Nationalism and Dynamic Autonomy

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Nationalist movements were a significant force in the politics of several advanced industrialized liberal-democracies during the 20th century.[1] In Spain, Basque and Catalan nationalism shaped the territorial structuring of the democratic transition[2], with the violent stream of the Basque movement impacting Spanish politics until ETA's permanent cease-fire announced in 2011.[3] Flemish nationalist triggered multiple reforms of the Belgian state[4]. Scottish nationalism successfully pushed for devolution in the United Kingdom.[5] Throughout the 20th century, nationalist movements in Western liberal-democracies pursued primarily an autonomist rather than a secessionist agenda, with the exception of Québec where referendums on independence were held in 1980 and 1995.[6] There were always secessionist parties (the Scottish National Party, SNP; *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya,* ERC; Batasuna; *Vlaams Blok*) but they were typically much weaker than parties seeking greater autonomy for the minority national community within the state.

By the turn of the century, secessionism appeared to be on an irremediable decline. Even in Québec, where secessionist nationalism was strongest, the *Parti Québécois* (PQ) was unable to act upon, or even sustain, the type of support for independence expressed in the 1995 referendum.[7] In Europe, not only had states enacted a variety of measures to accommodate nationalist demands, but the European Union (EU) seemed to give significant incentives for nationalist movements to seek autonomy rather than independence by, among other things, 'hollowing out' the state[8], creating networks for cooperation between regional governments,[9] and facilitating transborder

cooperation. In South Tyrol, for example, Austria's entry in the EU in 1995 meant an open border with the kin state, which could logically work to further undermine secessionist and irredentist nationalism. More generally, nationalist movements in Western democracies seemed to be operating in a 'changing international order'[10] that was producing a 'post-sovereign era'[11] where softer, more ambiguous, and more complex claims for self-determination than outright independence would dominate.

By the early 2010s, it was clearly that the demise of secessionist nationalism in Western democracies had been greatly exaggerated. The SNP formed a majority government in Scotland in 2011 and announced its intention to hold an independence referendum. In Catalonia, *Convergència i Unió* (CiU) underwent a secessionist turn that launched an external self-determination process still on-going to this day. Yet, in other minority national communities, secessionism has either failed to gain momentum or lost steam altogether. In Flanders, support for independence remains low and the Flemish nationalist party *Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie* (N-VA) entered a federal coalition in 2014 even if it meant, at least temporarily, shelving any type of self-determination claims.[12] In South Tyrol, the 2018 elections to the provincial parliament confirmed that the small gains made by the secessionist parties in 2014 did not represent the beginning of an upward trend for separatist claims.

This article tackles the puzzle of nationalist movements in Western European going in different directions; indeed, while Scottish and Catalan nationalism have recently witnessed a radicalization of their self-determination claims, nationalism in Flanders and South Tyrol have experienced no similar sustained surge in secessionism. The article argues that the central explanatory factor for the different paths followed by these nationalist movements is the nature of autonomy offered by their respective states. In Belgium and in Italy (at least as pertained to South

Tyrol), autonomy has been *dynamic* insofar as the specific conditions of autonomous government, and even the larger framework, have evolved. By contrast, autonomy in Spain and the United Kingdom (prior to the 2014 referendum on Scotland's independence) has been static. In Spain, the political class and the Spanish Constitutional Court have sent a very strong message that the Catalan Statute of Autonomy can not be changed in the way desired by Catalan governments while the broader *Estado de las Autonomías* is also unlikely to be reformed.[13] In the United Kingdom, the devolution arrangement was presented as a 'final settlement' and the notion of a multi-option referendum that could have resulted in a 'devo-plus' outcome was rejected by the British government as it negotiated the parameters of the referendum with the Scottish government.

The article is divided into four sections. In the first section, we discuss in greater detail the puzzle of the divergent paths taken by nationalist movements in Western Europe over the last decade or so and we explain how dynamic autonomy could be the crucial explanatory factor accounting for the distinct outcomes. The second section presents the case studies, first examining the cases of radicalization in self-determination claims (Scotland and Catalonia) and then looking at cases of non-radicalization, even moderation (Flanders and South Tyrol). In the conclusion, we look at how theory-building on nationalist movements in liberal-democracies could focus on dynamic autonomy

The Puzzle of the Divergent Paths of Nationalist Movements in Western Europe and Dynamic Autonomy.

Twelve Catalan politicians and civil society association leaders are currently standing trial for their roles in the 2017 referendum on independence.[14] That referendum, considered illegal and

unconstitutional by the Spanish state, represented the latest initiative in a self-determination process that previously featured a consultation on the political future of Catalonia in 2014 and a 'plebiscitary election' in 2015.[15] This Catalan 'process' was the product of a secessionist turn in Catalan nationalism.[16] In Scotland, the last decade witnessed a secessionist surge insofar as the SNP, always a secessionist party but a rather marginal actor in Scottish politics before devolution, rose to power, first with a minority government in 2007 then with a majority in 2011, and held a referendum on independence in 2014.[17] The surprisingly strong result in the referendum galvanized the SNP (which formed the government again after the 2016 Scottish elections) as well as the secessionist option.[18]

The strong secessionist pressures of contemporary Catalan and Scottish nationalism were virtually unthinkable at the turn of the century for several reason.

First, secessionism was always a minority position within each of these nationalist movements. Catalan nationalism has its historical roots in a bourgeoisie seeking autonomy for Catalonia within Spain or, alternatively, greater Catalan influence in the governance of Spain. In the contemporary democratic era, autonomy, not independence, remained the objective during the long period of CiU political dominance[19] under the leadership of Jordi Pujols. CiU's nationalist competitor, ERC, which espoused secessionist positions (albeit not consistently),[20] was always the weaker of the two nationalist parties before the 2010s. In Scotland, claims for self-determination were historically focused on home-rule or, as it became known towards the end of the 20th century, devolution. Even the early SNP's stated goal was the establishment of a Scottish Parliament.[21] Moreover, as the SNP developed a more clearly secessionist position in subsequent decades, it remained "extremely small in terms of membership and organisation, with few leading public figures and a chronic inability to fight elections)".[22] The SNP experienced somewhat of an

electoral breakthrough in 1974 only to lose most of the newly gained Westminster seats in the 1979 general elections. By the 1980s, the SNP joined the movement for devolution, albeit seeing autonomy as the first step towards independence. The first several years of the Scottish Parliament featured Labour-led governments. In sum, secessionist claims found very little political support in both Scotland and Catalonia as late as the mid to late 2000s.

Second, both Spain and the United Kingdom had responded to nationalist claims of autonomy in the late 1980s. In the context of its democratic transition, Spain established a system of Autonomous Communities (*Estado de las Autonomías*) that provided Catalonia (and other units) with a measure of political autonomy as specified in a Statute of Autonomy. In the United Kingdom, devolution resulted, in the case of Scotland, in the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament.

Third, the context of the late 1990s and early 2000s appeared antithetical to secessionism in Western Europe. The EU was draining powers away from the state towards its institutions while seemingly offering opportunities for agency for minority national communities, which seemed to reduce incentives for becoming independent.

Adding to the puzzle of secessionism becoming so strong within the Catalan and Scottish nationalist movements is the fact that not all nationalist movements in Western Europe experienced such a development. For example, no similar move to actively seek independence amongst South Tyrol's German-speaking population (where secessionist and irredentist claims had led to violence a few decades earlier)[23] or in Flanders, despite multiple political crises involving government formation that had some external observers calling for the country to be dismantled.[24] The development of strong secessionist pressures in Catalonia and Scotland and its absence in South Tyrol and Flanders only adds to the puzzle.

The contrast in outcomes also eliminates potential explanations that would make sense if the cases of Catalonia and Scotland were considered on their own. For example, the fiscal and economic crisis of 2008 seemed to be an important part of both stories of secessionist growth. In Spain, the crisis was severe, and Catalonia was one of the hardest hit Autonomous Communities, particularly on unemployment.[25] From the Catalan nationalist perspective, Catalonia was suffering financially from being part of Spain. In fact, Spain was said to be stealing from Catalonia, for example, through the workings of the territorial equalization scheme that was leaving Catalonia worst off than poorer Autonomous Communities after redistribution.[26] In the United Kingdom, the conservative-led government of David Cameron implemented austerity measures that included major social policy cuts.[27] These cuts were very unpopular in Scotland where memories of a Conservative Thatcher governmente implementing neo-liberal policies without much Scottish backing were still fresh. In the 2014 independence referendum campaign, one of the main arguments of the 'yes' side was that independence was necessary to protect existing social policy from the retrenchment and privatisation strategies of the British government.[28] Looking only at Catalonia and Scotland, one would also be tempted to invoke the difficulties of the EU (perhaps beginning with the failed Constitution in 2004)[29] or the rise of populism in Europe (and liberal-democracies more broadly). However, if all these forces (fiscal and economic pressures, disappointment with the EU, rise of populism), which were Europe-wide, had played a key role in stimulating secessionism in Catalonia and Scotland, there would presumably have been a similar development in other West European minority national communities such as Flanders and South Tyrol. But there was not.

Therefore, the explanation for distinct outcomes in, on the one hand, Catalonia and Scotland, and, on the other hand, Flanders and South Tyrol, has to be related to the state. In other

words, the Spanish and British states necessarily have something in common (at least in relation to Catalonia and Scotland respectively) that is different from something shared by the Belgian and Italian states in their relation to Flanders and South Tyrol respectively.

The distinct evolution of nationalist movements being connected to the state is hardly surprising since scholarship on nationalism has always emphasized its relationship with the state.[30] More specifically, the literature on nationalist movements in Western democracies has generally argued that the more extensive the accommodation of nationalist claims, the less likely nationalist movements are to seek secession.[31] There are many different potential strategies of accommodation in the liberal-democratic state's toolkit: the protection of individual and collective rights; the recognition of collective distinctiveness; the empowerment of the minority national community at the center; advantageous fiscal redistribution for that community; consociational democracy; and, most crucially, territorial political autonomy, implemented through either federalism or an autonomy statute.[32]

The centrepiece of the liberal-democratic state's accommodation strategy has been territorial political autonomy. Indeed, no minority national community within an established liberal-democratic state where a nationalist movement of significance operates is currently without some measure of autonomy. When states deploy a combination of alternative approaches to autonomy, they typically have to face a nationalist movement struggling to acquire their own autonomous political institutions (for example, the United Kingdom pre-devolution). Territorial autonomy is typically viewed in the literature as "a mechanism for accommodating nationality demands without provoking secession and countersecession."[33] The basic case for autonomy as a nationalist management strategy is simple: it is what nationalist movements want. Indeed, "[I]t is this promise of autonomy that has brought federalism to the forefront of conflict management

around the world."[34] By decentralizing many different policy fields considered by a minority national community to be of vital importance to its development, federalism or autonomy arrangements can minimize conflict between that community and the majority community (or the state).[35] Overall, most researchers have been positive on the potential of federalism or autonomy to manage nationalism in a way that avoids stirring secessionist sentiments.[36] Commenting on her collective book with Amoretti, Bermeo said "she expected our project to conclude that federalism exacerbated ethnic conflict. Instead, despite considering a great diversity of cases, our authors were nearly unanimous in concluding that federal institutions promote successful accommodation."[37]

This being said, we know that autonomy has not been sufficient to extinguish secessionist pressures in liberal-democracies. Catalonia, Scotland and Québec are all examples of minority national communities where the secessionist streams of nationalist movements have thrived in the context of substantial autonomy. What explains, then, strong secessionist pressures in minority national communities that enjoy autonomy? The answer in the literature on nationalist movements in Western democracies is typically that these minority national communities do not have enough political autonomy.[38] Such position makes intuitive sense: if nationalist movements want more autonomy (and, generally, they do), providing it could prevent, or stem the tide of, the radicalization of self-determination claims. In other words, extensive autonomy would logically seem to reduce secessionist pressures.

Yet, there is a very good reason to believe that is not the case: minority national communities that have experienced strong secessionist pressures enjoy a high degree of autonomy. A useful tool for assessing the level of autonomy of a minority national community (or any regional government) is the Regional Authority Index (RAI).[39] The RAI offers a self-rule score built from an assessment of where a region stands in relation to five criteria.[40] The maximum self-rule score

is 18. One regional government obtaining such maximum score is Québec between 1991 and 2010. The extremely high level of autonomy for Québec is confirmed by studies establishing that the Canadian federation has a very high degree of decentralization.[41] Yet, between 1991 and 1995, secessionism was at an all-time high in the province and the 'yes' side fell just short of obtaining a majority in the 1995 independence referendum. Moreover, the self-rule score of the four cases considered in this article show not only extensive, but also similar levels of, autonomy.[42] How can we explain the strong secessionist push in Catalonia and Scotland and the weakness of secessionist claims in Flanders and South Tyrol when the level of autonomy enjoyed by these four governments is virtually the same? The only possible conclusion stemming from these similar self-rule scores in the context of a divergence in the recent evolution of four Western European nationalist movements (and from the apparent paradox of Québec's maximum score at a time when Quebeckers almost voted to secede from Canada) is that the strength of secessionism is *not* a function of the level of autonomy enjoyed by a minority national community.

If the level of autonomy does not affect the strength of secessionism, perhaps the *nature* of autonomy does. One aspect of autonomy that has attracted little attention is the extent to which it evolves (or does not evolve) in time. Indeed, research on nationalism and autonomy has for the most part been variable-centered. From this perspective, autonomy is an 'arrangement'[43] or a 'device' that can take 'different legal and political forms.'[44] It represents the end of a political process[45] and the discrete outcome of negotiations. In other words, autonomy is typically conceptualized by researchers as the final settlement of a political conflict between communities (or between a minority national community and the state).Therefore, when it comes to autonomy, temporality is considered mostly to explain how it was achieved and to account for its degree and form.

There is a better use to make of temporality when studying autonomy and investigating its relationship with nationalist movement, notably the strength of secessionism in a minority national community. One angle is to examine if autonomy is, in fact, viewed by political actors in a particular minority national community as a final settlement. In other words, is autonomy considered static, or is it viewed as dynamic, that is, as something that will be adjusted, perhaps even expanded, going forward? The key political actors of minority national communities when it comes to the politics of self-determination are the nationalist parties. If these parties have good reasons to believe that autonomy can be improved in some way in the future, there is less of an incentive for them to adopt strong secessionist positions than if they think the existing autonomy arrangement is a take it or leave it proposition. If nationalist parties choose to nevertheless adopt strong secessionist positions in the context of a widespread perception among the population that autonomy is dynamic (perhaps simply as a result of ideological conviction), they are likely to place greater emphasis on some other aspect of their program or else risk electoral marginalization.

There are at least two reasons why the population of a minority national community would consider their autonomy dynamic. The first is that their autonomy has evolved in the recent past. In other words, there is a precedent, perhaps even over decades, of adjustments being made to the community's autonomy in a way that responds to its evolving interests and identity (at least as they are perceived by their political leaders). When such a precedent exists, autonomy is likely to be viewed as an on-going and open-ended process as opposed to a final, unchangeable settlement. In the absence of these precedents, autonomy can still be considered dynamic by citizens if there is a credible commitment on the part of the state to offer such as an approach. The credibility of that commitment would hinge on the past discourses and policies of the political actors making it (for example, a political party having always stated that a statute of autonomy was a take it or leave

it proposition would have low credibility if it made a commitment to dynamic autonomy) and also on the definition of a process for change (for example, setting up, or designating, institutions to manage autonomy in time would boost the credibility of a dynamic autonomy commitment). Moreover, for a commitment to dynamic autonomy to be credible, it also needs to be strongly and publicly endorsed by one, or some, of the main political parties in the minority national community.

Autonomy and Secessionism in Four Western European Minority National Communities.

We now look to solve the puzzle of the divergent paths of nationalist movements in Western Europe, which includes the surprising secessionist push in Catalonia and Scotland, through a controlled comparative analysis.[46] That analysis features two pairs of cases[47] treated in the most similar systems design. The two pairs (on the one hand, Catalonia and Scotland and, on the other hand, Flanders and South Tyrol) share many important features. Indeed, these minority national communities are within Western European advanced industrialized liberal-democratic states that are members of the EU, and they all enjoy a similar level of territorial autonomy through federalism or autonomy statutes. Yet, the last decade has witnessed in Catalonia and Scotland a major push for secession. In Catalonia, there has been a so-called process of self-determination that has featured the two main nationalist parties (CiU and ERC) taking clear secessionist positions and, as these parties formed the *Generalitat* of Catalonia, actively attempting to hold referenda to prepare a secession from Spain.[48] In Scotland, the surge of secessionism has corresponded with the rise of the SNP from of a marginal actor to somewhat of a hegemon in Scottish politics, as the referendum on independence it held produced a surprisingly strong result for the 'yes' side and unleashed a level of nationalist mobilization never seen before in Scotland.[49] Such a secessionist

push has been absent in Flanders and South Tyrol. In Flanders, the rise of the Flemish nationalist party N-VA, which formally supports the independence of Flanders, would at first glance seem to indicate a surge of secessionism. However, the N-VA never presented any precise and immediate plan to achieve this objective, and even accepted to abandon any state reform claims to be part of the federal governing coalition between 2014 and 2018. In South Tyrol, the hegemonic party of German-speakers,[50] the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP), eschewed independence in the late 1960s and remains firmly committed to autonomy.[51] To explain the difference in outcomes between the pairs of cases, we focus on one important difference between, on the one hand, Catalonia and Scotland and, on the other hand, Flanders and South Tyrol: the nature of autonomy provided to the minority national communities. In order to assess the role of dynamic autonomy in mitigating secessionist pressures, we trace the process of interactions between nationalist movements and the state, more specifically the state's approaches to, and structures of, autonomy, primarily over the last two decades or so. [52]

Catalonia and Scotland

Catalan nationalism was always overwhelmingly autonomist,[53] and Catalan political parties were initially satisfied with the Catalan Statute of Autonomy.[54] Through the 1980s and 1990s, CiU, which headed all the Catalan governments, maintained an autonomist discourse.[55] Beginning in the 1990s, some discontent towards the *Estado de las Autonomías* began to emerge. At the broadest level, the complaint was that the system had failed to evolve in way that enabled the Catalan government to exercise the powers it deemed necessary to the cultural, social, and economic growth of Catalonia. Catalan nationalists argued that Catalonia's powers were unduly curtailed by the Spanish government; that the system suffered from excessive fiscal centralization;

that Autonomous Communities were unable to interact meaningfully with the European Union; and that the Spanish state was stuck in a 'one and indivisible nation' mindset that prevented any recognition of a Catalan national reality.[56] As a consequence of this discontent, ERC began espousing secessionist positions in the early 1990s. In the 1992 Catalan elections, for example, ERC took a clear stance in favour of independence and vigorously questioned CiU's nationalist credentials. The strategy was only mildly successful as ERC increased its support but could not surpass 10% of the vote at Catalan elections during the 1990s. A clear secessionist position was therefore failing to attract much support at that time.[57]

The chances of reforming the Catalan Statute of Autonomy were virtually inexistent between 1996-2004 as the Spanish government was formed by the conservative *Partido Popular* (PP).[58] The PP's Aznar government conveyed a static understanding of autonomy.[59] It extoled the virtues of the 1978 Constitution and everything related to it, including the Statutes of Autonomy, seemingly viewing them as the perennial bases for the new, democratic, and prosperous Spain. Under the guise of 'constitutionalism,' or 'constitutional patriotism,' the PP's brand of Spanish nationalism tended to equate unity with uniformity and centralization, and therefore resisted any claims for recognition of distinctiveness, institutional asymmetry, and further decentralization in the Spanish system.

The formation of a Socialist-led government in Madrid in 2004 opened a window for the Catalan Statute of Autonomy to be reformed, especially since the Socialist also led the Catalan government since 2003. The negotiations for reforming the Statute were difficult. In Catalonia, the governing coalition was several seats short of the 90 required to adopt a reform of the Statute. In Madrid, the PP was challenging the constitutionality of most of the proposals discussed while many in the *Partido socialista obrero español* (PSOE) were uncomfortable with several of the

proposed clauses of the reformed Statute, especially the characterization of Catalonia as a nation.[60] In the end, an agreement on the reformed of the Statute of Autonomy was reached[61] and supported by both the Catalan and Spanish Parliaments. The reform was also put to a referendum in Catalonia where it was backed by over 73% of voters.

For a very short time, it seemed that Catalan autonomy could evolve, that it had some measure of dynamism. However, the potential effect that the reformed Statute could have had in stemming the tide of discontent over the *Estado de las Autonomías* in Catalonia was almost immediately negated by legal actions taken by a variety of political forces. The PP, as expected, took the reformed Statute to the Spanish Constitutional Court arguing that half of its content was unconstitutional. The Spanish ombudsman and five Autonomous Communities (Murcia, La Rioja, Aragon, Valencia and the Balearic Islands), two of whom were governed by the PSOE, also challenged the reformed Statute in court.[62] The mere fact that the reformed Statute was challenged in court after all the proper steps had seemingly been taken elicited much anger in Catalonia.[63] Few people expected that the Spanish Constitutional Court would uphold the entirety of the reformed Statute so pressure on ERC and, especially, CiU, to announce their position if and when the new Statute could not be enacted as agreed began to mount. Although both parties wavered in their discourse between 2006 and 2010, suggestions that a judgement unfavourable to the reformed Statute would represent some kind of end of the road for Catalonia within the *Estado de las Autonomías* began to be heard.[64] A narrative of exhaustion, consisting of expressing how Catalonia had tried multiple times to negotiated adjustments to its autonomy, only to be met every time by staunch refusals to implement change, was being deployed ahead of the court judgement.[65]

The Spanish Constitutional Court's judgement rendered on July 10 2010 annulled or interpreted narrowly many of the provisions of the Statute. The judgement seemed to firmly establish the static nature of Catalonia's autonomy. As such, it represented a transformative event in the evolution of Catalan nationalism;[66]indeed, to protest against the notion that change was impossible, over a million Catalans took the street to assert Catalonia's nationhood and its 'right to decide.'[67] The sheer size and intensity of nationalist mobilization unleashed by the judgement of the Spanish Constitutional Court quickly made CiU's traditional autonomist nationalism untenable. After CiU leader Artur Mas failed, in 2012, to convince Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy to afford Catalonia with greater fiscal autonomy,[68] and in the context of massive demonstrations now focusing squarely on independence, the dominant political party of Catalonia adopted a secessionist position

From that moment on, reversing the secessionist turn of Catalan nationalism was unlikely since the Spanish state[69] never hinted at the possibility that Catalonia's autonomy could evolve. In fact, as Catalan secessionist governments sought to hold a self-determination referendum, the Spanish state responded by declaring such exercise illegal and unconstitutional. In this context, the secessionist drive of the Catalan government, far from eliciting a willingness to negotiate Catalonia's autonomy, was met by the use of the coercive powers of the state and the suspension, albeit temporary, of Catalonia's autonomy through the use of article 155 of the Spanish Constitution. This reaction further narrowed the path of Catalan nationalism towards secessionism as Catalan society underwent a quick and profound dichotomization between supporters and opponents of independence. In this context, very little room was left for the historically-dominant autonomist nationalism.

Secessionism was historically as marginal in Scotland as in Catalonia. The first century and a half of post-Union Scotland was virtually absent of any self-determination claims, which led many to suggest there was no Scottish nationalism during this period or, at most, some type of 'non-national nationalism.'[70] Claims for political autonomy (first termed 'home rule' and later 'devolution') developed in the late 19th century and episodically surfaced for the next 100 years. Until late in the 20th century, the home rule movement in Scotland remained fairly weak. Secessionist claims were even more marginal than demands for home rule. In the late 20th century, Scottish nationalism was strictly focused on the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament, an objective supported by the SNP and achieved in 1999.

From the perspective of Westminster, devolution to Scotland seemed to be understood as a slightly new and fairly fixed political order. It was a 'settlement.'[71] In other words, devolution did not come with a blueprint for, or a commitment towards, future adjustments or an expansion of Scottish autonomy. Nor was there any precedent in the history of Scotland within the Union suggesting that the 1999 devolution arrangement was simply the first step in a series of constitutional and institutional changes related to Scottish autonomy. Of course, there were those in Scotland (as well as in Wales) who felt that devolution was the beginning of a sequence of political and institutional transformations towards greater decentralization,[72] but this position was never validated by the UK government. At the same time, and contrary to Spain, the UK government did not insist that the devolution arrangement was set in stone. Hence, while in Spain there was forceful opposition to the notion of autonomy as dynamic, this position never gained the same traction in the United Kingdom, although the idea that devolution constituted a final settlement was the dominant view in Westminster.

The notion of devolution as a final settlement rapidly came up against the new political configuration generated by Scottish autonomy. One key element of this new configuration was a re-shaping of the party system in Scotland, which included the SNP acquiring new political importance. One difficulty for the SNP before devolution was that it was widely viewed as a one party issue and had to contest seats in British general elections where a whole host of UK-wide issues were debated. With devolution, the SNP was able to articulate its 'Scotland first' discourse, including its stand on independence, in an appropriate setting. Another historical difficulty for the SNP was that Scotland was dominated by the Labour party,[73] with the Conservatives also representing a significant political force until the Thatcher years. Making headway in the context of the British two-party system was difficult. In the new Scottish political system, the SNP could put both Labour and the Conservatives on the defensive by forcing them to engage with claims for further autonomy. It was also in a position to benefit from the unpopularity in Scotland of the British Conservative party as well as from the Scots' skepticism of the British Labour party's move towards the right.

Devolution also changed the politics of self-determination in Scotland insofar as the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament provided for the possibility of a referendum on independence. Prior to devolution, the SNP simply stated that it would declare Scotland an independent country when it won a majority of Scottish seats at Westminster. This scenario was always highly improbable since the likelihood of the SNP winning a majority of Scottish seats was always infinitesimal, and also because the constitutionality of a unilateral declaration of independence in the event of such an outcome would have been highly questionable. With a Scottish Parliament, a clearer 'constitutional path to Scottish independence' emerged: the SNP

would commit to holding a referendum on independence during Scottish election campaigns, and it would introduce legislation to that effect if it could form a government and get the support of a majority of Members of Scottish Parliament (MSPs) for such a bill.[74] Moreover, in the context of territorial political autonomy, there was a 'model' for pursuing secession within an established liberal-democracy, that of Québec.[75] Indeed, the SNP could invoke the 1980 and 1995 Québec referendums, where the Canadian government participated in the campaigns by opposing 'sovereignty,' as evidence of the legitimacy of this type of popular consultation for choosing independence.

Thus, with devolution, the SNP became, with Labour, one of the two major parties in Scotland, and it could use the referendum as a tool to achieve its secessionist objectives. Disappointment with its results in the first two Scottish elections (which yielded Labour governments) led the SNP to re-evaluate its strategy for the 2007 Scottish election, where it chose to emphasize more significantly the static nature of Scottish autonomy, or how Scotland was 'held back'[76] by Westminster and its increasingly unpopular Labour government. Benefitting from dissatisfaction towards Labour (much more than a surge in support for independence), the SNP formed a minority government after the 2007 Scottish elections and then won a majority of seats in 2011, putting the party in a position to make good on its promise to hold a referendum on independence.

Westminster's static view of Scottish autonomy came across clearly as the SNP considered a multi-option referendum question where voters would choose between independence, the status quo and (presumably significant) further devolution (so-called 'devo-max').[77] Indeed, **"The SNP government's main objective over the months following the 2011 election was to win support to include a 'more powers' option on the ballot paper in the referendum (…) In 2011, the SNP**

supported a third option on the ballot paper as an insurance policy. It wanted to ensure that more powers would be won even if independence was defeated."[78] The British government, however, was adamant it would only accept a yes/no question on independence, suspecting that any middle of the road option would get plurality support and, therefore, force change towards increased power for the Scottish Parliament. In addition, "[P]olls suggested that a straight contest between independence and the status quo would be an opportunity to defeat, possibly humiliate, the SNP."[79]

For the British government, accepting a 'further devolution' option would have meant viewing and treating Scottish autonomy as dynamic, that is, as an evolving process rather than a settlement. Forcing a 'yes/no' question suggested that the existing autonomy framework was a take it or leave itproposition.

The independence referendum was a transformative event for Scottish nationalism for many reasons. First of all, it produced a level of nationalist mobilization never seen before. Indeed, the campaign "saw a phenomenal increase in public participation. Interest in politics assumed unprecedented levels during the referendum" (Mitchell, 2016: 90). Such participation and mobilization was particularly visible on the 'yes' side. Second, the referendum fully legitimized and rendered credible a self-determination option, independence, that had been historically marginal. This had a lot to do with the fact that it brought 'the Scottish question'[80] to the forefront of the Scottish political debate like never before. Third, the SNP came out of the referendum very much strengthened by the better-than-expected result despite despite the defeat of the 'yes' side 45% to 55%.[81]While it is impossible to know exactly how a campaign conducted in the context of a multi-option question would have unfolded, it is safe to think that the presence on the ballot of an option for increased autonomy (i.e. a clear signal by the United Kingdom government that Scottish autonomy was dynamic or, in other words, that it could be expanded) would have meant less

mobilization in favour of independence.[82] The irony is that in the last few days of the campaign, as there seemed to be a chance that the 'yes' side could win, the leaders of the three main British political parties made a common 'vow' that, among other things, the powers of the Scottish Parliament would be expanded if Scots rejected independence.[83] But, of course, the politics of self-determination in Scotland had already been transformed by the referendum campaign: secessionism was strengthened as was the SNP.[84]

Despite many important differences in the way the Spanish and British states managed Catalan and Scottish nationalism respectively (perhaps most notably, the United Kingdom recognized as legitimate and constitutional a referendum on independence whereas Spain did not), the two countries saw a similar radicalization of these nationalist movements. This similar outcome is the product of a common conception of autonomy as static. In Spain, the state considered that the changes sought by Catalan governments to the Catalan Statute of Autonomy are unconstitutional, leaving virtually no room for the Statute to be adapted and expanded. In the United Kingdom, the dominant view in Westminster that devolution was a 'final settlement' and the related insistence of the British government that a self-determination referendum be a choice between independence and the status quo produced a period when secession seemed the only option for change. Constitutional changes in the aftermath of the Scottish referendum stemming from the vow have provided dynamism to Scottish autonomy and mitigated secessionist pressures in Scotland.[85] No similar development has occurred in Spain where the dominant political discourse in Madrid has been either about the status quo on the autonomy question or a re-centralization of the system of Autonomous Communities.[86]

Flanders and South Tyrol

The strong secessionist pushes in Catalonia and Scotland have no equivalent in Flanders where "the desire for independence remains marginal and pro-independence mobilizations and social movements well-nigh absent."[87] Yet, the early development of Flemish nationalism shares a key feature with that of the two others insofar as the Flemish nationalist movement, known originally as the 'Flemish Movement', was overwhelmingly autonomist. After having primarily looked to transform Belgium from an almost exclusively French-speaking to a bilingual and bicultural political community for most of the 19th century, the Flemish Movement pushed for federalism in order to secure autonomy for the country's Dutch-speakers throughout the 20th century.[88] Secessionism was often present within the Flemish Movement but always represented a minority position.[89] By the 1960s, the relationship between the Francophone and Flemish communities had seriously deteriorated and a series of political crises seemed to open the way for a radicalization in the self-determination claims of Flemish nationalism.[90]

In 1970, Flemish and Francophone politicians agreed to a reform of the state, which represents a turning point in the evolution of nationalism in Flanders.[91] The crucial importance of this autonomist reform for Flemish nationalism stemmed primarily from the fact that it did not represent a comprehensive, definitive constitutional and institutional settlement. As such, not only were politicians leaving room for, but indeed rendered more than likely, further reforms at a later time. In fact, the political elite of the country "did not in the first place defend far-reaching devolution or the implementation of a fully-fledged federalism. They rather tried to contain the ethno-linguistic conflict, and removing some contentious competencies from the centre seemed a good way to do this."[92] The 1970 reform of the state also featured the adoption of consociational

governing practices involving the two main language communities. These practices would insure the occurrence of regular state reforms as sought by many Flemish parties since, in the consociational context, Francophone parties, which tended to favour the status quo, would need to agree to further change on autonomy for governments to be formed. Thus, the first reform of the state, which contained an agreement to create in Belgium three Communities (Flemish, French-speaking and German-speaking) and three Regions (Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels), contained the seeds of further reforms, thereby setting in motion Flemish autonomy.

The second reform of the state in 1980 was no more a definitive constitutional settlement than the first one. Although Flemish and Francophone parties agreed to strengthen the powers of Communities and to establish Flanders and Wallonia as Regions while providing them with policy-making powers, on the status and borders of Brussels within a decentralizing Belgian state they 'agreed to disagree'[93] and to tackle that issue at a later time. The third reform of the state, prompted by a political crisis around *Voeren/Fourons*,[94] transformed Brussels into a Belgian Region, provided protection for its Flemish minority, and permanently established its borders. It also foreshadowed another reform since "[I]n the ambitious agreement of May 1988, a separate chapter described a series of reform on which the coalition parties agreed, but for which the details had to be worked out later."[95] In other words, a fourth reform of the state was expected to follow the third. Once again, a developing political crisis precipitated the next constitutional change. This time, Flemish left-wing parties were blocking an arms sales deal to Saudi Arabia, which would have profited some Walloon factories. As tension built and Flemish public opinion seemed to radicalize on the future of Flanders, seven parties (including the Flemish nationalist party *Volksunie*) agreed to a fourth reform of the state, which involved the proclamation of Belgium as a federal state.

The formal transformation of Belgium into a federation did not render Flemish autonomy static. Less than a decade later, a fifth reform of the state (in 2001) provided the Regions with increased fiscal autonomy while decentralizing agriculture and international trade as per the wishes of the Flemish parties.

At the turn of the century, a change in the Flemish party system threatened to radicalize the self-determination claims of Flemish nationalism: the disintegration of *Volksunie.* A victim of its own success insofar as it achieved its original program of federalism, *Volksunie* was dissolved in 2001with many of its members forming a new, more ideologically-coherent right of center party, N-VA.[96] The rise of the N-VA, owed in large part to its anti-immigration platform, contributed to the beginning of a crisis of governability in Belgium[97] that opened a window for secessionist claims to potentially make headway. It took nearly one year for a new government to be formed after 2007 federal elections while the 2011 federal did not produce a government for 18 months. Among other things, linguistic tensions were re-surfacing in the form of the Flemish demand to split the bilingual electoral riding of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV).[98] Once again, a reform of the state, the sixth, which included the decentralization of family allowances relieved the pressure and kept secessionism marginal.

Despite multiple political crises in the last several decades that had both academics and opinion leaders questioning the future of the country,[99] no secessionist turn comparable to what unfolded in Scotland and Catalonia has happened in Flanders. In fact, no significant Flemish political party has any kind of a concrete and immediate plan to achieve independence, and there has been no mobilization in favour of secession. Belgium's on-going and open-ended process of decentralization provides massive disincentives for Flemish political parties to actively seek secession. State reforms are constitutive of Belgian politics; they are high-profile events, discussed

in federal election campaigns, and negotiated between Francophone and Flemish parties during processes of government formation. They occur at fairly regular intervals, and every reform sets up a next one. In other words, Flemings know there will be future state reforms. As these reforms always involve an expansion of autonomy for Flanders, they also know their general dynamics. In this context where it is all but assured that Flemish autonomy will keep developing, Flemings who want change do not have to support secessionist positions. Moreover, Belgium's consociational practices mean that Flemish nationalist parties sometimes have a chance to be part of the federal coalition government (as happened with N-VA from 2014-2018 and *Volksunie* before that), and therefore drive future state reforms.

In South Tyrol, secessionism, often of an irredentist variety, used to be strong, an unsurprising fact considering the primarily German-speaking territory was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire until it was transferred to Italy in the 1919 peace treaty of St-Germain.[100] Indeed, in the mid-1950, nationalism within South Tyrol's German-speaking population "comprised all the traditional elements of national Risorgimento, both in its political aim (separation from Italy and self-determination from South Tyrol) and in its choice of political instruments (rejection of the political parties, fermenting of frustrations and the beginning of paramilitary action)."[101] In the 1960s, there was further radicalization of nationalism as the secessionist paramilitary organization South Tyrol Liberation Committee (*Befreiungsausschuss Südtirol,* BAS) stepped up its violent actions, including the bombings of 37 high-tension electricity pylons in 1961 (an event that became known as the 'night of fire', *Feuernacht*) and several assassinations. Yet, a few decades later secessionist and irrendentist claims were all but gone and the Alpine territory is continuing its "path from external to internal self-determination."[102]

Autonomy was one of the tools chosen by the Italian state to manage South Tyrol after World War II. After the foreign ministers of Italy and Austria came to an agreement on the parameters of South Tyrol's treatment by the Italian state (the Gruber-DeGasperi Agreement, signed in 1946), the 1948 Italian Constitution created 20 regions, including five with a special autonomous status. One of these regions with a special autonomous status was Trentino-Alto Adige, which included the mainly Italian-speaking province of Trentino and primarily German-speaking South Tyrol. This First Autonomy Statute for South Tyrol did not succeed in moderating nationalism. Not only were Italian-speakers a majority (71%) in the new region, but the Statute was presented as a final settlement. Indeed, "[W]ith these provisions, Italy considered the Gruber-Degasperi Agreement as being fulfilled."[103] In other words, the autonomy offered to South Tyrol by the First Autonomy Statute under the original 1948 Italian Constitution was not dynamic.

The failure of the First Autonomy Statute to quell secessionism and irredentism led to the formulation of a Second Statute of Autonomy, which was approved by the main political party in German-speaking South Tyrol, the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* (SVP). This Second Autonomy Statute conferred autonomy primarily to the provinces of Trentino and Bolzano/Bozen (South Tyrol) as opposed to the region of Trentino-Alto Adige. It also created a model of dynamic autonomy. Indeed,

> The most significant difference to 1946 (…) was a guaranteed scheme of implementation of these provisions in a follow-up catalogue, the so-called 'Durchführungsbestimmungen.' This meant that the full autonomy would not be immediately effective. It came in gradually over the following years and

depended heavily on the political relationship between Rome and Bozen/Bolzano, as this determined the speed of the implementation.[104]

Initially, the timetable for the full implementation of the Second Autonomy Statute was two years. In reality, the process was much slower; only in 1992, did all the relevant actors (including Austria) consider the Statute fully implemented. The Second Autonomy Statute featured institutions that would keep generating dynamism into South Tyrolean autonomy going forward: the Commission of Twelve and the Commission of Six.

The Commission of Twelve was tasked with implementing autonomy measures related to the region of Trentino-Alto Adige while the Commission of Six deals strictly with the autonomy of South Tyrol. The Commission of Six's membership follows two rules of parity: between South Tyrol and the Italian state (each nominate three members) and between German- and Italian-speakers.[105] It *de facto* works by consensus, which guarantees that its decisions on the implementation of autonomy measures in South Tyrol have the support of its two main language groups as well as of the Italian state. The consensual nature of the Commission of Six helped it develop as a trusted institution for guiding the development of South Tyrol's autonomy.[106] Through the 1970s and 1980s, the work of this commission in implementing the content of the Second Autonomy Statute gave South Tyrol's autonomy a dynamic character.

The SVP became closely wedded to this incremental process for implementing the new autonomous measures for South Tyrol. Already recognized as the sole political voice for the German-speaking population of South Tyrol when the implementation of the Second Autonomy

Statute began, the SVP could reap the political rewards stemming from any and all benefits the new autonomous measures would bring German-speakers. It solidified its hegemonic position amongst German-speakers in South Tyrol.[107] There was, therefore, very little political space or incentive to articulate more radical self-determination claims as the Second Autonomy Statute was slowly and gradually implemented.

A crucial feature of the post-1992 relationship between South Tyrol and the Italian state is a shared understanding that all parties considering the Second Autonomy Statute fully implemented did not mean the end of the development of autonomy. In other words, autonomy was conceived as open and dynamic rather than closed and static. As a result, adjustments in South Tyrol's autonomy remained on-going, as room was left for South Tyrol to adapt policies in various realms to changing conditions and circumstances. At the center of the workings of this dynamic autonomy was the Commission of Six, whose enactment decrees are, in the Italian legal order, superior to the ordinary legislations of the Italian Parliament and only subordinate to the Constitution.[108] The enactment decrees of the two commissions have been used to "substantially change the provisions of the ASt or to overrule judicial rulings."[109]

Dynamic autonomy is not just a legal and intergovernmental reality in South Tyrol. It also became engrained in partisan politics through the SVP, which adopted it as a slogan. The SVP has developed a reputation for being the "mother and guardian of autonomy."[110] In this process of forging its role, the party eschewed its previous support for secession and re-integration with Austria. In turn, the concept of dynamic autonomy gained considerable reach and legitimacy as a result of being endorsed by the hegemonic party of German-speakers. The SVP promoting the

notion of dynamic autonomy meant it was widely diffused amongst German-speakers. In these circumstances where German-speakers could expect South Tyrol's autonomy to keep adjusting and expanding, there was no strong incentive to support secessionist or irredentist positions.

By 2013, some chinks were showing in the SVP's armor. That year, the party failed, for the first time since World War II, to garner an absolute majority of the 35 seats in the provincial legislature (although it came just one shy, with 17). The two main German-speaking parties then on the rise, *Die Freiheitlichen* (a far right populist party whose main platform was opposition to immigration) and *Süd-Tiroler Freiheit* (a more traditional nationalist party)*,* showed inclination towards secessionism. Moreover, at the same time, the Renzi government (2014-2016) had a constitutional reform agenda that seemed to question territorial autonomy in Italy.

In this context, to keep South Tyrol's autonomy on the move, the Provincial Council of South Tyrol initiated, in 2016, an 'Autonomy Convention' designed to collect ideas as to a formal revision of the Second Autonomy Statute. The Autonomy Convention, was presented as a participatory process whereby South Tyroleans could discuss the future of their collective autonomy.[111] The Convention's main report made several recommendations (for example, on fiscal questions, public administration, on South Tyrol's relationship with the Italian state and the European Union), which were expected to form the basis of the further development of South Tyrol's autonomy. Although the Convention was used to express many different points of view, including secessionist and irredentist ones, these types of claims have remained marginal,[112] thanks to an expandable and adjustable autonomy that has helped make South Tyrol a prosperous community largely shielded from the vagaries of Italian politics.[113]

Conclusion

The divergent paths of nationalist movements in Western Europe over the last decades constitute a puzzle that draws attention to a rarely considered variable: the nature of autonomy. Indeed, the controlled comparison between, on the one hand, Catalonia and Scotland where secessionism recently gained considerable strength, and, on the other hand, Flanders and South Tyrol where it did not, removes factors such as the economic crisis, Euroscepticism, the populist wave as well as the level of autonomy from the explanation. Tracing the process in the recent development of nationalist movements in Catalonia and Scotland shows that secessionism gained strength because these minority national communities were placed in a situation where their only self-determination alternatives were independence and the status quo.

Indeed, autonomy for the Catalans and for Scots (between 1999 and 2014) was not negotiable, adjustable or expandable; in other words, it was static. For Catalonia, static autonomy is the expression of a Spanish nationalism that strongly adheres to a mononational understanding of the country whereby sovereignty is indivisible[114] and that is reticent to empower Autonomous Communities, especially Catalonia, which represents a significant part of Spain both demographically and economically. The 2010 judgement of the Spanish Constitutional Court on the reform of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy represented a formal statement on the state's (static) conception of autonomy, and the subsequent all-out battle against any type of self-determination referendum re-enforced in a spectacular fashion that the political status of Catalonia could not be the subject of any compromise or negotiation. In post-devolution United Kingdom, autonomy for Scotland was, until 2014, also static insofar as devolution was considered by Westminster as a definitive, unchangeable arrangement while a 'more powers' option in a Scottish referendum was rejected by the British government for fear that an expansion of Scottish autonomy would have

been required had that option prevailed. In comparison to Spain, the static nature of autonomy in the United Kingdom was less insistently asserted and much less aggressively enforced. Not only did the British government acknowledge the legitimacy and constitutionality of an independence referendum but, when the 'yes' side seemed to have a chance to win in the latter days of the referendum campaign, it accepted to put Scottish autonomy on the move. This promise, followed up by the 2016 Scotland Act, clearly signaled the end of the notion that devolution was a final settlement, a likely contributor to support for independence not spiking as widely expected in the aftermath of the referendum on Brexit.

In the cases of Flanders and South Tyrol, the recent evolution of the nationalist movements is inseparable from mechanisms to adjust and expand autonomy. In Belgium, dynamic autonomy takes the form of an open-ended and incremental process of federalization, which considerably reduces incentives for political parties to adopt and promote clear secessionist positions and for citizens to support independence. Indeed, Flemings know there is another state reform just around the corner and, although they do not know its exact content, they understand it will expand Flanders' autonomy in some way. Hence, there is a method to Belgium's apparent madness of incessant state reforms, and although the country is often derided as unstable and fragmented, the weakness of secessionism in Flanders is a direct consequence of predictable and regular change. In South Tyrol, dynamic autonomy did not come in the form a series of constitutional changes but rather through the work of innovative institutions, the bilateral Commissions (of Six and of Twelve), whose enactment decrees can not be unilaterally amended by the Italian Parliaments. While these institutions that adjust and expand autonomy in South Tyrol are fairly obscure for the majority of the population, the notion of autonomy as dynamic is not since it was the political slogan of the hegemonic party of German-speakers (the SVP) for a long time. In others words,

most South Tyroleans may not know exactly how South Tyrol's autonomy evolves but they understand that it does. As such, it is unsurprising that secessionist and irredentist claims have become marginal.

Research on the evolution of nationalist movements in liberal-democracies has rightly emphasized the relationship between minority national communities and the state but it has generally failed to consider the intrinsic qualities of this autonomy. This article has shown that the causation between the strength of secessionism and autonomy lies in the nature rather than in the degree of the latter. Further theory-building around that idea requires examining more cases in order to not only verify to what extent the causation holds but also what various forms dynamic autonomy can take where it exists.[115]

Endnotes

[1] Alain-G. Gagnon and James Tully, eds., *Multinational Democracies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Michael Burgess and John Pinder, eds., *Multinational Federations* (London: Routledge, 2011).

[2] Luis Moreno, *The Federalization of Spain* (London: Frank Cass, 2001).

[3] Diego Muro, *Ethnicity and Violence. The Case of Radical Basque Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2011). ETA (*Euskadi Ta Askatasuna*) announced its dissolution in 2018.

[4] Kris Deschouwer, *The Politics of Belgium. Governing a Divided Society* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmilla, 2009).

[5] Peter Lynch, *SNP. The History of the Scottish National Party* (Cardiff: Welsh Academic Press, 2002).

[6] André Lecours, "The Political Consequences of Independence Referenda in Liberal Democracies: Quebec, Scotland, and Catalonia," *Polity,* 50 (April 2018), 243-274.

[7] The 'yes' side won 49.4% of the vote in the 1995 referendum and voter turnout was 93.5%.

[8] Vincent Della Sala, "Hollowing out and Hardening the State: European Integration and the Italian Economy," *West European Politics,* 20 (1997), 14-33.

[9] Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, "'Europe with the Regions': Channels of Representation in the European Union," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism,* 26 (Winter 1996), 73-90.

[10] John McGarry and Michael Keating, eds., *Minority Nationalism and the Changing World Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[11] Michael Keating, *Plurinational Democracy. Stateless Nations in a Post-Sovereign Era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[12] Data from 2014 shows that only 4% of Flemings questioned about their preferences on constitutional reform responded that they wanted 'All competences for regions and communities' (thus presumably independence). See Dave Sinardet, Lieven de Winter, Jérémy Dodeigne and Min Reuchamps, "in Kris Deschouwer, ed., *Mind the Gap. Political Participation and Representation in Belgium* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2018), p.121. N-VA left the federal coalition in late 2018 after refusing to support the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly, and Regular Migration.

[13] A constitutional reform of the *Estado de las Autonomías* would prove very difficult considering the divisiveness of the issue and the complex nature of the constitutional amendment process in Spain. Indeed, a total revision of the Spanish Constitution necessitates the support of a two-third majority in each house followed by elections to constitute new houses, and then a country-wide

referendum. A more targeted amendment requires at least a supra majority in the Congress as well as support in the Senate plus a referendum if one-tenth of the members of either house requests it.

[14] The formal accusations are rebellion, sedition, and misuse of public funds.

[15] Martí, David and Daniel Cetrà, "The 2015 Catalan election: a de facto referendum on independence?" *Regional and Federal Studies,* 26 (2016), 107-119.

[16] Montserrat Guibernau, "From Devolution to Secession: the case of Catalonia," in Michel Seymour and Alain-G. Gagnon, eds., *Multinational Federalism: Problems and Prospects* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 149-171.

[17] Michael Keating, ed., *Debating Scotland. Issues of Independence and Union in the 2014 Referendum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[18] Support for Scottish independence remained strong after the 2014 referendum and has hovered around 50% since the Brexit vote.

[19] CiU formed all the Catalan governments until 2003.

[20] For example, in the 1980s, ERC asked for the Statute of Autonomy to be enhanced. See Elias, Anwen, "Catalan Independence and the Challenge of Credibility: The Causes and Consequences of Catalan Nationalist Parties' Strategic Behaviour,"*Nationalism & Ethnic Politics,* 21 (2015), p.86

[21] Peter Lynch, *SNP. The History of the Scottish National Party* (Cardiff, Welsh Academic Press, 2002), 40-44.

[22] Ibid., p.2.

[23] Georg Grote, *The South Tyrol Question, 1866-2010. From National Rage to Regional State* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012).

[24] "Belgium. Time to Call it a Day," *The Economist,* September 6, 2007.

[25] Jesus Ruiz-Herta, Ryan Leenhouts and François Vaillancourt, "Une crise économique trois effets : Canada, Espagne et États-Unis 2007-2012," *Téléscope. Revue d'analyse comparée en administration publique,* 20 (2014), p.45.

[26] In 2010, Catalonia ranked eleventh in post-equalization financial resources per capita out of the 15 Autonomous Communities that participate in the Common financing system (the Basque Country and Navarre are outside that system) while it sits third before equalization. See Caroline Gray, "Smoke and mirrors: how regional finances complicate Spanish-Catalan relations," *International Journal of Iberian Studies,* 27 (March 2014), 21-42.

[27] Peter Taylor-Gooby, "Root and Branch Restructuring to Achieve Major Cuts: The Social Policy Programme of the 2010 UK Coalition Government," *Social Policy & Administration* 46 (2012), 61-82.

[28] Daniel Béland and André Lecours, "The 2014 Scottish Referendum and the Nationalism-Social Policy Nexus: A Comparative Perspective," *Canadian Political Science Review*, 10 (July-December 2016), 1-30.

[29] The proposed constitution disappointed minority national communities in Western Europe, particularly Catalonia, since it seemed to formalize the EU as a two level (state and supra-state institutions) rather than a three level (which would include the region) community.

[30] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (London: Blackwell, 1983); John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, second edition, 1994).

[31] Jaime Lluch, *Visions of Sovereignty. Nationalism and Accommodation in Multinational Democracies* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014); Michael Keating, *Nations against the State. The New Politics of Nationalism in Québec, Catalonia and Scotland* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, second edition, 2002); Alain-G. Gagnon, Montserrat Guibernau and François Rocher, eds., *The Conditions of Diversity in Multinational Democracies* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).

[32] Arendt Lijphart, *Democracy in Plural Societies. A Comparative Exploration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); John McGarry and Brendan O'Leary, eds., *The Politics of Ethnic Conflict Regulation. Case Studies in Protracted Ethnic Conflicts* (London: Routledge, 1993); Daniel J Elazar, *Federalism and the Way to Peace* (Kingston: Institute of Intergovernmental Relations, 1994); Ruth Lapidoth*, Autonomy: Flexible Solutions to Ethnic Conflicts* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996); John Coakley, ed., *The Territorial Management of Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, second edition, 2003); Nicola McEwen and André Lecours, "Voice or Recognition? Comparing Strategies for Accommodating Territorial Minorities in Multinational States," *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics,* 46 (2008), 220-243. Susan J. Henders, *Territoriality, Asymmetry, and Autonomy. Catalonia, Corsica, Hong Kong, and Tibet* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010); Eric Taylor Woods, Robert S. Schertzer and Eric Kaufmann, eds., *Nationalism and Conflict Management* (London: Routledge, 2013).

[33] Michael Keating, "Territorial Autonomy in Nationally Divided Societies. The Experience of the United Kingdom, Spain, and Bosnia and Herzegovina," in Karlo Basta, John McGarry and Richard Simeon, eds., *Territorial Pluralism. Managing Differences in Multinational States* Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), p.141.

[34] Thomas O Hueglin and Alan Fenna *Comparative Federalism. A Systematic Inquiry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), p.3.

[35] Some authors, many of them specialists of the former Soviet space, have argued that autonomy arrangements tend to stimulate secessionnism. See, for example, Philip G. Roeder,

"Ethnofederalism and the Mismanagement of Conflicting Nationalisms," *Regional & Federal Studies,* 19 (2009), 203-18.

[36] Lapidoth, 1996; Ghai, Yash, eds., .*Autonomy and Ethnicity. Negotiating Competing Claims in Multi-ethnic States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Yash Ghai and Sophia Woodman, eds., *Practising Self-Government. A Comparative Study of Autonomous Regions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

[37] Nancy Bermeo, 'The Import of Institutions,' *Journal of Democracy,* 13 (April 2002), p.97. The book is Ugo M. Amoretti and Nancy Bermeo, eds., *Federalism and Territorial Cleavages* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkings University Press, 2004).

[38] Alain-G. Gagnon, "Undermining Federalism and Feeding Minority Nationalism: The Impact of Majority Nationalism in Canada," in Alain-G. Gagnon, Montserrat Guibernau and François Rocher, eds., *The Conditions of Diversity in Multinational Democracies* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), 295-314; Ferran Requejo, *Multinational Federalism and Value Pluralism. The Spanish Case* (London: Routledge, 2005); Michel Seymour and Alain-G. Gagnon, ed., *Multinational Federalism. Problems and Prospects* (Houndmills Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

[39] Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks, Arjan H. Schakel, Sandra Chapman Osterkatz, Sara Niedzwiecki and Sarah Shair-Rosenfield, *Measuring Regional Authority: A Postfunctionalist Theory of Governance, Volume I* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[40] As for all databases reliant on coding, some of the RAI scores can be disputed. However, the RAI is a high quality tool and the only existing database measuring autonomy (self-rule) in multiple countries up to 2010. The five criteria of self-rule are institutional depth; policy scope; fiscal autonomy; borrowing autonomy; and representation. Ibid., p.28.

[41] André Lecours, "Dynamic De/centralization in Canada, 1867-2010." *Publius: The Journal of Federalism,* 49 (Winter 2019), 57-83.

[42] The RAI score for Flanders, Scotland, and Catalonia (up until 2010) is 14 while it is 15 for South Tyrol.

[43] Lapidoth, p.33.

[44] Yash Ghai, "Ethnicity and Autonomy: A Framework for Analysis," in Yash Ghai, 2000, p.8.
[45] Rajat Ganguly, eds., *Autonomy and Ethnic Conflict in South and South-East Asia* (London: Routledge, 2012).

[46] Dan Slater and Daniel Ziblatt, "The Enduring Indispensability of Controlled Comparisons," *Comparative Political Studies,* 46 (October 2013), 1301-1327.

[47] See, for example, Kathleen Thelen, *How Institutions Evolve. The Political Economy of Skills in Germany, Britain, the United States, and Japan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[48] By 2019, Carles Puidgemont, who was Catalan President at the time of the October 1 2017 referendum on independence, was living in exile in Brussels and 12 other politicians and civil society association leaders were standing trial for their role in a self-determination process considered illegal by the Spanish state.

[49] Nicola McEwen and Michael Keating, "Beyond the Referendum," in Michael Keating, ed., *Debating Scotland. Issues of Independence and Union in the 2014 Referendum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 191-202.

[50] The SVP also claims to be the voice of South Tyrol's Ladin-speaking population.

[51] Günther Pallaver, "The *Südtiroler Volkspartei*: Success through conflict, failure through consensus," in Oscar Mazzoleni and Sean Mueller, eds., *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe. Dimensions of Success* (London: Routledge, 2017), 107-134.

[52] On process-tracing, see Derek Beach, and Rasmus Brun Pedersen, *Process-Tracing Methods. Foundations and Guidelines* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

[53] Albert Balcells, *Catalan nationalism. Past and Present* (London: Macmillan, 1995).

[54] The Statute of Autonomy received broad support in Catalonia. It was put to a referendum in 1979 and garnered the support of over 91% of Catalan voters, with all nationalist parties advocated a 'yes' vote.

[55] CiU leader Jordi Pujols Pujols, who founded the senior partner of the coalition, CDC, always made a point to say that although he was a Catalan nationalist, he did not seek the creation of an independent Catalan state. See Kenneth McRoberts, *Catalonia. Nation Building Without A State* Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001, p.67.

[56] Requejo.

[57] Elias, p.87.

[58] The PP was particularly uncompromising once it formed a majority government (2000-2004).

[59] André Lecours, "Violence as Politics: ETA and Basque Nationalism," in Steve Saideman and Marie-Joëlle Zahar, eds., *Insecurity in Intra-State Conflicts: Governments, Rebels, and Outsiders* (London: Routledge, 2008), 120-137.

[60] Michael Keating and Alex Wilson, "Renegotiating the State of Autonomies: Statute Reform and Multi-Level Politics in Spain," *West European Politics,* 32 (May 2009), p.544.

[61] In short, the 2006 reform of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy specified and increased the powers of the Catalan government; created formal institutions for managing bilateral relations between the Spanish and Catalan governments; referenced a statement of the Catalan Parliament stating that Catalonia was a nation; introduced the notion that Catalan historical rights were a source for

self-government; increased Catalonia's fiscal autonomy and limited the ambit of fiscal equalization in Spain. César Colino, "Constitutional Change without Constitutional Reform: Spanish Federalism and the Revision of Catalonia's Stature of Autonomy," *Publius: The Journal of Federalism,* 39 (Spring 2009), 262-288.

[62] Montserrat Guibernau, "Secessionism in Catalonia: After Democracy," *Ethnopolitics,* 12 (November 2013), p.381.

[63] Ibid., p.381.

[64] Karlo Basta, "The Social Construction of Transformative Political Events." *Comparative Political Studies,* 51 (September 2018), p.1256.

[65] Ibid., p.1254.

[66] Idem.

[67] The slogan in the first massive demonstration in 2010 was '*Som una nació. Nosaltres decidim.*' (We are a nation. We decide.)

[68] The Catalan government sought, at that point, a new 'fiscal pact' with Madrid. In the early 2010, Catalan demands for increased fiscal autonomy grew louder as a major economic crisis, which morphed into a financial and fiscal crisis, was impacting the whole of Spain but hitting Catalonia particularly hard. As one of the wealthiest Autonomous Communities, Catalonia contributed more to Spanish coffers than it received, a situation that was becoming intolerable in the context of strong nationalist mobilization. Gray, p.26.

[69] All branches of the state fought secessionism in Catalonia: the executive, the legislatures, courts, and the public administration, including the police.

[70] Christopher Harvie and Peter Jones, *The Road to Home Rule. Images of Scotland's Cause* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2000), p.34.

[71] Paul Cairney, *The Scottish Political System since Devolution. From New Politics to the New Scottish Government* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2011), p.ix.

[72] Ibid., p.ix.

[73] Ian Donnachie, Christopher Harvie and Ian S. Wood, *Forward! Labour Politics in Scotland 1888-1988* (Edinburgh, Polygon, 1989).

[74] Neil MacCormick, "Is there a constitutional path to Scottish independence," *Parliamentary Affairs,* 53 (October 2000), p.722.

[75] Peter Lynch, "Scottish Independence, the Québec Model of Secession and the Political Future of the Scottish National Party," *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics,* 11 (2005), 503-531.

[76] See the quote by MSP Christina McKelvie in Glen M.E. Duerr, *Secessionism and the European Union. The Future of Flanders, Scotland, and Catalonia* (London: Lexington, 2015), p.93.

[77] Severin Carrell, "Alex Salmond could stage multi option Scottish independence referendum," *The Guardian,* January 25 2012. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2012/jan/25/salmond-multi-option-scottish-referendum. Retrieved March 14 2019.

[78] James Mitchell, "The Referendum Campaign," in Aileen McHarg, Tom Mullen, Alan Page and Neil Walker, eds., *The Scottish Independence Referendum: Constitutional and Political Implications* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016),.80-81

[79] Ibid., p.81.

[80] James Mitchell, *The Scottish Question* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[81] In the 2015 British general elections, the SNP won 56 out of a possible 59 seats, up 50 seats from the 2010 elections. The results in the 2017 British general elections were down but still strong, with 35 seats won. Moreover, in the 2016 Scottish election, the SNP won 63 out of a possible 129 seats to form government yet again.

[82] For example, the bipolar structure of the campaign (which opposed 'Yes Scotland' and 'Better Together') was dictated by the yes/no question and the underlying conception by the UK government of Scottish autonomy as static.

[83] David Clegg, "David Cameron, Ed Miliband and Nick Clegg Sign Joint Historic Promise which Guarantees More Devolved Powers for Scotland and Protection of NHS if We Vote No." *Daily Record*, September 15 2014., http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron-ed-miliband-nick-4265992. Retrieved March 14 2019.

[84] Lecours.

[85] The report of the Smith Commission, which was instigated by the United Kingdom government right after the referendum, translated into the Scotland Act 2016, which gives Scotland more fiscal autonomy and more policy autonomy in the area of social welfare.

[86] Diego Muro, "When do Countries Re-Centralize? Ideology and Party Politics in the Age of Austerity," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics,* 21 (March 2014), 24-43. The upstart far-right party *Vox* even proposes the return to a unitary state. See Robert Gould, "Vox España, an Alternative Identity for Spain: Nationalism, Opposition to the European Union, and Proposals for 'Spexit,'" Carleton University Centre for European Studies, 2019, p.5. https://carleton.ca/ces/wp-

content/uploads/Commentary-Vox-An-Alternative-Identity-for-Spain-by-Robert-Gould-February-2019.pdf. Retrieved March 14 2019.

[87] Michel Huysseune, "The Flemish Paradox: The Hegemony of Pro-Independence Parties in a Region Largely Indifferent towards Independence," *Ethnopolitics,* 16 (2017), 353.

[88] Louis Vos, "The Flemish National Question," in Kas Deprez, and Louis Vos, eds., *Nationalism in Belgium: Shifting Identities, 1780–1995* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 83-95.

[89] The first Flemish nationalist party, *Frontpartij*, was created after WWI. It was rooted in the *Frontbeweging*, an organization that struggled for the use of Dutch in the army. By the 1930s, *Vlaams National Verbond* (VNV) had absorbed *Frontpartij* and deployed a program combining authoritarianism and the creation of a 'greater Netherlands.' After WWII, the Flemish nationalist party *Volksunie,* created in 1954, championed federalism.

[90] The most important of these crises involved the fate of the world-renowned Catholic University of Louvain (Leuven). Historically Francophone but located in Flanders, the university had become bilingual in the 1930s but the Flemish Movement demanded that any education dispensed in French be located in the French language area a the new language regime seemed to dictate. This claim, which was associated with the slogan '*walen buiten'* (Walloons out) and accompanied by massive Flemish demonstrations, led to significant confrontations between the two language communities.

[91] Kris Deschouwer, "And the peace goes on? Consociational democracy and Belgian politics in the twenty-first century," *West European Politics,* 29 (2006), p.900.

[92] Ibid., p.901.

[93] Maureen Covell, "Agreeing to Disagree: Elite Bargaining and the Revision of the Belgian Constitution," *Canadian Journal of Political Science,* 15 (September 1982), 451-469.

[94] A controversy erupted around the small village of *Voeren/Fourons* located in Flanders but where the mayor, José Happart, refused to use Dutch in proceedings as the law required. The *Voeren/Fourons* controversy quickly turned into a national crisis as Flemish and French-speaking political parties were polarized over the fate of the village.

[95] Rolf Falter, "Belgium's Peculiar Way to Federalism," in Kas Deprez, and Louis Vos, eds., *Nationalism in Belgium: Shifting Identities, 1780–1995* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p.189.

[96] Other *Volksunie* members joined the Flemish Liberals, Socialists and Greens, which also presented potential for radicalizing Flemish self-determination claims.

[97] Wilfried Swenden, "Belgium and the Crisis of Governability, 2007-2011: Rebooting Territorial Pluralism?" in Karlo Basta, John McGarry and Richard Simeon, eds., *Territorial Pluralism. Managing Difference in Multinational States* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 196-219.

[98] The BHV electoral district featured territories of the Brussels-Capital Region and Flanders. For Flemish parties, especially N-V.A, the electoral district worked to spread French in its Flemish population residing in Flanders.

[99] Marc Swyngedouw and Marco Martiniello, eds., *Où va la Belgique? Les soubresauts d'une petite démocratie européenne* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1998); *The Economist.*

[100] Around that time, German-speakers accounted for 75.9% of South Tyrol's population while Italian-speakers represented 10.6%. Alice Engl and Alexandra Tomaselli, "Appendix," in Jens Woelk, Francesco Palermo and Joseph Marko, eds., *Tolerance Through Law. Self-Governance and Group Rights in South Tyrol* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 2008), p.392.

[101] Grote, p.91.

[102] Elisabeth Alber, "Qualified Autonomy vs Secessionist Discourses in Europe: The case of South Tyrol," in Eva Maria Besler, Alexandra Fang-Bär, Nina Massüger and Rekha Oleschak Pillai, eds., *States Falling Apart? Secessionist and Autonomy Movements in Europe* (Bern: Stämpfli Verlag, 2015), 267-296.

[103] Emma Lantschner, "History of the South Tyrol Conflict and Its Settlement," in Jens Woelk, Francesco Palermo and Joseph Marko, eds., p.11.

[104] Grote, p.11.

[105] There are either three representatives for each group, or three German-speakers, two Italian-speakers and one Ladin. See Jens Woelk, "What it Means to Be Special in Relation to the Central State: Institutions and Procedures," in Jens Woelk, Francesco Palermo and Joseph Marko, eds., pp.140-141).

[106] Francesco Palermo, "Implementation and Amendment of the Autonomy Statute" in Jens Woelk, Francesco Palermo and Joseph Marko, eds., p.145.

[107] Günther Pallaver, "The *Südtiroler Volkspartei*: Success through conflict, failure through consensus," in Oscar Mazzoleni and Sean Mueller, eds., *Regionalist Parties in Western Europe. Dimensions of Success* (London: Routledge, 2017), p.117.

[108] Palermo, p.147.

[109] Ibid., p.149.

[110] Ibid.,, p.117.

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[111] Elisabeth Alber, "The 'Autonomy Convention': Debating South Tyrol's prospects of self-governance," *European Public Mosaic* (June 2017), pp.29-30.

[112] In the most recent provincial elections, the two secessionist parties that seemed to be on the uptick four years before both lost seats.

[113] The presence in South Tyrol of an Italian-speaking minority, completely loyal to the Italian state and having little contact with the German-speaking majority, always represented an in-built constraint to the development of a broad movement for the independence of South Tyrol. See Andrea Carlà, "Living Apart in the Same Room: Analysis of the Management of Linguistic Diversity in Bolzano," *Ethnopolitics,* 6 (2007), 285-313.

[114] Xosé M. Núñez Seixas, *Suspiros de España. El nacionalismo español 1808-2018* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2018).

[115] A particularly intriguing case is Québec where secessionism has receded over the last two decades.