27	—
primary	52	44	33	46	51
secondary	8	11	17	7	8
high school	14	17	22	12	18
university	10	19	17	9	24
Social class:					
working-class	23	17	23	32	8
low-middle	32	34	42	46	39
middle	31	24	28	14	23
medium to upper	4	18	6	7	—
upper	10	6	2	1	30

Source: Llera (1994)

The PNV secured its position in Vizcaya, while EA became stronger in Guipúzcoa, and outside the Basque Autonomous Community, in Navarra.

During the period of the third Basque legislature, usually defined as one of party system consolidation (Llera 1994), a coalition government of the PNV, EE and the PSOE was formed which widened the gap between the programmes of the two moderate nationalist parties. First, EA has always been more radically nationalist, explicitly seeking the creation of 'an independent and united Basque state' and recognition of the right to self-determination. The use of these concepts clearly distinguishes it from the PNV, which at that time was clearly advocating the full implementation of the Statute of Autonomy, which it considered to be 'an adequate instrument to satisfy this country's demands for self-government', while EA had a more ambivalent position towards the Statute. Nevertheless, the PNV never formally abandoned its nationalist (ultimately, independentist) orientation, and its more moderate stance may in part be derived from its awareness of the growing need to govern in coalitions with other non-nationalist parties that accept Basque self-government but within the confines of the Statute.

EA also stands further to the left than the PNV, which belongs to the Christian

Table 6.5 Regional/national self-identification of the voters of different parties in the Basque Country in 1979, 1989 and 1992

	1979					*1989*							*1992*							
	HB	*EE*	*PNV*	*PSOE*	*UCD*	*Poll*	*HB*	*EE*	*EA*	*PNV*	*PSOE*	*PP*	*Poll*	*HB*	*EE*	*EA*	*PNV*	*PSOE*	*PP*	*Poll*
Only Spanish	2	—	6	28	43	14	—	3	2	3	20	20	9	—	1	1	5	21	28	9
More Spanish than Basque	2	—	3	14	27	6	2	1	1	2	7	—	4	—	9	—	4	24	43	11
As much Spanish as Basque	4	19	21	38	27	26	6	32	11	32	60	65	34	9	41	24	36	47	25	38
More Basque than Spanish	14	12	16	11	—	12	15	34	32	20	8	8	18	8	42	29	39	4	4	21
Only Basque	77	65	52	7	3	38	74	26	51	42	5	8	31	82	6	46	16	3	—	20
N	(97)	(57)	(236)	(85)	(30)	(1,011)	(247)	(113)	(162)	(390)	(270)	(110)	(1,400)	(131)	(66)	(72)	(284)	(160)	(35)	(1,489)

Source: 1979 data: Linz (1986); 1989 data: Llera (1994); 1992 data: CIS (Estudio 2,040, November 1992)
Note: All three surveys refer to the vote for regional (Basque Parliament) elections; however, the 1979 and 1989 surveys are of voting intentions whereas the 1992 survey is of vote cast

Table 6.6 Party vote by knowledge of the Basque language, 1991

	PNV	*PSOE*	*HB*	*EA*	*PP*	*EE*	*UA*	*Poll*
Do not understand	46	91	24	26	59	41	83	54
Understand	10	2	14	7	8	12	13	9
Speak some	9	6	15	17	25	18	—	13
Speak a lot	35	1	47	49	8	29	4	23
N	390	270	247	162	110	113	48	1,400

Source: Llera (1994)

Democratic family. EA began by defining itself as 'a modern and progressive party', which 'assumes, as an essential part of its political thought…the traditional objectives of social democracy' (1st Congress, 1987). EA's clear self-definition in socio-economic terms is motivated by the need to find a niche in party competition, and to distinguish itself from its closest rival, the PNV. Nevertheless, the economic dimension is not crucial to either party's ideological definition, and only very loosely may they be characterised as centre-left (EA) and centre-right (PNV) parties.

On 'new politics' issues, both EA and PNV agree on, and support, the implementation of policies aimed at gender equality and solidarity with Third World countries. EA has adopted a tougher position against nuclear energy and in favour of pacifism,[8] and, as a party in opposition, has encouraged the formation of alternative channels for political participation. Although the PNV and EA belong to different party groups in the European Parliament, both consider European integration to be positive for the Basque Country, and support a model of Europe based on the regions, and not the existing state boundaries.

The EA and PNV, as representatives of moderate Basque nationalism, both have long criticised ETA's criminal actions and HB's support for these. The PNV, and notably the *lehendakari* José Antonio Ardanza, played a major role in the process leading to the signing in 1988 of a unanimous declaration against terrorism by all the Basque political parties with the exception of HB, constituting a permanent platform for all parties to discuss solutions to the problem of violence. In this the PNV sought to free itself from accusations that in the past the party had shown ambiguity with respect to terrorism. However, although they always clearly condemned terrorism, EA leaders argued that 'together with negotiations to end ETA's activities, it is necessary to start political negotiations among all representative Basque parties in order to find the best political solution to the Basque Country's aspirations' (2nd Congress, 1989). EA's demand that the text should include references to the mechanisms for further developing the process of devolution led it to hesitate to sign the pact, although it finally agreed to do so. Despite EA's greater insistence on the need to discuss political solutions to the problem of violence, the PNV also shares this concern.

Table 6.7 PNV and EA membership by provinces or historic territories

	PNV		EA
	1985	*1996*	*1996*
Vizcaya	23,500	24,152	6,883
Guipúzcoa	8,000	4,036	5,496
Alava	1,500	2,132	1,312
Navarra	1,000	167	1,120
Total	34,000	30,487	14,811

Source: For 1985, Letamendía (1994b:52); the data for 1996 were provided by the parties themselves
Note: Both parties have a few additional members in the French Basque Country, and in a few cities outside the Basque Country

In short, the differences in programme discussed here are not related to what either party regards as fundamental to its ideology; to a great extent they are due to the different institutional positions each has occupied since 1986 (the PNV has always been in power whereas EA has remained in opposition for most of this period) and due to EA's need to differentiate itself from the PNV.

After four years of government by a coalition of the PNV, PSOE and EE, in 1990 elections were called in the Basque Country which led to the formation of a short-lived all-nationalist government comprising the PNV, EA and EE. Strong disagreements between the two moderate nationalist parties quickly led to the breakdown of the coalition, and EA's substitution by the PSOE. The disagreements arose from the different strategies. The PNV Virtually dropped references to independence, or even to possible extensions of autonomy–and derided EA, now its most direct opponent, as irresponsible for voicing them' (Ross 1996:500). The strategic change was rewarded with a 5 per cent increase of the vote at the 1990 regional elections (Table 6.2). Practically the same percentage was lost by EA, which had held its second congress in 1989, when again it defined its economic principles in social democratic terms, while stressing the differences between its programme and the PNV's (Letamendía 1994b).

The PNV-PSOE coalition, which for four years seemed to have worked well in terms of political stabilisation, continued after the 1994 elections, this time along with the EA. Since then, disagreements between the two nationalist parties have decreased. EA's own negative evaluation of its declining electoral performance together with its new institutional position could even lead to strategical convergence.

Profile of PNV and EA voters

Research on the sociological profiles of the various Basque political parties' electorates, and specifically of those of the PNV and EA, has not been able to identify major differences between them. In terms of age, education and class profiles, the electorate of EA is basically younger than that of the PNV, slightly

more educated, and slightly better off economically (Table 6.4). This, together with the greater appeal of EA among students and, generally speaking, among those in the active population (Llera 1994), suggests that this party could more easily join the new politics party family than could the traditional PNV, were it not that these issues play such an insignificant role in the party's defining principles.

In terms of the intensity and scope of nationalist sentiments, the EA's electorate seems to be more radical than the PNV's. Data from the 1990s (Table 6.5) show that, in terms of feelings of belonging and self-identification, significantly more EA's voters consider themselves only to be Basques than do PNV voters, while nearly all HB voters consider themselves exclusively Basque. Hence EA is supported by the 'more nationalist' voters of both nationalist parties.

A similar picture is obtained from an analysis of voters' degree of knowledge of the Basque language. PNV voters on average have a much weaker command of it, in terms of reading and speaking, than those of the EA or HB, while only a few PSOE voters understand Basque. As the literature suggests, a positive relationship exists between the formation of feelings of national/regional identity and the ability to speak the (distinctive) language of that region/nation. Linz, for example, has shown that 'practically nobody who speaks Basque identifies him/herself as Spanish or more Spanish than Basque' (Linz 1986:51). We can therefore conclude that, generally, EA is supported by voters with a more nationalist, radical profile than those who support the PNV

Not surprisingly, the EA's more radical message on the nationalist issue receives most electoral support in Guipúzcoa (Table 6.3), the province where demands for self-government are most radical, the call for independence strongest, and that has by far the highest proportion of Basque speakers (Llera 1994:93).

Membership, organisational structures, leadership and factions

Above, we have mentioned some of the most important internal conflicts in the PNV in the post-Francoist period. While in most cases there has been an important ideological dimension to the conflict, in others the confrontation related rather to a struggle between competing spheres of the party structure. But in nearly all cases there has been some type of organisational dimension to these conflicts.

The 1977 PNV Congress readopted virtually unchanged the Statutes of Organisation that the party had approved in 1933 (De la Granja 1995). These defined the party as a confederation of regional and local organisations, sovereign in their own sphere and united in a confederate pact. The choice of this structure responded to ideological factors: the specific weight that the legacy of the *fueros* had in the party and the corresponding importance of the distinct traditions of the four historic territories (Vizcaya, Guipúzcoa, Alava and Navarra).

In accordance with these statutes, the PNV was organised, and still is, at three levels: the local or municipal level; the 'regional' level (four assemblies, one for each historic territory); and the national (i.e. Basque-country) level.

The party's constitution is expressly governed by the principle of 'subsidiarity'; that is, that decisions should be taken at the lowest possible level. Yet there have been naturally conflicting interpretations of this principle at different levels. The statutes readopted in 1977 also stated that, owing to the confederate structure of the party, each regional assembly should enjoy equal representation (fifteen members each) in the National Assembly, regardless of the number of activists in each region. This parity of representation was reproduced at the lower regional level. Quite obviously this has led to substantial distortions between the wishes expressed by the membership at the base and the decisions eventually taken by any of the four regional assemblies or the National Assembly (Unzueta 1987; Letamendía 1994b). Because of these peculiar mechanisms in the decision-making process, the party has at times been accused (in particular by the dissidents who left the organisation in 1986) of suffering from a lack of democratic procedures. The rather uneven territorial distribution of the party's membership (Table 6.7) has made the handling of this confederate structure even more complicated.

Between meetings of the National Assembly, the National Executive (EBB) is the highest authority in the party. The president of the EBB is regarded as the party's leader. Until the organisational reform of 1987, the EBB was made up of twelve members chosen by and from the regional executives (three from each regional executive). These in turn elected one of their number as the president of the National Executive. These first statutes made no provision for the holding of regular party congresses.

The 1977 statutes included a strict rule of incompatibilities between the holding of public and party office which has largely been maintained in subsequent reforms, although now the assembly to which the public office holder is responsible is allowed to lift this ban. Criticisms from within and outside the party say that this means that the rule of incompatibilities is a mere façade. However, at some crucial levels (the EBB in relation to the Basque regional government for instance) the rule has usually been enforced.

During the late 1970s an ideological conflict developed between the Aranaists and the modernist wings of the party that was also linked to the different political experiences of the party activists during the dictatorship: the modernist, pragmatic approach was predominant among the PNV leaders in exile, while the Aranaist approach seems to have enjoyed greater support among those who had worked clandestinely in the Basque Country (Zirakzadeh 1991). Once the dictatorship came to an end and the party began to face the new challenges of democratic competition, the two ideological tendencies began to defend different models of party organisation, with the Aranaists stressing the sovereignty of the local and regional assemblies against the plans for thorough reform that Arzallus seems to have had (Unzueta 1987; Pérez-Agote 1987; Letamendía 1994a). Paradoxically, despite Arzallus' eventual victory, the organisational structure of the party remained virtually unchanged.

In the process that led to the party split in 1986 organisational tensions were

even more significant. The expulsion of the Navarrese section of the party can be interpreted as a renewed attempt by the EBB to gain decision-making power at the expense of the lower levels of the party. The organisational problems of the party became most obvious with regard to relations between the party and government. Garaikoetxea, the first *lehendakari*, was temporarily relieved of the obligation to adhere to party discipline and enjoyed considerable autonomy when forming the first regional government. This was made up of professionals with only a short history of party membership, something which seems to have been received with suspicion in some of the party's ranks. No member of this first government had authority in the most important party organs. As a result, an ever-widening gap developed between the government and the party central office. After a series of unsuccessful attempts by the National Executive to bring Garaikoetxea back under party discipline the latter was forced to resign, leading to the definitive split in the PNV.

The organisational structures adopted by the EA and PNV confirm that political elites saw organisational problems as one of the causes of the crisis. On the one hand, EA's constitution differs from the PNV's prior to the crisis in a number of important respects. While EA is also organised into three levels, it does not have a confederate structure; thus greater power has been given to the national level. The supreme organs of representation and decision-making are the National Congress, held every three years, and the National Assembly, held at least three times a year. In both assemblies the membership are represented through a system of proportional representation. The National Executive runs the party on a day-to-day basis and is chaired by the party's president. Both the National Executive and the president are elected by the Party Congress. Rules regarding incompatibilities of public and private office are less strictly defined than in the PNV Garaikoetxea, for instance, has been a member of the European Parliament while also being the party's president.

Nor, on the other hand, did the PNV go through the crisis unscathed. The 1987 Party Congress approved a major organisational reform. While it maintained the confederate organisation and the sovereignty of the lower assemblies in their sphere of competences, reforms were introduced which transformed the organisation more into a 'single' party. The National Assembly combined the old parity of the historic territories or regions with the introduction of some proportional counterweights.[9] The presidents of the regional executives are now automatically members of the EBB, but the remaining members of the EBB cannot be chosen from these regional executives in order to avoid multiple, competing mandates; furthermore, these remaining members are chosen by the National Assembly and not by the regional executives. The members of the EBB now have responsibility for different policy areas, thus facilitating the supervision of the regional, provincial, and municipal governments. The EBB's president is no longer chosen by the EBB but by the General Assembly, or Party Congress. Yet the introduction of a Party Congress has not modified the position of the National Assembly as the supreme organ of representation and decision-making.

In short, the new reforms strengthened the national level at the expense of the regional tier. The latter, however, has retained important prerogatives such as the right to design its own internal organisation.

In conclusion, EA represents a more centralised form of party organisation, but the PNV has also shown a tendency towards greater centralisation even if this has involved considerable trauma within the party. EA leadership is also more centralised, owing to the circumstances in which the party was born: the gathering of various disaffected but distinct tendencies around an outgoing leader, Garaikoetxea. The PNV has a more dispersed style of leadership which is above all symbolised in the two-headed structure of the party's highest authority: on the one hand Arzallus, the EBB's president, and on the other, the *lehendakari*, currently José Antonio Ardanza. Arzallus is unquestionably the most influential leader, followed by the *lehendakari* and the remaining members of the EBB.

As far as party membership is concerned, Table 6.7 clearly shows that if the PNV was greatly overrepresented in Vizcaya before the 1986 split, this difference with the other three provinces has become even more dramatic since then, even when the size of their respective populations is taken into account. The split had a clear territorial dimension with Guipúzcoa and Navarra remaining as strongholds of EA. Finally, the ratio of members to voters of the EA is higher than for the PNV (Tables 6.1 and 6.2).

Conclusions

If we had to highlight one single explanatory variable for the success of nationalist parties in the Basque Country, it would be the well-entrenched sense of regional identity of the Basque population. From the data given in Table 6.5 it can be seen that from the late 1970s until the early 1990s, nearly half the population identified themselves either as only Basque or more Basque than Spanish. This strong sense of identity goes back far into the past, as does its first party organisational expression: the PNV The emergence of nationalism (the early politicisation of identity) was linked in the first place to the rapid process of industrialisation and the social disruption this brought about. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the violent tactics adopted by ETA and the fierce repression with which the Francoist regime responded to these, put into motion a process of radicalisation that helped reinforce a section of the population's loyalty to Basque nationalist forces. The extreme polarisation of Basque society reached a peak sometime in the late 1970s, when more than half the population were divided between two extreme identity poles, i.e. feeling only Spanish or only Basque. Although since then the more exclusive identities have declined, regional identity remains a defining feature of Basque political life.

In pursuit of the goal of greater autonomy only one nationalist party has followed an unquestionable anti-system strategy, namely HB. EA and especially the PNV have followed an incremental and at times contradictory strategy: without renouncing the ultimate goal of recognition of the Basque people's

right to self-determination, they have concentrated most of their day-to-day activity on articulating demands for greater decentralisation. The still open-ended process of decentralisation in Spain, together with the constitutional obstacles to achieving that ultimate goal, allow these parties to constantly renew their message and thus maintain their strength. Up to now their policy success (the degree to which their demands have been met by the central government) does not seem to have had any electoral costs (if both parties' level of support is taken together), and it is uncertain whether this will change in the near future. If we consider each party separately, it is clear that the PNV has proved the more successful, winning back a great deal of the vote that had initially been lost to EA. This has happened for two reasons.

First, although both parties maintain a similar position on the national question (an ultimate recognition of the Basque people's right to self-determination), EA has a more radical discourse in comparison to the more ambiguous stance of the PNV. This has allowed the PNV to obtain the support of a wider spectrum of voters in relation to the national question, drawing support from voters with a dual identity. Although this has been at the root of some of the PNV's internal problems, it has also been one of the keys to its electoral success well into the 1990s. In the context of a slow but steady process of depolarisation in Basque society, the PNV's strategy has brought it a wider following than the firmer, less compromising position of EA.

The second reason for the PNV's success is the party's institutional position, as the senior partner in all the Basque governments (since the 1986 split). The potential electoral cost of compromising with the PSOE has obviously been much smaller than the advantages derived from its position of government party.

Yet EA's entry into the regional government in 1994 could favour a process of convergence and collaborational practice with the PNV, although it might be too early to talk of joint action. However, although they are not crucial to either party's main ideological core, some differences in programme have existed, and still exist, which may have had an impact on the electoral profiles of both parties.

To conclude, the depolarising tendency in Basque society and its consequences for the national as against regional identity structure might be having an impact, not only on the balance of power between the various nationalist parties, but also on the balance between these and the state-wide parties. The 1996 general elections were the first in which the state-wide parties obtained more electoral support than the nationalist camp. This was due to the overall rise of the *Partido Popular* (PP) in Spain as a whole (as well as in the Basque Autonomous Community), and to the good electoral performance of IU (United Left) in the Basque Country. If these trends continue (both the modest growth of the PNV and that of the PP and the IU), one can expect an expansion of feelings of dual identity and a reduction in exclusive feelings of belonging.

As a result of these elections the PNV signed a pact with the PP, the new party in power in Madrid, by which the nationalists committed themselves to supporting the new government in the Spanish Cortes in exchange for new concessions in

the decentralisation process (a new agreement on greater fiscal autonomy has already been agreed upon). The consequences of this strategy for the PNV as well as for the expansion of the PP in the Basque Country, and for the rest of the Basque political forces, nationalist and non-nationalist alike, remain to be seen.

NOTES

1 HB, in spite of its political significance, will not be analysed given the intrinsic theoretical and empirical difficulties in analysing of parties which to some extent support violent, anti-democratic strategies, but which are also part of a broader, not easily defined social and political movement.

2 Theories which stress the significance of the region's economic dependence are of little use to explain the emergence of nationalism in the Basque Country since it was in fact one of the richest regions of Spain at the time. Although the industrial–and social–transformation of Vizcaya at the time when Arana first denounced the excesses of modernisation is fundamental in explaining the rapid and widespread expansion of this doctrine, the founding father of Basque nationalism was not a convinced anti-capitalist, nor did he reject private property. Rather, he combined an idealistic vision of the pure, rural way of life with a more cautious attitude towards the ambiguous benefits of modernisation. A more comprehensive explanation for the emergence of Basque nationalism should therefore also take into account the climate of nationalist resurgence at the time. The influence of romantic Basque literature, which had already created some of the most enduring myths of Basque history, and the feeling of grievance held by large sectors of the population as a consequence of the abolition of *the fueros*, a highly valued symbol of Basque autonomy, paved the way for the extension of a new ideological formulation about feelings of discontent and displacement.

3 ETA emerged as an independent organisation in 1959. The original group had for a time been linked to EGI, the PNV's youth organisation, and emerged from the critical attitude that young nationalists had taken towards the PNV's apparent political passivity and the party's chauvinist position towards the issue of immigration; equally, the members of the new organisation placed a greater emphasis on the recovery of the Basque language than the PNV had previously done (Sullivan 1986; Mezo 1996). Lastly, ETA, like the Aranaist wing within the PNV itself, had a more uncompromising attitude towards the goal of independence (Díez-Medrano 1995:139), and did not approve of collaborating with other Spanish political forces. In time ETA began to link the national struggle to social demands. This led the organisation to give a Marxist veneer to its nationalist ideology, and to view its opposition to the central state as a struggle of 'national liberation' from an exploitative metropolis.

4 Another problem was the issue of Navarra. For the PNV, the fact that Navarra was defined as a separated entity from the Basque Autonomous Community became a source of permanent conflict and revindication against the state.

5 In 1977 ETA began to unfold a terrorist campaign that surpassed the more isolated attacks undertaken under the Francoist regime. Also, in the years following Franco's death the incapacity or unwillingness of the central government to stop terrorist attacks by the extreme right-wing groups, as well as various kinds of abuses perpetrated by the police forces in the Basque Country, contributed to this growing climate of violence.

6 HB was founded in 1978 as a coalition of radical left-wing nationalist parties. Later this political force linked itself to ETA-M (though not in a formal, declared way), becoming the political voice of othe most radical forms of Basque nationalism.

7 The Constitution of 1978 had set up two different routes to regional self-government ('slow-track' and 'fast-track' regions). The standard procedure was laid down in article

143; however, under article 151, any region could speed up the process of decentralisation under a special arrangement provided that this was endorsed by half the votes in a regional referendum. The procedure under article 151 also had the advantage of permitting the regions to claim in their draft statute the powers which the Constitution deliberately refrained from allotting to either the central or regional governments.

8 During the debate on the referendum on Spanish membership of NATO in 1986, officially the PNV had no position on the issue, although at the last minute the *Lehendakari* Ardanza (successor to Garaikoetxea) had recommended a positive vote, whereas the former president of the Basque government had shown his preference for a no vote.

9 From 1987 onwards fifteen representatives were to be chosen from each regional assembly, and another fifteen were to be shared by the four assemblies in relation to their number of activists. This proportionality has been reinforced in a subsequent partial reform adopted in 1992: twelve members from each regional assembly and fifteen for all.

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7

THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY

Development and change

James L.Newell

The Scottish National Party (SNP) articulates the demands of a nationalist movement whose antecedents stretch back at least to the beginning of the eighteenth century but which has aimed at secession only since World War I. Adopting as its strategy the election of MPs whose remit would be to sue for independence, the SNP remained electorally insignificant until the mid-1960s, since when it has won up to 30 per cent of the Scottish vote. This has had a considerable impact on the Labour Party, which now has a position on Scottish self-government that is much closer to that of the SNP than it has ever been before. As a party of the left, the SNP has an electoral base whose social characteristics appear, in some though not all respects, to be similar to those of Labour voters. Having suffered from considerable internal conflict during the first half of the 1980s, and from consequent electoral decline, the SNP is now on a rising trend. This may turn out to have unanticipated consequences for the British political system as a whole.

Historical background

The origins of the modern national movement in Scotland can be traced back to the 1707 Treaty of Union which maintained feelings of Scottish 'separateness' by virtue of the fact that it left such institutions as the Scottish local government and legal systems intact–thus leaving existing Scottish elites to regulate the domestic life of Scotland largely unhindered. During the course of the nineteenth century, with central government assuming an increasingly active role in the life of society and thus taking over many of the functions that had previously been left to local authorities, the parliamentary timetable became increasingly crowded to the detriment of purely Scottish business. The extent to which the Scottish elites were able to manage Scottish life thus declined so that, from the 1850s onwards, a series of organisations was set up to demand more Scottish control over Scottish affairs (Brand 1978:25).

The first organisation to demand complete independence was the Scots National League (SNL), which was founded in 1919 and which merged with the Scottish Home Rule Association (SHRA) in 1928 to form the National Party of Scotland, the immediate forerunner of the SNP. The SHRA wanted self-government in regard to Scottish affairs only, this to be achieved by working through the MPs of existing parties. The SNL, on the other hand, rejected this strategy, and the failure of home rule bills in 1924 and 1927 meant that by the end of the 1920s, notwithstanding their differences concerning outright independence, both organisations were amenable to the idea of co-operation through the creation of an independent National Party.

For over three decades the party which emerged from this fusion (it evolved into the SNP in 1934) remained small, and it was eclipsed by the Scottish Convention which in 1949–50 organised a mass petition demanding the establishment of a Scottish parliament and which was supposedly signed by over two million Scots.[1] Among the reasons for the SNP's lack of success was the fact that it was faced with major internal policy disagreements. The most important of these concerned the means by which self-government was to be achieved. Of course the party had been founded with the express purpose of contesting elections after attempts to work through the established parties had seemed to yield little. Unfortunately, insofar as nationalist candidates did badly at the polls, electoral campaigning seemed to achieve little either, and indeed could even seem counterproductive: prior to entering the electoral arena, the nationalists

> could pose a threat to the parties that could not be properly evaluated…. Having campaigned and failed badly, though, the nationalists exposed the inability of the home-rule cause to mobilise the electorate, and thus allowed the major parties to take even less notice of it.
>
> (Webb 1978:75–6)

The problem for the nationalists was (and still is) that while a great many, if not a majority, of Scots wanted some form of self-government, the latter was not the subject of strong attitudes; and to the extent that other issues, such as unemployment or inflation, might provoke discontent, such discontent was more effectively mobilised by the established, English-dominated parties. Success for the SNP was therefore dependent on a weakening of voters' allegiance to the established parties.

Such weakening began to appear from the general election of 1964 on; and from gaining 2.4 per cent of the Scottish vote in that year, the SNP advanced steadily to reach 30.4 per cent of the vote at the election held a decade later. The government's response was to secure the passage of a bill offering the establishment of a Scottish assembly with limited powers. The assembly was never set up, however, owing to the stipulation that it was to be established only in the event of at least 40 per cent of the registered Scottish electorate voting in its favour in a referendum. The failure to achieve such a vote when the referendum was held signalled the decline of the SNP until the general election of 1987, since when its

electoral fortunes have been on a rising trend. There have therefore been three principal trends in the level of SNP voting support in recent years, and it is to these and other aspects of the party's electoral performance that we now turn.

Electoral performance

If we look at the figures in Table 7.1, what stands out is the long-term rise in SNP support, overarching the shorter-term trends. Two general explanations have been advanced to account for this growth. One argues that from the late 1950s, Scottish voters came to feel relatively deprived with respect to England, which was enjoying high levels of economic growth while the Scottish economy remained stagnant. With an SNP arguing that Scottish political control was necessary to halt deterioration of the Scottish economy, an increase in its voting support was the result. A second explanation saw the rise in support for the SNP as the response of an exploited nation attempting to throw off its colonial shackles (Hechter 1975). Unfortunately for their proponents, there are embarrassing questions that can be asked of both theories. Of the relative deprivation explanation one may ask why we should be persuaded that a sense of deprivation would lead people to vote for the SNP as opposed to becoming active nationalists or even manifesting resignation or acquiescence, say. Of the colonial explanation one may ask why, if there is a colonial relationship between England and Scotland, nationalism has threatened the unity of the two only in the past two decades or so—when the situation described by the colonial theory has arguably existed for a hundred years or more. A more fruitful approach to an understanding of the SNP's rise would appear to lie in the specifics of what we know about the social-psychological bases of party support.

As in other Western democracies, social change has 'decoupled' voters from their traditional party ties with the consequence that, since the late 1960s, more votes than previously have been 'up for grabs'. Voters who used to support their parties 'as a matter of course' have since been shaken out of their partisan attachments. The electoral consequences of these changes can be seen in a decline in the combined Labour-Conservative share of the Scottish vote from 87.6 per cent in 1966 to 64.7 per cent in 1992 (Table 7.1). In Scotland, this process of dealignment showed up as increasing support for the SNP rather than for the Liberals, owing to the Scottish voter's national identity. For many years surveys have shown that a majority of Scots feel at least as much Scottish as they do British. We also know that voting SNP is positively correlated with the degree to which Scottishness replaces Britishness in voters' self-identity (see Table 7.2).[2] Therefore, 'in Scotland very few people feel antagonistic to the SNP and when old party loyalties erode, the SNP is psychologically easy for the Scottish voter to choose' (Webb 1978:128).

With regard to the rise between 1966 and 1974, many commentators tried to link a deteriorating economic situation to indications of growing aggregate volatility and increasing scepticism among voters as to the major parties' abilities to rectify

Table 7.1 Scotland: distribution of party support in general elections, 1945–92 (percentages)

Election	SNP	Conservative	Labour	Liberal	Other
1945	1.2	41.1	47.6	5.0	5.1
1950	0.4	44.8	46.2	6.6	2.0
1951	0.3	48.6	47.9	2.7	0.5
1955	0.5	50.1	46.7	1.9	0.8
1959	0.8	47.2	46.7	4.1	0.2
1964	2.4	40.6	48.7	7.6	0.7
1966	5.0	37.7	49.9	6.8	0.6
1970	11.4	38.0	44.5	5.5	0.6
1974, Feb.	21.9	32.9	36.6	8.0	0.6
1974, Oct.	30.4	24.7	36.3	8.3	0.3
1979	17.3	31.4	41.6	9.0	0.7
1983	11.7	28.4	35.1	24.5	0.3
1987	14.0	24.0	42.4	19.2	0.4
1992	21.5	25.7	39.0	13.1	0.7
1997	22.0	17.5	45.6	13.0	1.9

Sources: Craig (1981); Mitchell (1992); Bochel and Denver (1988)

Table 7.2 Scotland: national identity and vote, 1992 (percentages)

Identity	*Party voted for*					
	Conservative	*Labour*	*Liberal Democrat*	*SNP*	*Total*	*(N)*
Scottish not British	10	30	4	38	20	(184)
More Scottish than British	14	36	11	22	41	(383)
Equally Scottish and British	34	30	10	11	33	(313)
More British than Scottish	50	22	9	6	3	(32)
British not Scottish	58	12	15	4	3	(26)

Source: Brand, Mitchell and Surridge (1992: table 8)

the situation. Under such circumstances, the rise in SNP support may have reflected

> the importance of Scottish identity as a means of expressing discontent. … It identified a social group with a history of shared problems…. Thus with the weakness of the old parties the SNP benefited from the elements of communality and from a consequent ability to blame the problems of the community on a 'remote' government.
>
> (Brand 1993:42)

The more recent growth can be attributed to specific policy consequences of Conservative incumbency between 1979 and 1997. Of particular importance among these was the introduction of the highly unpopular system of local taxation known

as the poll tax. Because the tax was introduced in Scotland a year before coming into force in England, it was widely perceived as evidence of an anti-Scottish attitude on the part of the government whereby it was prepared to use Scots as 'unwilling guinea-pigs in an experiment to determine whether a poll tax might be suitable for their English brethren' (McCreadie 1991:46). Intensifying this effect of the poll tax were the government's attempts to restructure or abolish a series of public bodies associated with the Scottish Office.[3] As the network was dismantled, or staffed with Conservative loyalists, 'the Scottish Office ceased to be seen as a defender of Scotland's interests, and was felt instead to be simply an arm of semi-colonial government from London' (Paterson, Brown and McCrone 1992:630).

Despite the SNP's having established itself in Scotland as the third largest, if not the second largest, party in terms of votes, the vagaries of the British voting system have meant that the party has been consistently underrepresented in terms of parliamentary seats.[4] Nevertheless, strength in terms of seats can often be a highly misleading indicator of a party's influence within a party system and, as we shall see, the SNP has had a considerable impact on the programme of at least one of the major parties in the national party system—something which has potentially profound implications for the future of the political system as a whole.

The SNP's impact on other parties

On the UK-wide stage, the SNP has only once been 'system relevant' in Sartorian (1976) terms,[5] but Sartori's framework arguably obscures the significance of the SNP inasmuch as it has a relevance for the functioning of the British party system which is not captured by the criteria of coalition potential and blackmail potential alone. A party may have systemic relevance in at least two other ways: the size and distribution of its vote may influence the outcome of an election to the detriment of one party and the advantage of another; and/or it may have 'the ability to change the behaviour of a major party on the basis of perceived threat. In this case, third parties exercise influence at the programmatic level' (Levy 1990:3).

Although the latter is a possibility which has to be taken account of by all the parties, this is doubly so in the case of the Labour Party owing to the geographical distribution of its voting support.

> Only in the elections of 1945 and 1966 was the Labour Party able to command a majority of seats in England and Wales alone. In other words Labour won the elections of 1950, 1964 and the two elections of 1974 by depending on Scottish seats. If the SNP replaced Labour as the majority party in Scotland, the probability of Labour forming a British government would be seriously diminished.
>
> (Brand 1978:4)

So the Labour Party's electoral prospects nationally are considerably more dependent on the level of its Scottish support than is the case for other parties;

and it would also seem to be the case that it is Labour Party support that is most likely to give way whenever the SNP makes an electoral advance. Evidence for this is available at both the aggregate and the individual levels. An analysis of the results of the 1992 election in Scotland, correlating the 1987–92 changes in SNP vote in the seventy-two constituencies with the changes in vote for the other parties, showed a correlation of -0.38 between the changes in Labour's and the SNP's levels of support—as compared to the -0.06 that was obtained for SNP and Conservative support (Newell 1994). An opinion poll carried out by MORI in May 1987 asked Scottish voters, 'If you were not to vote for the [party mentioned at questions 1 and 2] which party would you vote for instead? Thirty-one per cent of intending Labour voters mentioned the SNP, as compared to 13 per cent of intending Conservative voters and 19 per cent of those intending to vote for one of the Alliance parties (the Liberals and the Social Democrats; these two parties later merged to become the Liberal Democrats). In such a situation it is hardly surprising that the SNP's recent growth has induced the Labour Party to move to a position on Scottish self-government that is considerably closer to that of the SNP than it has traditionally been.

The change in Labour's position, commonly referred to as the 'tartanisation' of the Labour Party (Geekie and Levy 1989; Levy 1990), came in three stages. The first of these corresponds to the publication, in July 1988, by the pressure group the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly (CSA), of 'A Claim of Right for Scotland', setting out proposals for the establishment of an all-party Scottish Constitutional Convention that would agree a scheme for a parliament, obtain the approval of the Scottish people for it, and thereafter assert their right to secure its implementation (McCreadie 1991:51). When the CSA had launched similar proposals in 1986, Labour had rejected them, arguing that a convention was unnecessary because a Labour government would be formed after the next election with a firm commitment to establish a Scottish Assembly (McCreadie 1991:51). Then, however, the 1987 election intervened. A Labour government was not formed and in the light of the SNP's advance, the party gave the CSA proposals a guarded welcome, describing them as 'a major contribution to thinking on constitutional change in Scotland' (Deacon 1990:68).

Stage two came with a by-election in the Glasgow Govan constituency in November 1988, when the SNP converted a Labour majority of 19,500 into an SNP majority of 3,500. Although it seems likely that the party would have entered the convention in any event (Macwhirter 1990; Deacon 1990), 'the Govan defeat propelled the party into the project with an enthusiasm and speed which might not otherwise have happened' (Deacon 1990:70).

Stage three corresponds to Labour's actual participation in the convention and its consequent endorsement of proposals that have very profound implications for the British constitution. At the convention's first meeting in March 1989, Scottish Labour MPs signed a declaration that directly challenges a cornerstone of the British constitution, the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty: 'We, gathered as the Scottish Constitutional Convention, do hereby acknowledge the sovereign

right of the Scottish people to determine the form of government best suited to their needs…'

In backing this declaration, Labour has in essence adopted the SNP's position that political sovereignty resides not in Parliament, but in the people of Scotland; and its current policy accepts what are the logical corollaries of this position, namely, that the powers of an assembly must be constitutionally entrenched and that a Scottish government will have its own revenue-raising powers.

Assisting this whole process has been the implications that four successive general election defeats have had in the view of Labour Party activists and spokespersons. Given that each election since 1979 has seen the Conservatives emerge as the largest party nationally, while doing particularly badly in Scotland, and given the radical nature of so many Conservative policies, a number of Labour spokespersons have sought to argue that the Conservatives have no mandate to govern Scotland. By thus implicitly endorsing the SNP's fundamental point concerning the supposed location of sovereignty, Labour politicians have put themselves in the position where, from the long-standing commitment to devolution for Scotland, slippage towards a nationalist position becomes that much harder to resist. In order to appreciate the significance of this, we need to look at the SNP's policies in some detail.

Profile of the party's programme and policy stand

The SNP most clearly resembles parties of the 'left-libertarian federalist' type (Müller-Rommel 1994:184–185); for though it rejects what it calls a 'centralised European "super-state"', it advocates independence within the framework of a 'confederal Europe' of the nations (or regions) rather than of the existing states, and it is 'left-wing' on the post-material, new politics issues as well as on the conventional socio-economic issues. The SNP has not always had such a profile, however. On the contrary, prior to about 1980 it would have been more correct to describe the SNP's attitude as being one of hostility towards Europe combined with flexibility on the traditional class-based issues of British politics. And this stance was essentially a consequence of the influential position occupied by 'traditionalists' (or 'fundamentalists') within the party.

Traditionalists are those for whom intermediate-range policies are to be judged exclusively in terms of their implications for the central goal of independence; and in particular, traditionalists will oppose any policy that can be construed as implying a rejection of the sovereignty of the Scottish people. Therefore, during the 1960s and 1970s, the party was reluctant to develop a clear image on the conventional left-right issues—which were only indirectly related to independence but which could compromise that goal by threatening internal unity—while it opposed membership of the European Community (EC; now the European Union) on the grounds that adherence to the EC Treaties compromised the principle of sovereignty. But of course nationalist parties:

> are obliged to develop some kind of ideological image including a conventional left-right component in order to explain the kind of new state they wish to establish…. Otherwise, as the SNP discovered in the 1960s and 1970s, [they] leave themselves open to attack from both left and right.
>
> (Mitchell 1990:50)

Likewise, with the resumption of European integration from the mid-1980s on, opposition to Community membership came to seem increasingly anachronistic; for if there had been doubts about the economic viability of Scottish independence before this resumption, then an independent Scotland left out of the internal European market seemed doubly unattractive.

Following a period of internal conflict between 1979 and 1982 consequent upon the failure of the 1979 devolution referendum and the party's poor performance in the general election of the same year, the left won increasing influence within the party. A clear leftward orientation for the party had been advocated by some since the mid-1970s as evidence began to accumulate that the SNP vote came from those who normally voted Labour,[6] but during the 1980s there emerged additional incentives to adopt a leftward-leaning profile. Partly as a consequence of the anti-Scottish attitude that was read into so many of the government's policies, the Conservative vote in Scotland declined sharply over the decade (see Table 7.1); and, as described above, this led the Labour Party to take an increasingly nationalist stance, arguing that the Conservatives had no mandate to govern Scotland. In such circumstances it made sense for the SNP to move onto Labour's ideological terrain, competing for the same votes on the same issues, thus playing on the ever-present fear in Labour's ranks of an SNP revival and so steering the Labour Party in an ever more nationalist direction. This was the significance of the SNP's decision, at the end of the 1980s, to mount a campaign of non-payment of the bitterly unpopular poll tax: Labour nationally could not really endorse such a campaign given its wish to resume governing at Westminster, and so the non-payment idea allowed the SNP to position itself as the most militant opponent of the tax, while enjoying the spectacle of division within Labour's ranks (Levy 1990:119).

Evolution of the party's policy towards Europe was a consequence of the fact that, because further moves towards centralised decision-making in the EC seemed to be a fact of life about which Scotland could do little anyway, it seemed more sensible to demand a direct say in European affairs—which would at least allow Scotland a measure of control over the nature and timing of such moves, rather than having them decided for it by an English-dominated UK government. 'Independence in Europe' seemed to offer the further advantage that it would lay to rest the bogy of separatism once and for all. In other words, whereas the SNP's previous policy of 'Independence simpliciter' (Macartney 1990:36) had been derided by rival parties as a recipe for customs barriers and trade wars with

England, an independent Scotland in Europe could not possibly entail either of these things given the way in which the Community was constituted.

Together with the anti-poll tax campaign, the Independence-in-Europe theme 'allowed the SNP to grab the initiative and set the agenda of Scottish politics for the first time since the mid-1970s' (Mitchell 1990:59). It allowed this in two senses. First, whereas surveys had previously suggested that around a fifth of Scottish voters were in favour of independence when the question was asked without any qualification, about a third were willing to endorse the notion of independence within Europe (Macartney 1990:36; see Table 7.3). So in making the policy switch, the SNP could almost be seen as having acted in line with Downsian assumptions concerning party rationality; as Levy (1990:58) points out, the fact that the party has never had majority approval for its central goal means that it has had the choice of either modifying its position in some way, seeking out other issues to build up support, or resigning itself to permanent minority status. Second, 'Independence in Europe' allowed the SNP to mount a considerable intellectual challenge to the plans for lesser constitutional change advocated by its rivals. The Liberal Democrats' plans for a federal solution, for instance, are vulnerable to the attack that if, as seems likely, the main responsibilities of a UK federal government will be gradually transferred to the European Union, then there is little point in creating a UK federation in the first place (McCreadie, 1991:48).

The party envisages independence being achieved by its winning a majority of

Table 7.3 Scotland preferred constitutional options, 1981–94

	1981	*1982*	*1983*	*1984*	*1985*	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*	*1994*
Independence ex EC[a]	25	22	23	25	33	32	35	30	11	10	9	6	34	38
Independence in EC									24	24	23	31		
Assembly	50	45	48	45	47	50	42	47	42	44	51	34	47	44
No change	25	27	20	27	14	15	20	19	20	19	16	25	17	16
Don't know	0	6	9	3	6	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	2	2

Sources: McCrone (1989: fig. 3; 1990: table 1; 1991; 1992:230; 1994: table 1); data supplied by ICM
Note: [a] Until 1988, the constitutional options offered were: 'completely independent Scottish Assembly from England'; 'Scottish Assembly as part of Britain but with substantial powers'; 'no change from present system'. From 1989, the categories were changed to: 'an independent Scotland which is separate from both England and Wales and the European Community'; 'an independent Scotland which is separate from England and Wales but part of the European Community'; 'Scotland remaining part of the UK but with its own devolved Assembly with some taxation and spending powers'; 'no change from the present system'. For the 1993 and 1994 polls the categories were changed yet again, this time to: 'Scotland should have its own independent parliament with full taxation and spending powers and leave the UK parliament at Westminster'; 'Scotland should have its own parliament with some taxation and spending powers but also remain part of the UK parliament at Westminster'; 'Scotland should continue to have taxation and spending decided at the UK parliament at Westminster as at present'

Scottish seats in a general election, whereupon it will 'invite the other Scottish MPs to co-operate in negotiating the orderly transfer of power from Westminster to Scotland and the preparation of a Constitution. This will be submitted to the Scottish people in a referendum and, if approved, an election will take place for the new Scottish Parliament' (SNP 1983:2). But unless a party can convince at least a proportion of the electorate of the feasibility of its goals, it is unlikely to make much headway; and a major problem concerning the party's independence strategy that is raised from time to time is, quite simply, what if England says 'No'? As the SNP's programme currently stands, it assumes that the winning of a majority of Scottish seats would be sufficient for the party to establish the legitimacy of its case to the satisfaction of all concerned. Yet the historical precedents are not good. If the legitimacy of the claim to independence were to be successfully challenged, for example by appealing to the unrepresentative nature of the electoral system, then independence could be dealt with by the simple opposition of a disciplined parliamentary majority—the way, in essence, Irish nationalism was dealt with earlier in the twentieth century until the issue was resolved by resort to force.

More fundamentally, a party must also have convincing arguments that its goals are desirable in the first place. Here the SNP would appear to face fewer intellectual obstacles, and in its quest for electoral success it seeks to base its case on two grounds, moral and practical. The moral argument is that the right to self-determination is a fundamental principle enshrined in international law, and that while a number of nations in Europe and elsewhere have asserted and won this right in recent years, Scotland has so far missed out. If other, similar-sized nations such as Denmark and Ireland are allowed independent membership of the European Union, then why not Scotland—which is, after all, one of Europe's oldest nations?[7] The practical argument is that Scotland has interests that are different from those of the rest of the UK—that because of its remoteness, government from Westminster is incapable of exercising the flexibility needed effectively to protect such interests. So, for example, the SNP claims that 'Scottish industry has been crippled by deflationary policies and high interest rates intended to dampen down overheating in the South of England property market in the late 1980s, when the Scottish economy was still operating at far below capacity' (SNP 1992:11). So a Scottish government would be better placed to take account of Scotland's particular needs; but in doing so, it would be able to draw on the country's vast natural resources, in particular in the energy field, which are currently controlled by London.

Because the SNP is a party of the left, its attacks on the Conservatives are very much attacks on that party's basic principles. Attacks on Labour, on the other hand, are attacks on its apparent inability to live up to its principles. Hence the SNP is helped by the fact that appealing to the Labour voter does not involve having to attempt to prise that voter apart from any attachment to basic Labour principles. Some indication of how successful this strategy has been emerges when we turn to examine the social characteristics of SNP supporters.

The social base of SNP support

Although the volatility[8] of SNP support precludes firm conclusions, it is significant that since 1987 the socio-economic profile of the typical SNP voter appears, in certain respects, to have become more similar to that of the typical Labour voter. This could be taken as evidence that the SNP has had some success with its strategy towards supporters of the Labour Party. We know, for example, that Labour does better among lower than among higher social classes and among council tenants (i.e. these living in social housing) than among owner-occupiers; and from the figures in Table 7.4 we can see that growth in SNP support between 1987 and 1992 was greater in social class C2DE (the working class) than in social class ABC 1 (the middle class)[9] and among council tenants than among owner-occupiers.

An analysis of the relationship between SNP support and age shows that the SNP has done consistently better among younger than among older voters in recent years. Unfortunately, it is impossible to tell from Table 7.4 whether we are in the presence of an age effect or a generational effect or a combination of the two; but impressionistic evidence suggests that generational factors are at work: a number of writers have spoken of a revival of Scottish culture in the post-war period (Brand 1978; McCreadie 1991), something which has affected younger generations in

Table 7.4 Scotland: SNP support by gender, age, social class and housing tenure, 1985–93 (percentages)

	1985	*1986*	*1987*	*1988*	*1989*	*1990*	*1991*	*1992*	*1993*
Gender:									
male	14	15	14	21	23	18	20	24	25
female	12	11	12	18	22	15	17	19	19
Age:									
18–24	10	15	17	25	28	23	26	33	29
25–34	16	9	12	20	24	19	22	26	29
35–54	15	14	13	20	24	16	20	21	20
55–64	8	14	14	16[a]	17[a]	15	16	17	18
65+	11	8	11	—	—	11	9	11	12
Social class:									
ABC1	12	9	12	16	20	16	17	17	18
C2	15	14	14	22	23	18	20	23	23
DE	12	16	14	20	24	16	20	24	22
Housing tenure:									
owner-occupier	—	—	12	17	21	16	18	19	20
council tenant	—	—	14	20	23	17	19	23	23

Sources: Adapted from data supplied by MORI, whereby for each year the percentages have been calculated on the basis of figures aggregated from the opinion poll data that were available for that year
Note: [a] Individuals aged 55+

particular, with the result that they are 'showing themselves to be far more nationalistic than either their parents or their grandparents' (McCreadie 1991:45).

Further light on the nature of SNP support can be cast by carrying out, on the results of the 1992 election in Scotland, the same ecological analyses that were carried out by Kellas (1992) on the results of the 1987 election. Such an analysis (Table 7.5) shows that, as in 1987, SNP voting is not strongly related to any of the social indicators presented in the table, something that is confirmed by a multiple regression analysis of the variables, which shows that only 6 per cent of the variation in the SNP vote is explained by all three social indicators taken together. In this respect, SNP voting is rather similar to Liberal voting, which was also rather weakly related to the social indicators, and very unlike Labour and Conservative voting, each of which shows high correlations.

Kellas (1992) suggests that in 1987 the nature of party competition in each constituency was more important than social factors in accounting for the variation in SNP voting:

> Tactical considerations were extremely important in determining whether Labour, the Alliance or the SNP was seen as the vehicle for anti-Conservative protest. If a strong SNP presence had been established through previous by-election performances or an incumbent MP, the SNP vote was strong; conversely, if the Liberals had established a strong local presence in a by-election or with a popular incumbent, the SNP found it very hard to make progress.
>
> (Kellas 1992:184)

This was also true in 1992. In all of the SNP's ten best seats, the party's nearest rival (and first or second party) was one of the two major parties; and in six of the

Table 7.5 Scotland: correlations between party vote and social indicators, 1992

Variable	*Correlation with support for:*			
	Conservative	*Labour*	*Liberal Democrat*	*SNP*
Per cent voting:				
Conservative	1.00			
Labour	-0.77	1.00		
Liberal Democrat	0.32	-0.68	1.00	
SNP	-0.09	-0.12	-0.42	1.00
Per cent:				
owner-occupied	0.70	-0.62	0.39	0.19
unemployed	-0.64	0.58	-0.37	0.07
household income	0.61	-0.40	0.21	0.25

Source: Data from Butler and Kavanagh (1992:310–312)

ten cases, that party was the Conservative Party. In four of the ten cases the SNP had an incumbent MP who had won the seat either at the previous general election or at an intervening by-election. By contrast, in all of its ten worst seats,[10] its vote was squeezed by the Liberals or Labour, these being the main challengers to a Conservative candidate, and it could claim no incumbent MPs or by-election successes.

We must now turn to an examination of the internal workings of the SNP; for the party's electoral performance has been a function not only of external factors, but also (and particularly in the post-1979 period) of its own capacity to mobilise electoral and other resources, i.e. internal factors.

Organisational structure

Since the SNP does not have a centralised list, figures for party membership are inevitably based on informed estimates. From a few hundred in the mid-1950s, membership took off from the mid-1960s to reach some 120,000 in 1968 (Levy 1990:5). Such a figure has never been reached again since then, and most current estimates put membership at between 15,000 and 20,000. If in other parties the significance of membership size for campaigning effectiveness is being undermined by the development of new technologies, in the case of the SNP the relationship between these two variables is less straightforward. Since the party lacks large institutional sources of finance, it is dependent on its membership for logistic and financial support in a way that the two large, Britain-wide, parties are not; and as Lynch (1995:11–14) has suggested, it has in recent years shown itself to be resourceful in utilising new technology to generate funds among its members–for example, by means of direct mail campaigns, which between 1990 and 1994 were successful in raising over £200,000 of extra funds for the party.

In terms of the party's formal organisation, the basic organisational unit is the branch, which may or may not mirror an electoral division. The reason for this is historical: the SNP was organised before there was any real hope of electoral success, so the areas covered by branches tended to be determined by the presence of activists rather than by the boundaries of seats to be won. Constituency-party organisations (to which branches send delegates) have been of any importance only since the mid-1960s, when the party began to win elections; and even today the main focus of the members' loyalty and activity is the branch. Constituency associations are responsible for selecting candidates to fight general elections, and in general for co-ordinating the campaigning activities of branches. Both constituency associations and branches send delegates to the Annual National Conference (the party's supreme policy-making body); but whereas branches may send up to ten delegates depending on size, constituency associations send only four.

Although the supreme body, Annual National Conference is not the most influential policy-making body. Alongside it sits a National Council. With members directly elected from branches, the latter's remit is to make binding policy decisions

between conferences, and it is more effective as a policy-making forum than Conference owing to its smaller size (Brand 1978:273). A second national-level body involved with policy-making is the National Assembly. Consisting mainly of delegates elected by the constituency associations, it was established in the 1960s to ease the pressure of work on the party's main managing body, the National Executive Committee (NEC), and its purpose is to consider policy reports and to make recommendations on them to the final decision-making bodies: Council and Conference. Finally, there is the NEC itself consisting of the national office-bearers, elected by Conference, and ten ordinary members also elected by Conference. Besides being responsible for the day-to-day administration of the party, it initiates strategy and tactics and keeps policy under review. This latter is done through one of the national office-bearers, the Executive Vice-Convenor for Policy, who appoints committees to examine particular areas of policy and to prepare the reports that are then considered by National Assembly. It is open to any ordinary member of the party to join a committee in which they are interested. The national office-bearer who acts as leader of the party is the National Convenor–currently Alex Salmond, elected in 1990.

SNP Members of Parliament (i.e. the British Parliament) are automatically members of Annual National Conference, National Council and National Assembly and have full voting rights. They also nominate three of their number to sit on the NEC.

As thus described, the party's organisation gives every appearance of being an open one, providing ample opportunity for ordinary members to participate in policy-making. Yet the extent to which this corresponds to the organisational reality remains unclear: formal opportunities may not be taken up and/or they may conceal the real, informal loci of power. Indeed, there is 'sharp disagreement on the nature of the party's organisation and the participation of members in it' (Levy 1990:11). Brand (1978) argues that, until the 1960s the party was oligarchically run owing to its small size, but that membership expansion thereafter meant that branches were more difficult to control. Crawford (1982), on the other hand, argues that from the mid-1960s, the party was tightly managed from the centre. Little original research has been carried out on the internal workings of the SNP, and clearly more will need to be done before the issue can be resolved. In the absence of further information, we are forced to assume that the formal structure is a more or less accurate description of the organisational reality; for the party's dependence on the logistic and financial support of its members suggested above would seem to make it a fairly safe bet that there will be a relatively high level of membership involvement as the *quid pro quo* for such support.

What is more certain is that, because of the participative bias of its organisational structure, there are relatively few formal barriers against internal conflict, something which goes a long way towards explaining the party's electoral decline after 1979 when the party descended into factional conflict as incumbents came under challenge for the party's electoral retreat in that year. On the one hand, fundamentalists attributed the party's poor showing to support for devolution

and the failure of the Scottish Assembly referendum. They favoured the so-called 'mandate strategy' for independence 'which consisted of waiting until SNP candidates were elected in a majority of Scotland's parliamentary constituencies and then declaring independence' (Levy 1990:61). On the other hand, so-called 'gradualists' claimed that the electoral reality made support for devolution mandatory: if offered a choice between a unilateral declaration of independence (the mandate strategy) or the status quo, the electorate would always support the status quo. They argued that the referendum failure and the electoral reversal had been due to the party's support for devolution not being wholehearted enough. Increasingly bitter conflict across the fundamentalist–devolutionist divide only really subsided in the aftermath of the 1983 election (which saw the party retreat still further), when the leadership found a bridge in the form of a constitutional convention.

The idea involved the election by proportional representation of a Scottish convention which would determine Scotland's constitutional status. The constitutional options available to Scots would range from the Conservatives' support for the status quo to the SNP's preferred option of independence within the European Community. The idea allowed the party to campaign for independence, thus appealing to the fundamentalist wing, while not rejecting anything short of that goal (Mitchell 1990:53). Proposals agreed by the convention would then be put to the people in a referendum.

Outlook

Just as the final adjustments were being made to this chapter a new general election took place (in May 1997). Labour won its largest House of Commons majority ever; the Conservatives won no seats at all in Scotland; the SNP became the second largest Scottish party, largely owing to the Conservatives' precipitous decline. Even though the SNP's own vote rose by less than 0.5 per cent (and the electoral system ensured that, with six seats, its voters continued to be heavily underrepresented), the election outcome makes it likely that the SNP will continue to have a significant input into the politics of the United Kingdom for the foreseeable future. For the election outcome has set in train a series of events which are likely to result in early legislation for a Scottish parliament, something which in its turn seems set to provide the SNP with a potentially significant forum for the pursuit of its demands (Lynch 1997).

July saw the publication of a White Paper, *Scotland's Parliament*, setting out how the new government intended to fulfil Labour's manifesto commitment to legislate for a parliament 'firmly based on the agreement reached in theScottish Constitutional Convention and elected by an additional member system'. If this translates into legislation which follows the letter of the Scottish Constitutional Convention's proposals, the Scottish parliament will thus employ a significant element of proportional representation. Not only will this increase the share of seats that might otherwise be expected to accrue to the SNP–overturning its

current inability, under the single-member, simple purality system, to turn votes into seats owing to the lack of geographical concentration of its support–but it will increase the party's bargaining power by reducing the likelihood of any one party emerging with an overall majority in the Scottish parliament.

September 1997 saw the promised referendum in which Scots were asked whether they favoured the establishment of a Scottish parliament and, in a separate question, whether they were in favour of the parliament being given tax-varying powers (which, as set out in the government's White Paper proposals, were to consist in a power to vary the basic rate of income tax by up to three pence in the pound). Partly owing to a united and confident campaign by an alliance of the SNP, the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats, there were decisive majorities in favour of both proposals, 74.3 per cent of voters favouring the parliament, 63.5 per cent the granting of tax-varying powers. With a Commons majority of 179, there had never been any doubt as to Labour's ability to legislate for the parliament, while in terms of its possible financial impact, the tax-varying power is of very little consequence. Rather, the significance of the referendum lies in what had always been its purpose, namely, to give the devolution project such a stock of legitimacy as to ensure it a swift and easy parliamentary passage while maximising the chances of success of the new institution by ensuring it a solid underpinning of authority from the outset.

That said, the tax-varying powers–along with a number of other likely features of the forthcoming legislation–might well raise the profile of conflicts of interest between Scots and the rest of the UK; and from this the SNP might be expected to draw considerable sustenance. It is not inconceivable that a future UK government, desirous of cutting public expenditure, might exploit the conferral of tax-varying powers by seeking a partial substitution of taxes raised in Scotland for central-government transfers, using 'financial responsibility' and 'accountability' arguments to bolster its case. Even if this does not happen, the existence of a Scottish parliament will almost certainly increase the transparency of the processes whereby the distribution of public expenditure between Scotland and the rest of the UK is determined (Constitution Unit 1996), a circumstance that might be a particular source of friction if the public spending choices of Westminster and Edinburgh differ significantly. The likelihood of this happening might be thought to be increased by proportional representation and a divergent voting distribution in Scotland as compared with the rest of the UK–thus making it more likely in the long term that the political complexion of the Scottish executive will differ from that of Westminster than that they will be the same. In all such cases the SNP might, as the poll tax non-payment campaign of the late 1980s suggested, be better placed than Labour to spearhead any protest, given that the latter party also has to appeal to other, non-Scottish interests in order to keep alive its chances of acting as a party of government at Westminster.

Yet if the SNP has been successful in recent years in acting as an agenda setter, shaping the programme of the Labour Party, this very fact has at the same time been the main obstacle in the way of its own growth; for it means that it is not the

only party able to promote itself as the defender of Scotland's interests by proposing a measure of self-government. The incentive for Labour to move onto the SNP's territory in this way has, as we have seen, been due to its placement within the state-wide party system. Having wide popular support in Scotland but no legitimate means of exercising power because of its lack of a Westminster majority, in opposing the Conservatives Labour had a choice: it 'could either challenge the Tories' [i.e. the Conservatives'] mandate in Scotland and throw away the Westminster rule book or [it] could play safe, hang fire and trust that the Scottish people would wait until England voted Labour too' (Deacon 1990:63). It chose the former strategy.

Yet in making this choice, Labour has created a cruel dilemma for itself such that the SNP may come to be regarded, in spite of its small size, as having been the midwife of profound political changes that it had never itself intended. For once a Scottish parliament is established, if not before, it is likely that there will be considerable pressure to find a solution to the famous 'West Lothian question', so called after the constituency of the Labour MP, Tam Dalyell, who first raised it: since the establishment of a Scottish parliament will effectively prevent English MPs from voting on Scottish domestic affairs, will Scottish MPs at Westminster still be allowed to vote on measures affecting only England and Wales? Both of the changes most commonly canvassed as 'solutions' to the problem (reducing the numbers of Scottish MPs, or preventing Scottish MPs from voting on non-Scottish matters) imply a reduction of Scottish influence at Westminster—whereas, unless 1997 represents a permanent change, it is likely that Labour will in the long term need such influence to be preserved if it wants to exercise power in the UK as a whole. It would be ironic indeed if, in bringing about change in Scotland, the growth of the SNP, a party of the left, also turned out to have the consequence of placing control over non-Scottish matters, permanently in the hands of the Conservatives.

Notes

1 The government was able to ignore the petition on the grounds that the general elections of 1950 and 1951 failed to result in the election of any MPs pledged to support self-government.

2 The question usually asked is 'Which of these statements best describes how you regard yourself: Scottish not British; more Scottish than British; equally Scottish and British; more British than Scottish; British not Scottish?'

3 The Scottish Office was set up in 1885, and over the years has had responsibility for an increasing range of functions that, for England, are exercised by separate departments based in London.

4 The SNP's representation in the Westminster Parliament was increased from three to four MPs as a result of a by-election win in the Perth and Kinross constituency in May 1995. Its representation in the European parliament rose from one to two MEPs as a result of the European parliamentary elections of June 1994.

5 That is, between 1976 and 1979 when the then Labour government lacked an overall majority in the House of Commons.

6 See Bochel and Denver (1972) and Hanby (1976).

7 Central to the SNP's main goal is the claim that sovereignty belongs to the Scottish people by moral and legal right. The SNP seeks to sustain this view on the basis of a particular interpretation of the significance of the 1707 Act of Union which many Scottish constitutional experts argue has the status of fundamental law (Kellas 1968:105; McCreadie 1991:49). Here it is argued that as the Act of Union came into force as a result of having been passed simultaneously by the Scottish and English Parliaments, it differs in essence from ordinary parliamentary enactments, being in the nature of a contract between Scotland and England. Therefore, the argument continues, the sovereignty of Westminster is not unlimited and Scots, having made the Union, have retained a constitutional right to unmake it.

8 Several measures of volatility are available, but probably the most reliable is the one which is obtained by calculating the change in the percentage of the vote obtained by a party between each pair of elections during a given period and then finding the mean change. This will then give us the average volatility for the party in question. Taking each pair of general elections beginning with the one in February 1974 (since when the SNP has contested every Scottish seat), average volatilities work out at 7.4 for the SNP, 4.8 for the Conservatives and 4.6 for Labour. Of course, as Maguire (1983:80–81) points out, 'the size of a particular party is an important consideration in any discussion of volatility. Quite a small shift in support may represent an important change in the strength of a small party, whereas it will be insignificant in the case of a large party.' In order to control for this, the average volatility of a party may be expressed as a percentage of its mean vote. On this basis, for the period in question, the SNP has an average volatility equal to 37.9 per cent of its mean vote, the Conservatives 17.2 per cent and Labour 11.9 per cent.

9 The class groupings may be defined briefly as follows: A, higher managerial and professional; B, lower managerial or administrative; Cl, skilled, supervisory, or lower non-manual; C2, skilled manual; D, semi-skilled or unskilled manual; E, residual, on pension or other state benefit.

10 The SNP's ten best results in 1992 were achieved in the constituencies of Banff and Buchan, Moray, Angus East, Tayside North, Western Isles, Glasgow Govan, Galloway and Upper Nithside, Perth and Kinross, Dundee East, and Kilmarnock and Loudoun. Its ten worst results were in the constituencies of Edinburgh West, Fife North East, Ayr, Orkney and Shetland, Kincardine and Deeside, Eastwood, Strathkelvin and Bearsden, Edinburgh South, Stirling, and Edinburgh Central. See the data contained in Butler and Kavanagh (1992:310–321).

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8

PLAID CYMRU

Dilemmas and ambiguities of Welsh regional nationalism

Thomas Christiansen

The history of *Plaid Cymru*

Plaid Cymru's history can most usefully be divided into three periods: its origin under the leadership of Saunders Lewis until his resignation in 1939; the period of gradual transformation under the leadership of Gwyfor Evans from 1945 to 1980, and the emergence of a modernist platform in the 1980s and 1990s. For the purposes of this volume, the more recent period is most significant, yet certain foundations were laid in the early periods which still bear on current problems and therefore deserve a brief introduction.

Saunders Lewis was the kind of charismatic but also idiosyncratic leader who is perhaps typical for nascent nationalist movements. As a poet and writer, he was first and foremost a cultural figure. He became president of a party that was to all intents and purposes a single-issue pressure group, concerned solely with the defence and promotion of the Welsh language and culture in the face of accelerating Anglicisation of South Wales (Davies 1989).

Lewis's philosophy was influenced by a strong Catholic conviction which set him on a collision course with the Anglican British state and with the secular Labour movement. Party ideology under Lewis was a harking back to medieval pre-Reformation, pre-English, pre-industrial Wales with the clear normative message that those times were better times than the current ones–i.e. that the English influence on modern Wales, identified as being in turn the Anglican denomination, industrialisation, urbanisation, bureaucratisation, secularisation, was morally, as well as politically or economically, harmful.

From the start there were strong pacifist and environmentalist, as well as nationalist, elements in *Plaid Cymru's* programme, a disposition that came to a head in 1936 when Lewis and two other party leaders went to prison for setting fire to an RAF bombing school under construction in Wales. Yet despite modest growth the party remained peripheral to British and even Welsh politics until well into the 1960s. Until the 1950s this was largely deliberate, since the party

had made no clear choice in favour of pursuing its cultural and linguistic aims through parliamentary channels. Lewis's arrest was perhaps the clearest sign that even the leadership of the party was prepared to resort to direct and illegal action and that concentrating on electoral success was regarded as secondary if not detrimental to the immediate purpose of saving the Welsh language.

This changed gradually after the war as the party, under the leadership of Gwynfor Evans, began to contest general elections more systematically, though not until 1959 were even half the Welsh seats contested. The 1930s, 1940s and 1950s with their immense social transformations, economic upheavals and industrial disputes were inhospitable times for a party that still pursued the discourse of the previous century. Yet it must also be said that the party was a model of inflexibility during this period. It is difficult to grasp, with hindsight, how the party could still campaign on a more or less exclusively Welsh-language platform in the 1950s when it was clear that—whatever the future of the Welsh language—Welsh politics were made in English.

The most important policy changes of *Plaid Cymru* since 1945 fall into the 1960s, which also saw its first parliamentary success. During the 1960s the party changed its basic outlook towards bilingualism and made the demand for a Welsh parliament its main goal—decisions that were internally controversial, but which would prove essential in the electoral contests of the following decades. Thus the 1960s marked the stage in which we can speak, for the first time, of *Plaid Cymru* as a mature political organisation, of a regionalist party rather than a cultural movement (McAllister 1981).

There are three dimensions to this transformation which began in the early 1960s and which is still ongoing: first, a departure from cultural and intellectually inspired elitism towards progressive and radical socialism; second, the enlargement of the party's goals to include not only predominantly linguistic issues but also a socio-economic programme and the demand for Welsh autonomy; and third, the decision to engage primarily in electoral contest and therefore to renounce violence, illegal acts and even direct action as viable alternatives. To a large extent changes along these dimensions have been compatible with, if not dependent on, each other. Yet the radicalism of the departure from decades of established principles has created internal tensions and divisions along a number of lines.

Most directly, the issue of programmatic reform has created two broad camps which have been called 'modernist' and 'traditionalist', the former obviously favouring the opening of the party towards the English-speakers in south and north-east Wales as well as an end to non-parliamentarian methods. Considering that the English-speaking majority in Wales has voted in the past for the Labour Party, the tactical choice of targeting this electorate would also imply a turn to the left in the party's programme. But in this respect there were also internal divisions, into 'National Left' and 'Hydro Group' respectively, among the modernists, while among the traditionalists left-wing views were not uncommon (Davies 1993).

Internal and external developments in the 1960s laid the foundations for the dominant position of modernists in the party which continues until today. One

important event was when in 1962 a number of *Plaid* members set up the Welsh Language Society in order to defend more forcefully the original aims of the party, which they saw as being watered down. This had been urged by Saunders Lewis in an influential radio lecture. He also wrote that the party 'should not tire of the wilderness'–for him direct action on cultural and language issues continued to be preferable to 'meaningless' electoral success. The foundation of the Language Society allowed *Plaid* to concentrate on electoral politics and expansion of its programme–there was in a sense a division of labour in which the Society took over *Plaid's* previous role as a linguistic direct-action movement while the party, under the direction of Evans, modernised and adapted to the demands of the British electoral system (Adamson 1991; Davies 1993).

The success of winning its first parliamentary seat in the 1966 Carmarthen by-election gave powerful support to the potential of the modernist strategy. The victory of Gwynfor Evans in 1966 and the channelling of traditionalist energies outside the party meant that in the 1970s *Plaid* could concentrate on the Westminster stage. It was then, with the rise and decline of the devolution issue, that the foundations for the recent reformulation of *Plaid*'s positions were laid. *Plaid*'s mixed parliamentary experience since 1966, the devastating result of the 1979 devolution referendum (only 11 per cent of the Welsh electorate supported the proposal for a Welsh assembly)–and the implications of a rapidly growing network of Welsh public institutions–these are the main determinants of nationalist politics which are confronting *Plaid* today.

From a Welsh nationalist perspective the 1980s were a difficult period. In the aftermath of the devolution debacle, the polarisation during and after the 1984 miners' strike and the scale of economic transformation following the decline of extractive and heavy industries posed major challenges to any attempt at mobilisation on the regional issue. Eighteen years of Conservative government gave Britain the impression of becoming a 'one-party state', reducing the role of Labour mainly to the representation of the 'Celtic fringe'–a role it had taken over from the Liberal Party after 1945.

In this situation the party chose to remain loyal to its new programme of 'socialist inclusion', demanding at the 1982 annual conference a 'decentralised socialist state' for Wales. It was perhaps the (tactical) realisation that Welsh elections are won by winning the Labour vote–all but three of the 15 constituencies in which *Plaid* is doing best are Labour strongholds–which best explains this further shift to the left (Rallings and Thrasher 1993).

Yet Labour itself has been changing, and also the old Liberal Party returned to Welsh politics in some strength, first in the guise of the Alliance and later as the Liberal Democrats. By 1992 these two parties were again calling for elected assemblies for Wales (Labour Party of Wales 1994; Labour Party 1990; Liberal Democratic Party 1992), and in the same year the Wales Trades Union Congress, which had campaigned for a 'No' in 1979, passed a resolution at its annual convention calling for an elected assembly for Wales (WTUC 1993). These demands, which went further than the 1979 devolution bills, made credible, more

than ever before, *Plaid*'s basic aim of self-government for Wales. This new and–considering its abrupt failure a decade before–surprising credibility of the demand for a Welsh assembly appeared to work well for *Plaid*, which won its fourth seat and thereby overtook the SNP in parliamentary representation at the 1992 election.

Simultaneously *Plaid*'s stand on its second main issue, the fight for equal rights of the Welsh language, had also received increased credibility. Largely through non-parliamentary actions the nationalists–*Plaid* as well as groups like the Welsh Language Society–had extracted major concessions from the authorities. Most significantly, a Welsh-language TV channel, S4C, was set up in 1982, a decision in which Gwynfor Evans's threat to stage a hunger strike was decisive in mobilising the nationalist camp and forcing the government to fulfil its pre-election promise (Davies 1989). Equally important perhaps was the steady growth of a specifically Welsh education system in which Welsh-medium teaching was on offer on all levels, and where Welsh language classes became compulsory also in English-medium schools (Williams 1991). The Welsh Arts Council had, from 1967 onwards, supported arts in the Welsh language with increasing and significant financial contributions (Davies 1993).

Because of these factors, aided by the widespread use of bilingual road and shop signs, administrative forms and official publications–even the Conservative Party manifesto for Wales is now bilingual–the late 1980s and early 1990s saw Welsh-language use rising. A modern and urban Welsh language media and communication subculture was born, the result of which was both symbolic–allowing the language to leave behind its old-fashioned and rural image–and substantial. Economic problems had forced new generations since the 1930s into emigration, a condition concomitant with the uselessness of Welsh language proficiency for the individual. The economic boom of the mid-1980s, above the UK average and based mainly on inward investment, meant that this situation was changing (Morris and Hill 1991). Learning and speaking Welsh was beginning to be regarded by many not, any more, as an embarrassment or a waste of resources, but as a useful asset in an increasingly competitive service economy (Williams 1991). Attendance at Welsh schools increased, and between 1971 and 1981 the percentage of 3- to 15-year-olds in Cardiff with a knowledge of Welsh increased from 4 to 7.2 (Davies 1993). In Taff Ely, a South Wales council controlled by *Plaid* until 1995, the growth of Welsh medium education saw the number of 3- to 15-year-olds speaking Welsh rise to 23 per cent (Balsom 1996:279).

Surely some of the predictions and expectations regarding both regional self-government and Welsh language development tend to be too enthusiastic and out of touch with the constraints that remain. Yet what has to be noted here is the fact that in the two key areas of *Plaid*'s programme the dominant discourse and public opinion have shifted markedly in its favour. As they continue to be relatively extreme with respect to the spectrum of present views on 'independence from the centre', it would be wrong to speak of *Plaid* as being part of the mainstream of Welsh politics, but it certainly has moved into a position where its demands and arguments link up with current conditions in a much more compatible way than, say, in the early 1960s or early 1980s.

The profile of *Plaid's* Programme

Having transformed its strategies and programme from 1962 onwards, the modernised *Plaid Cymru* presents itself as a progressive, forward-looking force in Welsh politics. Insistence on the Welsh language and opposition to English, the core of the party's original position, has been replaced by the demand for consistent bilingualism, which, as noted above, is not controversial in today's Wales. A host of supplementary demands are consistent with earlier positions: protection of the environment, industrial democracy, disarmament and decentralisation. Indeed, the ease with which these original beliefs have been transformed into the current aims of a New Left-type party could give one the impression that in a number of aspects the old *Plaid* began as a modern party, and that it has been the times rather than *Plaid* which have been changing profoundly.

With respect to issues of the libertarian dimension, *Plaid* now is inclined towards left positions. With regard to pacifism, this was never far from the party's mainstream ideology. The 1991–2 Gulf War, in which British troops were directly involved, renewed the opportunity for *Plaid* to manifest this commitment. Its MPs duly did so when they voted with the Labour rebels against the government and Opposition resolution to authorise the use of force. *Plaid* supports the demand for nuclear disarmament, joining in this the Welsh county councils, which declared themselves 'nuclear-free zones' quite some time ago. In Westminster, *Plaid* has also stood for increased attention to the problems of disabled persons–a *Plaid* MP has made this a special concern. Equally, Green issues have been high on the agenda, especially since Cynog Dafis–elected on a joint *Plaid Cymru*-Green Party platform–became, in 1992, the first 'Green' MP, representing also Green Party interests in Westminster. Finally, *Plaid* has of course always taken a stand on the issue of immigration, but this has changed rather dramatically as part of the party's transformation. Whereas originally the party was opposed to unfettered immigration from England (and perhaps also from Ireland, which ranks second among the origins of those not born in Wales), it has now shifted and regards any resident of Wales as a citizen with full rights. This shift is opposed by groups outside the party, some of which use violent means to prevent English-speakers from acquiring real estate in the region. *Plaid*, by contrast, having realised that electoral success can be achieved only with the votes of English-speakers and probably aware of the fact that Welsh identity without the linguistic component cannot be defined objectively, has moved to a non-ethnic definition of Welsh identity. It now recognises all those living in Wales, irrespective of language proficiency and of origin, as Welsh citizens, and all would enjoy equal rights after the achievement of self-government. Consequently there appears little danger of a 'Latvian-style' policy on immigration and citizenship.

In terms of socio-economic demands, *Plaid* has, after some oscillation, arrived at what is perhaps best described as a social democratic position. It supports a higher degree of state intervention, improved social security, better provisions

for small farmers, more investment in health care and education. It is argued that Wales does pay more taxes than it receives in expenditure from London, and that as a consequence regional fiscal autonomy would be beneficial. The issue of territorial redistribution has been used frequently by the party in recent years, in part because it is only with the increasing drawing of administrative and financial boundaries that such matters can become politicised. But *Plaid*'s use of the matter is not entirely consistent: on the one hand it has run a major campaign over water rates, protesting that water produced in Wales is much more expensive there than in England's West Midlands, to where it is also exported. At the same time, London governments are continuously reminded that they have to do more for Wales, that large-scale public or private investments must remain in the region because of the social cost such industries' closures would incur. It is not clear, therefore, whether the British state is supposed to become more or less involved in the economic life of the region. Equally, a pattern of favouring state intervention over market-based solutions is discernible, yet at the same time the party favours the passing of more power to the people, less tutelage, encouragement of self-help, etc. It is thus caught in the dilemma of conflicting libertarian and socialist goals, a problem not alien to parties of the 'new politics' type.

Yet in the case of *Plaid* these can at least to some extent be reconciled in the underlying demand for decentralisation and strengthening of local government. The idea of strong local government is quite congenial to the accommodation of economic and civil objectives and has turned out to be an asset of some relevance to the party's programme. First, strong local government is not perceived as being such a Utopian a demand as is regional devolution, since it is achievable gradually rather than instantly. This ought to increase the perception of a party having credible solutions to existing problems. Second, as shown below, inside Wales *Plaid*'s support is locally concentrated; a unitary Welsh state would therefore be quite undesirable from a party political perspective. Strong local government might give future *Plaid*-controlled councils more power *vis-à-vis* a likely Labour-dominated Welsh Assembly. Third, the experience of what *Plaid* habitually calls 'other small European nations' is indeed one of having strong local autonomy: the Scandinavian and Alpine countries as well as the Netherlands are all of this type. *Plaid* can thus point to working solutions of the redistributive-libertarian dilemma which are, to make it an even better argument, economically significantly more successful than Britain. The party literature does not tire of pointing out that a self-governed and internally decentralised Wales is not Utopian but, on the evidence of 'comparable cases', demonstratively preferable to the current situation.

Self-government in Wales

Currently article 2 of the party constitution (as well as membership cards) states the party's principal aims as the following:

- to secure self-government and a democratic Welsh state based on socialist principles;
- to safeguard and promote the culture, language, traditions, environment and economic life of Wales through decentralist socialist policies;
- to secure for Wales the right to become a member of the United Nations organisation.

The references to the achievement of a 'state' and of UN membership appear to be straightforward demands typical of late twentieth-century nationalism. Indeed, the only aspect of these main aims which distinguishes *Plaid* from the typical anti-colonial movement of the 1960s is the reference to 'decentralist' policies.

And yet the way in which these aims have been put into practice makes them less straightforward than they seem. Repeated modifications of the campaign manifesto have gradually altered the basic outlook of the party. For reasons which will be discussed in more detail under the heading of 'Europe', *Plaid* under the leadership of Dafydd Elis Thomas was transformed into an 'anti-nationalist' movement. This term, used by the party's vice-chair Phil Williams to sum up Elis Thomas's outlook, indicates the gulf of possible views one might have of *Plaid*'s stand. 'Anti-nationalist' is perhaps too obvious an attempt at distancing the party in the London press from previous, orthodox nationalist positions. Considering the need the party has felt since the mid-1970s to capitalise on a complex Welsh national identity which remains largely unmobilised rather than on express nationalism, it is logical that *Plaid* should try to present a moderate patriotism as opposed to old-style nationalism as its basic tenet. This belief in a degree of moderation is what the leadership of both Elis Thomas and Dafydd Wigley, his predecessor and successor, had in common.

The important point to be made about *Plaid* policy on self-government is nevertheless that it is less about moderation than about ambiguity, and that this ambiguity is not just a tactical device for fighting electoral campaigns in a divided territory, but also the acknowledgement that such an ambiguous profile must be part of (post-) modern nationalism. As this point is central to an understanding of *Plaid Cymru* in the late twentieth century, it deserves some elaboration.

Old-fashioned nationalism relied on a simplistic conflation of two organisational units: nation and state. Where the boundaries of these two units have been incongruent, nationalism has provided the mobilising force to change the status quo. Nations have had to achieve 'their' state, and, vice versa, states had to create 'their' nations. This has usually been a conflictual, and often a violent, process.

In this context, a nationalist movement is usually about the mobilisation of the communal group—the nation—to create an institutional boundary—the state. The resulting demand for national statehood, if it is successful, has as its natural outcome secession, separation, independence. Apart from arguments as to whether such independence is economically viable or not, the dominant, liberal post-war

consensus on the secessionist demands of nationalism is that it constitutes too great a rupture of the existing structure to be permissible.

That is one of the reasons why achieving independence has become more difficult in Western Europe since 1945. Internal restructuring and almost continual reform are visible in most states, and novel approaches such as asymmetrical, multi-speed and non-territorial arrangements have become possible. Outright secession of national minorities to achieve independent states, by contrast, has proved to be an elusive aim of minority groups and terrorist organisations, even and perhaps especially, in the liberal democratic systems of Western Europe. Only the British constitution is unusual in that it does not permit the type of power-sharing solutions which have found the support of nationalist movements elsewhere in Europe.

Plaid, or at least its leadership under the influence of Elis Thomas, came to the conclusion that to bridge this gap in the range of potential solutions to the territorial aspirations and the confines of the British state requires a move beyond established nationalist positions. While the SNP continues to demand a Scottish nation-state, implicitly accepting the logic of parliamentary sovereignty, *Plaid* has become what is perhaps best called 'post-nationalist'. If, in the discourse of a nationalist movement, 'state' and 'independence' are central frames for the traditional claim to statehood, the absence of such terms from recent *Plaid* discourse is perhaps the best guide to the development which has been going on since the late 1980s.

Instead, *Plaid* has concentrated on using phrases such as 'elected Welsh assembly', 'self-government for Wales', 'independent voice for Wales', 'responsible self-government', 'independent small nation', 'full national status', 'full political status' and 'a Wales governed democratically by a Welsh parliament'. Nowhere in the recent party literature, in interviews and statements from party officials is the term 'state' or 'independence' being used, a fact that must be a conscious choice considering how frequent such usage is by the SNP, and how abundant the opportunity would be for *Plaid* to follow suit.

Plaid implicitly rejects the idea of sovereignty and of independence, because these established principles have ceased to relate meaningfully to current political practice in Western Europe, yet it frames the departure from these principles in a terminology which alludes emphatically to them. More than superficial electoral manoeuvring, *Plaid*'s move towards 'self-government' can be explained as the central part in an attempt to take the ambiguity of changing circumstances onto itself and mould a timely programme from this condition.

This ambiguity is important in a number of respects: it bridges the classic nationalist dilemma between utopianism and pragmatism; it maintains a link to past programmes and prevents the accusation of volatility which is often levied against small nationalist parties; it enables the party to capture the intellectual high ground with the claim that its policies, far from being outdated, are in fact heralding the post-state future; and, for this reason, it works as another delimitation between *Plaid* and its main opponent–the Labour Party–which, though calling for similar policies, does so on a different foundation.

Devolution is now on the agenda, and *Plaid* may take heart from the indication that Welsh voters do, after all, want to see their own political institutions. In a survey carried out for HTV Wales in December 1996, 51 per cent of Welsh voters were in favour of devolution, against only 45 per cent who thought so in March of that year. What is even more encouraging for those who see devolution as a way of reaffirming self-confidence among the Welsh political class is that at the same time, 73 per cent wanted to see laws emerging from a future assembly, 57 per cent were in favour of tax-raising powers, and 60 per cent were in favour of proportional representation (Balsom 1997).

The referendum on the Welsh assembly, when it happened on 18 September 1997, proved to be a cliff-hanger of historic proportions. The 'yes' vote was won with 50.3 per cent of the vote, and the turnout was only barely above the 50 per cent mark. More significantly, the vote demonstrated beyond doubt the internal divisions within Wales. A north-south divide saw more scepticism in the north towards an assembly likely to be located in, and dominated by, the south. And while the borderlands to England voted, without exception, against the plans for an assembly, the west of Wales said overwhelmingly 'yes'. *Plaid* had been a prominent partner within the 'yes' campaign, and the jubilation of Dafydd Wigley, the party leader, alongside the leaders of Labour and the Liberal Democrats, was well deserved. But had the project failed, as it almost did, then surely the party would have taken its share in the public humiliation that would certainly have followed. The knife-edge vote in favour of a Welsh assembly was also a crucial endorsement of PC's partnership with the Labour government.

The whole issue of self-government has in the past few years become very closely linked to the process of European integration. The evolution of the Community after the Single Act and the Maastricht Treaty has made it of vital importance to the coherence of *Plaid*'s programme. Only the European level of governance has allowed the demand for a Welsh parliament and government (without statehood) to be practically conceivable. There are few instances in which parliament or government is demanded without *Plaid* making a reference to this being in the context of 'Europe'. The European Union having become so central to the programme and discourse of *Plaid*, it is necessary to look at this European dimension in a little more detail.

The European dimension

Plaid's stand on Europe is first and foremost a positive one: the party is enthusiastically supportive of the idea of European integration and of Welsh participation in this project. Criticism revolves solely around the way in which Wales is seen to be underrepresented and misrepresented, having no 'independent voice' of its own. As with bilingualism and self-government, European integration is a further central demand of *Plaid* which has become, if moderately so, part of mainstream Welsh politics. The Labour Party has changed its policy progressively (Labour Party of Wales 1994), and even though the parliamentary party has

shown divisions over the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty, the affirmative outlook towards Europe is now evident in the new Labour government's policy after coming into office in May 1997.

In Wales the 1975 referendum on the Common Market did not produce results that were significantly divergent from the UK average. Rural Wales has supported a Community that has stood, up to now, for subsidising the region's agricultural production. Industrial Wales has benefited from the Community's reformed regional policy, which has allocated £75 m for the reconversion of the coalfields in the valleys. The urban belt of South Wales, which has attracted an extraordinary share of inward investment, has done so also on the basis of foreign investment into the Community after the Single Act. The Welsh Development Agency has been pro-active, linking up with regions in other member states, establishing a 'Wales Euro Centre' in Brussels and organising the 1992 Europartenariat, an EC-wide trade fair to generate joint ventures among small and medium-sized enterprises. Thus the impact of EC/EU policies on the local and regional level in Wales is particularly strong, going beyond the general phenomenon of what has been called the 'Europeanisation of subcentral government' (Rhodes 1993).

European integration has therefore had a number of tangible results which have increased support for membership in the region. *Plaid*, having been supportive early on, is now trying to capitalise on its European credentials by emphasising the way in which Welsh interests would be better served if Wales had 'direct access'. As with self-government, the language used in this respect is highly ambiguous. The fact, useful for *Plaid*'s argumentation, is that 'direct access' and 'independent voice' *vis-à-vis* the Commission and the Parliament is afforded by both regions and member states. Such demands can therefore imply either the wish to becoming a sixteenth member state, as is SNP policy, or the wish for the creation of regional institutions which might lobby the European Union more effectively.

The ambiguity—and tension—in this policy is emphasised if one looks closely at the way in which demands are framed by *Plaid*: on the one hand, reference is made to 'small nations' like Ireland or Denmark; on the other hand, Wales is compared to 'strong regions' like Bavaria and Catalonia. It is true, of course, that since each of these possess unitary structures which facilitate the formulation of demands, they have better representation within the Union and thus reap greater benefits from membership. Similarly, *Plaid*'s vision of 'Europe' is that of a 'Europe of the regions'—the main demand on the reform of the Union is the development of the Committee of the Regions into a strong second chamber of the Parliament with full decision-making powers. It would be in this 'chamber of regions and nations' that Wales would be directly represented and able to influence Union policies, *not* in the Council of Ministers, on which the SNP concentrates its demands for direct Scottish access.

The structure of these demands is further complicated by the fact that the Welsh Secretary of State is criticised for complete absence from the Council of Ministers where the Scottish Secretary has at least occasionally been present.

Unlike its Scottish counterpart, the Welsh Office has also, until recently, not been represented among the staff of the United Kingdom Permanent Representation to the Union, which is seen as further evidence that Welsh interests are not properly taken care of. As a result, it is not at all clear whether the Welsh Office does represent the Welsh interest, though not sufficiently well, or whether an elected body is the only way to bring Wales into line with the rest of Europe.

Plaid has responded to this dilemma by emphasising the potential of European integration, applauding the achievements of Welsh Office, WDA and Labour MEPs in getting European finance into the regions, but demonstrating with examples from abroad that a 'self-governed Wales in Europe' would do significantly better than that.

European integration is of course presented as part of the general attack on the British state, and the party literature consciously creates an image of solidarity between regional actors and Union institutions. Partially this is true, of course, especially since in the 1970s the Commission felt the need to open an office in Cardiff, an exception to the rule that only member state capitals have Commission representations. Direct links between local government and the Commission have been aided, and the fact that the South Wales Central MEP Wayne David has been the vice-chair of the EP's Regional Policy Committee is seen as having increased the attention Welsh interests receive among the Union institutions.

Notwithstanding the fact that ambiguity surrounds the exact kind of Union the party envisages—a 'Europe of the regions' or a 'Europe of nation-states'—the commitment to Europe and the rationale for this commitment from a regionalist point of view are clear. Considering what has been said above about the (un)likelihood of achieving independence for Wales against the background of a diffused national identity, settling for 'full status' within the European Union is certainly pragmatic. At the same time, the vision of gradual development towards fundamental change remains, it is merely that *Plaid*'s European vision puts the emphasis of this vision on changes in Brussels—on the future constitution of the European Union rather than on the precise nature of Welsh self-government.

Such acknowledgement of the essential interdependence of regions and states within Europe, of the future being dominated by membership of the EU rather than independence from the UK, is forward-looking, and one could even say enlightened, in the view of other nationalist movements. Despite the essential ambiguity at the heart of the party's European vision, it is, one could argue, a more honest and realistic vision than the SNP's slogan of 'Independence in Europe', something which could be called a contradiction in terms.

One has to conclude that *Plaid* has managed well to link up its policy on self-government with the increasingly European dimension of regional government, but that, again, this has been achieved through considerable ambiguity. In this case the ambiguity appears to result from a lack of consensus within the party as to what vision of Europe should be supported and/or expected. The result, as for the general programme, is a double-edged sword, for it might succeed in papering over differences within the party as well as it might create a platform that is

unacceptable to the majority. The party's hope is obviously that the strong commitment to Europe as such is different enough from the other parties' programmes that the electorate will not question the underlying tension contained in the *Plaid Cymru* manifesto.

Electoral performance and organisational change in the 1990s

The party hailed the outcome of the 1992 general election as a success, claiming that it 'has been greatly strengthened by its strong performance' (*Plaid Cymru Newsletter*, Cardiff, June 1992). Whatever the extent of this strengthening, it is true that the percentage share of the vote had increased for the first time since 1974 and a record number of four MPs were returned to Westminster. Thus a long-term erosion of the vote had apparently been halted and reversed, as Table 8.1 shows.

In the following year *Plaid* jumped from fourth to second place in the county council elections, overtaking the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats. Expectations for the June 1994 Euro-elections—elections in which the party has always polled above average and in which its vote increased to almost 13 per cent in 1989—were naturally high (Table 8.2). But a good showing here, the party coming second with a further increase of the voting share to more than 17 per cent, was not rewarded with any seat in Strasbourg.

The 1997 general election result, in which all Conservative seats in Wales were lost, confirmed *Plaid's* 'success' of 1992 and further improved on it. Ceredigion, the surprise win of 1992, became a safe seat with a *Plaid* share of more than 40 per cent of the vote. On the whole, though, Wales turned even more red than it had been previously, and the Labour Party continues without question to be the dominant electoral force in the elections of the coming year.

There are dynamic linkages between European and domestic elections: in the

Table 8.1 General election results for Wales, 1979–97

Party	*1979*		*1983*		*1987*		*1992*		*1997*	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Labour	47.0	22	37.5	20	45.1	24	49.5	27	54.7	34
Conservative	32.2	11	31.0	14	29.5	8	28.6	6	19.6	0
Liberal Democrats[a]	10.6	1	23.2	2	17.9	3	12.4	1	12.4	2
Plaid Cymru	8.1	2	7.8	2	7.3	3	8.8	4	9.9	4
Others	2.2	0	0.4	0	0.2	0	0.7	0	3.4	0
Total	100	36	100	38	100	38	100	38	100	40

Source: Balsom (1996, 1997)
Note: Percentages are of votes cast, not seats won
[a] 1983, 1987: figure is for the Alliance

Table 8.2 European election results for Wales, 1979–94

	1979		1984		1989		1994	
	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats	%	Seats
Labour	41.5	3	44.5	3	48.9	4	55.9	4
Conservative	36.6	1	25.4	1	23.4	0	14.6	0
Liberal Democrats[a]	9.6	0	17.4	0	3.6	0	8.7	0
Plaid Cymru	11.7	0	12.2	0	12.9	0	17.1	0
Others[b]	0.6	0	0.6	0	11.2	0	3.7	0
Total	100	4	100	4	100	4	100	4

Source: Balsom (1996, 1997)
Notes: [a] 1984 figure is for the Alliance, 1989 figure combines SLD (Social and Liberal Democrats) and SDP (Social Democratic Party)
[b] 1989 figure mainly Green Party

three seats of the 1989 European election which lie outside its heartland in north-west Wales, *Plaid* came fourth–not, as might have been expected, to the Liberals but to the Green Party, which had, with 15 per cent across the UK, a spectacular success on that occasion. To be overtaken in such manner, with double the vote, by a party which was new to British politics certainly caused some anxiety among the party leadership. Despite the high vote, there were thus disputes in the party about the correct response to the Green challenge. As remarked above, *Plaid* had been, through most of its history, environmentalist, pacifist, anti-industrialist and progressively left-wing, and it is clear that *Plaid* and the Greens competed for the same clientele. Under the British electoral system there clearly is no place for two parties of such similar outlook, and the response has been to forge *Plaid*-Green alliances on a constituency basis in the run-up to the 1992 general election. This policy was controversial, and the National Executive neither endorsed nor prohibited this practice. One of these alliances did in fact turn out to be the location of the additional seat the *Plaid* gained in that election from the Liberal Democrats: Ceredigion and Pembroke North. As it was won with a relatively narrow majority of 3,200, having avoided splitting the environmental vote might indeed have made the crucial difference in winning this seat and contributing to the general success.

Plaid has thus capitalised on its potential of making inroads into the share of the established party vote in Wales. The culmination of this blackmail function would of course be the establishment of a Welsh senate, as has been on the agenda before and after the 1997 general election. In this scenario, which on the basis of current polls and perceptions is not unlikely to occur after the next election, the blackmail potential of moderate nationalism might soon be exhausted. All its demands would have been realised, though by different actors and without the movement ever winning a majority of the vote in the region. As soon as there are

not many more region-specific, cultural or economic demands that a Welsh national party can make, since they have all been fulfilled, it might not have much of a future.

As noted above, *Plaid*'s policy stance on two major issues–self-government and bilingualism–has received moderate support from the Labour Party and the Liberal Democrats. The electoral geography of the language issue is more difficult to disentangle. Despite the increasing usage of the Welsh language in the urban parts of industrial south Wales, *Plaid*'s share of the vote there has collapsed over the past twenty years. It has markedly increased in those areas which are still, and perhaps increasingly, bilingual, but in the south, where Welsh-speakers are a small minority, *Plaid* has lost votes during this period. This might be due to continuous immigration from England, but, perhaps more likely, there is a general perception that *Plaid*, together with the respective pressure groups, has achieved its main purpose of reconstituting Wales as a political and cultural unit, and that now other issues–social, economic and environmental–are more important than regional nationalism.

These two points together could mean that *Plaid* might become the victim of its (and the non-parliamentary groups') 'success', and that the future might herald decline. But such considerations are of course hypothetical, especially since there are no comprehensive data on public attitudes in Wales more recent than the Welsh election study of 1979. What remains true is that *Plaid*'s support is concentrated in North and West Wales, where three of its four constituencies are situated. It is this part which has been identified as *Y Fro Gymraeg*– the Welsh-speaking Wales (Balsom *et al*. 1983). Here at least, two safe seats have emerged, and in local government too, territorially concentrated, strong positions are visible.

Local government in Britain is potentially quite weak in a West European perspective, a potentiality which, as discussed above, came to a head during the 1980s. In Wales, local government is in a somewhat privileged position compared to local councils in England, since the co-operation with central government is institutionalised in periodic meetings with the Welsh Office. There is, despite the marked political differences between the parties governing at the national and the local level, a certain bipartisanship in matters Welsh, at any rate less of a confrontational climate than in England. Empirical research shows that even though the input of local government in Wales is limited to consultation, it does have an influence on the course of governmental policy in the region (Boyne 1993). On the local level *Plaid* looks, at first sight, weak, possessing majorities in local councils only in its Welsh-speaking heartland. In the 1990s, though, the party has made considerable inroads into the Labour-dominated valleys of south Wales. In 1997, it also controls one of the new unitary councils, Gwynedd. In addition, it is worth mentioning that independent candidates are a major feature of local politics in rural Wales. In 1986, for example, 40 per cent of all local seats went to single candidates, many of them independents, who won their council seats uncontested.

An important role for *Plaid* is that of agenda-setter. Since in the recent past the two large parties have determined, respectively, Welsh Office and local government

policy, *Plaid* has been able to present itself as the 'real' opposition. In the last couple of years both the British left and the right have been on the defensive, forced to major reviews of their political programmes and policies. In England the Liberal Democrats, presenting themselves as the alternative to spent political forces, have profited from this opportunity, as can be seen from their recent by-election and local election victories. In Wales, on the other hand, *Plaid* has taken up this role, for the county council election success in 1993 was perhaps as much due to dissatisfaction with the larger parties as to the rising credibility of *Plaid's* demands.

Traditionally, *Plaid* has been better organised than the other parties in Wales, employing more full-time staff and agents in the constituencies relative to its size (Balsom and Burch, 1980). It has therefore been better able to respond adequately to regional issues compared to the other parties which rely on London know-how and policy-making. Party finances are comparatively sound, since members are by and large dedicated to the Welsh cause and willing to contribute financially. At one time there was considerable laxity in the collection of membership fees—one report stated that only a third of the members paid their dues—but after 1964, along with other internal changes as part of the modernisation programme, the system of collection was changed and appears to have been improved (McAllister 1981).

The organisational modernisation that began in the 1960s therefore seems to have contributed to the markedly better results since. The fact that more seats have been won with a smaller share of the overall vote might be an indication of improved targeting of organisational resources. The modernisation of the party's programme, which has at times been erratic and is currently in a new phase, appears to address important issues that dominate Welsh politics in a credible manner. On these counts the move from being a sectarian movement—a 'sect', as it has been called—to being a modern party, combining a catch-all programme with single-issue politics, appears to have been successful. And yet the spirit of a loose social movement, resisting the implications of hierarchical party organisation, continues to pervade *Plaid's* internal politics.

The problem with party modernisation has been that it has not brought the electoral results that one might have expected. The *Plaid* vote has stagnated at around 10 per cent, with the more important, high-turnout elections leaving the party below that. While the party has changed programme, organisation and strategy, proving to be comparatively flexible in dealing with the structural constraints, and while governmental responses have to a disproportionate extent been accommodating of nationalist demands, voter alignments have not proven to be so malleable.

Although *Plaid* has redefined 'the Welsh' as meaning all residents of the peninsula, whether Welsh-speaking or not, whether born in Wales or not, the party's appeal to English-speakers and to British-identifiers in the demographic centre in the south remains limited. Its 'new politics' profile might appeal to the younger voters, but in this respect there remain tensions between the party's younger leadership and the rank and file, who are often located in the more rural

parts and tend to be conservative on the new politics dimension. A certain weariness both among the 'young turks'–who feel bogged down by a party apparatus that has only recently been reformed–and the 'old guard'–who see the traditional nationalist cause as taken over by feminism, socialism and environmentalism–means that reconciliation among the generational groups and consolidation of the current moderate left platform might hinge on visible improvement of the party's electoral fortunes in the next couple of elections.

Conclusion

The main conclusions on the party's policies and politics have been included in the sections above. A general theme has been the way in which *Plaid* has oscillated around controversial issues and used ambiguity to master the retreat from old positions. The structural background of opportunities and constraints has been discussed, and the way in which these have been used by the political actors. Inability to put aside the language issue and to move to political and economic themes accounts for the party's existence in the doldrums before and after World War II. When the economic nettle was finally grasped, in the early 1980s, it was too late: after 1984 demands for socialism proved to be almost as much of a liability as the language had done before. The party proved to be slow in adapting to the structural changes in the nature of regional identity on which it depends so crucially. The tension between economic necessities of regional development and the political desire for anti-centralist identity, which theoretical models of regionalism have identified, has clearly been visible here (Hueglin 1989).

Yet the growth of institutional Wales and the rising importance of the European dimension for both Welsh politics and the regional economy have enhanced *Plaid's* chances in the past few years. As has been pointed out, these developments 'are likely to ensure that territory remains a major element in [British] politics' in the coming years (Keating 1991). The issue of 'democracy' is now high on the regional agenda, and is being put to use, if ambiguously, by *Plaid*. British constitutional reform and the emerging Euro-polity are now setting the parameters for *Plaid's* political action and, ultimately, for its electoral success.

After the 1997 Labour landslide in the British Parliament in Westminster, the new government went quickly to work on bills to hold referenda in Scotland and Wales on devolution. The resounding 'yes-yes' in Scotland, paving the way for a parliament with legislative and tax-varying powers, was not quite matched by the Welsh vote, which only narrowly endorsed an assembly with no such powers. Still, the vote was affirmative, and Labour has confirmed that legislation will go ahead to hold the first elections to the new regional institutions in 1999. It is clearly now in the framework of the future Welsh assembly that the politics of *Plaid* will have to focus. The expectation in the party is that the focus on Welsh politics will benefit *Plaid*, and that, as a result, it can expect a share of between 15 and 20 per cent of the vote in the assembly. Optimists in the party maintain that

it could be in a position to hold the balance in the assembly and in this way exert extraordinary influence over the future government of Wales.

Yet such a development is far from unproblematic. An early indication of the dynamic nature of this process was provided by the 1997 party conference, held a few weeks after the referendum. The party leadership, having only just returned from the successful co-operation with Labour and the Liberal Democrats in the 'yes' campaign, was confronted with a hostile attitude to proposals for a coalition with Labour should this be required in order to establish a majority in the assembly. The basic dilemma of a minority party of whether, on the one hand, to collaborate with the government of the centre or whether, on the other hand, to distinguish itself through 'pure opposition' remains for *Plaid*. What does not remain is the status quo, as the goalposts of Welsh politics are being changed radically in the move towards the creation of its first comprehensive political arena of modern times.

It is perhaps best to conclude that the Welsh nationalists have made a virtue out of their own internal divisions, the dilemmas posed on devolutionist strategies through the legal structure of the United Kingdom and the identity structure of Wales, and of the complexity of territorial politics in a multi-layered and highly interdependent Europe. This virtue—a result of choice as much as of situational constraints—is the fact that the *Plaid* of the 1990s avoids blunt statements of policy or ideology. In part, this virtue has been the ability to compromise, to settle for second-best options where they have been possible in order to achieve pragmatic results. But to a great extent it has also been the use of ambiguity—the ability of *Plaid* to give up key parts of its programme and strategy in order to reform while appearing to not having given anything up. As suggested above, this 'virtue' is also a liability, considering that internally and among the electorate this attitude might well be viewed as hesitation and lack of resolve. Yet in view of *Plaid*'s commitment to shared sovereignty, to decentralisation and to a strong European dimension of regional politics, ambiguity must primarily be counted as an asset. At a time when the established nation-state order in Western Europe is beginning to come apart, ambiguity—the lack of clear answers and ready solutions to complex problems—might come to be regarded as more appropriate and ultimately more honest than the one-dimensional clarity that is usually expected of political parties.

Notes

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9

THE *LEGA NORD*

Marco Tarchi

Historical origins, phases of development, electoral evolution

The process of formation of 'leaguism' follows the typical path of regionalist movements. At the roots of the phenomenon lie the ideas of Bruno Salvadori, who was the leader of the *Union Valdôtaine* (UV), the first of the movements forward to fight for ethnolinguistic autonomy in northern Italy. In 1979, the UV tried to gather under its own banner all the autonomist forces and win a seat in the first direct elections to the European Parliament. It thus sought partners from outside the region with special statutes where parties whose focus was to the centre-periphery cleavage already existed: *Union Valdôtaine* (UV), *Unione Slovena, Movimento Friuli*, *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), *Partito Sardo d'Azione*, (PSd'A).

The Philological Veneta Society, a cultural association that since the beginning of the 1970s had fought to promote consciousness of Venetian identity, answered the appeal. It recommended the use of dialect, the rediscovering of popular traditions and the encouraging of knowledge of local history (Diamanti 1992). The society designated Achille Tramarin as candidate, and received around 8,700 votes. In the course of his search, Salvadori accidentally met in Pavia Umberto Bossi, a 35-year-old medical student, and he converted him to the cause.

Despite the low results (166,194 votes, 0.5 per cent, no seat), the list for a 'Europe of autonomies' stimulated the creation, almost simultaneously, of three organisations, each of which aimed to make the most of the political-economic and cultural resources of their own region, and expressed an overt opposition to the 'bureaucratic oppression' of central power. In 1979 Bossi founded the North-Western Lombard Union (*Unolpa*). The Union was not able to present lists for the local and regional elections of the following year, but circulated several slogans that subsequently characterised the *lumbard* movement. In January 1980, the members of the Philological Veneta Society gave birth to *Liga Veneta*. The League adopted as emblem the lion of St Mark, insignia of the *Serenissima Veneta* Republic. In the same year, in Piedmont the *Piemonteisa Arnassita* (rebirth) was founded.

All these movements aspired to evolve rapidly into structured parties and occupy a space within the political system. But the first years of their existence

were troubled. The claim of an identity based on ethnicity and supported by folklorist forms of action (assemblies, demonstrations, graffiti written in dialect, costume parades) reduced them to cultural epiphenomena and isolated them from the socio-economic interests of the 'people', who in fact lacked the common ethnic or linguistic traits that these movements sought to represent.

In 1980 the Venetian League vote in the regional elections remained at 14,000. Only by including in its propaganda polemics against migrant southerners and the 'parties of Rome' did it succeed in improving its results. The first moment of national visibility arrived with the parliamentary election of 1983. In Venetia, where it gained 125,311 votes, the League returned one deputy and one senator to parliament. This success attracted a certain number of imitators, and autonomist movements emerged in almost all parts of central and northern Italy. However, there were jealousies and misunderstandings among them. Three different regionalist lists were presented for the European elections of 1984: SVP, UVPSd'A and the Union for Federalist Europe (which comprised the Venetian League and its allies). The latter scored worst, receiving 163,299 votes and no seats.

The score at the local and regional elections in 1985 was slightly better. In the region of Venice, the League, despite having suffered a split, gained two regional councillors and several others in the local councils. In Piedmont, it gained a seat in the province of Turin. In Lombardy, where the *Lega Lombarda* had been born three years previously, it had three councillors elected in Varese and Gallarate. In this 'constituent phase' (Rovati 1993) leaguism underwent a decisive crisis. In Venetia, the 'mother of all the leagues' was torn by divisions and the Piedmontese group split into two (*Piemont,* led by Roberto Gremmo, and *Piemont Autonomista* led by folk-singer Gipo Farassino).

Its pragmatic attitude to externals and rigid internal hierarchical management projected the *Lega Lombarda* onto the scene. In 1987 it achieved an unexpected success, returning Bossi to the Senate, and to the House another of the founding members, the Catholic Giuseppe Leoni. From this moment onwards the *Liga Veneta* (allied to a group of pensioners, it missed entering Parliament by only 1,598 votes) declined, thus losing the leadership of new autonomist movements to Bossi's movement. The electoral success (almost 500,000 votes received in the centre-north) strengthened the League's leaders' ideological and tactical conviction that it was necessary to break with classical ethnoregionalism (Ercolini 1996:17).

The phase of expansion and enhanced visibility began between 1988 and 1989. Success was evident above all in Lombardy, where the movement little by little won seats in almost all the town councils. It also penetrated Liguria and Val d'Aosta. At the 1989 European elections, the *Lega Lombarda*, in alliance with the Venice, Piedmont, Emilia, Liguria and Tuscan autonomists, increased its votes to 635,546 and gained two seats. This was the prelude to the founding of the *Lega Nord*, formally enacted on 4 December 1989. This strategy was rewarded at the following local and regional elections of May 1990. With the twenty-four seats in regional councils (fifteen in Lombardy, three in Venietia and Piedmont, two in Liguria, one in Emilia-Romagna), 108 councillors in

main towns of communes, 88 seats in eight provincial councils and one mayor (won in the small commune of Cene), the League became a political actor of national relevance.

Defining itself increasingly as a protest movement of the productive north against the organisational ineffectiveness and the political corruption of the managing governmental class, leaguism consolidated its organisation and attracted new adherents. No longer neglected but now under attack from the other parties, the League enjoyed media attention and amplified its messages with an aggressive and rough but highly effective language (Costantini 1994; Iacopini and Bianchi 1994) and with mass rallies loaded with symbolism (usually the centre was Pontida, the place where in 1167 sixteen Lombard and Venetian cities took an oath to fight the emperor Barbarossa). Having defeated the divisions and the challenges of many small groups that tried to appropriate the label 'league' in order to exploit its popularity, the League transformed itself into a multiregional federation. In February 1991, it held its first congress and chose Bossi as party secretary. It made a qualitative jump in the parliamentary elections of 1992:3,394,917 votes, fifty-five deputies and twenty-five senators, chosen from eight regions, including Trentino-Alto Adige, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna and Tuscany.

The shock created by this success and the break-up of the centre parties, which had lost legitimacy as a result of judicial investigations into corruption, gained the League the approval of moderate and conservative public opinion, thus rendering it an acceptable force for governing. Owing the new semi-majoritarian electoral system, in the local elections of 1993 the League won more votes in the north than any other party. In the second ballot its candidates in most cases opposed those of the left. Although it was defeated by the former Communists (Partito Democratico delle Sinistra, PDS), and competed within an electoral coalition in all the big cities except Milan, it was strengthened by the experience. The League had moved from being a local protest movement to being a party that potentially could become the dominent centre-right party in a political spectrum deprived of the reassuring presence of the Christian Democrats.

The decision of Silvio Berlusconi to enter politics, noticeably modified the situation. On the one hand, the birth of *Forza Italia* (FI) reduced the attractiveness of the League, especially to social categories scared by an advancing left. On the other hand, in the new electoral system which assigned 75 per cent of the seats by majority rule, without the League the centre-right front did not stand a chance of victory. After some hesitation and tough polemics against the 'fascist, centralist and statist' *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN), Bossi agreed to form, with *Forza Italia*, Centro Cristiano Democratico (CCD) and Unione di Centro, the Liberty Pole, connected to the Pole of Good Government (FI+AN+CCD) in the south. He imposed tough conditions on the allies: in Lombardy 80 per cent, in the other northern regions 65–70 per cent of candidates were to be from the League. As a result of this 'blackmail,' the League became, with 117 deputies and 61 senators, the largest parliamentary group after the elections of 27 and 28 March 1994. In the government presided over by Berlusconi, this was translated into one deputy

prime minister, Roberto Maroni, five ministers (Interior, Budget, Industry, Communitarian Policies, and Institutional Reforms) and numerous vice-ministries.

However, this was only partial victory, as in the proportional districts the votes of the League decreased as compared with its score of two years earlier. The competition with *Forza Italia* led to a further decline at the European elections of June 1994 (6.6 per cent and six seats). In order to maintain its autonomy, the League was forced to promote conflict with its allies and, after only eight months, provoked the fall of the government.

Faced with a haemorrhage of its parliamentarians (fifty of them left) and with strong dissension in the top leadership, the party (then counting 149 mayors, 894 aldermen and 2,240 councillors) confirmed in an extraordinary congress the break-up with the Pole. It decided to support the centre-left government of Lamberto Dini from the opposition benches and conferred even more absolute decision-making power on Bossi. Despite the unfavourable polls, it ran by itself at the regional elections. Yet it received good results in its strongholds: 17.9 per cent in Lombardy, 16.8 per cent in Venice, 10.3 per cent in Piedmont. However, the attempt to expand outside the North under the label 'League of Federal Italy' failed.

Assured by this demonstration of strong identification of the northern electorate with the League, Bossi also broke the precarious alliance with the centre-left. After having withdrawn his support from the government at the anticipated elections of 21 April 1996, Bossi vehemently attacked the electoral coalitions of centre-right and centre-left, calling them disparagingly *Roma-Polo* and *Roma-Ulivo* and accusing them of pursuing policies that penalised the north. This polemic strategy produced the party's best results so far (3,777,786 votes, fifty-nine deputies and twenty-seven senators).

Subsequently, the clashes with the state accelerated. On 15 September, a mass demonstration along the shores of the Po River was held to proclaim the independence of 'Padania'. Bossi created a provisional 'Padana' government, a Committee of the Liberation of Padania (CLP) and even an embryo of paramilitary militia, the green shirts of the National Guards of Padania. Even if they were merely symbolic, they indicated a return to frontal confrontation with the institutions (confirmed by the conclusions of the Third Congress of February 1997). The separation of Padania from Italy thus became the League's primary goal.

Profile of the League's programme and strategic choices

Over the years, the League has undergone a series of changes of strategic importance, its programme responding more to emerging new opportunities than to shifting value orientations (Schmidtke 1994). Few of the original themes have been abandoned. Most of them have remained salient throughout its entire period of existence but have been adjusted to the circumstances and linked with new issues. Yet the tensions related to the centre-periphery cleavage have always remained the basis of the political action of the leaguists.

At first, regional leagues emphasised historical, cultural and anthropological specificities of their zones of reference. For them, territory was a source of identity and at the same time a place of recognition of interests antagonistic to those of outsiders. A sense of belonging to the community was given by birth and by the maintenance of traditions. The purpose of the movements was self-determination of the region. This would lead to the strengthening of the socio-economic position of the autochthonous population, guaranteeing reserved places in public employment and priority of employment in the private sector. The traditional parties with uneven territorial representation were accused by the leagues of having favoured–with measures of assistance dictated by a clientelistic logic–the 'unproductive' south *vis-à-vis* the developed and overtaxed north.

The provocative discourses, in dialect, held in town or provincial councils, aimed above all to draw attention to the cultural and administrative 'colonisation' of the northern regions. Both the *Lega Veneta* and the *Lega Automista Lombarde* (LAL) criticised the Risorgimento and the state model that emerged from it. They supported the right of autonomy of all peoples, and, quoting Rousseau, they insisted on the role of the small community. The first programme of the LAL exalted the principle of self-determination, proposed a 'confederation of Padana-Alpine peoples' within indefinite borders, and vindicated political decentralisation and the recourse to referendum and to other tools of direct democracy, against the 'mass democracy' that homogenised and levelled out specific identities (Vimercati 1990).

The electoral results of 1983–85 showed leaguism to be a phenomenon of the industrial periphery, one that expressed the crisis of political alignments around the old cleavages (Diamanti 1995). Yet it could not assert itself in the big cities. In order to overcome this weakness, Bossi and his entourage focused their propaganda on the regionalisation of interests. Taking care not to lose contact with popular sentiment, leaguism did not confine itself to offering representation to social groups whose economic strength outweighed their political influence. It also stimulated their pride, defining them as 'pillars of development' and channelling their resentments against the 'centralist and wasteful state'. The battle for the dialect became marginal, and the exclusive and ascriptive connotation of belonging faded away.

The professed ideology was integral federalism (Poche 1991) oriented towards the construction of a 'Europe of the peoples'. The region preserved the status of nation, but emphasis was placed more on the affinity of interests of its residents than on their cultural identity: demands for tax relief, protection of small enterprises against the political power of the big industrial groups, and incentives for agriculture and for local craftsmanship. By its demands for territorial autonomy, the League proposed to reawaken social fractures that were not normally central to regionalist movements: dissatisfaction with the malfunctioning of democratic institutions (Morlino and Tarchi 1996), insecurity, impatience of self-employed workers with the high costs of the welfare system and the general uneasiness about the inefficiency of public services. Outside the cities there became entranched various signs of antagonism to the system: protests against the 'big thief Rome'

and praise of the industrious north, contrasted to the 'idleness' of the south, expressing themselves in hostility towards the traditional political class and parties (Ruzza and Schmidtke 1991). Other features were attention to problems of public order, underlined by the forced residence of members of the Mafia and Camorra in small towns of the north, and propaganda against foreign immigration (presented as a source of delinquency). Together they created 'regionalist populism' (Biorcio 1992) which became a trade mark and led several researchers to classify the League as a party of the extreme right (Ignazi 1994; Betz 1994; Taggart 1995).

At the elections of 1987, with the affirmation of Bossi and of his movement as the pivot in the regional divide, the merely local dimension was surpassed more and more, and secessionist groups multiplied: *Union del Popolo Veneto*, *Union Piemonteisa*, *Lega Alpina Lumbarda*, etc. They accused the League of having betrayed the ethnoregionalist cause and they tried, without success, to challenge it. The phase of direct hostility to partitocracy thus began. It went beyond the regional limits, with the birth of a 'party of the north' and an adaptation of the party's programme to the new objectives. The anti-immigration campaign, which drew accusations of racism (Moioli 1990; Balbo and Manconi 1992), and the accentuation of the demands for administrative and fiscal self-government served to cultivate a common agreement with the neoautonomist groups that presented themselves all over northern and central Italy under the symbol *lumbard* at the local and regional elections of 1990.

The real turning-point came, however, with the proposal of an institutional federal model for Italy, in which the country would be divided into three big territorial aggregates: the 'macro-regions' of the north, of the centre and of the south respectively. Launching the proposal of a Republic of the North, Bossi aimed to consolidate, around a unifying symbolic base, the identity of the federation in a wider league from Piedmont to Tuscany, and to create a homogeneous socio-economic space.

The call for federalism, suggested by the political scientist Gianfranco Miglio, offered conciliatory tones when necessary. It was presented as a remedy to the problems caused by centralism, which had led to a large increase in the public debt and a corresponding increase in fiscal demands. Federalism was also used as blackmail, threatening the secession of the richest zones in Italy, bred by an 'entrepreneurial culture' opposite to that of the rest of the country, weighed down by the mentality and the costs of welfare 'assistentialism'.

Despite the lack of geographical and anthropological coherence, the notion of the north served the League in emphasising its distance from the official Italy of corruption, partitocracy and inefficient ministerial bureaucracy. It thus combined different components: egoism linked to local pride, the desire for deregulation of the small enterprises of the north-east, and criticism by the middle classes of the welfare state and the power of the unions (Poggio 1994). During this phase, the ostracism of the establishment was exposed by the League as ultimate proof of the insensitivity of the political and economic institutions

to the protest of the northern regions and thus of the need for the north to unite against the enemy.

After 1992, the disarray of the moderate parties and the forceful entry of the League into communal, provincial and regional councils, the House and the Senate indicated the League's passage from opposition to being a party with a chance of accomplishing its ideas for radical reform. The renewal of the institutions became the new strategic priority; the League presented itself as the party of renovation. The turning-point came with the winning of places on many local executives and the acceptance of the logic of alliances. This softened the League's tone and normalised its language. Without ceasing to exploit the tensions provoked by the ongoing political crisis, the League leadership declared that it had the correct remedy to keep the crisis under control: a blend of federalism, liberalism, striving for efficiency and trust in the benefits of European integration were meant to reassure the middle classes. The election, in June 1993, of the parliamentary group leader and former EC official Marco Formentini as the mayor of Milan, the symbol-metropolis of the productivist ethic of 'Lombard Calvinism', marked the most successful moment of this strategy.

In order to prevent the League from gaining a monopoly in exploiting centre-periphery tensions, almost all traditional parties agreed to integrate, in their own programmes, reforms towards federalism. The movement of Bossi, however, continuously criticised these parties' policy choices in order to explore other areas of conflict. As the break-up of the old political class legitimated the League's government potential, its plans were redefined in a conservative and legalistic way. The threats of fiscal strike and of a boycott of the acquisition of government bonds were replaced by proposals that emphasised the economic contents of federalism: the regionalisation of pension and welfare systems, the substitution of local taxes for federal ones, an expansion of the tax-raising powers of local bodies, and, above all, the privatisation of all enterprises under direct or indirect control of the state. During this phase there was a return to references to European continental unity, understood no longer in the sense of a romantic call to the Europe of 'small homelands' and 'prohibited nations', but as a large market for the industry of the northern regions.

The weak coalition potential exhibited in the administrative elections in 1993 showed that, by itself, the League was not able to accomplish its ambitious aims. It was forced to look for allies and to moderate its language, without, however, ceasing to underline its difference from possible partners. It was the period of the 'league of struggle and government' that showed an alternative face of pragmatic reasonableness, presenting plans for constitutional engineering and neoliberal programmes. On the other hand, those in the pro-independence faction continued to make anti-state declaration.

While maintaining this ambiguity, Bossi negotiated the idea of electoral alliance first with the centrist *Patto Segni*, then with *Forza Italia*. He chose the most convenient agreement with the centre-right. Even after donning ministerial clothes, the leaders of the League continued to keep the conflict between the north and the central

power alive. Its actions were a constant source of instability for the Berlusconi government. Finally, the implicit costs of an involvement in partitocracy appeared to Bossi more important than the benefits derived from sharing power.

The decision to withdraw from the coalition determined an adjustment in strategy and in policy choices for the umpteenth time. The need to separate itself from *Forza Italia*, something that risked alienating part of the electorate by arousing the indignation of conservative public opinion against a 'betrayal' on the part of the League that would 'deliver Italy to the left', resuscitated the protest politics of the League. Within a few months 'unattainable' federalism was set aside and replaced by independentism, which had never disappeared from the party's programme but until that moment had been played down. Symbolic provocation was relaunched: Bossi established in Mantua a 'parliament of the north' and accentuated the conflict with the state. Thus, he sought to unify, under the banner of the *Carroccio*, an area that was too segmented in culture and interests (Diamanti 1996).

Given the apparent limits of the strategy of occupying a central position in Parliament and in the country, the polemic against the national state was intensified. A proposal was launched to abolish the 'delegates' of the central government in the periphery: i.e. the communal secretaries and the prefects. In order for the League to distance itself from all other political forces, intensify the polarisation between the north and Rome and regain the focus of the mass media, once again the card of regionalism was played, this time with a maximalist objective: the self-determination of Padania.

The 'nation' that the League declared desirable but in reality was forced to invent is an ambiguous entity, whose historical-cultural origins are attributed to the struggle of the Celtic tribes against Rome (Oneto 1997) and whose geographical frontiers, decided after many debates, extend as far as the Marche, Tuscany and Umbria. But the profusion of symbolic actions with which the plan was presented—they included rites of consecration of the territory coloured by invocations of natural divinities—also show that the politics of identity was emphasised, at least temporarily, within the League. It is not, however, a genuine return to the origins, because the points of reference to the hypothetical Padana state are no longer ethnic but economic: the separation from Italy is invoked to point out the discrepancy of development between the two parts of the peninsula.

The irremediable backwardness of the south carries the risk of bankruptcy for industrial regions and exclusion from the European Union. Europe is seen to offer not only resources but also a homeland representing an alternative to Italy. It is no accident that following this new strategic turn, the League re-established the bonds with old-style autonomist movements such as the PSd'A and nursed its relationships with independence movements in the rest of Western Europe. In spite of its links with a populist party like the Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Austrian Freedom Party, FPÖ), the League in 1996 applied to re-enter the European Free Alliance, from which it had been expelled in 1994 following its governmental cohabitation with the neofascist MSI-AN.

Organisational characteristics and leadership style

Organisation has played an important role in the consolidation of the League. The choice of a flexible organisational model, characterised by simple and centralised decision-making mechanisms, with a hierarchical pyramidal structure and by dedication to the leader, guaranteed the movement a cohesion continually threatened by personality clashes and demands for internal autonomy. Furthermore, it has served as an effective channel of communication. Horizontally it has guaranteed co-ordination between regional structures in the League federation. Vertically it has allowed central leadership to control, influence and direct both the single leagues and their elected officials in Parliament and in the regional and local councils.

Despite the visible and complex apparatus, based on national (i.e. regional) secretariats, and provincial, territorial sections, a labour union (*SinPa,* previously *Sal,* and *Confedersal*) and many specific associations for entrepreneurs, artisans, farmers, young people, women, leisure, a technical consultancy to parliamentarians (*Tîmer*), a press agency (*AgeLega*), a daily paper (*La Padania*) and dozens of central and peripheral publications, a staff of employees (in 1993, at least thirty-six for the federal secretariat alone), the Northern League cannot be called a bureaucratic mass party (Panebianco 1988), although it displays some of this type's characteristics, such as an emphasis on 'ideology' (first federalist and then secessionist), the centrality of the 'believers' within the apparatus, and the strong vertical internal links.

In fact, its management is not truly collegial and presents a structural constraint on its capacity to expand membership (140,000 members declared in 1992; no later figures have been given officially), a constraint willingly imposed by the leadership through a strict system of selection of adherents. The subdivision of party followers into four hierarchically separate levels (supporting partners, deprived of the right to vote in the internal organs and of duties of participation; militants, who are required to be active and are granted the right to participate only at the sectional level; ordinaries, who participate at the national level and are nominated by a higher level on the basis of merit; and founders, who have a right for life to participate and vote at the National Congress) has the obvious purpose of controlling the possibilities of access to internal decision-making, thereby making the League a 'protected' party that is impenetrable not only by infiltrators but also, and above all, by forms of organised dissent. Analogous reasoning could be applied to the grassroots units of the movement: communal sections, constituency councils, zonal co-ordinations where only the militant and ordinary partners have power, and the possibility of acquiring positions depending on 'proof of loyalty' determined by membership seniority.

Unlike mass parties, the League did not demand—at least, not as long as secession was not on the agenda—a continuous and widespread militancy from its followers. It preferred to stimulate a psychological identification through several

keywords, and provoke a sense of affiliation without participation (Biorcio 1991). Hence the importance of communication, and the efforts it made to translate its messages into rational and symbolic linguistic codes easily understandable by the layperson. The appeal to a direct and informal argumentational style, interwoven with exaggerations and paradoxes, has been adopted as a form of rejection of the conventions of professional politics. It is a 'stigma of novelty' in an arena dominated by the ideological slang of parties born during the Cold War. It also aims to make politics more comprehensible to common people. In the same way has arisen a reluctance to accept any type of positioning on the left-right axis, considered irrelevant, and the tendency to be involved in the area of neomaterialist needs, maintenance of previously acquired economic affluence, efficiency of services, security, giving voice to appeals of 'strong' classes (Mazzette and Rovati 1993; Ricolfi 1995), whose frustrations and bitterness had been underestimated by the traditional parties. These obvious differences from its competitors were thus translated into a factor of political strength.

The leadership style of the League is the most visible expression of this difference. It includes elements reminiscent of various types of organisational structure, going from a social movement to a party of integration, without excluding some features of the catch-all party. Above all, however, the League displays the features of a charismatic party. In other words, it embodies the pure type of leader-party both in practice and in the formulations of its statutes: the federal secretary enjoys the right to temporarily suspend, at any moment he considers necessary, any internal hierarchy, and this decision remains in effect until the gathering of the next Federal Council, the board of directors of the movement!

The charismatic logic is inherent to the origins of the League. It is expressed, in addition to the primordial role assigned to rituals and to symbolic communication, in a mysticism of the founding fathers who survived the need to institutionalise, the numerous splits and the integration of the original regional leagues into a single structure. The anomalous role reserved to the 127 founders, in truth largely co-opted in different waves after the birth of the movement in order to strengthen the homogeneity of the leadership group, is a sign of the personalism that still marks the bonds between Bossi and his followers. The obligation of direct loyalty and the accordance of *ad personam* legitimacy are also defended publicly, in 'liturgical' form, through the periodic ceremony of the oath of Pontida, which gathers the 'disciples' around the leader.

The *de facto* informality of the intermediary hierarchies, uncertainty in financing (with ample recourse to donations, which were crucial until 1992, when state subsidies improved the situation), the dependence of activists and mid-level elites' opportunity structures on the personal trust they enjoy with the leader are some of the other charismatic features that characterised the League in its first phases and still today characterise its praxis. Electoral successes have not changed this fundamental feature.

In the imagery of the activists and of external supporters, Bossi remains not only the undisputed leader, but also the one who founded the movement,

elaborated its ideological framework, interprets its doctrine and is the only person who can translate it into practice. His charisma is therefore that of the 'creator and preacher' (Harmel and Svasand 1993). Doubtless this permanent charisma also has specific functional reasons. It serves to keep unified and coherent a highly heterogeneous organisation under the profile of the political culture where different 'historical' autonomisms based on ethnicity, economic federalism, localism, populism, xenophobia and other components cohabit. However, this partially instrumental aspect does not seem to lessen its practical effectiveness, especially when the risks of factionalism have increased owing to the growth of a strong class of semi-professional politicians (MPs, mayors, aldermen, local councillors).

The electorate: values, attitudes, socio-economic background

The electoral results obtained by the Leagues, shown in Table 9.1, can be divided into three separate periods. In the Leagues' formative phase (1983–7), League lists obtained significant results in only three regions: Venetia, Piedmont and Lombardy. The success of the *Lige Veneta* in 1983 was concentrated in the northern provinces: Belluno, Treviso and Vicenza, zones in which there is a strong influence of the Catholic subculture and the prevailing economic activities are based on small industries. An important part of the support for autonomists thus originates from the Christian Democratic area. In the other regions, the best results were achieved in extra-urban and 'frontier' environments such as Varese, Cuneo and Turin. The support for the ethnoregionalist candidates is fed by the discontent of

Table 9.1 Electoral results of the Leagues in north Italy 1983–96

Region	*1983 Nat*	*1985 Reg*	*1987 Nat*	*1989 Eur*	*1990 Reg*	*1992 Nat*	*1994 Nat*	*1994 Eur*	*1995 Reg*	*1996 Nat*
V. d'Aosta	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	5.7	—	—
Piedmonte	—	1.1	2.9	2.1	5.1	16.3	16.2	11.5	11.1	18.4
Liguria	—	0.9	1.3	1.4	6.1	14.3	11.4	8.1	6.5	10.2
Lombardia	—	0.5	4.1	8.1	18.9	23.0	22.6	17.7	18.7	24.8
Trentino-AA	—	—	—	0.7	0.3	8.9	7.5	4.5	9.6	13.2
Veneto	4.2	3.7	3.1	1.7	5.9	17.8	21.6	15.6	17.5	29.8
Friuli-VG	—	—	0.8	0.5	—	15.3	16.9	11.2	26.7	23.2
Emilia-Rom.	—	0.4	0.5	0.5	2.9	9.6	6.4	4.4	3.8	7.2
Toscana	—	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.8	3.1	2.2	1.6	0.7	1.8
Marche	—	0.5	0.5	0.1	0.2	1.3	—	0.8	0.9	1.5
Umbria	—	0.4	0.4	0.1	0.2	1.1	—	0.6	—	1.0

Notes: Nat=national elections; Eur=European elections; Reg=regional elections
The regional elections in Trentino-Alto Adige and Friuli-Venezia Giulia were held in 1993 and not in 1995
1983: *Liga Veneta*; 1985: *Liga Veneta*; for Lombardy: *Liga Veneta-Lega Lombarde*; 1987: *Liga Veneta*-Joined Pensioners; for Piedmont: LV-PU and Piedmont List; for Lombardia: LV-LL; from 1989: *Alleanze Nord* and then *Lega Nord*

the periphery with the central power for its indifference to their problems. It is based also on a desire to loosen relations with Rome and the south, and strengthen them instead with neighbouring European countries.

Geographically, the League spread over the entire northern regions, with the exception of Trentino, Val d'Aosta and Friuli-Venezia Giulia, which remained fiefs of 'historical' autonomists. Zones of concentration covered the entire Alpine arc. Enclaves also emerged in Liguria and in the north of Emilia. Lombardy became the driving force, followed by Piedmont. The 1990 regional elections showed a spreading of League support in adjacent areas. Above all, in Lombardy, it grew among the urban public-employee middle class and among young people.

The first analyses pointed out that, at the level of values, the Leagues' voters are predominantly secular, and moderate or right-wing (Cesareo, Rovati and Lombardi 1989). Seventy per cent of them previously voted for government parties, but unhappiness with the ineffectiveness of the political system led them to radicalism, to the extent that the political space they affiliate with is close to that of the neofascist MSI (Biorcio 1991). In terms of socioprofessional background, they are predominantly self-employed workers (shop keepers, farmers, artisans), students, employees and pensioners, and middle-aged males. Between 1987 and 1990, voters' motivations refer to a feeling of territorial belonging and a need for identity that was no longer satisfied by the Catholic subculture. Neomaterialist concerns based on interest and value choices were consolidated in a protest vote calling for efficiency and security (Natale 1991).

After 1990, the League entered a phase of enlargement that continued, with some set-backs, until 1996. Its public became 'normalised', reaching the entire middle class and cutting across the left–right distinction. Avoiding the risk of becoming a single-issue party and declaring the parties from Rome to be the enemy, the League offers the electorate a new collective identity, 'nordism', which activates a synergy between different motivations for voting behaviour (Mannheimer 1991). The big leap forward in 1992 showed that by presenting itself as the anti-party *par excellence*, the movement was able to gain votes from all the other parties' supporters: especially those of the DC and PSI, but also the MSI and the Greens. In social terms, the identity of the League electorate resembles the average voter. The 'red' zones, however, remain almost impenetrable. In any case, the characteristics of League supporters (presence in local circles, consumption habits, propensity for the market and the private economy, distrust of institutions and parties, intolerance towards southerners and migrants) indicate to a strong distance from the Communist subculture.

The elections of 1994 and 1996 only slightly modified this picture. The League declined in the metropolitan zones and increased its votes in the 'deep north', which goes from Pordenone to Cuneo. In these areas, small and medium-sized communes prevail, the rate of industrialisation is higher and unemployment lower. The politics of the League above all attracts groups of self-employed people who previously supported the Christian Democrats and look favourably on the

development of a 'micro-capitalism' that opposes not only Rome and fiscal pressures, but also the big economic potentates (Diamanti 1996).

The impact on the political system and perspectives for the future

The success of the *Lega Nord* has had several effects on the political system. Exposing the centre-periphery cleavage caused by the late and imperfect process of national unification, it has given a voice to the dissatisfactions of the economically more developed regions of the country and forced other political forces to take account of its themes.

If in Italy the model of the federal state and the 'northern question' has been brought to the attention of intellectuals and statesmen, this is due exclusively to the League. Furthermore, neoautonomism has given voice to social groups that, despite having contributed to the productive boom of the 1980s, were politically not sufficiently represented. The territorial expansion and the electoral success of 1990 converted them to an effective post-ideological protest instrument and aggregator of materialist (defence of affluence and security) and post-materialist (search for new identity after the collapse of the old subcultures of belonging) tensions.

The electoral support of the League has exposed the increasing credibility deficit of parties that had signed the constitutional pact of the founding of the Republic in 1945. It has also accelerated the delegitimation of the First Republic's leadership. Faced by the rise of the League, rival parties reacted ineffectively. First they went silent. Then they replied with sarcasm and contempt. They demonised it and accused it of barbarism. Finally, they tried to race with it on tracks chosen by the League, starting, however, too late. In short, they never dealt efficiently with the problems that assures the League of a body of support.

Nevertheless, up to now, the League has been more successful as a megaphone of protest than as a government force. Its participation in Berlusconi's cabinet and management of a metropolis like Milan have not increased its support. Its political action has suffered from various limitations. It still has not demonstrated any adequate answer to the criticisms it successfully made against misgovernment by the establishment. Its language has remained too rough and sour. The recruitment of administrative cadres with the necessary ability to carry out public policy has not been very successful. Its efforts to unify, under one flag, the extremely complex society of the north has failed: the city-countryside cleavage (or more precisely the cleavage between small and medium-sized urban centres) has, in this sense, counterbalanced the effects of the centre-periphery cleavage.

The separatist turn and the invention of a Padania tightly integrated in Europe like a 'shared homeland' should help, in the strategic vision of Bossi, in overcoming this impasse and guarantee the League hegemony in a territorially circumscribed area, giving it a formidable weapon to force the hand of the central state to make

agreements. At this moment, this strategy, even if supported by opinion polls, does not seem to have produced results that live up to expectations.

One reason is that the secessionist choice has further reduced the already low bargaining power of the League. The outcome of the League's plans in the immediate future will probably depend on the ability of Italian governments to meet the necessary requirements for integration into the processes of economic and monetary development of the European Union. If this objective is achieved, the League will perhaps be forced to withdraw into its electoral strongholds in the deep north, restricted to radical and marginal protest. Otherwise, its offensive against the national, unitary state, which today seems ambitious, could have unexpected affects.

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10

THE *SÜDTIROLER VOLKSPARTEI*

A hegemonic ethnoregionalist party

Anton Holzer and Barbara Schwegler

The *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP) occupies a special position in the spectrum of European regional parties and movements insofar as it has in many respects more in common with the supra-regional or national parties that do not call themselves 'ethnic' parties than with regionalist movements and groups, because it possesses relatively high organisational continuity and plays a highly specialised role with a constant form of organisation and articulation. The ways in which it participates in politics are quite traditional. Furthermore, at the level of international party formation, the SVP is a member/observer of the European Democratic Union (EDU) and the European People's Party (EPV), and not of the formation that groups most European regionalist parties, the European Free Alliance.

Since its foundation in 1945 the SVP has occupied a hegemonic power position within the political system in South Tyrol. It participated in the construction of the political and institutional forms of the region. At elections to the provincial council, it has regularly reached 60 per cent of the votes (see Table 10.1). This score means that about 90 per cent of the German-speaking and 65 per cent of the Ladin-speaking population of South Tyrol regularly voted for the SVP, during the years when rapid socio-economic structural change took place, with South Turol becoming a modern rather than an agrarian society.

Since its first participation in elections in 1948, the SVP has held the majority in the provincial government as well as the position of the provincial governor. It has considerable bargaining power towards the coalition parties in the South Tyrolean provincial government as well as towards the Italian central government. Hence it was able to achieve extensive autonomy for the region even though at the level of national parliamentary elections it constitutes only a small party with around 0.5 per cent of the votes (see Table 10.2).

In 1992, the SVP finally approved the agreement on the status of autonomy that granted extraordinarily far-reaching competences to the Bolzano-South Tyrol province. This event could, however, constitute a turning point in the SVP's 'success story' since the all-engulfing German-Italian conflict has lost much of its

Table 10.1 South Tyrolean electoral results of the main parties in provincial elections, 1948–93 (percentage of votes and number of seats)

Party	*1948* *20*	*1952* *22*	*1956* *22*	*1960* *22*	*1964* *25*	*1968* *25*	*1973* *34*	*1978* *34*	*1983* *35*	*1988* *35*	*1993* *35*
SVP	67.6 (13)	64.8 (15)	64.4 (15)	63.9 (15)	61.3 (16)	60.7 (16)	56.4 (20)	61.3 (21)	59.4 (22)	60.4 (22)	52.0 (19)
DC/DC–PPAA (1993)	10.8 (2)	13.7 (3)	14.3 (3)	14.6 (3)	13.5 (3)	14.4 (4)	14.1 (5)	10.8 (4)	9.5 (3)	9.1 (3)	4.4 (2)
MSI	2.9 (1)	4.8 (1)	6.0 (1)	7.1 (1)	6.2 (1)	4.9 (1)	4.0 (1)	2.9 (1)	5.9 (2)	10.3 (4)	11.6 (4)
PSI	5.0 (1)	5.7 (1)	5.6 (1)	5.9 (1)	5.4 (1)	PSI + PSDI	5.6 (2)	3.3 (1)	3.9 (1)	4.0 (1)	1.2
PSDI	3.1 (1)	3.5 (1)	4.0 (1)	3.6 (1)	3.8 (1)	7.2 (2)	3.4 (1)	2.3 (1)	1.3	—	—
PCI	4.0 (1)	3.1 (1)	2.2 (1)	3.1 (1)	3.7 (1)	6.0 (1)	5.7 (2)	7.0 (3)	5.6 (2)	3.0 (1)	—
GAL/Verdi-Gr. (1993)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6.7 (2)	6.9 (2)
SPS	—	—	—	—	—	—	5.1 (2)	2.2 (1)	1.3	—	—
WdH/SHB/UFS (1993)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.5 (1)	2.3 (1)	4.8 (2)
Die Freiheitlichen	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	6.1 (2)
Lega Nord AA-S	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3.0 (1)
Ladins	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.0 (1)

Sources: Holzer (1991); ASTAT (1995; Südtiroler Landesregierung (1997)

Notes: SVP=*Südtiroler Volkspartei;* DC/DC-PPAA=*Democrazia Cristiana-Partito Popolare per l'Alto Adige;* MSI=*Movimento Sociale Italiano/Alleanza Nazionale*; PSI=*Partito Socialista Italiano*; PSDI=*Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano*; PCI=*Partito Comunista Italiano*; GAL/Verdi-Gr.=*Grün-Alternative Liste/Verdi-Grüne*; SPS=*Sozialdemokratische Partei Südtirols*; WdH/SHB/UFS=*Wahlverband des Heimatbundes/Südtiroler Heimatbund/Union für Südtirol*; Lega Nord AA-S=*Lega Nord Alto Adige-Südtirol*

Table 10.2 South Tyrolean electoral results of the main parties in national parliamentary elections for the Chamber of Deputies, 1948–92 (percentages and number of main seats)

Party	*1948*	*1953*	*1958*	*1963*	*1968*	*1972*	*1976*	*1979*	*1983*	*1987*	*1992*
SVP	62.7 (3)	60.1 (3)	60.1 (3)	56.6 (3)	58.5 (3)	59.0 (3)	59.6 (3)	62.9 (4)	59.6 (3)	58.3 (3)	57.3 (3)
DC	21.8 (1)	17.6 (1)	16.9 (1)	16.5 (1)	14.4	16.4 (1)	13.2	11.9	11.5 (1)	8.4	7.4
PSI	—	5.8	6.3	8.3	PSI + PSDI	5.2	5.5	4.3	4.3	6.0	4.4
PSDI	—	3.2	3.4	4.5	8.8	3.5	1.6	1.8	1.3	0.5	0.6
MSI	—	4.6	5.5	4.6	4.1	4.6	2.7	2.5	3.4	10.2 (1)	6.7
PCI	—	4.1	4.1	5.1	5.3	5.7	6.8	8.4	8.0	4.6	—
SPS	—	—	—	—	—	—	2.2	—	—	—	—
LV-GL/Verdi-Gr. (1992)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	4.1 (1)	6.6
WdH	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3.6	—
Lega Nord	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	3.6

Notes: SUP=Südtiroler Volkspartei DC=*Democrazia Cristiana*; PSI=*Partito Socialista Italiano*; PSDI=*Partito Socialista Democratico Italiano*; MSI=*Movimento Sociale Italiano*; PCI=*Partito Comunista Italiano*; SPS=*Sozialdemokratische Partei Südtirols*; LV-GL/Verdi-Gr=*Lista Verde-Grüne Liste/ Verdi-Grüne*; WdH=*Wahlverband des Heimatbundes*

Source: Südtiroler Landesregierung (1997)

importance. The latest elections to the provincial council resulted in a loss–for the first time since the end of World War II–of almost 10 per cent of its votes!

Also, the new electoral system for the parliamentary elections has undermined the SVP's position (see Table 10.3). The 4 per cent threshold makes it impossible for the SVP, which even during its peak year never obtained more than 0.5 per cent of the vote, to gain parliamentary representation, unless it allies itself with a stronger partner.[1]

Table 10.3 South Tyrolean electoral results of the main parties in national parliamentary elections for the Chamber of Deputies, 1994 and 1996 (percentages and number of seats)

		Majority rule				*Proportional rule*	
	Party	*Elect. district 1*	*Elect. district 2*	*Elect. district 3*	*Elect. district 4*		
1994	SVP	19.0	84.6	72.1	83.2	60.1	(3)
	AN	32.1	—	7.3	7.6	11.0	(1)
	ADA	28.9	15.4	8.2	6.9	3.9	
	Lega Nord–Forza Italia	18.0	—	10.0	—	—	
	PLN/NGP	2.0	—	2.3	2.3	0.8	
	Forza Italia	—	—	—	—	8.6	
	Verdi	—	—	—	—	5.1	
	PDS	—	—	—	—	3.4	
	Lega Nord	—	—	—	—	2.4	
	PLN	—	—	—	—	0.8	
1996	SVP	—	73.0	66.3	75.4	—	
	POLO (AN + FI)	46.8	8.7	12.8	7.9	—	
	ULIVO	44.8	9.0	9.9	7.6	—	
	PLN/NGP	2.8	1.2	1.6	1.1	—	
	UFS	5.6	8.2	9.4	8.0	19.3	
	POP/SVP	—	—	—	—	28.0	(3)
	AN	—	—	—	—	13.8	(1)
	FI	—	—	—	—	9.1	(1)
	L. DINI	—	—	—	—	8.7	
	PDS	—	—	—	—	5.2	
	Verdi	—	—	—	—	5.4	
	Lega Nord	—	—	—	—	4.3	
	PLN/NGP	—	—	—	—	2.5	

Notes: SVP=*Südtiroler Volkspartei*;AN=*AlleanzaNazionale*; ADA=*Aggregazione Democratica Autonomistica*; PLN/NGB=*Partito della Legge Naturale-Naturgesetzpartei*; PDS=*Partito Democratico di Sinistra*; P=*Polo delle Libertà*; Ulivo='Olive Tree'; UFS=*Union für Südtirol*; POP/SVP=*Popolari per Prodi/Südtiroler Volkspartei*; FI=*Forza Italia*; L.DINI=*Lista Dini*
From 1994 on, representatives have been elected by a mixed system of majority rule and proportional rule: 75 per cent of the representatives are elected by majority rule in one-person electoral districts ('first past the post'), the other 25 per cent by proportional rule
Source: ASTAT (1995); Südtiroler Landesregierung (1997)

A diachronic and synchronic analysis can demonstrate the turning-points in the SVP's development. Special attention will be allocated to the forms and mechanisms for securing power and hegemony within the party as well as within the political system.[2]

Historical background

With the signing of the peace treaty of St Germain in 1919, which legally separated South Tyrol from the Austro-Hungarian Empire and assigned it to Italy, the South Tyrolians' long fight for self-determination began. It was suspended with the so-called 'package agreement' in 1969, and a settlement was reached with the declaration of 1992.

After the First World War, South Tyrol became part of a state with which culturally it had little in common except the Roman Catholic religion. When the Fascists came to power, Italianisation was forced on South Tyrol, culminating in an agreement between Mussolini and Hitler (the 'Option') according to which the South Tyrolean population had to decide either to adopt German citizenship and return to the *Reich* or to take on the Italian one and thereby lose their national identity.[3]

The course of the war stopped the ensuing emigration policy. Early in May 1945 the Allied forces marched into South Tyrol and established a kind of occupation regime under which the South Tyrolean party system was formed. In the same month the inaugural convention of the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP) was held. From the beginning the SVP considered itself a conservative party uniting all classes, and claimed exclusive representation of the German- and Ladin-speaking population. The right to self-determination embodied in the party programme since its founding was of primary importance.

The signing of the statute of autonomy for the *Trentino-Alto Adige*[4] region in 1948 marked the beginning of continuously strained negotiations. The Italian government not only enforced a territorial extension of autonomy to the purely Italian bordering province, Trentino, but also assigned legislation and administration in all important economic and social areas to the (mostly Italian) region. Hence many people felt that 'Italian rule' was far from being over.[5]

A constant 60 per cent of votes in elections to the provincial council (*Landtag*) and national Parliament seems to validate the SVP's strategy and formally guarantees its political hegemony.

The immediate forerunner of the SVP, the *Deutscher Verband* (German Association), played an important role in preparing the SVP's special position in the South Tyrolean political landscape. Between the two world wars this party could already unify the Catholic-conservative camp and secure their influence under the Fascist regime because of its close ties with the Catholic Church.

Until 1957 the party leadership, consisting of moderately conservative notables, was cautious and reserved towards the government of Rome and it was willing to co-operate with the DC (*Democrazia Cristiana*)-led administration.[6] During the SVP

conference in 1957, the leadership was completely renewed, and the charismatic Silvius Magnago[7] became party chairman. These events marked a shift in the party line towards the right, and radicalisation of nationalism and the demand for a special autonomy independent of Trentino. In the following years the attitude of the SVP towards Rome was characterised by its strong opposition to the Italian state, but nevertheless there was a certain willingness to resolve the conflict aggravated by the unsatisfactory agreements of 1948.

In 1969, with the help of Austria, a compromise was reached between the demands of the SVP and those of the Italian government. The so-called 'package agreement' (*Paket*)[8] was made and the province Bolzano-South Tyrol was accorded special autonomy.[9] With the new status of autonomy, competence shifted from the regional to the provincial council, which now formed the basis for the influence of the SVP. According to the statute of autonomy, the provincial government (as well as the regional government) had to be constituted in proportion to the numerical strength of linguistic representation in the provincial council. Since 1948, the SVP had been the only party to represent the German- and Ladin-speaking population. In other words, no other German party ever became part of the provincial government. Representation of the Italian community was taken over by the DC (now the DG-PPAA, *Democrazia Cristiana-Partito Popolare per l'Alto Adige*). It was sometimes supported by another Italian party (since 1993 there have been three!). Table 10.4 illustrates the numerical strength of linguistic groups throughout the years.

Paradoxically, the new statute seems to have shaken the hegemony of the SVP. In the most recent provincial elections, in 1993, the SVP had difficulties holding its absolute majority. Schmidtke argues that 'the more successful this "German" party is in increasing the region's autonomy, the less its own political identity is defined by an overwhelmingly strong enemy from outside (the Italian nation-state), and the less attractive is a political program essentially based on ethnic features' (Schmidtke 1996:295). The significance of this analysis can be demonstrated by taking a closer look at the SVP's programme and policies.

Table 10.4 Ethnic constitution of the population of South Tyrol, 1910–91

Year	*Germans (%)*	*Italians (%)*	*Ladins (%)*	*Others (%)*	*Total number of inhabitants*
1910	89.0	2.9	3.8	4.3	251,451
1921	75.9	10.6	3.9	9.6	254,735
1961	62.2	34.3	3.4	0.1	373,863
1971	62.9	33.3	3.7	0.1	414,041
1981	64.9	28.7	4.1	2.2	430,568
1991	65.3	26.5	4.2	4.0	440,508

Source: ASTAT (1995)

Profile of the party's programme and policy stands

The most recent SVP programme (1993) states: 'The SVP is the unified party of German and Ladin South Tyroleans of all social classes who in a sense of democratic responsibility declare for freedom, people and homeland' (SVP 1993:3). 'Sense of democratic responsibility' is thus expressed in party affiliation; or in other words, rejection of the SVP equals betrayal of freedom, of one's people and homeland. By this identification of the party with such substantial values, party allegiance is primarily and above all defined as loyalty to the people. The 'myth of the people' becomes the bastion of the unity of the South Tyrolean people. The demarcation with the Italian community is a prerequisite for the SVP's claims to being 'indispensable' to the German community.

Likewise, the regional feeling of belonging is the point of reference for social and political issues. The main political task of the SVP is not only to defend the political and socio-economic rights of the German community but also to strengthen a sense of solidarity and thereby enhance chances for survival. Thus a political strategy based on the principles of inclusion and exclusion, as well as continuous opposition to the Italian state, is required. Regardless of some Italians who strategically for personal gain[10]—vote for the SVP, ethnic belonging essentially determines the foundation of the party. From this political identity[11] follows the discourse of the SVP, which is characterised by a strong antagonism towards the central government in Rome.

Until the mid-1950s it was a moderate conservative leadership of notables who fought with Rome and who in 1948 negotiated the first autonomy statute. This statute, however, provided source for further conflict. The party went through a period of internal conflict owing to dissatisfaction with the agreement. The party conference in 1957 marked a turning-point in the party line when a new leadership changed the course towards a nationalist and more radical policy that aimed at separation not only from Rome but also from Trentino. The attitude towards the Roman government can be described as pragmatic and calculated, whereby the SVP hoped to gain more autonomy. It is worth pointing out that in contrast to the *Lega Nord* the SVP never aspired to 'overthrow' the Italian government, even if according to them it was competent. The subsequent agreements, such as the 'package agreement' in 1969 and recent confirmations of the autonomous statute, can be seen as a consequence of the tactics chosen by the SVP. The central issue of the 'package agreement' was the model of the 'ethnic quota rule', which was established in the 1970s. The rule regulated the allocation of civil service jobs, housing, subsidies, etc. according to the strength of the ethnic groups. Also, all sectors of society became, legally, strictly bilingual.

The idea underlying such a close and obviously binding economic and political distribution was that ethnic demarcations were to be (re)activated as political and economic boundaries, that vertical political commitment (loyalty to political elites)

be strengthened and horizontal political commitment (e.g. interethnic class solidarity) undermined.[12] Since only one party is in control and at the same time responsible for an ethnic group, 'ethnic patronage' equals party political patronage, which consolidates the dominance of the party.

With the ratification of the 'package agreement' by the administrative body, however, the SVP lost much of its power to mobilise the population. As indicated by the electoral results in 1993, the quest for self-government and the defence of the linguistic group no longer had the same force in defining SVP identity. The defence of the right of the German community to exist lost its significance. In any case, the SVP was not able to simply subordinate the minority question and turn to other political issues. Any major change in its programme was made difficult by its restricted definition as a basically ethnic party; today's political issues, such as, for instance, environmental problems, require solutions that include all ethnic groups, not exclude some of them. Of increasing importance in this context are the younger generations, who no longer define their political and social identity solely by means of ethnic identity. They are open-minded to Italian and European influences. The German culture is therefore not the only one by which they are shaped. Schmidtke speaks in this respect of a 'dual identity' (Schmidtke 1996:296) of South Tyrolean society.

Furthermore, SVP strategy in the 'post-package era' of propagating an opening towards Europe, more precisely towards a 'Europe of the regions',[13] is also accompanied by a certain weakening of the ethnic foundation. With inclusion into international society, the demarcation from other ethnic groups has become less strict. Furthermore, any pragmatic economic attitude towards the common market is incompatible with the highly emotional issue of ethnic survival.

The political landscape in South Tyrol is slowly but surely changing, and the integrative model, whereby South Tyrol is seen as a single entity, all of whose (German speaking) inhabitants share a common interest, is losing ground. Political loyalty can no longer be derived from belonging to an ethnically assigned group. It is thus no longer a given fact but a matter of the choice of individuals motivated by their own interests.

The modernisation of the party is ambiguous. On the one hand, new social and economic issues, above all environmental ones, have been adopted in the party's programme. On the other hand, the political agenda is, and must still be, structured in the old terms. Without reference to its community, there does not exist a legitimating basis for such a political force. Consequently, like other parties, the SVP should be evaluated on its handling of social and economic issues.

The SVP exemplifies how integrating collective identity and political choice are connected. Its political dominance will prevail only as long as the German population feel that their integration is conflictual and endangered.

The limited political agenda designs the boundaries of its constituencies. Conversely, the targeted constituencies determine the political issues. This interrelationship is demonstrated by a closer look at some essential features of typical SVP voters.

The SVP voters

The South Tyrolean parties were structured under the influence of ethnic fragmentation. The deep and constant conflict between ethnic groups resulted in a special competition between the parties that may be called 'segmented competition'. This means that competition for votes occurs primarily within an ethnic group rather than between the groups, therefore, the number of ethnic floating voters is small. The way in which the parties of different ethnic affiliations interact could thus be characterised as 'opposition without competition'. Although the German- and Italian-speaking parties are in opposition because of ethnic conflict, their potential vote bases do not overlap and therefore they compete very little for votes. This 'opposition without competition' is clearly visible in the relations between SVP and DC. Both parties are in ethnic opposition, yet, in spite of their ideological affinity, they do not compete for the same votes.

Although the number of parties has changed, vote distribution has remained relatively constant. Over a period of forty years the SVP has had a steady support of about 60 per cent. Only one exception can be singled out during this period. In 1973, the *Sozialdemokratische Partei Südtirols* (SPS, Social Democratic Party of South Tyrol), was formed as 'left opposition' to the SVP by one of its former members. The SPS won 5.14 per cent of the vote at its first electoral participation but could not maintain this success.

A second and stronger interruption in the SVP 'success story' is observable at the most recent election, held in 1993, but its possible impact and duration are yet to be seen (see Table 10.1).

It might be interesting at this point to define those areas in which the SVP is losing ground and to find out who those German- and Ladin-speaking South Tyroleans are that do not vote or no longer vote for the SVP. Thus it should be possible to show the limits of the SVP's integrative power and anticipate possible changes in the voters' future choices.

Basically the SVP's electorate is characterised by a high degree of inter-class voting. Over the decades the party has managed to mobilise support from all social classes. The SVP electorate reflects, on the whole, the structure of the German-speaking population and to a large extent also the structure of the Ladin-speaking population. The outstanding achievement of the SVP in integrating the German-speaking vote in this way was facilitated by intra-party differentiation of social interests.

German-speaking non-SVP voters support essentially two groups of parties: German-speaking parties and interethnic–mainly regional–opposition parties. Ladin-speaking non-SVP voters support the DC, but increasingly also regional opposition parties (as seen in the support of the movement 'Ladins' in 1993).

Analysis of the SVP's loss of votes to, for example, the Greens in 1988 (who confirmed their electoral results in 1993) shows that the SVP has particular difficulty integrating the young, educated, politically active and mobile middle class, who often work in the tertiary sector. The decrease of the support of this

group might in the long run be irreversible because the party allegiance of these voters is weakening and breaking free from ethnic bonds.

All in all, the SVP is still deeply rooted in the ethnic subculture. In order to secure their rule, the party leaders have, for the past two decades, pursued a strategy of 'ethnic patronage', whereby the distribution of material resources (money, jobs, housing, etc.) is bound up with ethnic belonging and party membership, thereby establishing and securing political loyalty along ethnic lines. The party has another effective strategy for the mobilisation of votes. Economic policy is oriented not only towards guaranteeing loyalty to the party but also through economic development, towards rebuilding it.

Emphasis is thereby laid, on the one hand, on the preservation of the agricultural structure and small-sized firms, because they constitute a constant–though decreasing–source of voters. On the other hand, the SVP strives to successfully steer a course towards an expanding modern tertiary sector (public and private, tourism).

If a party wants to play an important role in the political process and successfully maintain its strategies for ruling in a society becoming increasingly more differentiated and complex, strong support on the organisational side is necessary. It is in that way that the party's hegemony can be translated into practice.

Organisational structure and power distribution within the party

If the SVP of today presents itself as a professionally led, financially strong, well organised and modern mass party, this is primarily the result of party reform in 1964. Horizontally, the SVP is basically structured as follows: local, district and central body, each consisting of a chairman (*Orts-*, *Bezirks-* and *Parteiobmann*), a committee (*Orts-*, *Bezirks-* and *Parteiausschuß*) and an executive body on the district and province level (*Bezirks-* and *Landesleitung*). The latter is the actual executive board and has on its side the so-called presiding committee (*Präsidium*), which consists of the top party leaders. Members of the executive board are members as of right; that is, they are not elected.[14]

Decision-making processes within the party are very formalised: power and functions are strictly distributed and intra-party hierarchy is defined clearly. The real decision-making power is concentrated and centralised in the hands of the executive board ('securing of power through oligarchy'), whereas administrative decisions are mostly decentralised and are taken at the local and district level.[15]

The party machinery is on the one hand differentiated according to gender and age, (with sections for women and youth). Also, movements within the party target the professional classes (farmers, employers, employees).

The SVP women's movement, which conveys a traditional and conservative image of women, has relatively little influence, as is apparent from the tiny percentage of women in the highest organs. The SVP youth movement ('Young Generation') serves essentially to recruit political personnel to the party.

Employers, farmers and employees each form non-autonomous organisational units within the party, the first being the strongest intra-party estate, the latter the weakest. Majoritarian relations between those three wings clearly set the limits to intra-party democracy and stand in the way of a suitable modernisation of the party. Farming and trade, primarily small and medium-sized firms, make up a strong conservative majority. They are interested in maintaining the status quo and position of power ostensibly established by economic growth and autonomy, and therefore advocate the postulate of a unanimous and closed front towards the Italians.

Facing this conservative majority, the workers' wing is only partially successful in terms of achievement of intra-party office. While it stands to a certain degree for social democratisation, codetermination and cultural openness, on the national question it acts just as strongly as the right (Lill 1991:179). The movements show close personal intertwining with institutionalised representative associations such as, for instance, the *Südtiroler Bauernbund* (South Tyrolean Farmers' association) or the *Südtiroler Wirtschaftsring* (South Tyrolean Economy and Trade Association). Before the 1964 reform such associations were part of the party's executive board and therefore prevented the party leadership from becoming too dominant. With their elimination from the executive board the party could, on the one hand, secure its monopoly in the political decision-making process and, on the other hand, extend its integrative power deep into the party's top and mid-level elites.

Successful organisational diffusion of the party in almost all social subsystems is reflected in the large number of party members, which reached over 80,000 in 1993 and was approximately 73,000 in 1996. An organisation degree (the ratio of party members to voters) of more than 40 per cent means that practically one voter in every two is an enrolled party member, and in this respect the SVP occupies a top-ranking position not merely in South Tyrol but also with respect to European countries generally. What is not clear is whether the extremely high ratio of members to voters is still functional, or has become anachronistic for the purposes of the successful protection and stabilisation of political power.

The broad membership is still functional concerning membership fees, which are together with state party financing, the most important source of income. Since the financing of political parties in Italy is highly centralised, allocation of financial resources solely to the party headquarters results in increased concentration and stabilisation of power in the hands of the party leadership.[16]

The latter point leads us to ask who has access to power within the party and how the party elite is recruited. Almost excluded from positions of political power (that is, seats in the provincial Parliament) are women and workers. Until 1964 there had been no female representative of the SVP. Since then, only four women have been members of the provincial council. This exclusion of women can be explained by the fact that all higher party organs and associations that control the nomination of a candidate are personally and ideologically dominated by men, whereas the presence of women on the lower echelons of the hierarchy (voters and party members) is welcome. Chances for workers to reach the top echelons

of the SVP are equally small. Since 1948 only one 'worker' representing the SVP has been elected to the South Tyrolean Parliament. The professional structure of the SVP members of parliament today is characterised by a dominant percentage of employees (especially in the public service) compared to self-employed persons. Over two-thirds of the representatives are university graduates.

Paradoxically, a hierarchical and tight party machinery could not prevent split-offs (the far-right *Heimatbund* and the *Freiheitlichen*[17]) which were primarily sociopolitical and eventually also nationally and socially motivated. A completely opposite challenger to the SVP's monopoly is the Greens.[18]

The SVP and its challengers

In recent years, a tendency towards a more pluralistic political landscape can be observed in South Tyrol. Being German no longer equates to voting for the SVP; other variables now have to be taken into consideration. Besides the crisis of leadership and several internal struggles, other parties which were until recently of marginal or no importance in regional politics are beginning to disrupt the equation.

Above all, rightist organisations such as the *Heimatbund* and the *Südtiroler Freiheitlichen* (Freedom Party of South Tyrol) have gained a respectable percentage of votes. They primarily gather votes from those who are discontent with the autonomy that South Tyrol attained through negotiations by the SVP. They demand a radical break from the Italian state (i.e. a potential unification with North Tyrol, Austria). Some prominent figures of the SVP even left their party ostentatiously accusing it of 'betrayal' and 'renouncement politics' (Schmidtke 1996:303–304) referring to the SVP's autonomy agreement.

A completely different challenge to the SVP comes from the Greens. As a party of the left, they strongly oppose a politics of segregation in South Tyrol. Regarding environmental issues, the Greens exercise a certain influence on the SVP political agenda. Environmental concerns are now among the most important topics in the new SVP programme.

It is not only parties with German roots that play an important role: a regionalist party of genuine Italian origin has also now entered the South Tyrolean political scene: the *Lega Nord* of Umberto Bossi. Surveys in 1993 showed that over 50 per cent of the potential voters of the Lega come from the German-speaking population, 13 per cent of whom even stated they would vote for the *Lega* (Schmidtke 1996:312). Nevertheless, co-operation between the two regionalist parties is not on the agenda. Bossi's movement (and his populist mobilisational style) is perceived by the SVP as a political force incompatible with its conservative political identity. While there are similarities in the orientation of their programmes, their strategies differ.

Another Italian party is of increasing importance in South Tyrol, namely the neofascist MSI (*Movimento Sociale Italiano*: now *Alleanza Nationale*, AN). The MSI/AN significantly surpassed the DC/DC-PPAA in the provincial elections of 1988

and 1993 and is now the strongest Italian party in South Tyrol. The MSI/AN repudiates autonomy as being a betrayal of national Italian interests and as a violation of the rights of Italian citizens. Its success has some repercussions for other Italian parties in South Tyrol, especially the DC/DC-PPAA. Being a permanent coalition partner of the SVP, the DC/DC-PPAA now feels obliged to act more 'nationalist'. In some respects the SVP is indirectly implicated in the rise of the MSI/AN because of the 'lack of comprehension' of some politicians for the 'Italian minority in Italy'. The SVP is confronted with the reproach of 'apartheid', not only by Italians, but also by some SVP politicians. The *Heimatbund* and the *Südtiroler Freiheitlichen* are also accused of facilitating the demagogy of the neofascists with their nationalist claims (Lill 1991:175).

Prospects: a permanent subscription to power?

Politicisation of ethnic belonging has proven to be quite an effective tool of political mobilisation. Well-defined principles of inclusion and exclusion and of the contrasting political approach are essential to the success of ethnoterritorial politics, as the case of the SVP shows.

Over fifty years of SVP existence mirrors, more than anything else, the fight for autonomy and its way of securing German (and Ladin) identity.[19] In 1992 this fight was finally won: the Italian government fulfilled the agreements negotiated in 1969.

Has the SVP, as an ethnic 'ghetto party', made itself superfluous by this success? Has it lost its own cause for legitimation? The SVP denies this loss, pointing out that the 'package agreement' is far from being concluded in terms of autonomy. What matters now in the 'post-package era' is to defend autonomy against the centralism of Rome and Eurocracy in Brussels.

After the 'calming down on the front line', other issues have surfaced including questions about the structure of the SVP, the relationship between its groups as well as that of party leadership and voters. Conflicts of interests between workers and employers, environmental groups and business associations, are not new to the SVP. Dissident voices, however, are more often heard today. They can no longer be rendered secondary to the ethnic question. Political preferences are nowadays often defined by means of these more pressing questions. The collective identity of the SVP is no longer a given fact but questioned in its political meaning.

Are these the first signs of a tendency in the SVP towards more pluralistic forms of political representation instead of there being one single party with internal plurality? At first glance, the 1993 provincial election results, which brought the SVP close to losing its absolute majority in the provincial parliament, confirm this assumption. Yet erosion of the (so far) more or less constant electoral behaviour within the German- and Ladin-speaking[20] population, visible in losses to interethnic parties and groups, does not imply erosion of the SVP control system embodied in all levels of society. As a party that has persistently been in power, that has (so

far) held two-thirds of the members of the provincial government, the SVP controls all important political decision-making centres. This will allow the SVP to take the necessary steps to remain in power. It is in this context that we are likely to see the SVP consider changing the electoral system at the regional and provincial level and adopting the majority voting system as used at the national level. Such manipulation would probably enable the SVP to maintain its position of power in South Tyrol in the near future.

Notes

1 The SVP's participation in the elections of 1994 can be seen as a 'protest' against the new election system. Its candidate (its historic leader Silvius Magnago, seeking election under the proportional system of voting) gained more than 60 per cent of the votes in the constituency, which should have been more than enough for a seat. But because of the 4 per cent threshold, this seat was lost. In 1996 the SVP tried to find a solution to this problem by forming a journal list with a national party capable of reaching more than 4 per cent of the votes. This list, the POP, included the *Partito Populare Italiano,* one of the successors of the old Christian Democratic party. For various reasons (the SVP candidate was little known, his name (Crazzolaro) sounded more Italian than German (although it is a Ladin name), the election campaign was badly run, etc.) the SVP had no success. There was only one 'genuine' German name, that of Eva Klotz, the candidate of the *Union für Südtirol* (UFS). If many voters were looking for a 'German' name, this could be a reason for the relative success of the UFS. The elections of 1996 were also characterised by a large number of blank votes (56,994 or 17.3 per cent, against 13,558 (4.1 per cent) in 1994).

2 This chapter derives from a book by Anton Holzer entitled *Die Südtiroler Volkspartei* (Thaur, Austria: Kulturverlag, 1991).

3 Of 245,000 South Tyroleans, 213,000 voted for a 'voluntary' resettlement in the German Reich.

4 Italy did not allow the official use of the name 'South Tyrol' until 1972.

5 The agreement about the autonomy of the region Trentino-Alto Adige was based on the Paris Treaty of 1946 between Austria and Italy. It assured the German population of a set of particular measures which guaranteed their *Volkscharakter* (the character of the people) as well as their economic and social development. This treaty became an integral part of the peace treaty of the Allies with Italy and so the South Tyrolean question gained an 'international dimension', i.e. it can be brought before the UN. The recently reached agreement was judged to be a grave violation of the concessions guaranteed by the Paris Treaty.

6 After the first regional elections in 1948, the Catholic Italian party *Democrazia Cristiana* (DC) gained a majority in the province of Trentino. This changed in the mid-1980s.

7 He was chairman of the SVP from 1957 to 1991 and head of the provincial government from 1960 to 1989. Nowadays these two positions are no longer held by one and the same person.

8 The 'package' consisted of 137 regulations, the realisation of which was a twenty-three-year-long struggle between the Italian government and the German-speaking minority. In 1992 the SVP, as representative of the Germans declared the 'package' executed and the provincial administration ratified the agreement.

9 The negotiations of autonomy were accompanied by terrorist attacks, a rather rare phenomenon in Europe in that period. The attacks were directed against symbolic

objects such as fascist monuments (e.g. the fascist victory monument in Bolzano) but also high-tensions poles, etc. The aim was to draw the European public's attention to the situation in South Tyrol and thus to put pressure on the Italian government.

10 It must be noted here that South Tyrol holds the lead in Italy in terms of economic and social infrastructure. It has a very low unemployment rate (2.1 per cent compared to Italy's 11.5 per cent), and a good educational and social system, the latter being a result of the SVP 'five-year plan for hospitals and schools'.

11 For more detailed information on the subject of political identity and the programmatic profile compare Schmidtke (1996).

12 The S VP's economic policy was very conservative until the 1960s, and especially aimed at promoting the agriculture sector, the latter being considered a symbol of *Heimat* and *Volkstum*. Afterwards, there was a cautious opening towards trade and small and medium-sized firms. From the 1970s on, the tertiary sector became very important, especially the public one. The economic policy of the SVP is indirectly influenced by the national Italian government insofar as it grants South Tyrol a very high regional budget, in order to appease the South Tyroleans.

13 The SVP is the only regionalist party to have joined international party associations like the European Democratic Union (EDU) and the European People's Party (EPV). Concerning a 'Europe of the regions', the SVP thinks of how, historically, particular regions have developed. Specifically, it regards North and South Tyrol as a single region. This is a further demonstration of SVP members' strong bond to their 'native country', Austria.

14 The members of the executive board are elected in the lower bodies. For instance, the elected chairpersons of the districts are automatically members of the executive board. But also the SVP representatives in the national government and the European Parliament, the chairman of the parliamentary group in the *Landtag* and the *Regionalrat,* the provincial governor and the vice-mayor of Bolzano (if he is a member of the SVP) are *ex officio* members of the executive board (which apparently numbers thirty-three members).

15 According to party statutes the executive board body the one that delegates tasks to the presidium. The presidium can decide autonomously only in very urgent cases, and such decisions have to be ratified by the executive board.

16 The availability of financial resources also reflects to some extent the power relations of the movements within the SVP. Farming and trade, for example, both have well organised and financially strong associations outside the party, such as the *Südtiroler Bauernbund* (South Tyrolean Farmers' Association) and the *Südtiroler Wirtschaftsring* (South Tyrolean Economy and Trade Ring), whereas the SVP's employees lack financial and organisational resources, which makes them dependent on the party headquarters.

17 The *Heimatbund* as well as the *Freiheitlichen* can be seen as an offshoot of the SVP on a programmatic and personal level.

18 The Greens are the result of the attempts to form an interethnic party, i.e. one including all language groups, in opposition to the segregated South Tyrolean party system. However, today their voters are primarily German-speakers.

19 Lately, South Tyrol has often been referred to as a 'model of autonomy', especially in relation to national tensions and conflicts that have arisen after the awakening of nations 'without history' which were part of the former socialist countries.

20 The history of the South Tyrolean Ladins is closely linked to the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This Austrian dynasty adopted quite a tolerant position towards the Ladins. After the separation of South Tyrol from Austria the Italian government wanted to Italianize this minority, too. This might explain why the Ladins prefer to associate with the German-speaking minority (in relation to Italy as a whole) in South Tyrol, which was also under the threat of losing its identity.

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11

THE FAILURE OF REGIONALIST PARTY FORMATION IN CORSICA

Claude Olivesi

'After the terrorist bombing of the Bordeaux Town Hall, it is obvious that the Corsican case has become a state affair' commented Gilles de Robien, president of the *Union pour la Democratic Française* parliamentary group at the National Assembly, on the gravity of the events shaking the island of Corsica. The year 1996 began with the visit of the French Interior Minister and a show of force, largely for the benefit of the media, from the FLNC 'historic channel' (*Front de Liberation Nationale de la Corse*, Corsican National Liberation Front). It ended with the arrest of the presumed head of the main clandestine organisation and an upsurge in terrorist activities.

The status of 'state affair' is not so new. The 'Corsican question' has been on the government agenda since the beginning of the 1970s–more precisely, since the series of bombings that preceded Prime Minister Pierre Messmer's official trip in 1974. The symbol was the same, but the target itself differed.

A lingering crisis, like the one Corsica has endured for a quarter of a century, must be interpreted within the framework of the deep upheavals at work in a given society. In Antonio Gramsci's words, 'it is when the old dies and the new hesitates to arise'. This process is partly related to the 're-emergence of the centre-periphery cleavage materialising in a new awareness of the periphery' (Seiler 1982). Following Touraine's (1981:20) analysis, let us suggest that

> [Corsican] struggles can be interpreted either as the decline of a regional culture, swallowed up by mass society,…as the demonstration of the crisis of the French national state, itself beyond the empire's hegemony, the spreading of an international culture and the European Community's authority or, in a more complex way, as an aspect of the increasing tensions between the centre and the periphery in French society.

A brief historical overview

Corsica is the Mediterranean and insular step of the French Republic. It is situated only 300 km south-east of Marseille; and 95 km from Piombino on the coast of

Tuscany. The Bonifacio Strait separates it from Sardinia. The population of this periphery can be described as an essentially territorialised minority for whom territory constitutes a very strong reference point of identity, a kind of 'primitive body'. A major part of its population lives outside its natural borders: the Corsican diaspora in France represents around 500,000 people.

This is a unique situation in the Mediterranean because the island suffers a demographic deficit, with a population hardly reaching 253,000 for a surface of 8,681 km^2. Corsica holds third place among Mediterranean islands in terms of area. It is, however, at the bottom of the list in demographic figures and its per capita GDP is 30 per cent below the national average.

The history of Corsica is marked by a long series of struggles against the numerous states that tried to dominate it. The period historians call the Corsican revolution (1730) was the only one in its history when the island was not peripheral. It culminated in the partial independence (1754–69) that Pascal Paoli, one of the most emblematic historical figures of Corsica, obtained by force.

According to Ettori (1981), the demands for political identity have undergone four essential phases. The first, from 1769 to 1896, was marked by a slow integration into the French entity. Under the reign of Napoleon III, the cultural oppositions between 'Italianness' and 'Frenchness' was settled in favour of the latter.

The second, from 1896 to 1940, was characterised by an upsurge in protest. The publishing of *A Tramuntana*, the first newspaper written in Corsican, was a testimony to the first cultural rebirth of identity. In the political sphere, a claim for autonomy appeared with the creation of the *Partitu Corsu d'Azione*. In 1927, it became the *Partitu Corsu Autonomistu*. However, Mussolini's claims on the island, the harnessing of the Corsist theses by the Duce's propaganda and the irredentism of many of its militants triggered the end of this first rebirth (Leca 1994).

Third, the quarter of a century following the Second World War produced conflicting movements. It was a time of deep lethargy during which the island withdrew into itself. It returned to its cultural points of reference (family, village, clan). It experienced abysmal economic, demographic and cultural emptiness.

Finally, following the decolonisation of the Empire, the question of the development of the island was posed. In effect, the French withdrawal to the metropolis, mostly after the independence of the Maghreb, led to the granting of an economic role to Corsica, something completely ignored until then. This region, which did not offer much, could nevertheless look to two economic activities: intensive vineyard cultivation in the eastern plain, and a tourism industry adapted to the needs of the expanding leisure society. The implementation of these new orientations corresponded to the arrival of a non-native population originating from the former North African colonies. Consequently, these people, numbering several thousand were among the first to benefit from the new conditions. This sudden generosity on the part of the state generated a feeling of frustration among a part of the Corsican population (students from continental universities, members of the liberal professions and the middle class). Such state interventionism produced

a fourth phase that is still ongoing and that has triggered a second explosion of identity.

Territory: the moving force of demands

Meny (1991:61) refers to the 'defence of the territory' as being a politically functional concept due to the ethical, linguistic, geographical or historical values a population attributes to it. It is the justification for the creation of regionalist parties. It transforms itself to an ideological bundle, 'unanimous and dedicated to a sublimated cause'.

In the 1970s, important claims based on environmentalist and identity concerns grew and nourished Corsican protests. Environmental degradation and the disappearance of identity references were felt by many Corsicans as a menace to the 'primitive body' that binds them. This intense emotional bond provided an environment favourable to protest mobilisation.[1] From the exploitation of this sentiment, a political movement that would incarnate the values of modernisation emerged. It included the demand for a self-centred economic development, the defence of cultural identity, and the struggle against the traditional Corsican political system called 'clannism'.

Environmentalism as a pretext for the mobilisation of the people

The opportunity for a first crystallisation of protest arose with the case against the dumping of toxic waste ('red mud') in the Corsican Canal by the multinational company Montedison. The toxicity of these substances was proven when in the summer of 1972 whales ran aground on Corsican beaches. The absence of reaction from the highest level of public authorities triggered the formation of a considerable popular movement. The 17 February 1973 demonstration in Bastia turned into a riot and ended with the arrest of several organisers, among whom figured Edmond Simeoni, one of the autonomist leaders. A general strike on a massive scale echoed this repression. The event received international attention.

During an international demonstration against pollution in the Mediterranean held in June, the 'anti-red-muds' committee called for solidarity from the states present. By labelling Corsica a 'defeated nation', the protestors gave the affair a national character. The defence of the environment was taken up as a struggle for survival by a community for which the territory is an indispensable element. The island was defined as a geographic entity whose identity was threatened. This established a common attitude in later protests such as those against the circumstances surrounding forest fires (1983, 1989, 1992), against the Vazzio power station, against the project of installing the ICO nuclear energy cable, or the demand for the banning of sea traffic (especially tankers) in the Bonifacio Strait. The same can be said of the fight against land ownership speculation which regularly led to violence on the part of the FLNC. This clandestine

movement challenged state and local representatives who were calling for respect for the law, and concentrated its violence on contentious state projects. In that way the FNLC tried to build a public image of being a dispenser of justice. Any 'aggression' towards the primitive body provoked a reaction of protection in the Corsican community.

Since then, environmentalist and Corsist claims have never been separated. They have also been translated into electoral behaviour. Regional representatives of the autonomist party *Unione di u Populu Corsu* (UPC, Union of the Corsican People) backed the Green candidate, Antoine Waechter, in the 1988 presidential election. In 1995, *Corsica Nazione* did the same by promoting the environmentalist Dominique Voynet, who was in favour of their proposal for Corsica to be granted the status of overseas territory. In the 1989 European elections, the general secretary of the UPC was placed in third position on the Greens' list of candidates. This flexibility in candidate selection certainly had an influence on the result of the Greens in the island, where they polled 15 per cent of the votes. The nationalist-environmentalist alliance was renewed for the 1992 territorial elections of March 1992. In fact, there is almost no autonomous expression of environmental politics on the island. It is tightly linked to the strategies of the various nationalist movements.

The 1973 movement was also innovative in using new means of political expression. Before the demonstrations of the 'anti-red-muds' committee, a boat belonging to the Corsica Ferries company operating between Corsica and Italy was damaged by a terrorist explosion in the port of Bastia. Although no responsibility was claimed for the attack, this action was linked to the rise of popular protest. Thereafter the environmentalist movement would, indirectly but frequently, generate violence as a means of pressure on the state.

Language as a vector of identity demands

Concurrently, a movement was triggered by another concern. The withering away of identity that had started just after the Second World War was amplified by the arrival of non-natives in the early 1960s. The joint effects of immigration explosion and tourist implosion led to the erosion of the traditional frame of reference of society and provoked the 'great cultural disturbance' denounced by '*Main basse sur une îie*' (Hands off the island), the 1971 manifesto of the *Front Régionaliste Corse* (FRC, Corsican Regionalist Front).

From 1970 onwards, the defence of language gathered momentum. The document instituting the FRC in 1966 was the first text emphasising the need for the teaching of Corsican, underlying its usefulness in the face of the creation of the Common Market and proximity with Italy. This prophetic analysis presented defence of Corsican culture as a major tool for co-operation in a hypothetical zone without borders.

Since 1951, the teaching of regional languages has been managed by the principles of the Deixonne law, which excludes Corsican, Alsatian and Flemish,

considered to be non-native dialects. Such ostracism was considered to be pure discrimination by cultural rights militants. Various associations launched a struggle for the integration of the Corsican language and culture into the curricula of the public educational system. They organised this teaching outside the national education system. In 1974, with the granting of a status outline for the Corsican language, the associational movement obtained partial satisfaction of their demands. The language had never been recognised despite the fact that in 1995 it was still understood by 81 per cent of the population and spoken by 64 per cent. Since then, Corsican teaching has been progressively integrated into the entire educational system of the island.

Partly in response to the claim for reassertion of Corsican specificity, an official status was issued in 1982. It was followed by a second one in 1991. Their respective preambles insisted on cultural, historical and geographical characteristics that had to be preserved. Article 53 of the 1991 status appointed the Corsican Assembly as competent for the elaboration of a Corsican language and culture teaching plan. Enforcement methods were proposed for its insertion in the curricula.

Cultural movements and nationalist parties, however, found the mechanism insufficient. Frequent demonstrations on the island prove the sensitiveness of the issue. Bilingualism, a shared or even exclusive status of Corsican as the official language of the region were the most frequent demands. Even though the new status of territorial collectivity enhances the competences of the island's political power, the Constitutional Court pronounced, in its decision on 9 May 1991, that Corsican courses during school hours 'did not contradict the principle of equality' provided they were not compulsory and did not divert pupils from the rights and duties all other French pupils had.

Since constitutional revision in 1992, the status of the French language has become part of the Constitution. A new paragraph stipulating that 'French is the language of the Republic' was inserted in article 2. Some MP's pleaded for the establishment of a status for regional languages. They also asked that France ratify the regional and minority languages charter adopted by the Council of Europe. Public opinion polls showed that a massive majority on the island favoured this ratification.

These politico-cultural demands were adopted by all social groups relevant for the production of Corsican identity, thereby increasing the standing of in-group features. The multiplication of cultural groups, for instance, enhanced the renewal of sacred and secular music and singing. Cultural and political militants came together to add cultural demands to the national liberation struggle. Hence a process of identity-building was launched through the intervention of social actors.

However, this proximity between cultural and political actors had perverse effects. Those who opposed Corsican identity claims used it for establishing an equation between defence of language and promotion of nationalism. In the period 1983–6, many municipalities forbade cultural group performances on the grounds

of public order. During these years, the island's political spectrum saw the emergence of a radical movement and the election of its first representatives in the Corsican Assembly. Since then, the use of cultural claims as political means has diminished. Nevertheless, the commitment to cultural claims remains strong, as the public support given by cultural actors to the *Corsica Nazione* list in the 1992 territorial elections showed.

The cultural claim was also expressed in the fight for the establishment of new Corsican place names written in *volapük* (half Tuscan, half French). The establishment of a decentralised audio-visual public broadcasting service in 1982 also created tensions. It informed the population of the island's problems and at the same time gave access to newsmaking protest movements. This situation was vigorously denounced by the traditional political class, which accused the public broadcasting service of collusion and asked for its transfer to the Provence-AlpesCôte d'Azur region. The tensions eventually abated.

These examples support Gil's (1976:1723) analysis of the emergence of Corsican political demands as the combination of 'an environmental issue, a language issue and a Corsican culture issue which question the very political status of the island'. By picking up these popular claims and rewriting history, protest transmuted and gave birth to a social movement that would completely modify the ideological context in which the relations between Corsica and the French state had been set up.

Political aggregation of ethnoregionalist demands

The demands expressed in the 1970s were a powerful catalyst for the Corsist political movement. While it maintained these demands, it also added other issues from different cleavages. This sudden awareness based on various struggles highlights the cleavage between the centre and the periphery as described by Stein Rokkan (1973). Autonomist parties emerged from this opposition. According to Seiler (1994), their rather radical project consisted of the 'mediatisation of the will for a subsociety constituted on a territory…included in a state-national community'. For Briquet (1994), the development of the demands, until then rejected by the traditional political class, would allow 'the people and the groups–who were excluded up to then–to enter the local political sphere (by means of violence if necessary)'.

The fragmentation of the nationalist movement

The claims of the movement were established by members of the diaspora and students at universities on the French mainland. The cultural dimension played a major role. Actors on the island itself were not completely absent from this approach but concentrated more on economic and fiscal aspects, such as the constitution of study groups for the defence of Corsica involving socioprofessional

groups. Thus from the start, a pragmatic approach ran parallel to the intellectual approach. This apparent inter-class complementarity generated divisions that would continue in various forms (see Figure 11.1).

On 31 July 1966, the two approaches merged to form the *Front Régionaliste Corse* (FRC, Corsican Regionalist Front). It claimed to be pluralist and would indeed play a major role in creating a comprehensive ideology. Its 1971 manifesto ('*Main basse sur une île*') was a substantial step in the development of political reflection. Strongly influenced by a left-wing philosophy and close to the decolonisation movements, it could not square itself with the aspirations of the local lower middle class and the 'elites' constituted by the liberal professions. The difference between their expectations explains why, one year after its creation, the Corsist movement witnessed its first division with the creation of the *Action Régionaliste Corse* (ARC, Corsican Regionalist Action) of the Simeoni brothers. The latter formation played a leading part in political protest until the 1984 regional elections. The ARC refused to take a position on the left-right divide. It formulated mainly economic and institutional proposals calling for autonomous regional management. This organisation, led by the charismatic doctor Edmond Simeoni, mostly appealed to the lower middle classes.

The referendum called by de Gaulle in April 1969 unexpectedly echoed this trend. Article 3 of the constitutional bill proposed to promote Corsica to a fully fledged region with specific institutions. Despite a majority of 'yes' votes on the island, the outcome of the national consultation was negative. Was Corsica so strongly attached to Gaullism? Or was it an early manifestation of the consciousness of regional primacy? Probably both. This failure, combined with the relative prudence of the reform carried out by President Georges Pompidou and the rise of the 1972–73 protest movements, permitted the Corsist demand to advance a step further.

In January 1973 *A Chjama di u Castellare*, a manifesto issued by various organisations of the FRC, announced the launching of 'legal action to reach internal autonomy'. Under this pressure, and in order to prevent its younger members from leaving the organisation, the ARC also adopted 'autonomy' as its ultimate goal. In 1974 a document called *Autonomia* was published, presenting the ARC's aims, which were for Corsica to operate within the existing structures of the French Republic. From that moment on, demands for a specific status and the constitutional recognition of the Corsican people were to be closely linked.

From the events of Aleria[2] (August 1975) onwards, and the subsequent dissolution of the ARC, the *Unione di u Populu Corsu* would embody this autonomist sensitivity within the nationalist camp. In 1996, UPC leaders claimed about 300 adherents, thirty town councillors (one of them elected in Bastia) and three territorial councillors. This organisation was built on two levels. At its lowest level, the rank and file belong to local sections, which are grouped territorially into twelve regions. This statutory division into regions is inspired by the historical *pieve*[3] of the island. Two 'regions' were situated outside Corsica, linking the diaspora with the island.

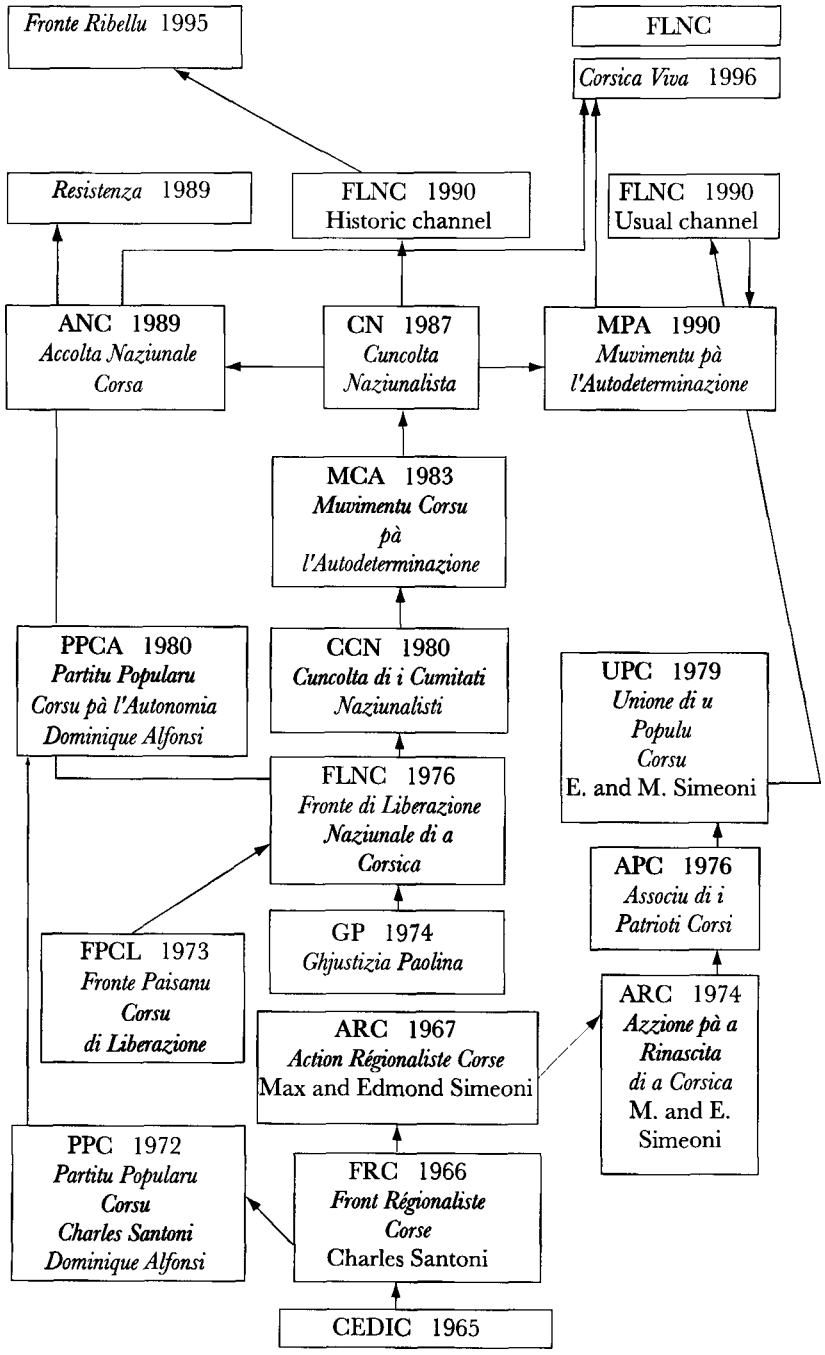

Figure 11.1 Genealogy of Corsican autonomist movements

The political organs are the Regional General Assemblies (comprising all militants), which elect the Regional Council, which in turn elects a bureau of three members. The General Assembly of all UPC members is the sovereign body of the movement. It appoints the political organs which serve to represent the entire movement, and meets once a year to discuss political projects. It elects the executive general secretary for a two-year mandate (which can be withdrawn if a motion of no confidence is passed by an absolute majority), and the central committee. The former represents the executive of the organisation. He is assisted by a general secretariat consisting of twelve members chosen by himself, most of them coming from the central committee. The latter, seventy-two members of whom a third are appointed by the regions, is the main forum between two General Assemblies. It meets every two months and works in close collaboration with the general secretary.

The creation of the FLNC triggered a shift in the semantics of nationalist slogans.[4] The recognition of the new strategy of a Corsican nation and the reacquisition of national rights led to a period characterised by a vicious cycle of violence and repression. On the eve of the 1981 presidential elections, more than a hundred presumed FLNC militants were in prison.

The election of François Mitterrand and the new government's policy proposal based on a statutory reform accompanied by *détente* measures divided the movement. The autonomists of the UPC favoured the experiment proposed by the state, even though the establishment of a new region did not live up to their demand for internal autonomy. The *Cuncolta di u Cumitati Naziunalisti* (CCN, created in 1980), on the other hand, regarded this status as a trap set by the 'colonial power'. This political group defended the FLNC theses, represented its public image, and thus challenged the reformist options of the autonomist movement. It decided not to participate in the 1982 vote that instituted the special status. The autonomists' good electoral performance in this poll had eroded two years later (Table 11.1). At the 1984 regional elections, the new *Muvimentu Corsu pà l'Autodeterminazione* (MCA, Corsican Autodetermination Movement[5] equalled the scores of the autonomists in terms of both share of the vote and number of elected members. This situation inspired the establishment of a strategy of union as partners, though still rivals. In the electoral arena, the autonomists were to be predominant. Yet in the ideological arena, the radicals would prevail. This compromise was not fully respected and would breed new internal tensions in the alliance.

President Mitterrand's re-election in 1988 once again changed the Corsican landscape. Interior Minister Pierre Joxe's policy of opening a dialogue paved the way for talks including nationalist representatives on the future of Corsica. In October 1988, the Corsican Assembly voted in favour of a motion stipulating: 'a living cultural and historical community consisting of native Corsicans and Corsicans by adoption does exist, it is the Corsican people, and its specific rights lie in the framework of the French Constitution'.

The government took this motion as a starting-point for the launching of a

Table 11.1 Balance of political power in Corsica since decentralisation

Dates	*Reg. 1982*	*Reg. 1984*	*Reg. 1986*	*Legisl. 1988*	*Europ. 1989*	*Reg. 1992*	*Reg. 1992*	*Legisl. 1993*	*Europ. 1994*	*Legisl. 1997*
Voters	136,063	136,944	156,030	121,853	78,732	130,778	133,030	109,722	66,737	111,866
FN		*12,631*	*9,144*	*4,474*	*8,597*	*6,508*	*4,687*	*4,855*	*4,135*	*7,260*
RPR/UDF	41,900	39,953	42,051	34,717	28,750	23,998	31,344	18,658	24,315	23,912
UDF		10,781	7,835	22,582				17,319		9,394
Other Right	23,135	3,568	16,828			35,318	36,848	11,172	5,920	18,482
Centre					2,181			3,495		
Right Total	*65,035*	*54,302*	*66,714*	*57,299*	*30,931*	*59,316*	*68,192*	*50,644*	*30,235*	*51,788*
Rad.	16,372	19,405	24,146	27,900		11,750	13,418	15,723	10,799	16,886
PS	16,449	18,899	19,244	11,290	15,329	5,700		4,369	4,889	7,134
Other Left	4,253		4,462			6,354			1,743	1,533
PC	14,818	16,077	12,684	13,208	8,517	11,068	11,274	9,701	5,115	14,836
Left Total	*51,892*	*54,381*	*60,536*	*52,398*	*23,846*	*34,872*	*24,692*	*29,793*	*22,546*	*40,389*
Nationalists	*17,334*	*15,633*	*13,997*	*6,613*	*12,197*	*26,905*	*32,232*	*22,873*	*7,289*	*6,531*
Elected Nat.	8/61	6/61	6/61				13/51			
Nat. parl. groups	2	2	1				4			

Note: Reg=regional elections; Legisl.=general parliamentary elections; Europ.=elections for the Euporean Parliament: RPR=*Rassemblement pour la République*; UDF=*Union pour la Democratic Française*; Rad.=*Parti Radical Socialiste* (ex-*Mouvement des Radicaux de Gauche*); PS=*Parti Socialiste*; PC=*Parti Communiste*

major consultation process on the statutory evolution of the island. 'Corsican people, component of the French people', a formula that had been censored by the Constitutional Council, was inserted into the proposal for a bill. Debates around the status promulgated in 1991 and the underlying strategies of power conquest led to reorientations and new divisions of the nationalist movement. Between September 1989 and December 1990, the *Cuncolta Naziunalista* (the CN, former radicals of the MCA), went through two successive splits: first, the creation of the ANC, then that of the *Muvimentu pà l'Autodeterminazione* (MPA). The latter adopted a moderate stance and aimed at constituting a coalition based on a common programme, capable of winning at the 1992 elections. The aim of this policy was to legitimise nationalist participation (or at least a part of it) in a larger coalition for the management of Corsica's affairs. However, nationalists still fought these elections under two separate lists: the MPA, which scored relatively well, and *Corsica Nazione*. The latter consisted of nationalist organisations of various size and concerns, ranging from a Third World nationalism to middle-class autonomism associating uncompromising environmentalists with militants of the *Lutte de Liberation Nationale* (National Liberation Struggle). A nationalist electoral umbrella, led by Edmond Simeoni, the historical leader, was thus created. As described by Seiler, these 'defenders of the periphery' offer a wide range of political positions:

> they are catch-all parties…their wide political spectrum enables them to reach the working classes…they can provide shelter to an orphan socialist left. On the socio-economic dimension, they oppose capitalism, in the sense that they defend people of modest means, but not in terms of class struggle. This social populism appealed to intermediary classes situated between capital and labour.
>
> (Seiler 1982:86)

The mobilisation of all these 'counter-veiling powers' will make this strategy electorally successful. In effect, until its implosion, the nationalist movement organised different sections of society with the help of associations (teachers, parents of students), socioprofessional organisations (craftspeople, shopkeepers, health-care professional) and trade unions. These organisations linked to the nationalist movement helped to legitimate nationalist political demands in numerous sectors of Corsican society. Adopting a message of the defence of Corsican specificity *vis-à-vis* the state and the European Union, they activated corporatist feelings.

As the campaign leading up to the September 1992 referendum on the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty showed, opinions of the nationalist movement towards European Union also proved to be controversial. The internally divided *Corsica Nazione* alliance campaigned for abstention. One of its components, the ANC, opposed the treaty, seeing it as an instrument of the 'Europe of capital'. The MPA, on the other hand, seduced by Treaty's federalist inspiration, was in favour. The referendum revealed an additional paradox. An economically

backward island relying heavily on European financial aid (a total amount of 1.3 billion French francs between 1989 and 1993), produced a strong protest movement against the nation-state that refused to support an (albeit imperfect) transfer of state sovereignty to a so far 'unidentified political object'.

The nationalist movement can thus be analysed as an instrument for the articulation of disparate interests on a territorial basis. The absence of an autonomous Green party and the National Front's weakness in the island allowed the nationalists to capture the discontent of very diverse sectors of the electorate. With its self-appointed anti-system status, the party fulfilled a tribune function. The results of the nationalists, although divided, in the 1992 territorial elections (almost 25 per cent of the suffrage) made the movement the most important political force on the island. This situation should have enabled it to claim the status of a 'party of alternation'. It was indeed considered as such by the various governments that succeeded one another after 1988. These kept in touch with the different leaders of the movement, thus aggravating its internal tensions. However, the movement's capacity as 'party of alternation' and its chances for winning office were jeopardised by its heterogeneity and the divergent strategies.

The present convulsions prove the intensity of centrifugal tensions within a nationalist movement in crisis and seeking to renew itself. In 1995 and 1996, splinter factions emerged in the MPA and the ANC. Because of its heterogeneity, the thirteen nationalist representatives at the Corsican Assembly (who represent more than a quarter of the total members) did not manage to constitute a single parliamentary group, which would have strengthened their influence in their assembly. Eventually, those elected on the *Corsica Nazione* list constituted three different groups: the ANC, a splinter group that came out of the CN in 1993, consisting of two members; the UPC (three members), which left the coalition in 1994; and those faithful to the *Corsica Nazione* banner (four members, including a Green representative). This implosion process that has taken place since 1992 has been provoked not by ideological differences, but rather by disagreements on tactical choices, fights for power and personal quarrels. The strong effects of personality and the influence of historic leaders on their fiefs (as demonstrated by electoral results) are typical of a clan-based political culture.

This situation creates a gap between the nationalist movement, public opinion, and also the electorate. The latter expects the movement to assert its ability to achieve power in order to implement the policies of societal transformation it promotes.

This choice would force the movement to abandon its tribune function and to formulate an answer to the double question of the role of violence and of the movement's ultimate goals. Former prime minister Barre's opinion that: 'If Corsicans want independence, they should take it' does not seem to be shared by the population (Avril and Gicquel 1996). According to a survey, 91 per cent of Corsicans reject this option. Nevertheless, 20 per cent of them do not feel shocked by the terrorist attack against the Bordeaux Town Hall. This figure proves that a large minority of the inhabitants have gradually grown accustomed to violence.

It also underlines one of the most essential features of Corsican nationalist movement: the permanent use of violence as a means of political expression.

Twenty-five years of political violence

The institution of controlled violence as a form of political expression constitutes one of the striking features of Corsican protest. A clandestine committee for an independent Corsica appeared in 1961 but soon vanished, proving that the population was ready neither to withdraw its confidence from France, nor to adhere to a violent process. The February 1973 attack was, however, a prelude to the constant presence of clandestine movements in the political spectrum and to the resort to violence in order to back a popular claim. Violence legitimised in this way was argued to constitute the only way capable of forcing the central power to give in. Its links with social movements caused some observers to refer to 'democratic terrorism' as opposed to minority and blind 'brigade' violence.

On 9 October 1973 the *Fronte Paisanu Corsu diLibarezione* (FPCL, Corsican Liberation Farmers' Front) claimed responsibility for an attack against the airforce base in the eastern plain. This targeted violence was clearly linked with the nationalist claims. In effect, national defence occupied several dozen hectares of arable land in this zone where those repatriated from North Africa had developed modern agriculture. On 23 October, the movement issued a manifesto calling for teaching of Corsican at school. The creation of the FPCL was the response to frustrated protests during 1973. In 1974, the prime minister's official visit was accompanied by the creation of *Ghjustizia Paolina*, a second clandestine movement of the self-appointed struggle for national liberation. The two movements coexisted with limited activity until 5 May 1976, when the Corsican National Liberation Front (FLNC) was created. The latter was set up after the Aleria events as an answer to the repression exerted by the central power. Anti-colonialism constitutes its ideology, armed struggle its means and the self-determination of the Corsican people its goal.

The world of the clandestine is difficult to grasp. However, it is worth underlining its significance in both the ideology and the activity of nationalist formations. The approach, as inspired by European models such as the IRA and ETA, is militarist. However, despite a high number of terrorist attacks annually and the use of 'revolutionary tax' against non-Corsicans (although they are not the only ones), its actions do not lead to blind murderous violence. The repression that militants had to face enhanced solidarity among the families of political prisoners. If they do not want to be discredited by their electorate, even the more moderate autonomist formations have to abide by this solidarity. The myth of the clandestine patriot, fed by the militant cultural circles, spread among the young through organisations such as the Corsican Students' Union. By remaining silent, public opinion tacitly participated in the legitimisation of the very existence of the FLNC.

After the presidential elections of 1981 and 1988, the clandestine organisation interrupted its violent activity in return for the openness of the socialist

governments' policies. On the eve of the election of the first Corsican Assembly (August 1982), its disagreement with the new status showed itself, however, in a spectacular breaking of the truce, which ultimately ruined the autonomist parties' electoral performance. Officially dissolved in January 1983, the FLNC nevertheless continued its terrorist activities. The unity of the clandestine movement was shattered only at the end of 1989. During a press conference held in the Corsican *maquis* (the environment usually chosen by the organisation in order to dramatise its shows of force), the FLNC presented its project for society (Crettiez 1993). With the goal of self-determination, it aimed to participate in the emergence of a participatory democracy combining the pursuit of social progress and of individual fulfilment. This document attested a change of strategy. By proclaiming Corsica as anchored in Europe, it downplayed the claims for independence. Moreover, the FLNC no longer sought political leadership and reversed its link with public organisations.

Internal contests concerning this shift led to the appearance of a hard-line splinter branch in 1990. Since then, two clandestine expressions have co-existed: the FLNC 'usual' channel, promoting the modernisation of the movement and the downplaying of the armed struggle, and the FLNC 'historic' channel which has remained faithful to the original aims and means of 1976. This division has affected all public nationalist entities, leading to more internal competition in the movement. The MPA rallied the first analysis, the *Cuncolta* followed the second one. Three further divisions (*Resistenza,* linked to the ANC; then *Fronte Ribellu*, constituted in 1995 as a consequence of the split of the FLNC historic channel; and the FLNC, which seceded from the 'usual channel' in 1996) within both sides of the nationalist movement contributed not only to the multiplication of clandestine organisations, but also to greater internal competition.

Since 1976 Corsican society has gradually become accustomed to the sporadic violence of clandestine organisations (amounting to forty-four assassinations and 8,400 terrorist attacks)[6] during their fight against the Weberian 'state monopoly over the use of legitimate violence'. Although 75 per cent of them are not attributable to clandestine organisations but are due to personal settling of scores, there were 1,172 attacks in the years 1995 and 1996, and they caused 600 million francs worth of damage in 1995 alone. These figures attest to the damage political violence has had on the functioning of Corsican society. The generations of the 1970s and 1980s were 'socialised by a culture of violence that can become determining in the shift to extreme forms of behaviour' (Wieviorka 1990).

Violence gradually replaced the rules for conflict resolution commonly used in a civilised society. Although originating from the clandestine movements, violence has partly escaped their control and has even been consuming them in their internal competition.

The normal routes employed by the authorities do not seem to resolve the problems. The citizens, who are well aware of the state's helplessness, seek other modes of intervention, circumventing the authorities and reactivating traditional networks of clientelist solidarity.

According to observers, social workers and teachers, a growing number of young people who live in social isolation engage in violence. Unemployment (13.5 per cent of the active population in 1995), poverty[7] and the existence of a juvenile, unqualified *lumpen proletariat* without a chance to emigrate lead to the continuation of violence on the island. Social networks are constituted from the slum areas of the urban suburbs. Thus are recruited the small gun-carriers of the dregs of society that perceive clandestinity as 'a social revenge, a type of social mobility for youngsters without future' (Culioli 1996).

This insecurity goes together with a slow but steady decline of the Corsican economy. Since 1993, governments and elected officials have collaborated to design a scheme of fiscal exemptions to relaunch economic development on the island. This goal was also the rationale behind the bill for the 'Corsican free trade' zone adopted by the Parliament in December 1996. The island received 3,300 million francs in subsidies from national and European solidarity funds for the period 1994–9. Nevertheless, the forecasts for economic development completely overlook the blooming of a, predatory 'grey' economy.

From 1986 onwards, observers have regularly pointed out that all components for establishing a mafia system in Corsica are objectively present (Inciyan 1992). In the past, clandestine group financing took place via the revolutionary tax but the organisations refused the profit-making logic. Today, with the clear example of different leaders having personally enriched themselves during their period of militancy and their subsequent re-immersion in normal society as managers or shop owners, the context is different. Moreover, movements that want to cease armed struggle thus 'demobilise' a militarised *lumpen proletariat*, leaving it free to perform all kinds of mercenary activities (Lefèvre 1996).

Corsica thus provides a new example for scholars analysing the potential links between political violence and common criminality. As in Italy, Japan and the USA, where mafia or similar organisations are on the fringes of the political system, this situation further weakens and disturbs the functioning of institutions and of society in Corsica. The crisis that has affected the nationalist movement in recent years aggravates the state of decay of Corsican society. In a context deeply transformed by decentralisation, the construction of Europe and globalisation of the economy, the twenty-five-year cycle of the contemporary history of the island is concluded. Those who in the past presented themselves as the firm defenders of the Corsican people now have the choice between revising their thinking and their methods of action or, as described by Wierviorka (1988) being struck by the inversion syndrome and withdrawing into themselves.

Notes

1 A survey of the *Observatoire Interrégional du Politique* (1995) found that 80 per cent of the inhabitants feel strongly attached to their region, which is 25 per cent more than the national average.

2 In order to denounce a financial scandal in the field of wine industry, Simeoni decided

to occupy by force one of the main producer's cellars. The place was soon surrounded by both police and army, and someone opened fire. Simeoni surrendered, but these events led to a pre-insurrectionary situation in Corsica, with major riots in Bastia.

3 Traditional geographical division in valleys, village communities' gatherings.

4 The creation of the *Fronte di Liberazione Naziunale di a Corsica* (FLNC) will force the UPC to choose the path of protest. Nowadays, it is looking for a second chance to renew both its cadres and its doctrine, which are currently still strongly influenced by its historical leaders.

5 It replaced the CCN, which was dissolved by the government in 1983.

6 For which they claimed responsibility respectively in twenty-one and 3,738 cases.

7 At the end of 1993, 5,788 people, i.e. 0.91 per cent of the French population, were living on the guaranteed minimum income level.

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12

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN REGIONALIST PARTIES AT THE LEVEL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The European Free Alliance

Peter Lynch

Introduction

The development of transnational political parties has been a consistent feature of West European politics in the post-war years. European integration has propelled the establishment of two different types of transnational party organisation: the transnational party federation and the political group in the European Parliament. Though it might be conventional wisdom to present regionalist parties as isolationist and hostile towards internationalism and European integration, the parties have combined to develop their own transnational federation and sought to establish a political group of regionalists in the European Parliament. Rather than remain aloof from international developments, regionalist parties in different parts of Europe have been intimately concerned with international issues and developments, and have shown great interest in European integration in particular. Part of these parties' response to European integration has involved participation in European institutions and membership of transnational political organisations. This chapter will offer a historical assessment of the attitudes of regionalist parties towards transnational co-operation and analyse the development of the regionalists' own transnational federation, the European Free Alliance (EFA). It will also offer an examination of the activities of regionalist parties in the European Parliament and their efforts to establish a regionalist political group within the parliament, such as the Rainbow Group from 1984 to 1994, to rival those of the other European political families.

European integration has been both a cause and, in a much smaller way, an outcome of regionalist party co-operation. Most regionalist parties have been supportive of European integration over the long term, and acceptance of European

integration has had considerable impact upon most regionalist parties. The parties have been drawn into European elections and the European Parliament, and into participation in a range of transnational regionalist organisations–and, most significantly, regionalist parties have Europeanized their political goals. Parties as different as *Eusko Alkartasuna*, *Convergència i Unió*, the *Lega Nord*, the Scottish National Party and the *Volksunie* no longer support autonomy or independence but a 'Europe of the regions' and 'independence in Europe' (Lynch 1996). Regionalist parties have supported European integration for three main reasons. First, European integration is seen not to threaten political and economic decentralisation but to assist it. Both regionalism and European union are seen to involve sharing powers between different levels of government, with a key role for local or regional institutions. Second, European integration is not seen to damage minority languages and cultures. It is perceived to embody both political and cultural pluralism rather than present a mono cultural view of European society. Third, there are strategic reasons for supporting European integration. Some regionalist parties see European integration and regional decentralisation as developments which will chip away at the powers of the central states from below while European institutions chip away from above (Kolinsky 1981), though other regionalist parties see European integration as providing a viable external support system for national and regional autonomy that removes the costs of secession and autonomy (Birch 1977; Hutchinson 1994).

The logic of transnational regionalism

Regionalist parties have had a number of motives for developing inter-party links and participating in European elections. Since many of the other political families, such as the socialist parties, Christian Democrats and Liberals, have developed transnational federations and political groups, it is logical and politically desirable for regionalist parties to follow suit. If a family of parties is to create its own political links and organisations then it needs to identify certain benefits from co-operation and collective action. In the case of the regionalist parties, the gains of transnational co-operation exist at several levels. At a minimum, participation in European elections can be seen as a simple extension of domestic electoral goals. However, the manner in which European elections and the parliament operate has had a larger impact upon regionalist parties. The second-order nature of European elections has offered specific opportunities to small parties, which have often been able to achieve greater levels of electoral success in European elections than in national elections (Lynch 1996).

In addition, the European Parliament operates funding procedures to encourage co-operation between parties in European elections and within the parliament itself, and such factors have created a financial logic for co-operation between regionalist parties that fitted nicely with the political logic of seeking transnational links. The development of a transnational federation such as the European Free Alliance is also useful for small regionalist parties with few organisational resources

at their disposal. Membership of the EFA allows them to share resources and learn from the larger, more electorally successful parties within the organisation. There is also a strong political logic to co-operation between regionalist parties. The parties view co-operation and membership of transnational groups as part of a strategy to publicise the case for autonomy and self-government through forming a collective voice. This desire has certainly been evident within the European Parliament, with regionalists seeking to create a common voice to press their demands within the context of European institutions. This has meant that regionalist parties have sought election to the parliament and their MEPs have participated in the range of parliamentary activities and initiatives available to European parliamentarians.

The origins and development of the European Free Alliance

Most of Europe's main political families had established their own transnational federations and political groups by the 1970s, but regionalist parties conspicuously lagged behind. Four regionalist parties had combined to form the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations in 1973, but this was a lobbying office rather than a political organisation. The development of a more explicit political alliance began with a meeting of regionalist parties at Bastia in 1979 where nine regionalist parties agreed to examine the prospects for political co-operation. These parties formed a loose alliance for the first direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 through adopting a common statement for the election campaign. However, a deeper level of political co-operation only came about in 1981 when the *Volksunie* (VU) hosted a conference of regionalist parties in Brussels, using its position within the European Parliament as the basis for establishing the European Free Alliance.

The EFA was formally established at the Brussels conference and the EFA participants were given four main goals: increasing the number of regionalist parties within the European Parliament to facilitate the establishment of a regionalist political group; expanding the membership of the EFA to include more parties (especially if they had MEPs); developing some common policy positions as a manifesto for European elections; and developing a wider common platform to guide the EFA and as an expression of the federation's political identity.[1] The EFA identified a range of strategies for expanding its membership and establishing a regionalist group in the European Parliament. First, it saw a number of potential members in parties such as the *Front Démocratique des Francophones,* the *Rassemblement Wallon* and the Scottish National Party (SNP). Second, the development of electoral alliances between regionalist and non-regionalist parties in France was viewed as a growth area. Third, the expected enlargement of the European Community to include Portugal and Spain would bring in a number of new EFA members that would succeed in gaining representation within the European Parliament.

Since 1981, the EFA has been administered from within the European Parliament by the VU. The VU was central to the EFA's development as it

provided a strong directive influence on the organisation and it was able to use the parliament's resources to build the EFA. The EFA was very much the VU's creation, and one of its key goals was to develop a coherent manifesto for the EFA. However, this goal was always problematic. The EFA's member parties have been ideologically disparate, and their individual platforms have been largely domestic in focus and unsuitable for transnational politics. Initially, the EFA adopted a very broad common programme which was essentially a statement of principles rather than a political manifesto. Since 1981, EFA policies have evolved in two distinct ways. First, the EFA has sought to adopt a common policy statement at each European election. However, this situation has led not to detailed manifestos, but to a brief statement of principles often based on the lowest common denominator between the parties.[2] Second, the EFA has adopted a range of policies at its general assemblies. However, these policies have mostly dealt only with the agenda of European integration and issues such as a single currency, European regional policy, the Maastricht Treaty, minority languages, energy policy and employment (Lynch 1996). None of these policies is binding on party members and it is difficult to see whether they have any real effect on member parties or domestic politics.

The EFA has also been concerned with increasing its membership both for its own sake and as a mechanism for establishing a regionalist group within the European Parliament. The EFA has followed three main expansion strategies since 1981. First, it has sought to organise as much of the regionalist family as possible into the EFA. Second, it has sought to arrange electoral coalitions in some states to enhance the prospects of regionalist success. Third, it has begun to look outside the European Union for new members for both the EFA and the Rainbow Group. Each of these strategies was based on the assumption that regionalist and non-regionalist parties would seek to associate with the EFA and wish to participate in the construction of a distinct political group within the European Parliament.

Organising parties inside the regionalist family offered the most logical means of expanding the EFA, but involved considerable problems. In 1983, the EFA managed to gain the accession of *Plaid Cymru,* the SNP and *Union Valdôtaine,* though the SNP did not associate with the regionalists in the European Parliament but joined a non-regionalist group (see below). In the mid-1980s the EFA was concerned with attracting the large Basque and Catalan regionalist parties, *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) and the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV), as a result of the Mediterranean enlargement of the European Community. To some extent, the expansion of the EFA and the establishment of a regionalist group had been constructed upon the assumption that the Basque and Catalan parties viewed themselves as regionalist parties which would readily associate with the existing EFA membership. However, this assumption turned out to be incorrect. Both the CiU and PNV saw themselves as hegemonic parties within their regions and sought to associate with mainstream ideological groups within the European Parliament (Marcet and Argelaguet 1994). Each chose to eschew the EFA and

the prospect of involvement in a regionalist group, which tore the heart out of the EFA's strategy for expansion.

Though the CiU and PNV shunned the EFA grouping, some of their regionalist competitors did choose to involve themselves with the EFA parties. The Basque *Eusko Alkartasuna* and the Catalan *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* were the main parties to join the EFA and aid the creation of a regionalist political group. The expansion of the EFA entered a new phase in 1989, when it managed to attract regionalist parties such as the *Lega Nord, Slovenska Skupnost, Union für Südtirol* and *Unitat Catalunya*. However, only the *Lega* brought elected representatives in the European Parliament, and its involvement was controversial throughout its membership of the European Free Alliance and the Rainbow Group.

The EFA also sought to enhance its efforts to create a political group through assisting its party members in European elections. The EFA encouraged its affiliates to contest the European elections and to form electoral alliances to increase the regionalist component in the European Parliament. The EFA encouraged the *Partido Sardo d'Azione* and *Union Valdôtaine* to develop their existing electoral alliance in 1984 and 1989, when their joint list succeeded in electing an MEP. In France, the EFA was instrumental in constructing an alliance between a range of regionalist parties and the Greens (*Verts*) for the 1989 European elections.[3] Both the Greens and the regionalists suffered from the fact that European elections in France were organised on a system of list proportional representation which designated the whole of the country as the electoral constituency and instituted a 5 per cent threshold. An electoral alliance between the parties was one means of ensuring that the joint list surpassed the 5 per cent threshold, on the understanding that the regionalists would receive one MEP among the first four elected on the Green-regionalist list. This deal brought the first nationally elected regionalist in France, with Max Simeoni of the *Unione di u Popule Corsu* taking up a seat in the European Parliament from 1989 to 1994. However, by 1994 the alliance between the regionalists and Greens was over, as a result of conflict within and between the two French Green parties. This situation left the regionalist parties in the unfortunate position of having to contest the 1994 European elections as a regionalist list which gained only a small level of support (below 1 per cent).

The third strategy for expansion adopted by the EFA involved a search for members outside the European Union and the regionalist family. By 1989, the EFA had exhausted the supply of potential members within the European Union and had to look outside the EU to prospective new member states for new party affiliates. The end of the Cold War and the democratization of Eastern Europe after 1989 made a range of new countries and parties available to the EFA and to the Rainbow Group through EU enlargement. The EFA sought to organise in the East and quickly gained the accession of the Slovak independence party, *Slovenska Narodna Strana*, though this party was involved with the EFA only for a short time. The EFA also became a member of the International Network of Centre Parties and participated in a number of party conferences in Scandinavia, the Baltic states and Eastern Europe as part of its search for new EFA affiliates

and potential new members for the Rainbow Group (Lynch 1996). However, the Rainbow Group itself actually collapsed before the 1995 enlargement brought new member parties into the European Parliament–thus depriving the Rainbow-EFA configuration of the prospect of expanding. However, had this move succeeded it is likely that it would have had the effect of diluting the regionalist dimension to the Rainbow group, through attracting non-regionalist parties. Indeed, basing expansion on countries outside the European Union merely emphasised the fact that the EFA and Rainbow Group had exhausted the supply of potential affiliates within the EU and among the regionalist political family.

Though the EFA's expansion did not occur as anticipated, the number of parties in the EFA increased from nine in 1981 to nineteen in 1983 to twenty-one in 1992. These changes meant that the EFA's initially loose and informal structure had to adapt. The EFA general assembly of 1983 agreed a new constitution and structure for the federation which sought to establish formal rules and procedures to guide the federation's development. The EFA had to create a mechanism to deal with applications for membership from parties and a democratic executive structure to cope with decision-making within the EFA between general assemblies. The EFA's expansion from nine to nineteen had brought difficulties when two regionalist parties from the same region sought to join the organisation. This problem was resolved with the 1983 constitution, which set down rules for new members that required parties to be democratic and non-violent, and participate in elections. It also opened up a process for parties to become observers to the EFA from inside and outside the European Community and ensured that no two parties in the EFA could come from the same region–which was intended to push rival parties into political and electoral co-operation.[4] The new constitution therefore provided a set of criteria to assist the EFA in accepting and rejecting party members which also enabled it to draw a distinction between its democratic regionalism and extremist parties such as *Herri Batasuna* and the *Vlaams Blok*. The new constitution also reorganised the EFA's governing bureau to provide a balance between the MEPs and the parties without MEPs on the EFA executive, which gave the weaker parties a greater role within the EFA structure.

The EFA constitution was restructured twice in the 1990s. First, in 1991, the EFA structure was altered to take account of the growth of new members after the 1989 European elections and the very different size of affiliated parties. The EFA introduced new rules that required full members to contest elections, obtain elected representatives, have formal party structures and distribute a party newspaper or bulletin. These changes were intended to encourage the EFA affiliates to operate more as electoral organisations, and they also provided a mechanism for new members to join the EFA as observers for the period of a year before being accepted into full membership.[5] The EFA underwent a further organisational reform in 1995 as a result of provisions in the Maastricht Treaty on political parties. The EFA chose to turn itself into a European political party, following article 138 of the Treaty on European Union. This change involved the renaming of the EFA as the 'European Free Alliance-Democratic Party of

the Peoples of Europe', with a set of statutes which emphasised the democratic nature of the EFA and its commitment to parliamentary democracy, civil and human rights and self-determination for all peoples.[6] However, the new constitution and organisational set-up was almost entirely similar to the old EFA structure.

The European Free Alliance as a family representative

The European Free Alliance has been an imperfect representative of the regionalist family, though the nearest that regionalist parties have come to obtaining a single family organisation. Initially, the EFA existed without the involvement of major parties such as *Plaid Cymru,* the Scottish National Party and the *Union Valdôtaine,* though each joined the EFA in time, and the organisation expanded to become a representative of a wider range of regionalist parties. Expansion has been a consistent goal for the EFA, but the federation has not succeeded in developing into an effective family representative as significant parties have remained outside the EFA or have departed from the organisation. *Convergéncia i Unió* and the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* have been the most prominent long-term absentees from the EFA, though there have been other parties which have remained a separate identity from the bulk of the regionalist family (see Table 12.1). Similarly, the fact that the *Lega Nord* was expelled from the EFA in 1994 means that the federation has lost one of its most electorally successful members, with no prospect of its rejoining the EFA at a future date.

There are a number of reasons why parties have avoided the EFA. Both CiU and PNV saw themselves offering political appeals that were ideological rather than regional; the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* chose to associate with the Christian Democrats; *Herri Batasuna*'s support for political violence excluded it from the EFA; and the anti-immigrant, extreme-right positions of the *Vlaams Blok* were never likely to be accepted by EFA parties even if there had been no other party member from Flanders already in the EFA.

Though the EFA has succeeded in bringing most regionalist parties into a single organisation, some of its party affiliates are extremely small and insignificant. Indeed, a large number of EFA affiliates are actually micro-parties rather than small or third parties. The *Partit Occitan*, *Union Démocratique Bretonne* and *Unitat Catalunya* are all extremely small organisations with low party memberships and only a few local councillors. The size and negligible electoral impact of such parties contrasts badly with the greater level of electoral success enjoyed by the SNP, *Lega Nord*, *Union Valdôtaine* and VU. There is a division between the small and larger parties in the EFA, but the more significant development has been the loss of larger parties such as the CiU and PNV to the EFA cause, which has undermined the effectiveness of the EFA as a family representative and also created substantial long-term obstacles to the formation of a regionalist political group in the European Parliament.

Table 12.1 The European Free Alliance as a family representative

Parties in the EFA	*Non-EFA members*
Eusko Alkartasuna	Convergència i Unió
Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya	Front Démocratique des Francophones
Fryske Nasjonale Partij	Herri Batasuna
Mouvement Région Savoie	Lega Nord
Partei Deutschsprächiger Belgier	Partido Nacionalista Vasco
Partido Sardo d'Azione	Partido Galego
Partit Occitan	Südtiroler Volkspartei
Partido Andalucia (observer)	Svenska Folkpartiet
Plaid Cymru	Vlaams Blok
Scottish National Party	
Slovenska Skupnost	
Union Démocratique Bretonne	
Union für Südtirol	
Union pour l'Alsace	
Union Valdôtaine	
Unione di u Populu Corsu	
Unitat Catalunya	
Volksunie	

Note: The fact that very small regionalist parties often have a transient existence means that this list is by no means complete, but is based on comparing the 1997 membership list of the European Free Alliance with known regionalist parties within the EU which are not involved in the EFA

The programme of the European Free Alliance

Though regionalist parties often escape classification in conventional left-right terms (Müller-Rommel 1991), there are dimensions which can be identified so that we can understand the nature and substance of the European Free Alliance: the type of self-government demanded, attitudes towards European integration, 'new politics' profile and anti-modernist views. The EFA parties comprise a distinct group within the regionalist party family, through their acceptance of the EFA's common programme and policies, though there are distinct differences between the EFA parties themselves. The EFA parties represent a range of different constitutional preferences in relation to self-government, though there is some movement in party positions on self-government (Lynch 1996). Within the UK, the Scottish National Party has been a consistent supporter of independence (in Europe since 1988) while *Plaid Cymru* has vacillated ambiguously between support for self-government, independence and a regional assembly. The VU was traditionally a proponent of federalism but has latterly moved towards consideration of independence in Europe (De Winter 1994). The remaining parties within the EFA tend to support a variety of positions on regional autonomy involving federalism and the creation of regional governments with substantial decision-making powers. However, the differences between the parties on the

issue of self-government have seldom created conflicts within the EFA as parties have considerable policy autonomy within the organisation.

In relation to European integration, most EFA parties have shown similar positive attitudes and responses. The majority of EFA members favour the deepening of the European Union and its transformation into a federal 'Europe of the regions'. The SNP is the strongest exception as it favours Scottish independence in an intergovernmental European Union in which states, not regions, remain the dominant actors. This difference has never led to conflict within the EFA, though it might have contributed to the SNP's long estrangement from the EFA and the Rainbow Group (Lynch 1995). However, while the EFA parties largely support the principle of European integration, they are often suspicious of the practice of integration and the attitudes of the large states. For example, there was dissatisfaction with the Treaty concerning the European Union's failure to provide a more serious regional dimension than the Committee of the Regions and deal seriously with the democratic deficit through providing genuine European citizenship and participation in European decision-making.[7]

Post-materialist issues have played some role within the European Free Alliance and there are some attachments between the EFA parties and post-materialist issues. The founding statement of the EFA included commitments to environmental protection and anti-nuclear and lifestyle issues, and the EFA has debated and passed environmental policies on a number of occasions in the 1980s and 1990s. However, the EFA also has policy commitments related to the materialist political agenda of economic and regional policy and the single market. The parties involved with the European Free Alliance have had little connection with anti-modernist issues. The sole case of a party which espoused such views was the *Lega Nord* and its political positions caused friction within the EFA on a number of occasions before it was suspended from the EFA in 1994 over its participation in the coalition government with the neofascist *Alleanza Nazionale*. Indeed, largely at *Volksunie's* instigation, the EFA spent a good deal of time emphasising that it did not support anti-modernist issues associated with parties such as the *Vlaams Blok*. The EFA's programme and activities have stressed democracy and pluralism and have sought to avoid association with the extreme nationalist and regionalist parties on all occasions.[8]

Regionalism in the European Parliament

Since its inception, the European Free Alliance has sought to establish a regionalist political group within the European Parliament. A regionalist group was seen as being the best strategy for advancing regionalist demands and interests within European institutions, a strategy which would allow the EFA parties to compete with other political families and gain the political and resource benefits of group status within the parliament itself. However, while regionalist parties have undoubtedly viewed membership of political groups as a positive benefit within the parliament, this has not meant that they have sought to participate in a regionalist political group. The regionalist family has traditionally been very fragmented within

the European Parliament, which has caused substantial problems for the EFA and has meant that regionalists have remained an embryo group within the parliament since 1979. For example, though the SNP may have seemed a natural member of a regionalist group, it chose to join the European Democratic Alliance with *Fianna Fáil* and the *Rassamblement Peur la République* (RPR) and avoided involvement with the regionalist parties in the European Parliament for a decade. Similarly, other parties with elected members of the European Parliament such as *Convergència i Uniò*, the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* and the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* joined non-regionalist groups such as the European Peoples Party and European Liberal Democrats.

Whilst intra-family fragmentation was one element in preventing the emergence of a regionalist political group, other factors also caused difficulties. First, there is the fact that political regionalism is a very uneven force in Europe. Though most EU countries have regionalist parties many have traditionally been electorally weak, such as those in France and the Netherlands. Second, some countries, such as Denmark, Germany, Greece and Portugal, offered little hope for the EFA because they lacked a regionalist dimension to their political systems. The enlargement of the European Union to include Austria, Finland and Sweden has added to this problem through bringing in yet more countries which lack a significant regionalist dimension. Finally, there was always a numerical problem for regionalist parties in the European Parliament. The parliament had established rules governing the formation of political groups which necessitated a minimum number of MEPs to create a group from a mixture of different member states. Regionalist parties found it extremely difficult to obtain these threshold requirements on their own. The result was that regionalist parties always had to combine with other parties to establish a group–a situation which has never changed over the course of four European elections.

Regionalist parties have tended to be involved in political groups in the European Parliament in two different ways: either through the EFA 'embryo' led by the *Volksunie* or in other types of groups detailed above. The EFA embryo has participated in very different political groups since direct elections in 1979. Initially, the VU was involved in the Technical Co-ordination Group, which comprised a disparate range of parties that sought to gain the political and financial benefits of group membership but eschewed participation in the existing political groups (see Table 12.2). The Technical Co-ordination Group really existed as a formal structure for small parties and independent members, in which the MEPs retained their independence in the European Parliament and avoided developing common policies or organisational features that resembled those of other political groups. What was significant about the Technical Co-ordination Group was that it provided the opportunity for the EFA parties to develop enduring links with non-regionalist parties which were a substitute for the creation of a fully fledged regionalist political group in the European Parliament. This development was evident from the fact that a range of parties, such as the Danish anti-EC party, the *Folkesbevaegelsen Mod EF*, and two left-wing Italian parties, the *Democrazia Proletaria* and *Partido di Unita Proletaria*, followed the VU into the Rainbow Group in 1984.

Table 12.2 The regionalist party embryo in the European Parliament, 1979–94

Technical Co-ordination Group, 1979–84	*Rainbow Group, 1984–9*	*Rainbow Group, 1989–94*
Volksunie	**Volksunie**	**Volksunie**
Folkesbevaegelsen Mod EF	Folk Mod EF	Folk Mod EF
Independent Fianna Fáil	Agalev	Independent Fianna Fáil
Rassemblement Wallon	Die Grünen	**Scottish National Party**
Partido Radicale	Groen Progressief Akkoord	**Partido Andalucia**
Partido di Unita Proletaria	Partido di Unita Proletaria	**Lega Nord**
Democrazia Proletaria	Democrazia Proletaria	**Unione di u Popule Corsu**
	Ecolo	**Eusko Alkartasuna**
	Partido Sardo d'Azione	**Esquerra Republicana**
		Partido Sardo d'Azione
		Union Valdôtaine
		Canary Isles Autonomist
		Independent Grünen
		Partido Renovader

Note: Regionalist parties in **bold**

The Rainbow Group, as its name suggests, contained a range of different political parties and two distinct embryo groups. Within the Rainbow Group there was a small regionalist embryo comprising the VU and *Partido Sardo d'Azione*, and also a more significant Green-environmental embryo which had seven members from the German Greens, two MEPs from the Dutch Greens and two MEPs from the Belgian Green parties, Agalev and Ecolo. Besides these two embryos the Rainbow Group contained two Italian leftist parties and the Danish anti-EC movement, which had nowhere else to go but made a useful numerical contribution to the Rainbow Group. The Rainbow Group worked on the same principle as the Technical Co-ordination Group with maximum policy and voting autonomy for its members. The Rainbow configuration was a group in name only, with no aspirations to develop into an electoral alliance or transnational party. Indeed, this level of autonomy was its great strength as it provided a mechanism for both Green and regionalist embryos to organise themselves within the parliament almost completely independently.

After the 1989 European elections, the two embryos within the Rainbow Group went their separate ways. The Green parties formed their own Green political group while the regionalists were left as the dominant force within a reconstructed Rainbow Group. The 1989 elections were notable as the occasion on which the EFA made a considerable electoral advance and came closest to establishing its own political group. The new Rainbow Group contained representatives from eight regionalist parties, partly as a result of successful electoral alliances with regionalist and non-regionalist parties (such as in France), and the regionalists' electoral success in 1989 finally brought the SNP to join a regionalist political group. However, despite this situation the EFA could muster only nine out of the

Rainbow Group's fifteen MEPs–indicating how the regionalists remained a distinct embryo despite the successes of 1989. This second Rainbow Group was the high-point of EFA and regionalist representation in the European Parliament.

The European elections of 1994 saw a considerable reduction of EFA representation in the parliament, with only the Canary Isles Autonomist, *Lega. Nord*, SNP and VU retaining their MEPs. The *Lega's* suspension from the EFA and Rainbow Group, as a result of its participation in the Italian coalition government with the extreme-right National Alliance, effectively meant that the EFA won only four MEPs in 1994 (Lynch 1995). This development left the EFA in the weak position of seeking non-regionalist parties to form a new political group. As the Danish anti-EC movement abandoned the EFA embryo to join the new Europe of the Nations group, the three EFA parties were left to establish the European Radical Alliance with MEPs from Bernard Tapie's alternative Socialist list *Energie Radicale* and the Italian Radical Party (see Table 12.3). This situation was a far cry from the strength of the EFA in the Rainbow Group from 1989 to 1994 and from the federation's expectations of being in a position to establish a political group as a reflection of the regionalist party family.

Though the regionalist parties have comprised only a small element of the European Parliament, the fact that they have participated in political groups has allowed them to play some role within the deliberations of the parliament. Whilst the parliament has tended to be dominated by the Christian Democratic European Peoples Party and the Socialist Group, there has been a role for lesser political groups within the parliament's work. The various groups in which regionalist parties have played a role have all sought to operate as 'hinge' groups within the parliament in the space between the main groups. Whether through the Rainbow Group or the European Radical Alliance, regionalist parties have played a role in parliamentary committees, reports and plenary sessions, using their role in the parliament to present a regionalist agenda on as many occasions as possible.

Conclusion

The European Free Alliance has been the most enduring transnational alliance between West European regionalist parties. It has existed as a forum for

Table 12.3 The European Radical Alliance, 1994

Party	*Number of MEPs*
Energie Radicale	13
Scottish National Party	2
Partido Radicale	2
Volksunie	1
Canary Isles Autonomist	1

Note: Regionalist parties in **bold**

political co-operation inside and outside the European Parliament and has given regionalist parties some voice in European integration. The EFA is evidence of the extent to which regionalist parties see themselves as a political family and are prepared to engage in political co-operation and European integration. The federation has provided a means for parties to co-operate to gain political and logistical support, publicity and financial resources. However, while the EFA has been a success in many areas it has failed in its main goal of creating a regionalist political group in the European Parliament and turning the regionalist family into a more serious electoral and organisational competitor in European political systems. The 1994 European elections demonstrated the difficulties of the regionalist family in gaining the levels of support necessary to make a greater impact in European politics. The European Free Alliance survived the demise of the Rainbow Group in 1994 and must pin its hopes on future regionalist electoral success in the 1999 European elections. In the meantime the European Free Alliance must continue to do the types of things it has always done in order to survive and grow: look for new members, help existing members to gain electoral success and produce common policies to guide the organisation.

Notes

1 Report of the conference of the European Free Alliance, 8–10 January 1981.
2 The EFA's basic principles called for equal status for the nations and regions of Europe; respect for linguistic and cultural difference and decentralized political institutions; the strengthening of EU regional policy; the development of a nuclear-free Europe; and increased aid from Europe to the Third World. Principles outlined at a meeting of the European Free Alliance, 6 April 1984.
3 The list comprised regionalist parties from Alsace, Brittany, Corsica and Occitania and polled reasonably well in Alsace, Brittany and Corsica in the 1989 European elections.
4 General assembly of the European Free Alliance, Eupen, 22–23 April 1983.
5 Constitution of the European Free Alliance, Brussels, 1991.
6 Statutes of the European Free Alliance-Democratic Party of the Peoples of Europe, Brussels, 1995.
7 General assembly of the European Free Alliance, Brussels, 4–5 May 1992.
8 The EFA and the VU compiled and distributed a report on the differences between democratic regionalism and extreme-right nationalist parties in 1992, comparing the Rainbow Group with the far-right group in the European Parliament.

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13

CONCLUSION

A comparative analysis of the electoral, office and policy success of ethnoregionalist parties

Lieven De Winter

In this concluding comparative chapter I will try to answer some of the questions launched in the introductory chapters of Huri Türsan and Ferdinand Müller-Rommel. We will basically draw our conclusions from the cases included in the book. Data on (some aspects of) other ethnoregionalist parties not covered in the book will be included where they are available.[1]

Either of two strategies could be followed in the comparative analysis of the ethnoregionalist party family. We could compare the cases belonging to our type among each other, and try to find similarities. We could also compare each ethnoregionalist party with its main competitors within its region, and establish the differences between this type of party and other party families within the same regional polity. If organisation, unconventional political action, leadership style or lack of factionalism are important factors in explaining the success of ethnoregionalist parties, this can be true only if ethnoregionalist parties have a comparative advantage over other parties with regard to the hypothetical determinants of party success.

The latter, more ambitious approach would give us a definite answer on the particularity of the ethnoregionalist party family *vis-à-vis* its competitors, not only in ideology, but also in terms of internal organisation, political action, support and consolidation. Unfortunately, this is not possible, as it would require the book's contributors to have studied all relevant parties in their particular region.[2] Still, on several occasions in this chapter, especially with regard to internal features, I do try to pinpoint the specificity of ethnoregionalist parties, as compared to their main competitors.

The identity as regards programme of ethnoregionalist parties

Main characteristics

The defining characteristic of ethnoregionalist parties' programmes is undoubtedly their demand for political reorganisation of the existing national power structure, for some kind of 'self-government'. In fact, the centrality of this demand

distinguishes this type of party from other party 'families'. Yet the type of self-government sought varies considerably from one ethnoregionalist party to another. In order to clarify this 'self-government' dimension, I propose a classification based on the radicalism of the demands made for self-government. Table 13.1 presents this classification, in ascending order of radicalism.

- Protectionist parties argue that the segment of the population they represent is of a unique character. Thus they demand from the 'centre' that measures be taken that can guarantee the preservation and development of this cultural identity, within the framework of the existing state. Claims usually include recognition of the regional language as the official language of the region, although some parties accept a bilingual status for the region. They all demand measures to stop or even reverse social discrimination based on linguistic grounds, as for instance in the form of quotas for members of minorities to be employed in state offices. Of the parties considered, the FDF before the 1970s, the *Lega, dei Ticinesi* (Knüsel and Hottinger 1994) and the *Svenska Folkpartiet* (SFP, Swedish People's Party; Arter 1994) belong to this category.
- Autonomist parties accept power-sharing between the existing central government and their region, provided that theirs is treated differently from other territorial entities within the state. Hence these parties are not federalist in the sense that they demand greater autonomy purely for their own region. Under an autonomy arrangement, certain competences are left to the national state, including foreign relations, defence and monetary policy. To this category belong the SVP, several of the Corsican nationalist parties, the *Union Valdôtaine*, the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* before 1979 (Petrosino 1992), and to some extent the CDC and the PNV The latter two parties do not explicitly exclude independence as an option in the future, but currently aim at maximising the autonomy of their region.
- National-federalist parties want to acquire a degree of self-government through the reorganisation of the unitary state into a federal state. This demand is more radical than the one for autonomy in the sense that power is devolved to all regions in the country. Exemplary cases were the three Belgian ethnoregionalist parties until the end of the 1980s and the *Lega. Nord* before 1995.

All the above types of parties demand not independence, but only more self-government. In between the group of independentist and non-separatist parties, we find a blurred category of the European federalist parties, which demand autonomy or independence for their region. However, their demands are situated within the framework of a federal 'Europe of the regions', with future nation-states based on regions, rather than on existing states, which they expect to wither away. This is also the official position of the European Free Alliance. Many of the larger ethnoregionalist parties in the European Union appear to belong to this category.[3]

Table 13.1 Radicalism of demands for self-government of main post-war ethnoregionalist parties in Western Europe

Party	Belgium			UK		Italy		Spain				France
	VU	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*Corsica*
Self-government												
protectionist		<70										
autonomists					×		×	×		×		UPC, ARC, MPA, MCA
federalists	<90s	>70s	×			<95						
independentists	90s			×		>95			×		×	CCN, CN
Future Europe												
Intergovernmental Europe, region = state				×								
Intergovernmental 'Europe of regions'							×	×				
Fed. Europe of regions + states		×			×							
Fed. Europe of regions only	×		×							×	×	
Fed. Europe of nation-states; region = state						×			×			
Affiliation in EP												
1989–94	EFA	ELDR	n.a.	EFA	EFA	EFA	EPP	ELDR	EFA	EPP	EFA	EFA
1997	EFA	ELDR	n.a.	EFA	EFA	ind.[a]	EPP	ELDR	EFA	EPP	EFA	EFA[b]

Notes: Numbers in the columns are years: '<90s' means 'prior to the 1990s', etc. EP=European Parliament; ELDR=European Liberal, Democrat and Reformist Group; EPP=European Peoples Party

[a] Belonged to the ELDR in the period 1994–96. It has left this group and applied for reintegration into the EFA, which is hesitant about this. In the meantime, the group's MEPs are classified as 'independent' or 'unattached'

[b] Of all the Corsican nationalist movements, only the *Unione di u Populu Corsu* belongs to the EFA. See Figure 11.1 for an explanation of the various Corsican abbreviations.

The different views of ethnoregionalist parties on the issue of Europe are presented in Table 13.1. However, the lip service paid to Europe covers and also hides quite divergent options, allowing several parties to remain ambiguous about separatism.

Among the advocates of Europe of the regions, some (like the SNP) see their region as an independent state that will keep its sovereignty within an intergovernmental Europe. Hence, they are not at all federalist. Others do opt for an integral federal model, among which some (like the FDF) do not exclude the possibility that the level of their national state will keep some relevance, as an intermediary level between the main levels of decision-making, e.g. Brussels and the regions. Still others find this intermediary level superfluous (ERC, VU, LN). In addition, a 'Europe of the regions' is not incompatible with the autonomist strategy or the separatist one. Also, at the moment, there exists neither any institutional arrangement of devolution of EU competences to the regions in Europe, nor the political will in a majority of the fifteen EU member states for such an arrangement ever to come about. Given the variety of visions on the future of Europe, and the highly hypothetical character of an institutional evolution towards a federal Europe with a politically relevant regional level, it is preferable not to speculate on this category. We therefore reallocate the parties that are in favour of a 'Europe of the regions' to the other categories, on the basis of their attitude towards the national state.

The last two categories seek separation of the region from the existing state. One can distinguish between two types:

- independentist parties aim at the full political independence of their region. Some do so within the framework of a federal 'Europe of the regions' (VU, LN, ERC, EA, PSd'A after 1979), while others reject a federal Europe or submission to any other type of supranational authority. Yet they are not necessarily hostile to an intergovernmental Europe (SNP). A small number of these parties are prepared to use violence and terrorism to achieve this separation (*Herri Batasuna* and some Corsican parties linked with clandestine movements).
- Irredentist parties not only aim at breaking away from the state to which they belong, but also favour annexation of their region to another nation-state with a similar cultural identity. This strategy is open only to minorities living in frontier areas with historical links to a bordering state, and is more likely to occur if the bordering 'motherland' makes irredentist claims. Irredentist strategies are more likely to be pursued in periods of international turmoil than during a stable, frozen configuration of the international system. The Catholic parties in Northern Ireland (*Sinn Féin* and SDLP) are the main examples of this type. The South Tyrolean and the Valdôtaine ethnoregionalist movements for a short period toyed with the idea of rejoining the Austrian and the French homeland respectively. Likewise, some of the predecessors of the VU, between the First and Second World Wars, sought the construction of a greater Netherlands.

Table 13.1 also shows that it is impossible to place any of the parties considered here in one of these categories on a fixed, permanent basis: party positions often moved over time between these categories, and moderate and radical objectives sometimes managed to 'cohabit'. For tactical reasons more moderate claims may sometimes seem to dominate the agenda of these parties, but once these moderate objectives are reached, often more radical (and probably more genuine) demands surface. Most ethnoregionalist movements with a strong linguistic character started as cultural-protectionist movements, evolved into autonomist or federalist movements, and in the 1980s, owing to the progress made with regard to European integration, made appeal to the idea of a federal 'Europe of the regions', often as a way of avoiding declaring themselves openly separatist.

Secondary characteristics

Although the predominance of the demands for some kind of self-government constitute the defining characteristic of the ideological identity of ethnoregionalist parties, i.e. that which differentiates them from other party families, their electoral success and expanding constituencies forced them to address a wider range of policy issues. Hence the question arises as to whether they also display distinct features on other ideological dimensions.

The first dimension to consider is obviously the left-right dimension. If we restrict this dimension to the socio-economic left-right issues (leaving aside foreign policy and defence issues), we find a rather heterogeneous picture (see Table 13.2).[4] In addition, some ethnoregionalist parties, especially the VU, have shifted position over time. Half of the parties considered are situated at the left and centre-left.[5] With exceptions, the left or centre-left parties tend to be more independentist (except the RW, the VU in the 1950s and 1960s, PC), while the centre-right or right parties are not independentist or irredentist (except the LN). This link can also be explained by different experiences of the left and right concerning participation in power at the regional and national level. All the right-wing parties have had this experience, while most of the left have not (Table 13.11, p. 236). This participation may make parties less radical, as they are responsible for monitoring the relations with and transfer of power from the centre, and may therefore adopt a pragmatic, incremental style rather than a confrontational and ideological one. The non-governmental parties of the left do not have these constraints and can voice radical demands with more ease.

The diversity of policy stands of ethnoregionalist parties on this central dimension is also reflected in the membership of parties at the European level. A large majority are or have been members of the European Free Alliance, the organisation of ethnoregionalist parties within the European Parliament (see Table 13.1). However, some of the main ethnoregionalist parties are not EFA members and they have sought inclusion in one of the major groups of the right or centre: the Catholic SVP and PNV in the European Peoples Party; and the FDF, SFP, CDC and LN (between 1994 and 1996) in the European Liberal, Democrat and Reformist Group.

Table 13.2 Other ideological features of ethnoregionalist parties

Party	*VU*	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*Cors.*
Left–right												
Extreme left												ANC
Left	>90		>76		>82				×			
Centre-left	70s		<76	>80	62–82						×	
Centre	80s			<80								UPC
Centre-right	60s	×			<62	×		×		×		MPA
Right	50s						×					CNC
New politics												
Pacifism	a	c	c	a	a	e	f	e	c	c	a	c
Anti-nuclear energy	c	c	c/d	a	a	e	f	e	c	c	c	a
Ecology	a	a	c	a	a	d	a	c	c	c	c	a
Participationism	a	a	a	a	a	c	f	e	c	f	f	a
Third World concerns	c	c	f	a	e	b	f	c	c	f	f	f
Decentralisation	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	c	c	a
Feminism	f	c	a	a	a	e	f	c	c	c	c	f
Anti-modernist issues												
Integrat. migrants	c	c;d	a	c	a	b	b	d	d	f	f	d
Law and order	d	c	f	d	f	a	e	c	d	e	e	a
Abortion	d	c	e	c	f	d	b	c	c	d	c	b

Notes: Cors.=Corsica
a, 'has politicised or stressed the issue and taken a positive position'
b, 'has politicised or stressed the issue and taken a negative position'
c, 'takes a positive position but the issue is peripheral in the party programme'
d, 'takes a negative position but the issue is peripheral in the party programme'
e, 'no attention is paid to this issue but other (national) parties in the region do give it their attention'
f, 'the issue is irrelevant to all parties in the region'
/, 'a large faction is pro, another large faction is against'
; means that when a party changed position over time, the character before the ';' indicates the first position it adopted, the character after the ';' the current position

A third conflict dimension salient in most countries we have dealt with concerns post-materialist or 'new politics' issues. Several ethnoregionalist parties developed a clear profile on this dimension, often before the Greens became the dominant force, and managed to capitalise on it in electoral terms. Table 13.2 presents the position of ethnoregionalist parties on some new politics issues, indicating that a majority of ethnoregionalist parties adopted positive attitudes towards political and administrative decentralisation (which is a step to self-government),

participation, ecology, pacifism, feminism, and opposition to nuclear energy, and some of these parties picked them up as a major issue of their programme. Only Third World concerns were less politicised. This may be explained by the fact some of these parties consider their region to be colonised by a centre (cf. Hechter's (1975) theory of internal colonialism), and their anti-colonial struggle does not reach beyond their national framework. The parties with the strongest new politics profile are the SNP and PC, followed by the VU, FDF and RW, while those with the weakest profile are the LN followed by the SVP and PNV The link with the left-right divide is clear but not perfect. Apart from the FDF, only left or centre-left ethnoregionalist parties have strongly politicised these issues, while the most lukewarm parties on these issues are those of the right or centre-right.

A fourth dimension refers to 'anti-modernist' issues stemming from the 'silent counterrevolution' (Ignazi 1992), i.e. the emergence of a right-wing neopopulism, a non-materialist reaction against the agenda of 'new politics'.[6] As far as the anti-modernist issue dimension is concerned, most ethnoregionalist parties do hold and voice hostile feelings towards people who live in their region but who identify with other regions or with the state centre and are not willing to integrate into the regional culture. The policy measures proposed by ethnoregionalist parties towards these 'aliens' vary from forced unilingualism in public life, discrimination on the job and housing market, peaceful coexistence, to positive and active integration of 'aliens'.

Yet, with regard to the position of immigrants from non-EC countries, a theme central to the neopopulist right, the picture is mixed. Although most ethnoregionalist parties call for a stop to immigration, generally they have not been willing to go as far as the latter political family. Only the LN and the SVP have strongly politicised this issue, not only against the immigration of foreigners, but also against that of southern Italians. The ethnoregionalist parties in Belgium and Britain adopted mildly positive attitudes towards integration. Law-and-order questions do not seem to be of much interest and a common attitude is absent. As far as issues related to traditional family values are concerned, only the SVP has strongly opposed abortion. But other ethnoregionalist parties of Catholic inspiration (because they recruit in a predominantly Catholic region) are less vehemently opposed to abortion than the Christian Democratic parties in their respective countries.

Finally, ethnoregionalist parties cannot avoid taking a stand on European integration. European integration represents a process of centralisation of decision-making with regard to socio-economic matters (and in the future probably also with regard to foreign policy and defence), a process most likely to increase the gap between regional populations and the main decision-making centres. Initially, several ethnoregionalist parties were against European integration. More recently, European integration has boosted the hopes of most ethnoregionalist parties rather than scaring them. All became supporters of European integration, although, as we have seen, differences exist as to the model of this more integrated Europe.

Two factors can explain this generally favourable attitude to Europe, which sometimes contrasts with the attitudes of the 'state-wide parties'. First, Europe has

invested heavily in regional policies through which poorer regions are given substantial economic support, a support sometimes denied by their own state. Second, most ethnoregionalist actors believe that the framework of a politically and economically united Europe will permit their region to achieve greater autonomy or even full independence and yet still prosper economically and remain integrated in the international political community. In this conception, European integration weakens the national state 'from above', as many competences pass to 'Brussels'.

To conclude, the ethnoregionalist parties we have studied do cluster around some variables with respect to their programmes: the parties situated to the left are also those that embrace 'new politics' issues most, and also tend to be most independentist. The right or centre-right parties are less independentist and embrace new politics issues less firmly and sometimes engage in politicising anti-modernist issues.

Patterns of electoral success

Some remarks concerning methodology

Before we examine the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties, some methodological problems with regard to the type of elections and the level of measurement and the time period covered need to be clarified. At first glance, the electoral scores of ethnoregionalist parties in Western Europe are not impressive. The overview of the success of small parties in Western Europe during the period 1947–87 reveals that the share of ethnoregionalist parties in the overall vote (general elections at the national level) equals 1.3 per cent (Mair 1991). On average, per election in all West European countries under consideration during that period, we find an ethnoregionalist party participating only in about one out of three elections.

Yet this overall figure does not present the real picture of the electoral importance of ethnoregionalist parties. First, ethnoregionalist parties were successful in some countries in the period considered by Mair. Furthermore, ethnoregionalist parties usually do not intend to capture votes across the entire electorate of a state, but try to maximise their electoral support in the region or from ethnic groups on which they focus. Therefore, the success of a nationalist party should be measured not in terms of the proportion of the national vote, but only in terms of the proportion of the targeted electorate, the votes of the region they claim to represent. This type of measurement offers a more precise appreciation of the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties.[7]

Second, there is the problem of the type of elections that should be analysed in order best to grasp the electoral strength of this type of parties. Most major ethnoregionalist parties participate in general elections, in elections for the European Parliament, and in regional, subregional (provincial) and communal elections. As the main policy objective of ethnoregionalist parties is the reorganisation of the national power structure towards an increase in the degree of self-government, and for this reorganisation only legislative bodies at the national

level are competent, ethnoregionalist parties tend to focus on increasing their political weight at the level of the national parliament, rather than at the substate levels of political representation.[8] As European elections in most countries serve as second-order elections (Marsh and Franklin 1996:11–15), the scores of ethnoregionalist parties sometimes overrate their actual impact on the national political system. Therefore, we should focus primarily on their electoral performance at the level of national parliamentary elections.[9]

Finally, the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties should be presented in a dynamic perspective. Like nationalist movements, nationalist parties often follow cyclical patterns, with a life span covering the stage of initial appearance, a peak of success, decline and disappearance, and re-emergence and the beginning of a new life span or cycle of nationalist politics (Table 13.3).[10] Hence, in some countries, nationalist parties can–at given moments in time–be as politically important as the traditional parties, while in other periods, they are not very relevant to the party system. Hence the overall picture of modest or slight importance often hides dramatic peaks of nationalist party success in a particular period. To recapitulate, within the framework of this concluding chapter, we will focus on the electoral performance of ethnoregionalist parties in the post-war period, during general (parliamentary) elections, measured at the level of the regional target electorate.

Patterns of electoral success

Before we look at the electoral performance of the main ethnoregionalist parties in Western Europe, it should be underlined that most European regions lack an ethnoregionalist party. Of the 118 regions in Europe analysed by Hearl, Budge and Peterson (1996:175), only thirty-three of them have specifically ethnoregionalist parties. In fourteen of these regions, the ethnoregionalist vote is divided over several parties, while in the other nineteen a single ethnoregionalist party exists.

On the basis of the empirical patterns, we can distinguish between four levels of electoral success (Table 13.3), measured in terms of the best average score obtained in three consecutive elections:

- hegemonic parties that manage to win an absolute majority of the votes in their region. Only the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* and the *Union Valdôtaine* in the Val d'Aoste region managed to gain nearly as many votes as there are respectively German- and French-speaking voters in their region.[11] The Swedish People's Party also manages to attract nearly as many voters as Swedish-speakers in Finland (Arter 1994). All these parties represent territories with strongly concentrated groups whose language and culture are strongly minoritarian (less than 10 per cent) within the state to which their region belongs. Their electoral score is also quite stable over time.
- large parties that represent a substantial minority (25 to 50 per cent) of the electorate. These include the FDF, the PNV and CiU. Only the latter

Table 13.3 Electoral performance of ethnoregionalist parties

Party	*VU*	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC CiU*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*Cors.*
Electoral history												
Creation	1954	1964	1965	1934	1927	1983[a]	1945	1974	1931	1895	1986	1967
First participation	1958	1965	1965	1935	1929	1983	1948	1977	1931	1907	1989	1982
First seat	1958	1965	1965	1945	1966	1983	1948	1977	1931	1915	1989	—
Electoral score												
Average score in:												
1950s	3.4	n.a.[b]	n.a.	0.5	2.6	n.a.[c]	60.1	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1960s	11.7	14.3	6.9	3.7	4.6	n.a.	57.6	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
1970s	16.3	34.9	14.3	20.3	10.3	n.a.	60.5	16.6	4.4	28.5	n.a.	n.a.
1980s	14.0	14.8	3.1	12.9	7.6	4.1	59.0	29.1	3.1	26.9	11.3	5.4
1990–7	8.6	11.9	n.a.	21.8	9.5	23.5	44.1	30.7	4.7	25.3	9.0	13.4
Last year incl.	1995	1995	1985	1997	1997	1996	1996	1996	1996	1996	1996	1997
Peak score:												
%	19.4	35.4	20.9	30.4	11.5	24.8	62.9	32.7	5.1	31.2	11.3	20.8
year	1971	1974	1971	1974	1970	1996	1979	1989	1993	1982	1989	1993
Best average three consecutive elections:												
%	17.9	34.9	16.4	23.2	11.0	23.5	61.0	32.2	4.2	29.4	9.8	8.6
period	1971–7	1971–8	1968–74	1974–9	1970–4	1992–6	1948–58	1986–93	1977–82	1977–82	1989–96	1988–97
Rel. majority	No	1970s	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No

Notes: Cors.=Corsica

[a]Data refer to the *Lega Veneta*, which later merged with the large Lega Lombarda

[b]Data cover FDF results in the Brussels cantons of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde constituency. The peak score of 1974 (39.6 per cent) has not been taken into consideration, nor the 1995 results, as in those elections the FDF formed an electoral alliance with the Brussels liberals.

[c]Data calculated for the Lombard region only. The calculation of the *Lega's* strength is particularly difficult given that the movement has spread from Lombardy to the provinces of central Italy, with the introduction of new constituencies for the 1994 election.

has failed to win a relative majority of the region's votes. Among these large parties, only the FDF has declined to 'small-party' status.

- medium-sized parties that represent between 15 and 25 per cent of the votes, including the VU and RW, the SNP, the *Lega Nord* and HB. None of these parties are or have previously been the most important party in their region.[12] The electoral performances of this group are rather unstable. The VU and RW (but also the FDF) have followed the classical cyclical pattern of ethnic mobilisation: a period of little political success and division of the political representation of the ethnoregionalist movement; the sudden breakthrough of a single party to high levels of support; a period of consolidation; followed by a gradual decline into oblivion.
- small parties that represent only a small minority (less than 15 per cent) of the voters in their region. They include PC, the ERC, EA, EE, PSd'A, UPC and others that are electorally so insignificant that they are not included in our analysis. The ERC, EA and EE have to compete for the ethnoregionalist vote with a large centre-right catch-all party in their region, which also dominates the regional government (the PNV and CDC). All the small parties mentioned above are also left-of-centre parties that compete for the left-wing vote with a major social democratic party (and sometimes an (ex-)communist party as well). Hence, their niche in party competition space is structurally restricted, as they are competing on two fronts with two larger parties. Still, apart from the EE,[13] they seem to have stabilised their hold over their niche in the electorate. On the centre-periphery dimension, their niche is the one of the peaceful independentists, while on the left-right divide, they present themselves as new left, or at least more radical or modernist than the social democrats.

Determinants of electoral success

With regard to the explanation of the emergence of these parties and their success (in terms of votes, offices and policies), a wide variety of conceptual and theoretical frameworks can be found in the literature.[14] Starting from the inventory made by Ferdinand Müller-Rommel in this book about the theoretically relevant determinants of the success of old and new ethnoregionalist parties, our empirical verification of the relevance of these determinants will focus, first, on the factors that are related to the environment in which ethnoregionalist parties operate, i.e. their political opportunity structures, and, second, on the determinants related to ethnoregionalist parties as actors themselves, i.e. their internal resources and constraints.

External determinants

Relative strength of identities

As far as the political opportunity structure is concerned, given the fact that we defined ethnoregionalist parties as the political representatives of ethnic and/or

Table 13.4 Features of regions with relevant ethnoregionalist party mobilisation

	Fland.	*Brus.*	*Wall.*	*Scot.*	*Wales*	*N. Italy*	*Tyrol*	*Catal.*	*Basq.*	*Cors.*
Identity region:	R = N	R < N	R < N	R > N	R > N	R < N	R > N	R > N	R > N	R > N
regional (%)	41	24	23	64	41			36	41	
state (%)	43	65	69	8	22			44	20	
both (%)				24	35			18	38	
Year of survey	1992	1992	1992	1995	1995	—	—	1992	1992	1995[a]
Regional language:										
prevalent (+50%)	×	×	×				×	×		×
widely spoken (25–50%)					>1961				×	
restricted (5–25%)				×	<1961					
none or defunct (0–5%)						×				
Higher socio-economic status	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Net receiver	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Sources: Belgium: De Winter and Frognier (1997); Scotland and Wales: *MORI* (1995, unpublished data); Corsica: OIP (1995, unpublished data)
Notes: R=regional; N=national. >1961 means 'since 1961'; <1961 means 'before 1961'.
[a]The 1995 survey of the *Observatoire Interregional de Politique* measured feelings of identity through two separate questions, namely on the strength of the feelings of belonging to Corsica and France respectively. The average identification with the former was much stronger than with the latter.

regionally concentrated territorial groups which claim that they constitute a specific social category with a specific and unique common identity, we will first look at the objective and subjective features of this common identity (Table 13.4), the strength of its non-party expressions (in terms of nationalist social movements), and its relative importance *vis-à-vis* other cleavages.

Hearl, Budge and Peterson (1996:179–180) tested the impact of objective features of separate regional entities on the overall level of voting for ethnoregionalist parties in those entities in the period 1979–93. From among a large number of independent variables included in their multiple regression analysis (for instance, size of region, distance to centre, population, sectorial unemployment, regional GDP, degree of political-judicial-administrative autonomy), only the presence of a prevalent or widely spoken regional language, and to a much lesser extent the degree of overall unemployment and of industrial employment, emerged as significant determinants of ethnoregionalist voting.[15] The authors conclude that 'minority nationalism, where it exists, seems to owe more to its cultural than to its material base'.

Hence, contrary to the predictions of economic modernisation and political development theories (for an overview see Newman 1994:30–32), there is no socio-economic structural necessity driving the ethnoregionalist vote in Europe, but only the prevalence of a particular regional culture. This determinant does offer a sufficient explanation for the very high electoral score of the party of the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland, of the French-speakers in Val d'Aoste and of the German-speakers in South Tyrol in Italy, as they all represent a language group that is largely majoritarian within the region, but strictly minoritarian in the larger state. However, in several regions, such as the three Belgian regions, Catalonia and Corsica, the specific language is also quite predominant (spoken by more than 50 per cent of the population), while the scores of these ethnoregionalist forces are quite varied. At the other extreme is the success of the *Lega Nord* despite the lack of a distinct regional language in the north of Italy.

The equation between language and culture may, however, be too crude a simplification. A better indicator of the degree of cultural distinctiveness of the inhabitants of a particular region is their feeling of belonging,[16] rather than just the degree of pervasiveness of the regional language. Survey data indicate that in some regions, inhabitants define themselves primarily as a member of the region, rather than of the state to which their region belongs. This is the case in the Basque Country, Catalonia, Flanders, Scotland, Wales and South Tyrol. On the other hand, a majority of the Walloons, the inhabitants of northern Italy and the Swedes in Finland identify first with the state level. Therefore, there does not seem to be a straight link between the strength of ethnoregionalist parties and a high identification with the region.

Still, the relevance of the indicator of the degree of common identity of the inhabitants of a region is amply demonstrated by survey analyses for the Spanish, Belgian, Scottish and Welsh cases, revealing a strong correlation between voting for an ethnoregionalist party and substate feelings of identity.[17] In regions with

such high levels of regional identification, there is a general positive climate towards parties that most strongly express that substate identity. Therefore, in periods of dealignment, it is not surprising that floating voters are attracted by these parties, rather than by other newcomers or challengers to the vote of traditional parties.

Another source of identity might be the region's relative socio-economic status and degree and direction of financial transfers between the region and the rest of the country.[18] The regions whose socio-economic status is superior to that of the rest of the country also have the strongest ethnoregional voting (Flanders, Brussels, northern Italy, South Tyrol, Catalonia and the Basque Country). All these regions, except South Tyrol, are also net payers to the state, in the sense that they contribute more to state revenues than they receive in terms of public expenditures. Hence, their goal of more autonomy is rational in fiscal and economic terms, as well as cultural terms. In most of these regions, there is a widespread feeling, most strongly voiced by ethnoregionalist parties, that the region is contributing too much to the central state which will waste this revenue for redistribution to poorer, unindustrious regions and for the maintenance of a parasitic central state apparatus in the capital. The case of the *Lega* shows most dramatically that this feeling can also contribute to the creation of a strong, but non-ethnic, feeling of regional identity.

The political impact of the common 'ethnoregionalist' identity is determined by the strength of other identities. Generally, there is much greater potential for the ethnoregionalist vote in a region than is captured by an ethnoregionalist party, if that potential is measured in terms of a sense of ethnoregionalist identity. As we saw above, we find that majorities of Scots, Welsh people and Flemings identify with their respective regions, but that their respective ethnoregionalist parties on average did not manage to gain the support of more than one out of five voters. As voters have not only ethnoregionalist, but also class or religious allegiances, ethnoregionalist identity cannot completely determine voting choices. Therefore, the political or electoral expression of ethnoregionalism will depend not on the degree of ethnoregionalist feelings only, but also on the saliency of other cleavages, and the attention that parties that focus on the traditional cleavages (e.g. left–right) are willing to pay to ethnoregionalist issues.

In fact, as far as the saliency of class identities is concerned, the success of ethnoregionalist parties in Belgium and Great Britain at the end of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s came before the economic crises placed class conflict back on top of the political agenda. The economic boom of the 'Golden Sixties' reduced tensions between workers and those in other social categories. In addition, the Second Vatican Council (1963) reduced tensions between Catholics and other believers, and between believers and non-believers. Hence the decreasing pertinence of the two main cleavages (religion and class) in the Belgian polity created space on the political agenda for issues stemming from the linguistic/regional cleavage. On the other hand, the positions of the electorally most successful parties (SFP, UV and SVP) do not seem to have been boosted by these 'cultural shifts', most likely owing to their catch-all and morally conservative

nature. The rather late success of the Spanish ethnoregionalist parties is related to the fact that democracy was consolidated only in the 1980s, and therefore the issue of democratisation prevailed over ethnoregionalist demands, at least until democratic consolidation was assured. The emergence of the *Lega* coincides with the eroding of the Cold War,[19] which rendered obsolete the main cleavage in Italian politics, that between the 'anti-system' Communist and the 'democratic' governmental parties. In addition, secularisation (marked by the legalisation of abortion and divorce) also rendered the cleavage between Catholic and secular forces less stringent.

In periods of gradual or rapid loss of relevance of old cleavages and of relative calm on the international scene, the political and social identity of individuals is less predetermined by their structural position in terms of class or religion. This weakening of traditional identities allows for the introduction of other sources of identity. Ethnoregionalist parties were more successful in introducing the new cultural and regional sources of identity because their offer referred to dormant or lower-order identities. These are the product of pre-modern cleavages: the opposition of local and regional cultures against the introduction of a homogeneous national culture defined by the centre, which is associated with a larger movement towards homogenisation (in economic, financial, judicial, military, diplomatic terms) linked to the emergence of the nation-state. Hence ethnoregionalist parties appeal to identities which are often older than class identities. Yet although religious identities are often even older, religious identity was very homogeneous and therefore not menaced by other religious identities in the countries we have dealt with. Hence this religious identity was less hostile towards the emergence of an ethnoregional identity.

Neither did ethnoregionalist parties suffer much from the identities offered by other newcomers on the unfreezing party systems (the Greens and the extreme right). The latters' identities refer to new challenges (the environment, immigration) which were not perceived until the 1970s. Hence in the 1960s and early 1970s, the years of the first post-war boom of most ethnoregionalist parties in Western Europe, these other newcomers simply could not fill the identity vacuum that was created by the declining relevance of class and religious cleavages. In addition, to some extent, ethnoregionalist parties did already cover part of the 'ecologist' territory, as many of them were the first to politicise environmental and other 'new politics' issues.

Yet the success of the *Lega Nord* at the end of the 1980s indicates that ethnoregionalist parties are not limited to capitalising on post-materialist issues, but can also build on a general dissatisfaction with the existing political establishment, together with issues which are more related to the silent counter-revolution, such as immigration, excessive state intervention, increasing financial costs of the welfare state for small and medium-sized business and independent workers, combined with a perception of social profiteering by some groups. As this feeling is most strongly pronounced in the north, this 'anti-establishment' protest was easily combinable with ethnoregionalist demands. Here,

ethnoregionalist demands seem to serve only as an intermediate goal through which to arrive at a more profound cause, i.e. a different conception of the state, the economy and society.

A party's electoral performance is a function of its perceived attractiveness relative to the perceived attractiveness of its rivals, i.e. the traditional parties and other newcomers. A party's electoral performance is a function of the capacity of other parties to adapt to what it does. Therefore, we should also take into consideration the capacity of adaptation—or lack of it—of the rivals of ethnoregionalist parties to these contenders.

First, as far as the absence of other protest parties is concerned, the electoral breakthrough and peak of the federalist parties in Belgium occurred in a period when no other significant protest parties competed for the votes of those who were discontented with Belgian partitocracy. Their decline corresponds to the emergence of the arrival of the Greens and extreme-right parties. Likewise, in the UK, the breakthrough of ethnoregionalist parties took place before the revival of the Liberal Democratic 'third party' or the arrival of the Greens as alternatives against the duopoly of Conservatives and Labour.

Second, the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties in the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s is clearly related to the temporary incapacity of the traditional parties to respond effectively to regionalist and linguistic demands. This was clearly the case in Belgium[20] and Great Britain. Only when in Belgium, Spain and Great Britain the regional branches of the traditional governmental parties started to support the demands for more autonomy (and sometimes even created an autonomous party branch in the 'menaced' regions) was the transfer of votes to the ethnoregionalist parties stopped.

Electoral system

Hauss and Rayside (1978) examined the implications of institutional characteristics such as the electoral system. It could be argued that proportional representation should boost the ethnoregionalist vote, as it does for any other small party. Harmel and Robertson (1985:516) in fact did demonstrate that out of twelve social, political and structural variables of the success of new parties, only the nature of the electoral system exerts an impact. Therefore, a PR system with low thresholds is likely to have facilitated the breakthrough and rapid expansion of parliamentary representation of ethnoregionalist parties in Italy, Belgium and Spain. In majoritarian systems voters with sympathies for an ethnoregionalist party may refrain from voting for such a party if that party does not seem to stand a chance of winning any seat. In PR systems with a sufficiently large number of seats per constituency, the probability of vote-wasting is less high. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the first success of the SNP in terms of seats gained at a general election occurred only in 1970, about thirty-five years after the creation of the party!

Still, in comparison with other newcomers, ethnoregionalist parties suffer less in a majoritarian system given the fact that their support is by definition regionally

concentrated. Therefore, their chances of winning seats in some of their region's constituencies are more realistic, and vote-wasting is less of a problem.[21] Furthermore, the electoral scores of the ethnoregionalist parties operating in PR systems and those using use a 'first past the post' system (Great Britain, and Italy since 1994) do not differ systematically. Hence, we can conclude that the impact of the electoral system on the electoral score of ethnoregionalist parties is quite weak. In Great Britain, in spite of the fact that the SNP and the *Plaid Cymru* usually win only a few parliamentary seats, large numbers of voters continue to vote for their candidates, even in absolutely hopeless constituencies. And the *Lega* has not so far suffered from the shift from PR to a predominantly majoritarian system.

Demonstration and escalation effects

Contemporary Spain represents a particularly interesting deviant case as far as the relations between the ethnoregionalist vote and autonomy is concerned. Most regions do not enjoy the large degree of autonomy granted to Catalonia and the Basque country, but they too showed significant ethnoregionalist party activity at the 1996 general election, and that includes the 'centre' regions. This points to an additional environmental determinant, i.e. what Connor (1972) calls 'the demonstration effect', or the intranational or cross-national effect of ethnoregionalist demands in one region on the success on ethnoregionalist parties in other regions.

As far as intranational effects are concerned, the fact that in one or more regions substate nationalist movements and parties tend to become successful can serve as an incentive in other peripheral regions for developing ethnoregionalist sentiments, movements and eventually parties in order to defend their specific regional interests. The success of Catalan and Basque nationalism clearly stimulated the development of similar nationalist or ethnoregionalist movements elsewhere in Spain. Likewise, the development of Walloon and Brussels French-speaking movements and parties in the 1960s constituted a response to the growing success of the Flemish nationalist movement in the period between the world wars and in the 1960s.

The cross-national demonstration effect refers to the impact of the success of ethnoregionalist/nationalist movements in one state on the development and self-confidence of similar movements in other states. This is especially true if contacts between such movements are institutionalised, as is for instance the case for the European Free Alliance. Such cross-national inter-regional networks can provide weaker movements with logistical support, help in formulating their programmes, political status and prestige, and boost their morale (see Chapter 12).

Apart from demonstration effects, we can also identify escalation effects. When regions and ethnoregionalist movements are in the first instance in conflict with each other (and sometimes contest control over the same territory) rather than jointly opposing the unitary state, inter-regional conflicts, fuelled by ethnoregionalist parties, tend to escalate and move to the centre of the political agenda. This escalation in turn additionally boosts the success of all ethnoregionalist parties. For instance,

when, as a reaction to the success of Flemish demands, the Walloon and Brussels French-speaking movements also started to score well electorally in the 1960s and radicalised the demands of the French-speaking population, this Francophone radicalisation and mobilisation was evidently interpreted in Flanders as an additional menace to Flemish interests, and therefore boosted the results of the VU, considered to best defend Flemish interests.

European integration and devolution

European integration has made the calls for independence of ethnoregionalist parties more realistic. It weakens the traditional arguments against *Kleinstaaterei* (Hobsbawm 1992:31). Small states can clearly survive and prosper within this new international institutional context. To put it more strongly, small countries like the Benelux countries and Ireland would not have reached their level of prosperity if they had not been included in this European framework.

European integration weakens the national state 'from above', as many competences pass to 'Brussels'. Second, following the setting up of the Internal market, the European Union developed a large number of programmes at the regional level. At the same time, in several countries, the unitary state was weakened 'from below' through the process of federalisation (Belgium, Italy in the future?), the granting of autonomy to specific communities (Spain), and devolution (France). Hence, in relative terms, the regional level gained importance as a policy level *vis-à-vis* the unitary state. Newman (1994:41) argues that the creation of regional policies (by the national states), rather than the centralisation of policy-making, sparked the surge of ethnoregional parties in the 1960s and 1970s. Independentist parties hope that the decline of decision-making relevance of the state will facilitate its demise.

Critical events and specific issues

Finally, specific critical events and issues have facilitated the success of ethnoregionalist parties. The discovery of oil in the North Sea boosted Scottish nationalism, as it created the hope that an independent Scotland would be economically viable. Hence the SNP claims that it is Scotland's oil, and that the revenues from the oil should be spent on Scotland and not used to help keep the English economy afloat. Also, the introduction of the poll tax in Scotland, before the rest of the UK, created a nationalist outcry against exploitation by a Conservative south-east England. The action of the *Mani Pulite* judges, who accused a large section of the political personnel of the traditional governmental parties of corruption, obviously gave credibility to *Lega Nord*'s attacks on the old political establishment. The 1966–68 revolt of Flemish students against the bilingual statute of the Catholic University of Louvain and the paralysis of the other Flemish parties on this issue came as a welcome but unexpected gift to the *Volksunie*.

Internal determinants

Leadership resources

Do ethnoregionalist parties break through because of the exceptional qualities of their leadership, and if so, what are these qualities?

One of the striking characteristics of most ethnoregionalist parties is that they were led for a very long period of time by a single charismatic leader, who was often (one of the) founding father(s) of the party. This leader achieved on his own all the crucial tasks of establishing the organisation, articulating its goals and selecting its social base, and acted as the sole interpreter (and adapter) of the party doctrine. Such charismatic and multi-functional leadership seems to occur especially in the nascent period of a nationalist party or movement. This feature is most pronounced in Catalan post-Francoist nationalism, which is still dominated by its historical leader, Jordi Pujol. Likewise, in the *Lega Nord,* all important decisions are made by its charismatic founder, Umberto Bossi. The *Volksunie* was led for twenty years by one of the founding fathers, Frans Van Der Elst, who enjoyed high moral prestige and was praised for his intellectual superiority and quasi-religious devotion to the party. The *Rassemblement Wallon* was steered by a brilliant orator, Professor François Périn. *Plaid Cymru* was first led by the charismatic Lewis, and changed profoundly under the long-lasting leadership (1945–1981) of Gwynfor Evans. The SVP was led from 1957 to 1989 by Magnago, and his role was decisive in pushing consistently for greater autonomy, while the *Union Valdôtaine* was led by Caveri from 1945 until 1973! Arana, the founding father of Basque nationalism in the nineteenth century, dominated the PNV for decades. EA is led by the charismatic Carlos Garaicoetxea, one of the two dominant figures of post-Francoist moderate Basque nationalism.

Hence, at the head of ethnoregionalist parties we often find a charismatic leader, usually the founding father, who remains in office for a very long time. This type of leadership corresponds to the type labelled 'creator and preacher' by Harmel and Svasand (1993), which is most effective in the first phase of a party's development, lying between the decision to create a party and the election of the first representatives of the party to parliament. During this phase, the leader must shape and effectively communicate the party's message. As party founder, or one of the founders, he is the visible spokesman, the main preacher and diffuser of the party's message. Hence, at this stage, charisma and a high profile are crucial, as listeners should be attracted and associate the message not only with the leader, but also with the party. 'The ideal leader for phase one will combine the qualities of creator, communicator, and charisma' (Harmel and Svasand 1993:74). It seems that most ethnoregionalist parties had access to such a leadership resource.

Yet this particular type of leadership resource also creates its own problem: that of rejuvenation of the leadership at a particular moment. Usually, the traditional leaders are replaced by less charismatic leaders with different views on objectives or tactics (for instance, asking for more autonomy or independence, or forcing the

party to join government). After the 'reign' of the charismatic leader, a period of leadership instability often occurs, with a large turnover or with leaders having less authority within the party. In fact, it seems that after the demise of the charismatic historical leader, leadership is transferred to a small oligarchy, or becomes even more dispersed among different organs, layers and personalities within the party. Still, if the party by that time has developed into the second or third phases referred to by Harmel and Svasand, it can electorally survive the leadership transformation. In the second phase, organisational skills, strategic insight and consensus-building capacities (fighting emerging factionalism) are crucial. In the third phase, credibility and dependability are needed to convince other parties that the ethnoregionalist party is an acceptable and reliable partner in government.

Some leaders of ethnoregionalist parties not only performed extremely well in the first-phase role of leadership, but themselves played all three roles. In fact, the founding fathers of the RW, FDF, PC, the LN and the CDC all made their party *regierungsfähig*. Therefore, we can conclude that these ethnoregionalist parties were led by individuals capable of playing quite different leadership roles consecutively or simultaneously. Apart from the SNP and the SVP, it was under this type of leadership of a charismatic founding father that the parties obtained their best electoral results.

Although some other newcomers in the defreezing party systems of the 1970s and 1980s were also led by a charismatic founding father, ethnoregionalist parties are more receptive to this type of leadership, given their often blurred ideology: first they have to convince their public that the inhabitants of their region form a specific cultural group. Arana is most likely the most influential fabricator of ethno-regional identity, as he invented the main mythological symbols of the Basque nation (name, flag and hymn). Second, they have to argue that this group is discriminated against or menaced by the centre, and third, that they offer the only way of defending and preserving the 'people's soul' and its 'sacred homeland'. As intrinsically catch-all parties, they also have to address a message that will be equally well received in different social strata. Hence, in the face of such challenges charismatic leadership is most warranted. Such a leader can personally embody the common values and imaginary identity of the people. He (they have all been men) is seen as a 'saint' and 'martyr', who kept the party alive during the 'catacomb' years, and sometimes fought clandestinely against the 'enemy state' and was even imprisoned or forced into exile. In less extreme cases, such leaders devoted their life to the embryonic party at a moment when many considered them heretics, class traitors or loony romantics.

In terms of leadership concentration, Table 13.5 classifies the parties considered according to the typology put forward by Janda (1980:116–117). Several parties (RW, PC, LN, CDC, ERC, EA, PNV) show extreme degrees of concentration, in the sense that leadership is exercised by one (or two) individual(s) who can personally commit the party to binding courses of action. Only a few practise a more collegial model of leadership (VU, FDF, SNP, SVP). However, in comparison with their main competitors, the national parties in their region, only half of them are more

Table 13.5 Leadership characteristics of ethnoregionalist parties

	VU	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*Cors.*
Longest reign (years)	20	11	11	11	36	>1984–	32	23	10	>1977	>1986	>1967
Leadership concentration:												
coll.centr. >5 ldrs	×		>1976	×			×		1987–9			
coll.centr. 3–5 ldrs		×										×
two leaders									>1993	×		
single leader			<1976		×	×		×	1977–87		×	
Relat. leadership concentration	less	same	more	less	more	more	more	same	less	less	less	more
Leadership competition	major	major	none	minor	minor	minor	major	none	ousted	ousted	none	ousted
Factionalism – types and degree:												
strategic	5	3	5	3	5	2	1	2	5	2	1	6
ideological	5	0	2	2	6	2	3	2	1	6	1	6
issue	2	3	2	2	6	4	1	2	0	6	2	6
leadership	5	3	0	2	0	0	1	3	5	6	0	6
Electoral success:												
full splits	1978; 1992	no	1976	no	no	no[a]	1988	no	1984	1986	no	1989; 1990

Note: Cors.=Corsica, >1977 means 'since 1977'. Under 'Leadership concentration', 'coll. centr. >5 Idrs' means 'collectively centralised into the hands of more than 5 leaders', etc.

[a] In January 1995, twenty-five *Lega* MPs formed the *Lega Federalista Italiana,* and seventeen MPs formed the *Gruppo Federalista e Liberal-democratico*. However, these offshoots did not have any success at all, as they did not present lists at the 1996 general election, though some MPs have been absorbed as candidates by the centre-right coalition *Polo per la Libertà*. The *Lega* did not lose votes at the 1996 election

Key to 'Factionalism' entries (for exact definitions see Janda, 1980:119–123):

0'Concerns with strategy/ideology/issues/leadership are not subject to public debate and disagreement among party leaders'

1'Concerns with strategy/ideology/issues/leadership are a matter of public debate and disagreement among party leaders but not enough to promote factional tendencies'

2'Concerns with strategy/ideology/issues/leadership are a matter of debate and disagreement; factional tendencies are present, but factions are not clearly distinguished in the sense of labelled groupings with identifiable membership'

3'Concerns with strategy/ideology/issues/leadership have created a small faction within the party, but the faction does not have a formal organization of its own'

4'Concerns with strategy/ideology/issues/leadership have created a small faction within the party with some formal organization of its own or have provoked a split after the beginning of the period'

5'Concerns with strategy/ideology/issues/leadership have created a large faction within the party–large defined as about 25 per cent of the membership or more–but the faction does not have a formal organization of its own'

6'Concerns with strategy/ideology/issues/leadership have created a large faction within the party with some formal organization of its own or have provoked a split after the beginning of the period'

oligarchic. It is also worth noting that in half of the parties, the position of the leader was solid, in the sense that the leader was unchallenged while in office, or the challenge was only minor, given that the outcome of the challenge was sure as the challenger(s) did not stand a chance. In the other half, leadership challenges were of major importance (with the outcome unsure), and in several cases leaders were voted out of office.

Strength of the party organisation

In spite of the charismatic leader characteristics, several ethnoregionalist parties opted for the mass party model. The ratio of members to voters at the peak of each party's electoral success is presented in Table 13.6, in order for us to judge the parties' capacity to recruit activists from among their voters. The variation is extremely wide, from the SVP, where nearly one voter in two is a party member, to the SNP, with a ratio of less than 2 per cent. Yet the peaks of electoral success often do not correspond to peaks of 'encadrement'. The SNP, for instance, in the second half of the 1960s, managed to have one member per three voters, and an overall membership of 120,000, but this was before its best years at the polls. Also, parties that are in decline often see their membership ratio grow, as the members seem to be more loyal than the voters. This is the case for the VU and the FDF, which reached peaks of encadrement of 14 and 20 per cent at precisely the moments when they fared worst in the polls! Yet the relation between electoral success and membership is very weak. Among the parties with the best electoral scores (with peaks over 30 per cent), only for the SVP is encadrement high; the others succeed in recruiting only a modest degree of membership when their votes are soaring. Their scores are quite similar to those of the electorally less successful parties but with better ratios.

In comparison with their competitors, the state-wide parties in the region, most ethnoregionalist parties have a lower degree of encadrement (exceptions being the SVP and the Basque parties). Still, this still does not mean that these parties can count on a lower mass of activists in comparison with their competitors. The latter, being traditional governmental parties in clientelist countries (like Belgium, Italy and Spain), often manage to attract members by means of material incentives (through political patronage), with the result that their membership is probably ideologically less committed. Hence the incentives of purpose that characterise members of most ethnoregionalist parties give these parties a more important reservoir of political activists, loyal troops that can be deployed for conventional and unconventional political action.

Do ethnoregionalist parties allow for more direct participation of the members than do the traditional parties? Again the picture is mixed. Only in the ERC and the FDF do ordinary members elect the party president. In the RW, PC and in some SNP constituency parties, they directly choose the candidate list for general elections. In all other cases, delegates of the members or 'national' party bodies decide on the recruitment of top political personnel. Also, in only a few parties

Table 13.6 Membership features of ethnoregionalist parties

	VU	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*UPC*
Member/voter ratio	8.6	4.8	3.0	1.9	5.0	4.1	39.8	3.7	4.1	9.9	7.3	2.1
abs. in 1,000	49.4	11.6	10	12	8	140	67	5.4	8.6	31	14	0.3
peak year or period	1971–8	1974–8	1971–4	1992	—	—	1979	1993	1993	1996	1996	—
max. ratio	13.7	20.2	3.3	32.7	—	—	43	idem	idem	11.2	idem	—
year	1978	1987	1974	1968	1997	1992	1992	idem	idem	1985	idem	1979
Membership NSWP/SWP												
higher				1960s			×			×	×	×
equal	>1975	>1985		1970s	×							
lower	<1975	<1985	×	>1970s		×		×	×			
Membership participation												
sel. leader	PC	OM	NC	no	no	no	PC	PC	OM[a]	EC	NC	OM
sel. parl. cand.	CP	EC SC	OM	~CP OM	OM	EC SC	CP	PC	PC	NC	NC	yes
congress	>1993	yes	no	no	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	yes	yes
relative degree[b]	less	same	same	more	same	less	less	same	more	more	more	

Notes: 'abs. in 1,000' means absolute number in thousands. >1975 means 'since 1975', <1985 means 'before 1985'. NSWP=non-state-wide party; SWP=state-wide party EC=National Executive Committee; NC=National Conference; PC=Party of Provincial Council (in between executive and conference); OM=ordinary members; CP=constituency party (board or conference); SC=special central selection committee; ~CP= variation between constituency parties.

[a] Since 1992

[b] As compared to the traditional parties

(FDF, PC, ERC and EA) are all ordinary members allowed to participate in the party's national congress. Thus, in general, most parties seem to offer about the same opportunities for direct participation to their members. Only the PNV, EA, ERC and SNP seem to offer more than their competitors, while only in the VU (until 1993), the SVP and the *Lega* do members have less opportunity.

Most ethnoregionalist parties show a high degree of organisational centralisation inJanda's terms (1980:108–109), in the sense that there is a discernible party hierarchy that runs from a single national executive committee through subregional party and to local organisations, with a parliamentary group that is subordinated to national organs (see Table 13.7). In the FDF, PC and SVP, only the 'national' bodies are of political relevance, while only in the SNP and PNV do subregional bodies compete as power centres with the 'national' party organs. Still, organisational concentration does not seem to be a distinguishing feature, as only the FDF and the SVP are more concentrated than their state-wide competitors, while only the SNP, ERC and PNV are less concentrated.

Ethnoregionalist parties are particularly vulnerable to factionalism (Newman 1994:46–53). In Table 13.5 data are presented concerning the degree of four types of factionalism, based on the scales developed by Janda (1980:119–123). First, there is strategic and tactical factionalism concerning nationalist objectives and strategies which oppose moderate vs. extreme objectives, tribune vs. participationist strategies. This type of factional conflict often occurs after an electoral defeat, or when faced with the question of participation in government, or while supporting a legislative package for the expansion of regional powers (Newman 1994:46). The VU, RW, PC, ERC and the Corsican parties all had large factions (supported by a quarter or more of the membership) on such strategic issues. In other parties, crucial strategic questions did not lead to the formation of strategic factions.

The second type of factionalism is ideological. Since many ethnoregionalist parties pursue a catch-all strategy on the left-right (and where relevant, also on the denominational) divide, the electorate, activists and cadres of these parties are by definition socially quite heterogeneous, which often leads to the emergence of left-centre-right factions or tendencies. This type of factionalism tends to lead to severe tensions and even splits when the ethnoregionalist party is asked to support the socio-economic policies of the government in exchange for passing institutional reforms. Hence, they have to give support to and are politically accountable for policies on which their interclassist electorates are divided. In addition, electoral defeats are often abused as occasions for settling accounts between factions. Ideological left-right factions are or were prominent in the VU, the PC, the PNV and the Corsican movements.[22] Finally, questions of leadership competition and succession can also lead to factionalism. This was the case with the VU, but also the ERC, the PNV and the Corsicans.

In general, the Corsican ethnoregionalist groupings, the PNV, PC and the VU are the most factionalised parties, while the EA and SVP are the least. The Corsican parties, the VU, RW, SVP, ERC and PNV also underwent a number of successful splits (i.e. when the seceding factions managed to win at least one seat at the next

Table 13.7 Organisational concentration according to the typology of Janda (1980)

	VU	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*UPC*
Organisational centralisation	5	6	5	4	6	5	6	5	5	4	5	5

Key:
4'There are discernible national party organs that are more powerful than subregional and local organizations, but these national organs themselves constitute competing power centres rather than a single-peaked hierarchy; includes situations in which the parliamentary party organization challenges the leadership of other organs'
5'There is a discernible party hierarchy that runs from a single national council or executive committee through subregional party organs down to local organizations; parliamentary organization is subordinated to national organs'
6'There is a discernible hierarchy that has a single national council or executive committee at the top acting directly on the local organizations without interposing subregional organizations; there are only national organs'

general election(s). Although several ethnoregionalist parties suffer from different types of factionalism, there seems to be no direct link with their electoral performance.

As far as party finance is concerned, the VU, FDF, SVP and CDC manage, in comparison to their electoral importance, to mobilise more financial resources than their state-wide competitors (Table 13.9, p. 233). Only the ERC, RW, SNP and the Corsican movements are clearly 'poorer' than their competitors. The generally good fund-raising performance is rather surprising, taking into account that most of these parties have rarely participated in government, and therefore have less to offer enterprises in terms of public contracts.[23] However, given the fact that the party membership is more motivated by incentives of purpose, these members are more willing to support the vehicle of their ideology or public policy goals than is the case for parties whose membership draws more on material incentives.

Political action and media coverage

The specificity of ethnoregionalist parties with regard to political action is an area that needs to be explored systematically. Seiler (1982) identifies three types of political action strategies, which are related to the radicalism of the means autonomist movements and parties are willing to use:

1 external to the system (or anti-system) strategy: strategy adopted by ethnoregionalist parties that are excluded from the political system, and that are also not willing to adhere to the democratic (non-violent) rules of the game. As we excluded *Sinn Féin* and *Herri Batasuna* from our analysis, this strategy will not be considered.
2 tribune strategy: characterises parties that do adhere to the democratic rules of the game, but do not want to participate in government. They prefer to exert pressure on policies only from opposition.
3 governmental strategy: when parties want to realise their objectives by participating in government. This usually means taking part in a coalition government, and therefore includes the acceptance of policy compromises. The frequency and success of such a strategy will be discussed in the following section.

As far as tribune strategies are concerned, they can be pursued within the traditional parliamentary arena, as well as outside parliament. Data on the performance of ethnoregionalist parties in comparison to their main competitors are rather scarce. As far as parliamentary performance is concerned, data on the behaviour of MPs of the VU, SNP, PC, SVP and CDC suggest a higher level of participation, especially in those activities that draw media attention (De Winter 1992; Mishler and Mughan 1978). Among them, apart from those of the CDC, MPs are also more active in constituency work (Table 13.8).

Apart from the FDF, ethnoregionalist parties are more active than (or at least as active as) than their state-wide competitors in terms of non-conventional political

Table 13.8 Communication resources of ethnoregionalist parties in relation to those of competitor parties

	VU	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*Cors.*
Behaviour of MPs inside parliament	more	same	less	more	more	same	more	more	more	—	—	n.a.
Behaviour of MPs outside parliament	more	less	less	more	more	more	more	same	same	—	—	n.a.
Protest activity	more	less	same	more	more	more	more	same	more	same	same	more
Media coverage	more	more	more	more	more	less[a]	more	same	less	more	less	more
Fairness coverage	more	more	fair	less	more	less	more	fair	less	fair	less	more
Relations press:												
party owns daily	no	no	no	no	no	>1997	no	no	no	yes	no	—
support maj.daily	yes	yes	yes	no	no	no	yes	no	no	no	no	—
support min.daily	no	no	no	yes	no	1993–6	no	yes	no	no	no	—
newsletter/period.	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	yes	yes	yes

Note: '>1997' means 'since 1997'

[a] Only in the period 1992–4 did the Lega receive about the same coverage as other parties

participation. This type of political action seems to secure them more than average media coverage (in comparison with their electoral strength). Only the *Lega* and the minoritarian Basque and Catalan parties do not seem to profit from disproportionate media coverage (Table 13.8). As far as the fairness of the content of media coverage is concerned, only the SNP, LN, and the minoritarian Basque and Catalan parties usually receive negative coverage. Still, in order to have an impact on agenda-setting, it is probably better to be talked about, even negatively, than suffer media indifference.

With the exception of the PNV none of these parties has a daily newspaper that could communicate the party's views to its (potential) followers. Only the Belgian ethnoregionalist parties can or could count on the support of a major daily in their region, while the SNP, LN and CDC can rely upon the support of a minor newspaper. Hence, their good media coverage is due not to their control over or the benevolent attitudes of the regional media, but rather to the news that ethnoregionalist parties manage to create themselves, through eye-catching actions which the media cannot neglect. All but the ERC do have a periodical or newsletter used to communicate with party members.

Links with social movements

The absence of a party-autonomous ethnoregionalist movement or network was identified as one of the reasons explaining the electoral vulnerability of ethnoregionalist parties after a first major policy defeat (Newman 1994:57). Most of the parties considered in this book do not merely have good relations with the broader ethnoregionalist social movement, but are the core of this movement (Table 13.9). In some cases, like that of the *Lega,* there is no movement apart from the party. Hence, apart from Flanders, Catalonia and the Basque country, where the ethnoregionalist movement is well entrenched in civil society, ethnoregionalist parties were (or potentially are) more electorally vulnerable to major policy defeats. In the three regions mentioned above, the ethnoregionalist movement is to some extent fragmented, as several parties compete for its support. This explains the weak and unstable score of the VU, ERC and EA respectively, as these fragmented movements can (temporarily) shift their support between ethnoregionalist parties.

Voters

The voter profiles of ethnoregionalist parties in their boom years[24] seem to be rather similar in sociodemographic terms (Table 13.10). Apart from the CDC, PNV SVP and LN, voters for ethnoregionalist parties are younger than voters for traditional parties. Apart from the current Corsican situation, no ethnoregionalist party is overrepresented among the working class. The relative impenetrability of this social category to the ethnic sirens is probably due to stronger integration and better encadrement of workers in socialist and communist mass parties and affiliated organisations. Hence nearly all ethnoregionalist parties are overrepresented among middle-class voters. Related to the previous

Table 13.9 Financial, partronage and linkage resources of ethnoregionalist parties in relation to those of competitor parties

	VU	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*UPC*
Party finance	rich	rich	poor	poor	poor	same	rich	rich	poor	same	same	poor
Access to patronage resources	less	same	less	less	less	less	more	more	less	more	same	less
Support of regionalist movement(s) for party:												
party = core reg. mvt.		×	×	×	×	×	×					×
most supported	×							×		×		
not most supported									×		×	

Table 13.10 Sociodemographic characteristics of ethnoregionalist voters as compared with voters in general

	VU	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*Cors.*
Age:												
younger	more	more	more	more	more	same	same	less	more	less	more	more
older	less	less	less	less	more	same	same	more	less	more	less	less
Class:												
blue-collar	less	less	less	same	same	same	same	less	less	same	less	more
white-collar	more	more	more	same	same	less	same	more	more	more	more	less
independents	same	same	more	less	less	more	same	more	more	more	more	more
Education:												
primary	less	less	less	-	less	same	same	less	less	more	less	less
secondary	more	more	more	-	less	more	same	more	same	less	more	more
higher	more	same	more	-	more	less	same	more	more	less	more	same
Gender:												
male	more	less	more	more	less	more	same	same	more	less	less	more
female	less	more	less	less	more	less	same	same	less	more	more	less
Date of survey	1975	1975	1975	1975	1979	1990	1980s	1979	1995	1990	1990	1995

Sources: VU, FDF and RW data are based on my own calculations on the basis of the 1975 GLOPO survey; SNP: Brand (1978); Lega: Diamanti (1991); CDC: Marcet (1984); ERC data: ICPS surveys; Basque data: Llera (1994). The Corsican data were made available by the *Observatoire Interrégional de Politique* (1995)

characteristic is the higher level of education of most of the ethnoregionalist electorate. These characteristics correspond to those of the 'new voter' of the area of 'citizen politics' or 'new politics' (Dalton, Flanagan and Beck 1983), of the 'dealigned protest voter' (Newman 1994:39) who is most likely to abandon traditional parties. Yet after a decade or two, most of the specific sociodemographic features of the electorates of these parties tend to fade away.[25] This suggests not only that the ethnoregionalist vote is a phenomenon of dealignment, but that several ethnoregionalist parties managed to realign supporters committed to the regional autonomy agenda (even when in most cases the size of this loyal electorate is smaller than the parties' peak scores).

Determinants of office-holding and policy success

Success in achieving office

A majority of the ethnoregionalist parties have held office at the level of regional political structures (where they exist). However, only the three Belgian ethnoregionalist parties and the *Lega Nord* have held ministerial office at the level of national government. The Swedish People's Party even became a traditional governing party in Finland, participating in more than two out of three post-war Finnish governments.

Other parties have played a vital role in supporting a minority government with the votes it needed to survive. Usually this support was paid for with policy concessions by the party in government. The SNP, PC, the CiU and the PNV have provided support for governments at different moments in time (Table 13.11).

What factors contributed to the success of ethnoregionalist parties in achieving office? In the Belgian case, several factors contribute to the inclusion of ethnoregionalist parties in national coalitions. First, inclusion follows from the constitutional requirement for a two-thirds majority in Parliament for institutional changes that involve a revision of the constitution to reform the unitary state. Nevertheless, two of the four major constitutional reforms (those of 1970 and 1980) were eventually implemented without there being ethnoregionalist parties in government and with the support of the three traditional political families. Therefore, the inclusion of the federalist parties was never the only feasible coalition formula to raise support to a two-thirds majority. A 'tripartite' coalition of the traditional parties was always possible. Ethnoregionalist parties were included by the centre-right or centre-left governments since they were not demanding partners with regard to other salient issues, especially socio-economic ones. After the traditional parties split and reluctantly agreed that the unitary state had to be reformed along federal lines, the ethnoregionalist parties rapidly became *regierungsfähig*. Finally, the inclusion of federalist parties could also be interpreted as a deliberate strategy of the traditional parties to undermine or break the electoral

Table 13.11 Office-holding and policy success of ethnoregionalist parties

	VU	*FDF*	*RW*	*SNP*	*PC*	*LN*	*SVP*	*CDC*	*ERC*	*PNV*	*EA*	*Cors.*
Government:												
participation	1977–8 1988–91	1977–80	1974–6	none	none	1994	none	none	none	none	none	none
support	1993	none	none	1976–9	1974–9	1995–6	1948–	1980–2 1993–5	none	1996–	none	none
Regional government:												
participation			n.a.	n.a.	n.a.							
participation alone	yes	yes	none	none	none	yes	yes 1948–	yes 1980–95	none	yes 1980–6	none	none
coalition: maj.								1995–		1990–		
min.	1981–5 1988–95	>89				1994–6				1986–90	1990 1994–	
Satisfaction of policy demands:												
+/- all	×		×				×					
majority		×						×		×		
minority					×				×		×	×
+/- none				×		×						

strength of these parties, by forcing them to make policy compromises and share responsibility for some unpopular socio-economic policies.

The inclusion of the *Lega Nord* in a coalition government follows from, on the one hand, the governmental pact signed with Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* and the neofascist *Alleanza Nazionale* before the 1994 elections (constituting the *Polo della Libertà*) and, on the other hand, the strength of the *Lega* in the Chamber, where it constituted the largest parliamentary group of the coalition, even when *Forza Italia* gained about twice as many votes as the *Lega*.[26] In the Spanish case, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE, Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) had only two alternative ways of raising sufficient support for its minority government. It had to form a coalition either with the ex-Communists (*Izquerdia Unida*, United Left) or with the two main ethnoregionalist parties. The first would require heavy concessions at the level of socio-economic policies and foreign affairs. This is not the case with the centre-right PNV and CiU, at least not with regard to those policy areas. All they demand is some concessions with regard to an expansion of the autonomy of the Catalan and Basque communities. In addition, some trade-offs can be made with regard to power-sharing at the level of the autonomous governments. Hence, in terms of policy concessions, the PNV and CiU constitute a less costly coalition partner to the governing Socialists than does the United Left. Also, for the currently governing *Partido Popular* (PP), seeking the support of ethnoregionalist parties was less costly than support from the PSOE. Likewise, the SNP support for the 1974–9 Labour minority government was traded off for the preparation of legislation on devolution.

Hence, apart from the *Lega* case, the traditional parties sought support from the ethnoregionalist party because this support was least expensive in terms of policy concessions with regard to items central to the governmental parties. In addition, the inclusion of the ethnoregionalist party in a governing coalition approximated most closely a minimal winning coalition formula and was therefore also the least costly in terms of ministerial portfolios. Thus, success by ethnoregionalist parties in achieving office was more the result of the willingness or calculations of traditional governmental parties to seek the support of an ethnoregionalist party than the result of the numeric impossibility of circumventing these parties in the building of a government coalition. It was not the result of clever political manoeuvring by the ethnoregionalist party's own leaders, in cases where the inclusion of that party was far from obvious at the outset of the process of forming a government. In sum, apart from the *Lega* case, ethnoregionalist parties supported or joined governments because they were invited as undemanding partners, not because they were indispensable.

Policy success

With regard to the issue of the restructuring of the unitary state, some parties have been extremely effective. The VU, RW, the *Union Valdôtaine* and SVP have seen more or less all their original demands for federalism or autonomy fulfilled.

The Brussels region, Catalonia and the Basque country now also enjoy considerable autonomy. The pivotal power of the CiU and the PNV at the national level since 1993 has increased, and will further increase, the degree of autonomy from Madrid of their region. As a result of the pressure of the three federalist parties, Belgium was transformed from being a unitary to being a strongly federalised state.

Other ethnoregionalist movements have not been very successful in policy terms. The referenda on devolution–i.e. the reward received for supporting the Labour minority government–did not receive majority support from the Scottish electorate, still less the Welsh one, which caused a major crisis within the SNP and PC. Although new referenda on a Scottish parliament and Welsh assembly have been held in September 1997, neither party has any bargaining power given the overwhelming majority of Labour at the 1997 general election, in Scotland and Wales as well as the rest of Great Britain. The Berlusconi government and its successor agreed to introduce some degree of federalism (which was a central demand of the *Lega* during the coalition talks), but so far little progress has been made with regard to its conception, let alone the drafting of relevant legislation.

There is a clear positive relation between electoral and policy success. If we dichotomise the classification of policy success (Table 13.11) into two categories, i.e. ethnoregionalist parties that have seen all or most of their policy demands satisfied, and those that have not, and relate this to our classification of electoral success (Table 13.3), we notice in Table 13.12 that the small parties have had little policy success, while the hegemonic and large parties have been quite successful. Notice that in policy terms no small party was successful, and no large or hegemonic party failed. Only the policy success of the medium parties is mixed. The VU and RW have been very successful, not only having participated in government but also, and more significantly, having managed to split the Belgian traditional parties along ethnoregional lines, which allowed the new, linguistically homogeneous wings of the old parties to recuperate and implement the policy agenda of the RW and VU. The SNP and *Lega* have so far had little success: the former has never held any pivotal power, except in 1976–79. Participation in and support of government by the *Lega* (1994–6) was probably too short and erratic to impose its own agenda.

Trade-offs between policy, office and electoral success

The classic dilemma of trade-offs between electoral success, office-holding and policies is relevant only to ethnoregionalist parties that reach the stage of *Regierungsfähigkeit* (such as *Lega Nord*, the main Catalan and Basque ethnoregionalist parties, and the Belgian federalist parties). As long as the elites of the traditional parties do not consider an ethnoregionalist party to be an acceptable coalition partner, the problem of the trade-off between the advantages of entering government (i.e. gaining offices and implementing policies) and the disadvantages (loss of credibility owing to acceptance of compromises with coalition partners) is

Table 13.12 The link between electoral and policy success

Electoral success	*Policy success*	
	Low	*High*
Small	ERC EA PC UPC	
Medium	Lega SNP	VU RW
Large		FDF CiU PNV
Hegemonic		SVP SFP

Note: This table was conceived jointly with co-editor Huri Türsan

irrelevant. Nevertheless, sheer electoral strength or pivotal power can make governmental participation unavoidable. Hence, before a party reaches the stage of *Regierungsfähigkeit*, its main behavioural objective is simply to propose policies popular among the electorate and become electorally so important that it can no longer be ignored by the parties in power.

The traditional governmental parties can react in two ways to the electoral threat of ethnoregionalist parties: undermining the electoral success of the ethnoregionalist party by copying and implementing the ethnoregionalist agenda themselves while keeping the ethnoregionalists out of power (Levi and Hechter 1985), or luring the ethnoregionalists into government and compromising them in office (Rudolf and Thompson 1989). The Belgian traditional parties applied both strategies. The electoral effects of the VU and RW's experiences with government participation were disastrous for both. The VU was severely punished by the electorate after its first governmental participation (1977–8), which did not produce any policy results. After its second experience (1988–91), which did produce considerable policy results (i.e. the achievement of a federal state structure), it was punished again.

Hence, 'mature' ethnoregionalist parties are confronted with a variety of dilemmas and trade-offs. A refusal to participate in government when the opportunity arises could have negative consequences, in electoral terms, with the party being accused of a lack of responsibility when progress with regard to the implementation of the ethnoregionalist agenda is finally within reach. On the other hand, government participation, in spite of its office rewards and policy output potential, can damage a single-issue party in two ways. Either the policy pay-offs can be so significant that the party may lose its *raison d'être,* or, if policy rewards are insignificant, the rank and file can revolt and veto a strategy that is

apparently beneficial only to leaders who aspire to office. The followers of these parties often also harbour strong anti-political establishment attitudes, and therefore are more critical towards participation in government and compromising with the actors of 'old politics'.

The Basque and Catalan ethnoregionalists have so far managed to avoid this dilemma by refusing ministerial responsibility. In the case of the *Lega Nord*, a short but highly confrontational participation in government did not lead to electoral damage, but did not produce policy pay-offs either.

Impact on the national political system

Ethnoregionalist parties have had a dramatic impact on the party system of some states. The impact concerns the size, number and nature of electoral competitors. First, by definition, the emergence and electoral breakthrough of ethnoregionalist parties increased the fragmentation of parliamentary representation and the number of effective parties. Second, in Belgium and Spain, ethnoregionalist parties are so important that we can no longer talk of the 'Belgian' or 'Spanish' party system, but only of their party systems. The Belgian case is the most obvious one: among the parties represented in Parliament, not a single one still addresses itself to the entire Belgian population. After the splitting of the traditional parties, there are no longer any Belgian parties, only Flemish and Francophone ones, which present candidate lists only in the Flemish and French-speaking constituencies respectively. Hence, since 1978 there have been two party systems in Belgium, a French-speaking and a Flemish one (De Winter and Dumont 1997).

The same kind of disintegration of the national party system is currently occurring in Spain. At the level of elections for the general and autonomous communities, more than half the inhabitants of the Basque country and Catalonia now vote for 'non-state-wide parties'.[27] Hence, in these regions the main actors competing for votes are different from those of the rest of the country, as are the nature and the direction of their electoral competition.

Third, the success of ethnoregionalist parties indicates that the centre-periphery cleavage has become a relevant dimension of electoral competition. This addition of a dimension to the space of party competition evidently complicates electoral competition and coalition-building, as parties in hitherto one-dimensional left-right systems of electoral competition have to make calculations not only about their socio-economic profile, but also about their stand on ethnoregionalist issues. They also have to determine the weight these issues should be given in comparison with traditional socio-economic ones.

This addition of a dimension of electoral competition often causes those traditional parties that suffer most in a particular region from the breakthrough of an ethnoregionalist party to adapt their policy towards ethnoregionalist demands. For instance, the Labour Party in Scotland now has a position on Scottish self-government that is much closer to that of the SNP than it ever used to be. The ethnoregionalist parties in Belgium forced the traditional parties to

break up, and the Walloon and Flemish successors have rapidly adopted policy positions on federalism that come close to the ones promoted by the respective ethnoregionalist parties. Similar adaptations have taken place in Catalonia and the Basque country. Likewise, the issue of federalism and the transfers between the north and the south of Italy forced the current government party, the *Partito Democratic della Sinistra*, towards a less unitarist position. The same shift occurred in Spain's main governmental parties (PSOE and PP).

Finally, the ethnoregionalist conflict dimension is often one on which centrifugal competition is more likely to occur than centripetal competition. In Belgium, virtually all Flemish parties defend, on linguistic issues, positions that are diametrically opposed to those of the Francophone parties. Policy distances have tended to increase, rather than decrease. Consequently, while on the denominational and left-right dimension competition between parties is now more centripetal, on the linguistic/regional dimension competition is becoming increasingly centrifugal. The recent rise of ethnoregionalist parties outside Catalonia and the Basque country is bound to have a similar effect on the electoral competition between parties in Spain.

Conclusion

The most prominent feature of the programmes of ethnoregionalist parties is undoubtedly their demand for political reorganisation of the national power structure, or for some kind of 'self-government'. The kind of self-government sought varies considerably from one ethnoregionalist party to another, and therefore we have proposed a classification of these parties according to the degree of radicalism of the demands for self-government, ranging from protectionist, autonomist and federalist parties to independentist and irredentist ones. This emphasis on institutional reform aiming at increased self-government allows us to consider ethnoregionalist parties as a specific 'party family'. The ethnoregionalist parties we studied do cluster around some other programme variables: the parties situated on the left are those that embrace 'new politics' issues most, but also tend to favour full independence most strongly.

The variety of self-government profiles of ethnoregionalist parties corresponds to the phase of ethnic mobilisation in which the ethnoregionalist movements find themselves. Some ethnoregionalist movements and parties are still in the second phase of Hroch's (1985) nationalist mobilisation, others are in phase C (having become the main party of their region and therefore capable of forcing concessions from the centre towards devolution). Others are beyond phase C, and have seen most of their original demands met by the former unitary state. Hence they find themselves faced with the difficult choice between self-congratulation and abdication or pushing towards the ultimate fulfilment of nationalist objectives, i.e. the founding of an independent nation-state.

We verified the empirical impact of the main variables and factors singled out in the literature as determinants of the electoral emergence and success of

ethnoregionalist parties in the post-war period. We focused first on the factors that are related to the environment in which ethnoregionalist parties operate, i.e. their political opportunity structure. Here, the strength of ethnoregional identity serves as the main characteristic of the regions determining nationalist votes, whether measured in terms of prevalence of a specific language or feelings of belonging to the region instead of to the state. The strength of the common 'ethnoregionalist' identity is determined by the strength of other identities, especially those of class and religion. In addition, these parties are capable of incorporating issues stemming from other cleavages than the centre-periphery cleavage, especially post-materialist or 'new politics' issues. The electoral system does not seem to exert an impact. The absence of other protest parties and the incapacity of the traditional parties to respond properly to regional and linguistic demands in the respective regions do have implications, however. Intranational or cross-national demonstration, contagion and escalation effects between ethnoregionalist parties are also discernible. Finally, European integration and devolution have rendered ethnoregionalist parties' pretensions for self-government more realistic and boosted their confidence.

As far as the internal resources as determinants of the electoral success of ethnoregionalist parties are concerned, one of the striking characteristics of most ethnoregionalist parties is that they have been led for long periods of time by a single charismatic leader, combining three types of leadership roles: those of creator and preacher, organiser and stabiliser. It is under the leadership of their historical figures that most parties have obtained their best electoral results. The voter profiles of the various ethnoregionalist parties in their boom years seem to be rather similar, corresponding to the sociodemographic characteristics of the 'dealigned protest voter'. Yet by the 1990s, those profiles had become more similar to those of the population at large, indicating that a process of realignment had taken place.

In terms of other internal resources and constraints, however, the picture is often quite varied and the relation to electoral success unclear. In comparison with their competitors, the national parties in their region, half of the ethnoregionalist parties are more oligarchic. While most have a lower degree of encadrement, they seem to offer about the same opportunities for direct participation to their members. They are particularly vulnerable to factionalism. Their financial situation is usually quite healthy. Their MPs are usually more than averagely active in and outside parliament, especially in those activities that draw media attention. Ethnoregionalist parties are more (or at least as) active in terms of non-conventional political participation, which seems to secure them more than average media coverage, in spite of their structurally weak access to the media. Most parties do not only have good relations with the broader ethnoregionalist social movement, they are the core of it, which can be a source of electoral vulnerability.

Although several ethnoregionalist parties have participated in the national government, their success in achieving office was more the result of the willingness or calculated decision of traditional governmental parties to seek the support of

an ethnoregionalist party than the result of the numeric impossibility circumventing these parties in the building of government coalitions or of clever political manoeuvring of its own leaders.

In terms of policy success, several parties have seen most of their original demands for federalism or autonomy fulfilled. There is a clear relation between electoral and policy success, as small parties have achieved little or no policy success, while the hegemonic and large parties have been quite successful. However, policy success and the holding of positions in government confront 'mature' ethnoregionalist parties with a variety of dilemmas and trade-offs. In spite of its rewards in terms of achieving office and having the potential to affect policy, government participation can damage a single-issue party in two ways. The policy pay-offs can be so significant that the party can lose its *raison d'être*; or, if policy rewards are insignificant, the generally less docile rank and file can revolt and sanction a strategy that apparently benefits only the party leaders' aspirations to achieve office.

Finally, in Belgium, Spain and Italy, ethnoregionalist parties have had a major impact on the party system in terms of size, dimensions and nature of the electoral competition. In Spain and Belgium, we can no longer speak of a single party system; the reality is one of multiple quasi-autonomous party systems. This break-up of the national party system may further boost ethnoregionalist mobilisation in the future.

Notes

1 In order for the cases analysed in this book to constitute a comparative data base, each individual author was asked to respond to a questionnaire in which the main dimensions of analysis followed in this chapter were operationalised. Data on parties not covered in this book will be reported only in the text, not in the tables, as such data are often incomplete.

2 Most case studies of ethnoregionalist parties have not systematically compared these parties' internal resources with those of the state-wide parties. This is partially due to the fact that where they do exist, studies on the internal structure and functioning of state-wide parties tend to focus on the national level, not the organisation and structure of these parties within the region in which they have to compete with an ethnoregionalist party.

3 Whether this position will remain as widely shared is an open question. Given the current crisis of political representation of ethnoregionalist parties within a single parliamentary group in the European Parliament, it is likely that in future the official position of the EFA will carry less weight than before. In addition, ethnoregionalist parties—like traditional parties—cannot remain immune to the growing anti-EU mood among large sectors of the population in some countries.

4 Unless specified otherwise, our classification of parties on the left-right dimension is based on Laver and Budge's data (1992) derived from party manifestos in the period 1945–79, amended where necessary for the post-1980 period, and rendered even more specific where possible.

5 On the extreme left, we find the parties that have links with terrorist movements (*Herri Batasuna* and *Sinn Fein*).

6 This reaction challenges the institutions which since the 1960s have embodied and implemented the new politics agenda, and focuses on the problematic consequences

of this implementation, such as an unstable world, lack of discipline, ungovernability, insecurity, immigration from the Third World, internationalism and decline of national identity, women's emancipation, decline of traditional family and moral values, etc. To this is added a feeling of distrust towards traditional decision-makers, including parties, politicians and pressure groups.

7 In principle, we could further restrict the basis on which the success of ethnoregionalist parties has to be calculated. For instance, the territory that ethnoregionalist parties consider theirs is often 'occupied' by 'immigrants' who identify with the 'centre'. Ethnoregionalist parties usually do not seek to represent these groups. In fact, they are often openly opposed to their presence in the region. Yet this narrower definition of target electorate faces two problems. The first is practical: it is not always possible to define and obtain data on the exact number of 'natives' and 'aliens' (for instance on the basis of their mother tongue or place of birth). Second, one could extend the logic described above to all parties, whereby for instance the success of Christian Democratic parties should be measured only in comparison with the number of Christians in a country, the Communists in comparison with the number of workers, etc. Also, this would pose even more serious measurement problems, and complicate comparison over time and in space.

8 In some countries, the gap between ethnoregionalist voting for regional and national parliament respectively can be quite wide. In some Spanish autonomous communities, such as Catalonia, many voters cast a 'dual vote': about half of them vote for ethnoregionalist parties at regional elections (thereby expressing their ethnoregionalist adherence), while three-quarters vote for 'state-wide' parties at general elections (Montero and Font 1991).

9 Finally, the electoral success of an ethnoregionalist party should be evaluated not only in terms of its target electorate, but also in relative terms, i.e. in comparison with the strength of the major parties (in the target electorate). It is much easier–*mutatis mutandis*–to obtain 10 per cent of the vote in a two or a two-and-a-half party system than in an extremely fragmented system.

10 On the whole, ethnoregionalist voting surged at the end of the 1960s in Europe, declined during the 1980s and revived again at the beginning of the 1990s (Hearl, Budge and Peterson 1996).

11 The proportion of votes of the SVP corresponds to 80 to 95 per cent of the proportion of German-speakers and Ladins in South Tyrol, which constituted about two-thirds of the region's population as a whole in the 1961 and 1971 censuses, and 69 per cent in the 1981 census.

12 Therefore, it is not necessary to conceive of a category of parties that capture a relative majority of votes.

13 EE, a former branch of ETA, renounced the strategy of violence after the death of Franco. In the 1980s, the party became an even more moderate autonomist than the PNV Because of the difficulty leftist and nationalist options have in finding a stable position in Basque political life, the party split in the early 1990s, and one of its seceding parts merged with the PSOE.

14 For a more detailed overview of these theories see Hooghe (1992), Coakley (1992) and Koelble (1994).

15 According to these authors, unemployment in these regions triggers a measure of protest. The presence of a distinctive culture, expressed in a specific language, then helps to channel protest into a regionally specific party. The importance of industrial employment is due to the fact that many of the regions with vigorous nationalism are characterised by a heavy concentration of old or new industry.

16 The strength of feelings of regional identity can be affected by a variety of factors: a common identity and autonomy in the region's past; the degree of 'oppression' by or lack of adaptation of the centre towards ethnoregionalist claims; the homogeneity

of identities in the region (impact of mass immigration from the centre to the periphery); the degree of 'encadrement' or membership recruitment of this population in organisations that share and reproduce ethnoregionalist feelings, and the links between the ethnoregionalist party and these organisations and movements.

17 See Pallares, Montero and Llera (1994), Christiansen (1995), Maddens, Beerten and Billiet (1994) and Brand, Mitchell and Surridge (1992).

18 Another alternative indicator of general public support for the cause of ethnoregionalist parties is public opinion on the issue of institutional reform. According to surveys, in Flanders, Scotland, northern Italy and Sardinia a majority of inhabitants favour an increase in the degree of self-government of their region. On 11 September 1997 Scottish voters, in a referendum voted decisively in favour of the setting up of a Scottish parliament with tax-raising powers. A week later, Welsh voters voted narrowly in favour of a Welsh assembly, without tax-raising powers. In Catalonia, Brussels and Wallonia, a majority support the institutional status quo or even a return to the *ancien régime*, i.e. a more centralised state. In the Basque Country, we find about equal numbers of supporters for the two options. Yet the relation between this expression of public support for self-government and ethnoregionalist voting is quite unclear. In Brussels, Wallonia, Finland, Catalonia and the Basque country, ethnoregionalist parties have fared relatively well, in spite of the fact that no majority can be found in the population in favour of increasing the level of self-government!

19 Great upheavals usually jeopardise the chances of ethnoregionalist movements and often lead to their demise. First, when the nation-state is menaced by an enemy (from within or from outside), national unity is considered the ultimate good. The same effect can be noticed for class oppositions. Hence ethnoregionalist forces will usually join other political formations in their defence of the state (an example is the Catalan and Basque nationalists joining the Republican forces against Franco). On the other hand, in some cases ethnoregionalist minorities have seized the opportunity that an external threat against the national state offers for separating them from the centre, through collaboration with the foreign enemy. This strategy was followed by parts of the pre-war Flemish movement, and the Irish and South Tyrolean nationalists. In either strategy, if an ethnoregionalist movement has put its bets on the losing side this can jeopardise, or even block, resurrection for a decade or more.

20 The electoral growth of the ethnoregionalist parties in Belgium occurred at a time when the traditional parties were still unitary actors, trying to arrive at compromises within their ranks between their Flemish and French-speaking wings. After these parties split into Flemish and Francophone Christian Democrat, Liberal and Socialist parties, the electoral progress of the federalist parties stalled.

21 For instance, in 1974, an SNP seat cost on average 76,329 votes and a PC one 55,440, while a Liberal seat cost 411,289 votes (against 35,916 votes for a Labour seat and 37,779 for a Conservative one; author's calculations).

22 A similar picture emerges for factionalism around issues (apart from in the VU).

23 The parties with a strong electoral performance (usually over 30 per cent) all belong to the richer category, but also to those that do exert executive power.

24 Where possible, the composition of the electorates at the moment when the parties reached their electoral peak has been analysed. During their consolidation phase ethnoregionalist parties tend to lose many of their characteristic features.

25 This seems to be the case for the VU, FDF, LN, CDC, PNV and SVP. See data provided in the different case studies.

26 This disproportion is due to the fact that Bossi managed to conclude the electoral pact at a time when *Forza Italia* was relatively still weak, which allowed him to place most of his candidates as the common candidate of the *Polo delta Libertà*.

27 If one considers the PSC as a party autonomous from the PSOE.

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