

**SUBVERSIVE DIPLOMACY IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT?
THE LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES OF INDEPENDENCE PARTIES**

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Introduction

The upsurge in interest in the interaction of regions and the European Union (EU) in the past decade has only recently sparked examination of how regional *parties* are negotiating the opportunities and challenges created by European integration. Whether nationalism in the guise of movements for "regional"¹ autonomy or independence in EU member states has actually been fostered by the evolution of the European Union is still an open question. Less controversial is the recognition that many nationalist parties across the Member States recognize the critical importance of economic, social and political developments in the EU to their struggles for independence or autonomy, and have, either reluctantly or enthusiastically, come to incorporate a "European" dimension into their strategic designs.²

But whereas the impact of European integration on nationalist politics at the domestic level is now increasingly familiar territory, less so is the exploration of how nationalist party activists themselves seek to influence the policy-making of the EU and participate in institutions at the European level. Some of the competition for resources that nationalists engage in is either occurring at the domestic level itself, in local, regional or national government, or "in Brussels" (literally) but outside the boundaries of the formal institutions of the Community. These types of participation are not insignificant as, for example, the growing literature on the power of lobbying and information offices and on trans-European regional associations suggests. But there are few systematic comparative studies of nationalism in European Union institutions. That is, despite the growing interest how "Europe" affects nationalist politics and strategy at the domestic level, there is less discussion of how nationalists seek to affect "Europe" itself: studies of nationalism recognize that the EU is playing a greater role in nationalist politics, either positively or negatively for the parties concerned, but shy away from addressing how nationalists are responding in Europe to the opportunities and challenges that Europe presents.

I propose that not only are nationalists using the institutions of the EU to promote their agendas, but that their strategies can be understood in the light of the historical record of how nationalists have sought to use international organizations. Throughout this century, nationalists have used international organizations (IOs) to try to win support for their causes from international players - major powers - that have been in a position to advance their interests. Nationalists have sought to establish the distinct identities and interests of their respective peoples and to win support for policies they believe would benefit these peoples, including independence. Until recently, nationalist parties have not had equal power in IOs to that held by the representatives of their state governments. Establishing the distinctiveness of their identity and their political interests has been critical for "getting noticed" in order to win support or patronage from other powers, in an arena where nationalists could not speak for themselves.

The European Parliament (EP) creates a novel situation where nationalist representatives are formally equal to the representatives of the states they seek to destroy or recast. Nationalists can speak for themselves and can directly attack the legitimacy of their states, while seeking to present themselves as the sole legitimate voices of their respective peoples. I propose that nationalists will use the EP in a manner similar to that in which they have traditionally used IOs: to seek legitimacy and support for their movements from an international audience, and to turn international opinion against the current state structure and toward that articulated by the nationalists. They first need to convince their audience that the people, nation or region they claim to represent is somehow distinct in identity from that identity associated with their respective states. This requirement is prior to convincing an audience that the nationalists' constituents have distinct policy interests, interests that the current state cannot or will not accommodate. Nationalism is essentially an attack on the legitimacy of the state as an entity capable of addressing the needs of the constituent peoples of that state. Success requires first that a "people" be recognized as a distinct entity; but successful nationalists will also demonstrate that it is a consequence of this particular identity that the policy interests of the people in question are ignored. Although

nationalists cannot win their "ultimate" constitutional game at the European level, I will argue that they can use their platforms to establish their identity and their interests, and to attack the legitimacy of their states in the eyes of an international audience.

After briefly examining the historical record of how nationalists have employed international organizations, I will turn to a specific set of interactions in the European Parliament in which we might have the strongest expectation that nationalists will attempt to legitimate themselves as leaders and to attack the legitimacy of their states. When their respective states hold the presidency of the Council of Ministers, nationalists, along with their colleagues in the EP, have numerous opportunities to question and criticize representatives of these states' governing parties. I will explore how, in the context of their states' representatives, nationalists attempt to establish distinctive identities and policy interests for their constituents. I propose that during these interactions with the Council Presidency, nationalists seek to establish for their constituents identities that distinguish them from the state, to promote policies that demonstrate a unique dedication to these constituents' interests, and to call into question the very legitimacy of their respective states while asserting that the nationalist agenda alone can create the only legitimate form of polity for their people.

Nationalists in the European Parliament: weak parties in a weak institution?

Although the European Parliament might seem an ideal laboratory in which to study the strategies of independence parties in IOs, surprisingly little systematic research on the subject has been undertaken. That there is little academic interest in small parties or nationalism broadly defined in the EP (except, perhaps, when extremist MEPs generate publicity) is the result of misplaced emphasis in much of the literature on the EP on *outcomes* or on voting results, as opposed to the mechanisms by which coalitions are built and political alliances forged.

It is to struggle against the prevailing current to discuss the strengths of the EP as opposed to its weakness.³ But even those studies that explore the internal dynamics of EP decision-making give us little

reason to take an interest in the political activities of nationalist MEPs. The European Parliament has been dominated as an elected body by the European Socialist Party (PSE - currently the largest political grouping in the EP) and the European People's Party (PPE - Christian Democrats and the British Conservative party). Although the Socialists have a numerical majority, legislation requiring an absolute majority (e.g. under the cooperation procedure) demands coalitions be formed by either the two major groupings, the PPE/PSE "grand coalition," or with the inclusion of the more moderate groupings in the EP. Many independence-seeking nationalists have never been part of a medium or large-sized European grouping: the Flemish independence party, the Vlaams Blok, sat with the minor grouping, the Technical Group of the European Right from 1989 to 1994 and are now non-attached; the Scottish National Party sat with the small leftist grouping Arc en Ciel from 1989 to 1994 and now sits with the left-liberal European Radical Alliance. In one of the few studies done on coalition formation on roll call votes in the EP, Kreppel and Tsebelis (1996) indicate that the record of roll call votes under the cooperation procedure during the 1989-1994 session shows that the extreme right and left groupings in which the above parties sat were weak and that the right in particular had no capacity either to pass legislation or to block it. The weakness of these parties was such that Kreppel and Tsebelis refer to them as almost "permanent oppositions" in the EP. The dissolution of the Technical Group of the Right after the 1994 EP elections has left the Vlaams Blok in an even weaker position in terms of formal ability to participate in the European Parliament and to influence legislation, despite their adding a new MEP to their EP contingent.⁴

Yet the above suggests a lacuna in literature on the European Parliament. By focusing on proceduralism and on outcomes as indicators of power, such as the ability of the EP collectively to influence EU legislation, or the extent to which Euro-groupings can sway voting within the EP, studies of the European Parliament can not help us to understand why small or marginalised parties participate in the institution at all. Given the efforts of nationalists to win seats in the European Parliament (EP), and the success of some nationalist parties to do so, it is logical to investigate the EP as an arena in which

nationalist politicians seek in some way to further their political agendas. If we assume that nationalists are rational political actors, we must ask: why do they participate in the European Parliament? What do they hope to achieve, given their apparent total exclusion from any capacity to influence events within the EP itself? The value that these parties' members derive from participating in the European Parliament stems not from any ability to wield the clout of the major political groupings in the EP, the Socialists or Christian Democrats, but is based upon the unique role that the European Parliament allows them to play in engaging an international audience. Nationalist members of the European Parliament (MEPs), in particular those that represent independence parties, do indeed seek to use their position to influence the behaviour of their colleagues, in order to support decisions of the EP that will be beneficial to the nationalists' constituencies. But furthermore, independence parties have long term goals that require them to seek to change the very perceptions that other MEPs have of their relationship to their respective regions or nations. Crucially, these MEPs must cause to be called into question the nature of legitimate rule in their respective states, with a view to destroying the capacity of their state governments to claim to be legitimate leaders. A brief exploration of the role nationalists have historically played in international organizations sheds light on the strategies we might expect nationalists in the EP to employ. Although it may be difficult to determine ultimately whether or how nationalists in the EP have an impact directly on domestic policies and politics, we can at least develop a sense of the strategies they take into the international arena, and the goals they claim to be pursuing.

International Organizations: Whither Nationalists?

What special opportunities or challenges does the international environment pose for nationalists, and how do nationalists seek to exploit their international environment? Although the European Parliament represents a historically novel form of international organisation, there are a few historical precedents to help us develop some assumptions about how nationalists might respond to a supra-state institution such as the European Union.

We confront an initial difficulty in that, although an ever-increasing body of work discusses the impact of the international arena on nationalist parties, or on the domestic political structures in which nationalists operate, far less attention is paid to how nationalists participate in the international arena. Literature on the impact of international forces on nationalism tends to flow in several distinct streams. At the broadest level, we are challenged to consider how the "international environment" affects the conditions in which nationalists pursue their goals. These discussions include Marxist and neo-Marxist considerations of how world capitalism, particularly in the form of empire-building, and the globalisation of markets have an impact on potential support for nationalism (Nairn, 1977; Hechter, 1975). Analyses of how specific international regimes, such as free-trade areas, influence individuals' preferences for supporting nationalist parties (Meadwell and Martin, 1996; Meadwell, 1991; Hechter and Levi, 1979), and more fundamental propositions about how the now-universal norm of the state as the basic organizational unit in world politics constrains the very goals that nationalists must articulate (Bull, 1977; Jackson and Rosberg, 1982) also shape discussion of nationalism in the international context. Although we can develop some expectations about how the international system, and institutions and regimes established in it, may affect the politics of nationalism, we encounter less discussion about the other side of the coin. It would be easy to dismiss this facet of the discussion by noting that nationalists, or rather, any political actors that are not representatives of the governing parties of states, have had few actual opportunities to participate in the international political arena. Certainly, there are no major cases of international organizations (IOs) where non-state government actors have had equal powers to, or equal say alongside, state governments; the European Parliament appears to be the first major IO where this is indeed the case. But nationalists of various persuasions have sought to have an impact in the international arena in the past, even where they have not been granted full powers to participate in IOs. What can the history of participation in IOs by nationalist movements and parties reveal about their goals in the international arena, and the strategies they have sought to deploy in order to exert influence in it to achieve their goals?

Historically and contemporarily, there has been some interaction by ethnic and nationalist movements with international organizations despite non-state organizations not possessing full participatory rights in these IOs. On a limited scale, these movements have had some success and have "learned" to use the international arena strategically; yet their efforts must be seen in the context of a world whose "international" organizations remain steadfastly the preserve of states.

The League of Nations was determined to ensure fair treatment of minority groups in new states, and sought to give these groups the capacity to appeal directly to the League concerning violations of their rights. Minority groups could petition the League directly for protection of their cultural and other group rights; but discussion and decision on their petitions was undertaken only by states in the League, including the state against whom the petition was directed.⁵ In petitioning the League, national minorities had acquired a means to break the monopoly held previously by states on "foreign policy," and had made initial forays into appealing directly to an international organization. What the aggrieved parties required, ultimately, was the direct support of individual states within the League. Despite their weakness, non-states had made their debut in a major international organization. Although the League had proven unable to intervene on behalf of minority peoples, the ground had been prepared for future aggrieved cultural and national groups to seek assistance at a new political level: above the level of the state itself.

As the League faded, the United Nations emerged as an international actor in which the representatives of many newly independent states enthusiastically took up the cause of politically oppressed cultural minorities and nationalist movements.⁶ Many contemporary human rights organizations and IOs permit minorities to file complaints or register abuses of their rights; and, numerous non-state actors, including organization such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International, have secured observer status at the UN. But as with the League, these cannot fully participate in deciding the issues that are of the greatest concern to them. The winning of the support of powerful states who are in a position to help advance their interests has continued to be the goal of national minorities who take their

cause to the international arena. The UN and other IOs are seen as potential sources of various forms of support for non-state actors: they can serve as forums for communication or propaganda to third parties (other states, diaspora groups, etc.); for soliciting direct support in the form of financial support, weapons, food or other aid; for challenging general norms of international behaviour or the conduct of specific states (and for seeking international responses to perceived injustices therein); for helping to forge linkages with similarly-minded organizations or interest groups; for the creation of political networks to serve future interests; and for simply publicizing the existence of a group and its grievances (Brysk, 1994; Van Cott, 1994; Esman and Telhami, 1995). Non-state actors *have* succeeded in having an impact on the policies of their own states: by getting their grievances onto international and third-party agendas, and by fostering international recognition of their state governments as "illegitimate," they have engendered the moral suasion and political interest necessary to convince other states to act on their behalf. Yet for all the novel purposes to which IOs may be put, it remains the case that whether nationalists or minorities seek influence through the UN, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, or the Council of Europe, they rely on persuading the members of these IOs - state representatives - to take up their causes and to work on their behalf.

But have national or ethnic movements, acting through IOs in which they have no formal participatory capacity, had any lasting impact on which future non-state actors might draw? National minorities may have thrown down a challenge as to what "sovereignty" implies in its *content*. Since the Second World War, human rights issues have come to form an essential part of what sovereign states are expected to defend. The legacy of the Nazi regime, combined with the era of decolonization and problematic issues of national minorities in new states, created a new international moral climate that began to challenge the utter inviolability of the sovereign state. Hopkins (1995) argues that the *functions* of sovereignty have come to be defined as its provision of advantages to a given citizenry - it implies a single procedural code for a people; the securing of rights for individuals and groups; and the ensuring of market relations (or other forms of transaction). If a state delivers these benefits, it is considered

"legitimate," its sovereignty inviolable. If, on the other hand, it is perceived to violate systematically this implicit covenant with its citizenry, the legitimacy of such states to be considered "sovereign" may become problematic.⁷ If no challenge to state authority arises, it may continue to function as sovereign in international politics. If, however, "entrepreneurs" representing the interests of disadvantaged groups do emerge, this may challenge the legitimate right of the state to impose obligation on its population (Hopkins, 1995).

What ethnic and nationalist movements appear to be doing is using modern IOs to the greatest extent they can to point out these supposed failures of their respective sovereign states. They seek, however feeble the means at their disposal, to challenge the legitimacy of states that are perceived to be failing in their duties to provide equal rights (be these economic, political or cultural) to all citizens. When national minorities have succeeded in using IOs to compel states to modify policies, they have first needed to convince the international community that there exists a "legitimacy problem," i.e. to present evidence of some form of systematic discrimination against a specific group. But more critical to their efforts is convincing state governments to use what formal powers they have to act on behalf of the aggrieved minority. These latter have learned, in the post-War era, to create and diffuse an *image* of the aggrieved group that can easily be taken up by potential patrons, and to latch on to norms of self-determination and human rights to promote their cases. But further action intended symbolically to "delegitimize" the status quo sovereign state, and to legitimate the leadership of national minorities as their peoples' "true" statesmen to the world, will ultimately fail if the group's patrons do not deliver on pressuring the offending sovereign state to change its policies.

The experiences of national minority groups in IOs have thus made a substantial contribution to commencing a debate over what the duties of a sovereign state are, a debate that represents a challenge to the previously maintained inviolability of the sovereign state to do what it likes to its population. Furthermore, national minorities and other non-state groups have demonstrated that some success in IOs can be achieved with the creation of powerful images and persuasive arguments that can be deployed

upon the international organization itself and upon the states that compose it. Yet, despite what these minorities have contributed to the role nationalists can play in the international arena, what they have not been able to do, at least until the advent of the European Parliament, is equally significant: they have not fully been able to represent *themselves* in international organizations. This fundamentally weak position of non-state actors has endured throughout much of this century. But the arrival of the European Parliament has created an utterly novel form of IO: non-governing parties, including ethnic minorities and regional parties, have full, formal powers of participation alongside the governing parties that represent the states composing the European Union.

The international arena: what makes independence parties unique?

It may be helpful at this point to understand why I intend to focus on nationalist parties, in particular those advocating independence, as opposed to other "non-state" political actors in the European Parliament (EP). What is special about nationalism that might distinguish it from other forms of political activism in an international organization? A detailed discussion of nationalism-cum-political phenomenon cannot be undertaken here. However, let it suffice for purposes of argument to assume that nationalism, if it follows Gellner's dictum of seeking to make political power congruent with the nation,⁸ can be classified as a distinct form of political activism, whose functional goals cut across wide possible variations in ideology or movement organization. There are numerous variations on the theme of nationalism represented in the European Parliament, from "right wing nationalism"⁹ to autonomy parties of differing ideological stripe to independence parties, also scattered across the ideological spectrum, despite the common goal of seeking the destruction of their respective states and the creation of new sovereign political entities.

Independence parties stand out from the autonomists and the "right wing nationalists" as those nationalists that reject that the current state structure can ever provide justice and fair treatment for their particular region, nation or cultural group. What are the implications of this for behaviour in the

international arena? Independence movements have always been confronted by the need to satisfy party activists and voters who will abandon the party if they believe its leadership has "sold out" or is compromising the constitutional goals of the party.¹⁰ These parties need to make a demonstrable effort to show that they are working for independence, to satisfy the simple requirement of the party winning elections or attracting membership. Hence their activity in international organisations acquires a dual purpose. They can create an image of themselves as champions of independence for their constituents in the eyes of other world actors, and use this apparent international recognition and acceptance of their ideals to bolster their *domestic* support. Their activities at the international level serve a function beyond constituency politicking for the securing of resources or rights, a trend we have noted historically in the participation of nationalists in IOs. If independence party politicians are going to have their own "voices" heard in IOs, and are going to have all the formal power and responsibility of state government parties, they have an interest not only in seeking to protect the interests of their constituents but in challenging the legitimacy of their host states, and in establishing themselves as the legitimate representatives of their people in international affairs. That is, in international organizations where the opportunities exist, independence-seeking nationalists will try to act as diplomats, articulating their constituents' interests to the world and claiming to be the sole actors who have the right to do so.

Cases, Data and Methodology

The nationalist parties I have selected for observation are the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Flemish party the Vlaams Blok. As I am arguing that independence parties generally carry traits that cause them to engage in similar types of international activity, I selected two cases that represent the widest possible "variety" of nationalisms in the European Parliament. The SNP is a left-wing social democratic independence party that is fighting for independence from a highly centralized state with no elected regional institutions (i.e. "regions" meaning Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and England). The Vlaams Blok is based in Flanders and is undertaking its struggle in a highly decentralized Belgian state

that has already devolved substantial power to its federal regions. The Vlaams Blok promotes a nationalism that is right-wing and highly exclusive in basing itself on a Flemish cultural, not civic, identity: the Vlaams Blok seeks the destruction of the Belgian state and the creation of an independent Flanders. Other independence parties in EU Member States have MEPs. However, the Scottish and Flemish parties are selected for their representing a broad spectrum of ideological and other characteristics: if there are indeed particular properties of how independence parties act in international organisations, they ought to emerge with these cases, despite their other differences.

The data that form the backbone of this study come from the Annex to the Official Journal of the European Communities (Debates of the European Parliament), and cover the two most recent presidencies of the Council of Ministers by each the United Kingdom and Belgium.¹¹ The published debates of the European Parliament catalogue the variety of forms of participation by MEPs during the formal sittings of the Parliament: oral and written questions to the Commission and Council of Ministers, motions for resolution tabled or debated on a variety of subjects including topical and urgent affairs; reports authored by MEPs that have come up for debate; debate on statements by the Council and Commission; explanations of voting; and discussion regarding approval of the minutes and other procedural issues (e.g. points of order, personal statements, and so on). I will analyse the content of the interactions between the SNP and Vlaams Blok MEPs and their co-national representatives on the Council of Ministers, during the period in which their countries held the presidency of the Council. Interaction specifically with the Council Presidency takes a number of forms. At the beginning and end of each term of office, a representative of the Presidency makes a statement to the EP in which he or she discusses the programme of the Presidency on the former instance and the achievements of the Presidency on the latter. On these occasions, there are opportunities for brief statements and questions by MEPs; MEPs are as well usually given the chance to question the Council Presidency on its occasional statements on special issues (e.g. the ERM crisis in 1992). The EP also allows for oral and written questions to the Council, frequently with debate or supplementary questions: questions may be grouped

by subject in special joint debates or tabled for Question Time. The European Parliament has a Question Time to the Council during every week-long session (i.e. about six such Question Times during each six-month presidency, there occasionally being an emergency session or a debate on a statement by the Council). During these Question Times, any MEP may table written or oral questions to be answered by the country presiding in the Council.¹² This is an ideal situation in which to observe how independence parties seek publicly to establish themselves as legitimate representatives for their regions and to differentiate themselves from their governments' policies, and perhaps from competing nationalist voices, to an international audience.

From what we understand about the nature of independence seeking actors and from what we have observed historically about the participation of nationalists in IOs, we can set forth several propositions about the types of behaviour we expect to see by independence parties in the European Parliament. First, such parties need to establish themselves as representing a distinct national *identity*, be this cultural, ethnic, regional/civic or other. The primary goal of nationalist parties needs to be to establish to an audience that their constituents "exist" as an identifiable group. We therefore expect that an independence party MEP will use language that explicitly refers to his or her national group or that conveys the image that this national group is distinct in identity from that projected by its state representation. This includes, but is not limited to, description of the self as a member of a national group distinct from that of the state, or of a party representing such a national group; or the description of one's constituents as belonging to such as distinctive national group. This would contrast with the presentation of oneself or one's constituents in ideological terms, in European grouping terms, or as identifying with the respective Member State.

Second, we expect MEPs from independence parties *to articulate policy interests particular to their national groups*, policies that are distinct from those advocated by the "status quo" parties in their states. That is, not only do nationalists need to convince an audience that they represent a different "people," but that this matters because their constituents have substantively different interests from those

articulated by their respective Member States. We therefore expect that the types of interventions these nationalists will make in the EP involve the presentation of a policy agenda that is distinct from that pursued by their Member State government parties, and other co-national non-independence seeking parties. This may involve presenting a policy agenda distinct to the region or nation, with special relevance for independence parties' constituents; differentiating this policy agenda from those of the status quo parties; or attempting to put onto the legislative agenda of the EP or to introduce into debate subjects of importance to their constituents, that they claim the status quo parties have ignored.

Third, the crucial task of nationalists seeking independence is to *call into question the legitimacy of the current state structure* and its representatives to speak on behalf of the nation, region or ethnic group. We can therefore propose, drawing on the activities of nationalist parties and movements in IOs in the post-war era, that independence seeking MEPs will openly question the ability of their respective Member States to fulfill the obligations sovereign states are considered to possess regarding their specific national, regional or ethnic groups. This may involve the legitimation of the nationalist party as the sole legitimate spokesperson for the nation or region, the MEP's presenting himself or herself as uniquely possessing the ability to do best for his or her people and the right to speak on their behalf. Or it may involve actively trying to delegitimize the state by calling into questions the ability, or willingness, of actors operating under current state structures to provide for the given "nation," and challenging the right of state parties to make policy on behalf of that nation. Demonstrating the failure of governing parties to make appropriate policy for the nation, and the lack of governing parties' taking responsibilities deemed important to the nation may be part of this strategy. Opposition parties that are not necessary nationalistic may equally seek to create a distinct image of their constituents in the international arena, and may assert policy interests that differ from those of the governing party. It is this third dimension, that of criticizing the legitimacy of the state itself, that sets apart independence-oriented nationalists from other types of parties, including autonomist nationalist parties. Creating a distinct image and articulating distinct policy stances precede this task of legitimation; but ultimately, it is this element of promoting the nationalist

party as the only legitimate voice of a people that is the most critical task for independence seeking MEPs.

Examining the record: independence parties and their co-nationals in the Presidency of the Council of Ministers

During the UK presidency of the Council of Ministers from July to December 1986, there was only one independence party MEP from the UK, Mrs. Winnie Ewing of the Scottish National Party. Ewing remained the sole independence party MEP during the UK presidency of July to December 1992. During the Belgian presidency in 1993 there was a new form of Flemish nationalism in the European Parliament: along with the autonomist Volksunie party, the independence-seeking Vlaams Blok had one MEP, Mr. Karel Dillen.

It appears not to be the case that nationalist MEPs are uniformly concerned with making their case to a "European audience" in the context of the presence of their co-nationals in the Council Presidency. Dillen only had four instances of direct interaction with the Belgian Presidency, as opposed to ten for Ewing during the UK Presidency. One difficulty in attempting to generalize from individual MEPs and small parties is that any quirk of fate e.g. illness or domestic emergency may significantly skew the record of participation. I will return to problems of generalizability in my concluding remarks. I would like to examine the content of what these nationalist MEPs *do* discuss when they have the opportunity publicly to critique the activities of their national governments and the very state structures within which these governments operate.

The Image of the Nation

The first dimension that we suggested would matter to nationalists was that of creating a distinctive image. What does the record show of how, or whether, nationalists, and independence parties in particular try to create a public image in the European arena for themselves as nationalists with

distinctive regional, ethnic or cultural bases? In the records of Ewing's (SNP) interactions with the UK Presidency in 1986, we expect her to use rhetoric that emphasizes her Scottish identity, describes her constituency (the Highlands and Islands of Scotland), or highlights her party as in some way distinctive in whom it represents (i.e. representing Scottish interests instead of British or UK interests). Rather surprisingly, however, *at no point* in any of Ewing's ten instances of interaction with the UK minister sitting as the President-in-Office of the Council did she ever identify herself in these terms.¹³

Furthermore, on only two other occasions does she explicitly link herself with any particular political identity: in one instance, regarding an oral question to the Council with debate on a Community training programme, Ewing identified herself explicitly with her committee's interests (she was then Chair of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media).¹⁴ The other occasion was the Council statement on the six months of the British Presidency, when Ewing referred to herself as "the only British Member who is not a member of the large parties," and proceeded to use this introduction solely to thank Lady Chalker for her "magnificent conduct throughout the British Presidency."¹⁵ This is hardly a noticeable effort to present a distinctly national, regional or cultural identity; indeed, Ewing's self-identification as British might rile some of the more radical members of the SNP. She is clearly, both in her self-presentation as British and in her courtesy toward Lady Chalker, seeking to demonstrate a degree of goodwill toward her co-nationals presiding in the Council, and does not project an identity that could be construed as distinctive, except insofar as she presents herself as the representative of a small party - aside from this, her political identity as an independence-orientated nationalist is not overtly broadcasted to her colleagues in the EP.

The 1992 Presidency of the United Kingdom inspired a more activist approach by the SNP MEP than did the previous presidency. We see, in addition, more attempts by Ewing to forge an identity for her party, her constituency, and her nation that distinguish Scotland and its people from the UK as a whole, to her audience in the European Parliament. At its simplest, this involves projecting an image of the geographical constituency that she serves; at a more complex level, Ewing seeks to position herself

with a political and social identity for herself and for those she represents that is separate from the identity associated with the UK as a single nation or unitary state.

Ewing makes some attempt to describe her constituency to her international audience, and thereby to create for them an identity that distinguishes it from the rest of the UK, and places it in a Scottish, not a British, context. Of her fight to get Objective 1 (ERDF) status for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, she says that the Commission welcomed her earlier interventions on behalf of her electorate, "because of our sub-Arctic climate, our vulnerability, our remoteness, the cost this entails, the sparse population, and so on."¹⁶ She deploys this theme of a vulnerable people throughout the period of the UK Presidency, describing Scotland for example as particularly hard hit from the ERM crisis,¹⁷ and as an unwilling recipient of irradiated fuel stores.¹⁸ More significant is her frequent usage of the words Scotland and Scottish in her activity throughout the British Presidency: on several occasions, including her comments on the statement on European Union and the Maastricht Treaty by the President-in-Office of the Council, she refers to Scotland as "my own country," a highly politicized usage of the word intended to contrast with the more generally accepted term of "region" used in Europe to describe Scotland.¹⁹

These attempts to present an image of Scotland and its people as distinct from the rest of the UK represents a departure from Ewing's behaviour during the 1986 UK Presidency, where "Scotland" as an entity unto itself was for the most part absent from her rhetoric. This language is intended to remind an audience that Scotland exists as a distinct entity. The fact that Ewing made these interventions in the context of her own state's presidency is significant, as it seeks to create a *relational* image of Scotland i.e. as something that is not the United Kingdom. It may be a measure of Winnie Ewing's success in associating herself specifically with Scotland that she earned the sobriquet "Madame Ecosse," a name that has stuck amongst her colleagues in the European Parliament. By identifying her party with a vulnerable people, and by attempting to create a public image of Scotland that differentiates it in the minds of her audience from the UK itself as a state, she is laying the groundwork to make even more

damning criticism of the UK: that the state itself is ill-equipped to meet the needs of some of its own peoples.

Karel Dillen, the representative of the Vlaams Blok during the Belgian Presidency of the Council during, engaged in much more limited interaction with his co-nationals in the Council. He confronted the Belgian President-in-Office of the Council three times during debates on Council statements to the European Parliament, and once in a debate on questions concerning racism and xenophobia to the Council and Commission. With the exception of one of these interventions, where he does not define himself in any terms that are related to the Vlaams Blok as a Flemish independence party, Dillen makes much more explicit than Ewing the relationship of himself as an MEP and his party to a people with a distinct identity, the Flemish. When he confronts Belgian ministers, Dillen clearly identifies himself as a nationalist, and a right-winger, who along with his colleagues in the European Right grouping, stands up and "fight[s] for the maintenance of their language, culture, religion and civilization - in short, for the essence, singularity and culture of their people and of all the peoples of Europe."²⁰ This rhetorical device allows Dillen to make two claims simultaneously about the nature of Flemish nationalism: that it is concerned with the preservation of a given distinct culture (i.e. Flemish), but that, in addition, it is concerned with the preservation of a diversity of cultures, that any "people," not simply the Flemish, have the right to seek to maintain a distinctive culture.

However egalitarian this may sound, it is far from implying a civic nationalism. It is the cultural content of Flemish identity, and the relationship of the Vlaams Blok to the fight to preserve this cultural identity, that most concern Dillen. The image he creates in the European Parliament of Flemish culture emphasizes the importance of the Dutch language to this culture, and warns of a language under threat, both "at home" and in the heart of European institutions. Like Ewing, Dillen emphasizes the vulnerability of the group he claims to represent. The Flemish people are threatened, he states, by economic forces that threaten the viability of their communities and thereby the survival of their culture.²¹ Furthermore, the very unwillingness of a native Fleming, Willy Claes, to speak Dutch in the European Parliament is

indicative to Dillen that Dutch-speakers have few allies to protect their right to use their language in European institutions.²² Dillen identifies the Vlaams Blok as the only party dedicated to saving Flemish culture.

That Dillen has had success in projecting at least a distinctive image of the Vlaams Blok for his EP colleagues is manifested by the reaction to him and to his party by other MEPs participating in debates with him. In debate on questions to the Council and Commission on racism, the speaker for the Greens explicitly referred to the Vlaams Blok, saying that she was "shocked, deeply concerned, and furious" about Vlaams Blok successes in Belgium and "indignant" about how they used social problems for "their repulsive racist campaigns."²³ Such condemnation of "racist" political parties is not uncommon in EP debate, although individual parties are rarely singled out. Dillen may well have established an image of Flanders, of Flemish culture, and of the Vlaams Blok in the minds of his Euro-colleagues; whether it is the image that he seeks to project, of a culture and a people under threat, is quite another issue.

Dillen also faces a challenge to his image of Flemish identity that Ewing does not. Dillen is confronted with another representation of Flemish nationalism in the form of Volksunie MEP Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, who also makes explicit claims to speak on behalf of Flanders, whereas Ewing faces no similar challenge from other nationalists. Whereas Dillen extols the virtues of a Flanders liberated from the constraints of the Belgian state, Vandemeulebroucke speaks on behalf of the regions of Belgium playing a strong role *within* the state. Addressing the President-in-Office of the Council Willy Claes, Vandemeulebroucke identifies himself as a co-national: "we are a small country" he states, using the first person plural to demonstrate shared civic identity with Claes. And whereas Dillen equates Flemish interests with independence, Vandemeulebroucke, speaking immediately before Dillen in the debate on the programme of the Belgian presidency, asserts the value of *regional* identities and politics in Belgium, which, if fully realized, can "serve as a shining example of the reinterpretation of Europe in which everyone, including a region, is to have a say and can actually play a part in the building of

Europe."²⁴ These two visions of Flanders in Europe are in direct conflict: Vandemeulebroucke does not include any specifically "cultural content" in his message about regions, simply that as political entities they should be empowered; Dillen, on the other hand, rejects any notion of Flanders that does not identify his particular cultural construct of the Flemish nation with an independent state. Dillen may have had an impact in projecting an identity for Flanders and for his party in the European Parliament, but this identity itself is highly contested, as well as the political means that Dillen seeks to employ to promote his vision of Flanders.

Policy and Identity

But are the requisites to create an image, for an independence party, defined solely in terms of casting an identity in regional, cultural or other national terms? Historically, we have noted that nationalists seeking to work through international organizations have needed first to establish an identity in these terms as a means to attract international recognition of their causes. But nationalists in the European Parliament have additional tools at hand to win support. They can participate fully in the legislative and scrutinizing functions of the EP and make a case for their interests directly. By setting themselves in the context of their state presidencies of the Council of Ministers, they have the opportunity to position themselves directly in opposition to the agendas of their state governments, winning additional recognition for themselves as actors with the specific interests of a distinct people in mind. Do independence parties in the EP therefore develop and articulate distinctive policy lines? What are the consequences, in terms of the support they may garner for their causes, of the policy positions that they do advocate? I will first set out the major policy positions of the MEPs considered here, before discussing the consequences that these positions have on the ability of independence parties to win support.

Ewing and Dillen articulate policy agendas in their dealings with their respective state government Council presidencies that, not surprisingly, relate closely to their ideological positions. More interesting, however, is how their policy stances relate to questions of identity and the creation of an

image in the international arena. Ewing's policy interests retain a similarity across the 1986 and 1992 UK presidencies, with some variation with issues of topical importance. Her interests as stated in interactions with the Presidency in 1986 can be classed as: renewable energy and non-nuclear power; the interests of Scottish fishermen and the Common Fisheries Policy; education; human rights and specifically anti-apartheid measures; enforcement of additionality in the European Regional Development Fund; and respect for the European Parliament as an institution (by its own members and by the other institutions of the EC).²⁵ Her interests in 1992 bear broad similarities: human rights in Africa and Asia; the transport of nuclear fuel; problems of age discrimination; support for Lomé Convention states; a common electoral system for European elections; and greater openness in EC/EU institutions, particularly the Council of Ministers. New issues that arose in the wake of the Maastricht Treaty and recent developments in Europe included the application of subsidiarity within the UK, the selection of members for the Committee of the Regions, the ERM crisis, and Objective 1 (ERDF) status for Ewing's constituency, the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.²⁶ The range of Dillen's interests was much more limited. These interests included: the protection of European interests in relations with the former Soviet Union; stopping immigration into the EU and returning immigrants to their countries of origin; the dangers of the Maastricht Treaty, with a focus on the problems of granting voting rights in local elections to EU citizens residing outside their home state; and the need for a more critical approach of Belgium to US foreign policy, especially in Iraq.²⁷ Ewing never explicitly spoke of the destruction of the UK as a goal of her party; Dillen mentioned on several occasions the dismantling of Belgium as the goal of the Vlaams Blok. Yet beyond this obvious indicator, is there anything inherently "nationalistic" in these MEPs' overall policy stances? In other words, are nationalists really acting like nationalists in the EP, in terms of their professed policy interests?

The differences between the two parties appear fairly clear. For the Vlaams Blok, all policy emerges directly from the conceptualization of culture promoted by the group and their emphasis on independence for Flanders as the only means to safeguard their culture. There does not appear to be any

policy dimension independent of the nationalist agenda per se; policy simply reflects the identity politics of the group. The SNP, on the other hand, present an independent policy agenda that does not necessarily bear directly on the nationalist project. In this case, policy helps to shape an image of nationalism for the SNP, for a party that refuses to define itself in cultural or ethnic terms. To be humanitarian, left-leaning and environmentally concerned are not fundamental to the *notion* of Scottish independence; these tendencies are deployed within the boundaries of a civic nationalism that could allow for other interpretations of Scottish political identity. Compared to the Vlaams Blok, whose policies are closely bounded by the explicit relationship of culture and Flemish independence, the SNP can pursue broad based policy interests without appearing to compromise their overall goals of Scottish independence. But what are the consequences of these approaches?

The narrow focus of Vlaams Blok interests in the EU, and the relationship of their interests to a particular concept of identity, implies that on practical grounds, Dillen faces difficulty in making compromises for support on legislation of importance to him. With a conceptualization of identity that is "zero sum," and with policy interests that derive directly from a desire to preserve culture, the Vlaams Blok MEP faces marginalization from political power in the European Parliament. To make compromises with the larger political groupings that have the numerical strength to pass legislation and resolutions would be highly problematic for a party that itself resulted from the perceived compromising of the Volksunie on cultural issues. The MEP for the Vlaams Blok is compelled to limit his policies to a narrow area for ideological reasons, the abandonment of which would cause chaos within the party; yet in doing so, he would appear to go a long way toward ruling himself out of the "political game" in the European Parliament.

Yet the broad based, apparent flexibility of the SNP causes difficulties for this party as well. By directing her energies at constituency politics and at political issues that have support amongst the other parties of the left in the European Parliament, Ewing runs the risk of articulating a policy stance that is utterly indistinguishable from that of any other left wing party. This potential difficulty emerges during

the 1986 presidency, particularly during Council Question Time, when Ewing follows the lead set by Socialist grouping MEPs on issues such as non-nuclear energy by intervening in a supportive manner on their questions,²⁸ and by supporting the line of questioning by UK Labour MEPs specifically on additionality of ERDF monies, education at EC funded schools, and South Africa policy.²⁹ Question Time during the 1992 Presidency suggests a similar trend, with Ewing intervening in support of the line of questioning proposed by other Socialist group members and other Labour MEPs specifically.³⁰

The dangers of the SNP's nationalist message getting lost are most apparent on the numerous occasions when the British Labour Party MEPs and Ewing speak in the same debates about the programme or achievements of the UK Presidency of the Council; that is, in the situations where Ewing was the greatest opportunity and need to distinguish the SNP from the status-quo UK parties. Ewing's concern over the UK opting out of the Social Chapter of Maastricht is shared equally by the Socialist grouping and by Glyn Ford (Labour, MEP for Greater Manchester East) in particular. Indeed, during the statement on the agenda of the 1992 UK Presidency by Douglas Hurd, it is a Scottish Labour MEP who launches the most vitriolic attack on why certain questions were ruled inadmissible for following up the Presidency statement; Ewing added her comments, but here the criticisms of UK policy are most powerfully articulated by a Scottish non-nationalist.³¹ Cross-party (non-Conservative) policy interests also appear on the issue of fisheries, the ERM, and democracy and accountability in EU institutions. Hence Ewing finds herself in a position somewhat the "opposite" of that faced by the Vlaams Blok MEP: she may have broad support for the policies she promotes in the EP and may therefore be able to deliver policy successes to her constituents, but the perception that her policies are those of *the Scottish National Party* and the independence movement may not be clear. By overtly promoting a non-cultural, civic nationalism, the SNP MEP may find herself with the problem of simply being seen as another constituency politician in Europe, with little awareness of her party's ultimate goal of independence or understanding of why it matters.

Legitimacy, Identity and Policy

The nationalism of the Vlaams Blok therefore appears politically marginalised; that of the SNP, politically unsalient. Can they escape from their dilemmas? As suggested in the introduction to this paper, the "procedural" marginalization of parties like the Vlaams Blok need not necessarily be equated with political failure in Europe. And the fact that the SNP does not promote obviously nationalist policy stances in the EP does not preclude their attacking the legitimacy of the UK state in other respects. Despite the apparent difficulties that these nationalist parties both face, each can still employ a tactic long established by nationalist movements as a goal in international organizations: to attack the legitimacy of their respective states directly, presenting the message that the state is not, and cannot, fulfill its obligations to their constituents and that this failure of the state represents its incapacity to uphold those functions normatively associated with the sovereign state. To what extent do Ewing and Dillen attempt to convince an international audience that their respective states should no longer be considered legitimate sovereigns, as these states have abandoned their rights to impose obligations on the peoples that the SNP and Vlaams Blok claim to represent?

The 1986 presidency of the Council of Ministers again appears to represent a peculiarity in that Ewing does not overtly attempt to challenge the legitimacy of the state on behalf of the SNP at any point. She does not in any interaction with the Presidency claim that the UK as a state structure does not have the right or capacity to address the interests of the Scottish people. Rather, her interventions suggest that the government of the UK is not doing the job that it could potentially do to tend to the interests of Scotland, particularly in regard to European Community issues. Ewing's questions to the President in Office of the Council of Ministers in 1986 suggest a concern with the policy directions that the UK is, or is not, taking on some issues of concern to Scotland, in particular the question of additionality with respect to the European Regional Development Fund and the implementation of the Common Fisheries Policy.³² When challenging President in Office Chalker about the apparent failure of the UK government to follow the spirit of ERDP policy on additionality, Ewing does indeed demand to know whether the UK policy is "illegal," and states that Chalker's statement concerning the activities of the UK does appear to

be "a confession of an illegal act."³³ But criticism of government policy does not necessarily imply criticism of the state per se. This question of additionality represents the only intervention by Ewing during the 1986 UK presidency where she suggests that the policy-making organs of the UK may be actively working to discriminate against those who could benefit from ERDF monies. But as discussion above about identity and policy of nationalist parties suggested, there is no explicit projection of an image of *Scotland* as suffering from the policies of the UK; nor is there a suggestion that the state is incapable of meeting the needs of its people; only that the current government, in a few policy areas, is not doing so. Ewing fails to launch any major attack on the legitimacy of the UK as a political entity, and does not make any attempt to argue that an independent Scotland would better represent the Scottish people in the international arena.

The 1992 Presidency again reveals a more active SNP MEP, who is more strident in her condemnation of the incapacity and unwillingness of the UK to consider the interests of Scotland. Ewing's interactions with the UK Presidency demonstrate her desire to show herself and her party as more "democratic" in how they would represent the people of Scotland, and to paint the UK government not merely as unwilling to defend the interests of Scotland in Europe, but as fundamentally unable to do so under current conditions: the state itself is flawed and unrepresentative of the interests of the people of Scotland.

It is on specific policy issues that Ewing points to the failure of the UK government to take appropriate action on behalf of Scottish interests. Whether out of intentional discrimination or benign neglect, the policies of the UK have, according to Ewing, had a severe impact on the welfare of the Scottish people and she thereby calls into question the right of the government to be seen as speaking for Scotland and Scottish interests. Throughout the 1992 UK Presidency, Ewing underlines the failure of the UK government to address the economic interests of Scotland, in particular in Europe, and points to the unwillingness of the government to formulate more general policies on European issues that would benefit Scotland. The ERM crisis of autumn 1992 dominated the UK presidency. Ewing was quick to

point out that although the SNP had called early on for a devaluation of the pound, the government ignored their call: "A continued refusal to devalue will cost thousands more jobs as imports flood in and export trade is lost. The government has been intransigent. . . The refusal to take that action has brought misery to thousands of families. And Scotland is always hit worse."³⁴ But even on issues of less immediate crisis, the SNP MEP charges the UK government with an unwillingness to defend actively the interests of Scotland in Europe. In addition to condemning the government for squandering the oil wealth of the country, Ewing's remarks that the UK has been unwilling to lobby for ERDF monies for the poorest parts of Scotland are linked to her assertions that the state ignores its most vulnerable people and is incompetent to manage the economy in a way that would benefit them.³⁵ She argues that the Commission welcomed her activity in seeking Objective 1 status for the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, but that the UK government failed to support her or press the case in Europe.³⁶ To portray the state as unwilling or unable to protect its weakest citizens, in particular when these belong to a minority nation or regional group, follows in the long history of how nationalist movements have sought to win support for their causes by attacking the rights of their states to be seen as legitimate entities.

The lack of democratic representation of the peoples of the UK in Europe forms the basis of Ewing's critique of the state. She highlights government policy on subsidiarity and the UK electoral system for European elections as flaws that prevent the interests of the Scottish people from being properly represented either within the UK or at the European level. The position of the United Kingdom on subsidiarity is attacked by Ewing as being both contrary to the interests expressed by the Scottish people and as a block to their effective representation in Europe. She confronts the UK President in Office on several occasions with the fact that the people of Scotland voted for parties that supported some manner of regional representation for the nation, but that the UK insistence that subsidiarity stops at Westminster is in direct contradiction to the expressed interests of 75% of the Scottish electorate.³⁷ During five of her ten interactions with the UK presidency, she refers to the UK policy on subsidiarity, as well as its use of the first past the post electoral system for European elections, as problematic for

democracy in the EU. Referring to demonstrations during the summit of the European Council in December 1992, she asks whether the UK government noticed "that 25,000 people took to the streets in Edinburgh in united opposition to demand what they had voted for - a Scottish parliament - this is hardly a cradle of democracy if that is called irrelevant!"³⁸ Ewing seeks to project the idea that in the UK as currently configured, the interests of an entire nation can be ignored. The UK government may, either willfully or out of neglect, cause the interests of Scotland to be ignored. But more importantly, the lack of democratic representation in the state itself are deemed to imply that proper representation will never be achievable; only massive changes to the structure of the state and its electoral system will achieve fairer representation.

However, the question that Ewing does not pose directly in her confrontations with the UK Presidency is whether independence is actually the only means by which the changes she seeks can be achieved. In fact, nowhere during either the 1986 nor 1992 UK Presidencies does Ewing make the claim that an independence Scotland is necessary for the interests of the Scottish people best to be served. Instead, the actions of the SNP MEP compel us to ask whether a simple change in government would resolve many of the issues of the lack of democracy and of poor representation that concern her. The issues of subsidiarity and proportional representation for European elections that, if we judge by her interaction with the UK Presidency, are the crux of the "democratic deficit" in UK relations with Europe, are issues that the Labour Party has pledged to address in government.³⁹ And many of the specific issues that Ewing claims demonstrates the unwillingness, or incapacity of the state to address Scottish interests are not inherent to the state itself, but are the product of Conservative government. That the new Labour government is currently engaged in negotiating changes to the Common Fisheries Policy that should benefit Ewing's constituents, and that the first action taken by the government regarding Europe involved its pledge to sign the Social Chapter of Maastricht at the June 1997 Amsterdam summit points to the difficulty of interpreting Ewing's criticisms of the UK Presidency as much more than the attacks of an opposition on a governing party. The SNP argument for independence is based on a belief that even a

change in government cannot bring to Scotland the benefits it deserves;⁴⁰ and the UK "as currently configured" may well be unable adequately to allow the representation of Scottish interests. But Ewing herself presents no compelling rhetoric to suggest that independence for Scotland is the only solution. Her activities in the European Parliament reveal a dedicated opponent to Conservative government, one who is intent on demonstrating the illegitimacy of the Conservatives to make policy and representations on behalf of Scotland, but not an opponent to the United Kingdom as a polity.

Karel Dillen appears to have no trepidation about articulating the Vlaams Blok view that the Belgian state is an illegitimate entity and only the creation of an independent Flanders will benefit the Flemish people. He, like Ewing, portrays the representatives of his state's Presidency of the Council as unwilling to defend the interests of his national group; but more explicitly than does his SNP colleague, Dillen dismisses his state as an illegitimate entity with no functional capacity to tend to the interests of his nation.

The unwillingness of the Belgian President in Office to defend the interests of Flemish people, Dillen states, is evident from the behaviour of the Belgian Presidency in the European Parliament itself, as well as more broadly in European institutions and in its European policy. During the statement by the Belgian Presidency on its programme for 1993, Dillen attacks the President in Office, Willy Claes, for not addressing the EP in Dutch. Seeing this as an attack on Flemish culture, Dillen asserts that "we had to recognize that for the President in Office, a Limburger, a Fleming, Dutch is no longer an official language of the European Community . . . it was made as clear to us as that what Belgium is and what Europe must never become;" he continues by referring to this incident as indicative of a Belgian Presidency that "is a disgrace and an insult to Flanders and Europe."⁴¹ The centrality of culture and language to the political agenda of the Vlaams Blok makes language use one measure of "Flemish-ness": those who use and support Dutch are acting in the interests of the Flemish, and those who do not are traitors.

Neglect of Flemish culture is linked by Dillen more generally to the European policies of Belgium and to broader foreign policy goals of the Presidency. The Maastricht Treaty is a point of particular concern for Dillen, particularly regarding the right of EU nationalist to vote in European and local elections outside their home Member States. As mentioned above, Dillen is critical of the Belgian governments' supporting Maastricht and not demanding an opt-out on this particular point. But central to his critique is what this represents on the part of Belgium. It is not a simply policy issue in dispute, but the fact that the Belgian Presidency leads a country of "irresponsible politicians" who "submissively accepted the wretched Treaty of Maastricht as nowhere else in Europe. . . They have accepted it uncritically. They ought at least to have done as England did, as Denmark did with a vengeance!"⁴² In three of his four major statements during the Belgian Presidency, Dillen confirms his opinion that the Belgians have acted "submissively," "recklessly and without forethought," and in "the most conformist and uncritical fashion" in their foreign policy activities in Europe, singling out Maastricht as a key example of how "Belgium has yet again trampled Flemish interests under foot."⁴³

The unwillingness of Belgium to defend Flemish interests abroad is not, however, simply benign neglect. Dillen portrays the activities of the state as an overt attempt to discriminate against Flanders and to exploit the resources of its people. Responding to Jaak Vandemeulebroucke's statement on behalf of the Volksunie that a federal Belgium can serve as an example for the rest of Europe, Dillen argues that federalism in Belgium has become an excuse for theft by the state, in which Flemish wealth is redistributed to the other regions of the country. "The Belgian Presidency bears the responsibility in Belgium for an annual theft of 250 000 m Belgian francs and more from the pockets of Flanders for the bottomless pits of Wallonia. Is that an example for Europe?"⁴⁴ By speaking in the context of the representatives both of the government of Belgium and another Flemish nationalist party, Dillen can attempt to paint both government and "opposition" in Belgium with the same brush: whereas government may be responsible for the "theft," other parties, including those claiming to represent the interests of Flemish people, apparently accept or condone it.

The focus of Dillen's attack derives from the Vlaams Blok emphasis that Flemish culture, particularly defined, is under threat. The culture therefore places certain demands on politicians: as those who claim to represent the interests of Flanders must speak Dutch, they must also take upon themselves the duty of protecting Flemish culture to be considered legitimate. Dillen employs this notion of "duty" in the service of a culture on several occasions during the Belgian Presidency. Defending the MEPs of the extreme right in the European Parliament against charges that they are racist and xenophobic, Dillen describes fighting for the maintenance of one's culture against "colonization" by other cultural groups as "our right and our duty."⁴⁵ He repeats this notion of having a duty to one's culture in an attack on all those parties in Belgium that claim to speak with Flanders in mind:

The Belgian President of the Council, his Flemish ministers, his Flemish government parties, for lack of Flemish awareness, Flemish pride, Flemish conviction, have not fulfilled their Flemish duty but have made themselves guilty in high degree of bartering away the interests of the Flemish people.⁴⁶

Depicting all of these actors as having "sold out" the interests of Flanders, the Vlaams Blok MEP can position himself to assert that the very legitimacy of any state in which all such actors can conspire together to suppress Flemish interests must be in doubt.

Dillen takes care to characterize the Belgian Presidency of the Council as representative not merely of the governing parties of the state, but of Belgium as a polity. In this respect, he seeks to cast the illegitimacy of the government to represent Flemish people onto the state itself: he equates the problems of government policy with inherent flaws in the state and seeks to convince his audience that in no way can "Belgium" as a polity ever address the needs of Flemish people. Emphasizing the total corruption of the state, Dillen presents a vision of Belgium in which there is no longer any possibility for Flanders to be fairly represented: the state has lost all credibility as a vehicle for the articulation of

Flemish interests. In his response to the Belgian Presidency's statement on its 1993 programme, Dillen accuses the Presidency, the parties participating in government, and the parties supporting the state by forming a "loyal" opposition as having built "a new government on the back of Flanders, thanks to new Flemish compromises, new Flemish defeats. Personal interest, party interest took precedence over the people's interest."⁴⁷ Dillen presents the idea of a "people's interest," or a "genuine interest," implying that legitimacy lies only with those who respond to these popular concerns: when they are systematically ignored, the legitimacy of the state must be questioned. In addition, the Vlaams Blok MEP seeks to position his party's struggle in the historical context of others who have fought for liberation from repressive states. He invokes "the right of self-determination [that] gives Flemings the right and duty to demand an independent Flemish state of their own. Then Flanders will be a fully-fledged member of the greater European family of nations, cooperating in freedom."⁴⁸ Emphasizing the notion of self-determination, Dillen seeks to establish a context for Flemish nationalism that is recognized in the international arena as just. This contextualization of the Vlaams Blok agenda as liberating and empowering serves equally to delegitimize not only the Belgian state, but all those who would support it and not recognize an independent Flanders as the only viable polity that could protect Flemish interests.

Comments

The 1986 Presidency of the United Kingdom warrants some discussion, as the activities of the SNP MEP during this period diverge sharply from expectations and are markedly different from her interactions with the representatives of the UK during the 1992 Presidency. As noted, Ewing made no overt attempts to present a distinct national image for her constituents or even her party and did not actively question the legitimacy of the UK government to speak on behalf of Scotland. Why do we see such a difference between the two periods? And which presidency, therefore, should we accept as representing "normal behaviour" by an independence party - is the 1992 Presidency the actual "outlier" in this respect? Indeed, with only two sets of observations, we would have difficulty stating that one or the

other is indicative of a true or underlying trend. What we can point to with a greater degree of certainty is the notion that Ewing's actions during the 1986 Presidency diverge sharply from the behaviour of independence parties hypothesized at the outset of this study. Why should the SNP in 1986 be acting in so few respects like a theoretical independence party in an international organization ought?

Although the current strategy of the SNP focuses positively on the role that an independent Scotland would play in Europe, this has not always been the case. Indeed, in the 1975 UK referendum on membership in the EC, the SNP campaigned for a "No" vote. Although one SNP MP at Westminster has described it as a "historical myth" that the SNP only went "pro-Europe" in the late 1980s, she also admits that the pro-EC faction within the party had lost the internal debate in the 1970s and that the big shift toward support of the EC did not occur until the late 1980s.⁴⁹ The SNP also stated until the late 1970s that it would not field candidates for European elections if the EP were to become a directly elected assembly. Ewing's strategy in 1986 is therefore a product of a party that is still ambivalent in its assessment of Scotland's relationship with the EC. Without domestic party consensus to promote actively the image of a nation seeking to be independent in a European context, Ewing's strategies reflect a highly pragmatic approach to the European Parliament: she takes the opportunity to campaign directly in the EC for the interests of her constituents. For a party that is still not publicly "won over" to the cause of Europe, the EC appears as a set of opportunities both to influence the content of legislation that may have a domestic impact on one's constituents, and as a "cash cow," or at least a policy cow, that should be exploited to the greatest possible extent for the benefit of those that one is representing. She need attempt neither to distinguish her constituents as a national grouping with particular policy interests, nor to attack the UK as an illegitimate state in order to achieve success with her policy interests.

We have noted in addition that even during the 1992 UK Presidency, the SNP MEP did not articulate a set of policy objectives that differed significantly from that of the UK Labour MEPs; nor did Ewing attack the UK-cum-polity as inherently illegitimate, but only illegitimate in its current structure as supported by the Conservative government. She again does not seek to establish a policy agenda that is

linked exclusively to Scotland or even to the SNP. Yet arguably Ewing is a successful Member of the European Parliament by many measures. In her fourth term as an elected MEP, "Madame Ecosse" has been credited by many, including her political enemies, as being a highly successful constituency politician and in large part responsible for securing Objective 1 status for the Highlands and Islands for the most recent funding period of the ERDF. Whatever one may argue about the actual economic benefit brought to the area by Objective 1 status, it has been a political victory for Ewing.

Hence the question that arises is the extent to which Ewing's policy successes have been dependent upon her willingness to forego an antagonistic approach toward the "state," including toward all non-independence seeking parties. Her behaviour defies traditional explanations of how nationalists participate in international organizations, and indeed contradicts the position officially articulated by the SNP about the ability of the current UK-wide parties to represent the interests of Scotland. Yet she has demonstrated success as a constituency politician. The question that emerges from observing Ewing's interactions with the UK Council Presidency is whether her policy achievements depend on her willingness not to "act like a nationalist" in terms of not overtly attempting to delegitimize her potential political allies.

Karel Dillen may have achieved his goal of creating a recognized identity and policy space for the Vlaams Blok and the nation this party claims to represent. However, his ideological orientation combined with his refusal to accept other Belgian parties as legitimate political actors render it difficult, if not impossible, for him to forge alliances beyond the few MEPs of the extreme right. Dillen's current Vlaams Blok colleague in the European Parliament, Frank Vanhecke, admits that the party is utterly politically isolated in the EP:

If we would have any influence in the European Parliament, it would be negative influence. I could see it happen that if we said 'yes,' everybody else would say 'no,' or if we said 'no,'

everybody else would say 'yes.' But that's our only and sole influence. . . let's say we are politically marginalized in the European Parliament. . . we are a 'quantité négligeable.'⁵⁰

In the case of the Vlaams Blok, the successful projection of a distinct national identity, a policy agenda particular to this national group, and a powerful critique of the legitimacy of the Belgian state appear to confirm our initial hypotheses about the behaviour of independence parties in international organizations. However, this has come at the price of the total ineffectiveness of the party as anything but a pure "protest" party, with the power only to voice opposition.

The activities of Dillen and Ewing reveal that focusing solely on the intended *outcomes* of nationalist activity may distract us from recognizing other forms of power that nationalists seek to deploy in international organizations. The Vlaams Blok MEP has failed utterly to convince an international audience of his party's legitimacy to lead a new Flemish state and of the need to deprive Belgium of its status as a sovereign entity. But he has managed to create an awareness of his cause and to serve as a critic of his state and its policies. Ewing, at least in her interactions with the UK Presidency of the Council of Ministers, has done little to condemn as illegitimate the UK as a state and to press the case that only an independent Scotland can accommodate the interests of the Scottish people. However, her cooperation on a policy agenda even with other parties in her own state may make her better able to deliver benefits to her constituents, thereby securing their long term political support.

Conclusions

Nationalists in their past history of dealings with international organizations have had as their primary motivation the securing of patronage from states powerful enough to have an impact on the fortunes of their movements. Key to nationalists' strategies has been convincing an international audience of the legitimacy of the nationalist cause and thereby winning support for it. The European Parliament, equally, presents opportunities for nationalists to seek to mobilize international support on their behalf,

both to help secure tangible resources via policy payoffs and to build the nationalists' case for legitimacy. But insofar as the EP represents a novel IO in which nationalists can speak for themselves, instead of relying on other states to articulate their concerns, independence parties are faced with new challenges. They must not only pursue their parties' stated goals but build consensus with other actors who may help them achieve these goals, if they wish to do more than simply rhetoricize to an international audience. The onus of responsibility for advocating the nationalist cause is taken from major powers or their representatives, and placed squarely on the nationalists themselves. Yet this implies that nationalists must also begin to confront the problems that confront any political parties active in representative institutions. In an international organization, they must simultaneously play to an international audience and seek to satisfy the interests of domestic constituents. In particular, they must decide whether cooperating with "unsympathetic" political actors represents a sell-out of their cause, or the only practical way to move their agenda forward.

The Members of the European Parliament for the Vlaams Blok and the Scottish National Party share, ultimately, the same goal of national liberation. The historical traditions of nationalist movements in international organizations, as well as the stated goals of these parties, lead us to believe that they will strive to achieve this shared goal in similar ways: they will seek to present an identity of their national groups as distinct from that of their states; they will assert that these groups have special policy interests; and they will seek to show that their respective states are not legitimate sovereigns because they fundamentally cannot accommodate the interests of these distinct national groups. By observing the interactions of SNP and Vlaams Blok MEPs with their co-nationals presiding in the Council of Ministers, we have sought to place these nationalists in a context where they would have the greatest opportunity to differentiate themselves and their nations from "the state" and to challenge directly the capacity of the state to meet their constituents' needs.

But in an international organization where they have the power to speak on their own behalf, nationalists may find that they have other interests beyond simply pursuing their final constitutional

goals. Whereas Karel Dillen of the Vlaams Blok demonstrates devotion *only* to the cause of Flemish independence, with little interest in participating in constituency politics, Winnie Ewing of the SNP has found that setting aside the major constitutional questions that concern the SNP may allow her to achieve greater gains for those whom she represents. What is novel about the European Parliament is that it allows nationalists to participate in decision-making in areas that will affect the future interests of their national groups, independent or not; even if independence parties cannot win their constitutional battles at the European level, they may still win benefits for, and protect the interests of, their national groups. The role played by Ewing in the European Parliament forces us to reevaluate what "being a nationalist" means in the European Union: is there a trade-off between promoting a constitutional agenda and defending constituency interests by engaging in more cooperative politics? Dillen's political activism leads us to ask whether nationalism of the extreme right can ever be recognized as a legitimate form of political activity in a European Parliament dominated by the left and the moderate right.

The narrow scope of this analysis, based on two nationalist politicians interacting with their co-nationals during a limited period of time, admittedly raises the issue of the generalizability of any conclusions. The difficulty of gathering data on individuals over extended periods of time in the European Parliament poses problems for researchers who would wish to undertake more rigorous research; however, ultimately the study of comparative nationalism in the European Union must advance beyond the analysis of only two actors, to a more complex exploration of the relations among nationalists, their co-national colleagues, and the broad international audience they hope to convince of the justice of their cause. This study indicates that there is no "single path" for nationalists to follow in an international organization of elected representatives. Their strategies may be shaped by ideology, by their position within the political space of the IO, or by their desire to put constituency politics before their ultimate constitutional goals. The political activism of Winnie Ewing and Karel Dillen challenges the historical tradition of what nationalists have sought to accomplish in IOs. In this respect, even a small scale comparative study suggests that nationalism in the international arena is a complex phenomenon,

the study of which demands an exploration of not merely the phenomenon of nationalism itself, but of the relationship between the domestic and international polities in which these actors are simultaneously performing.

¹ Nationalists whose goal is independence for their nation, ethnic group, or territorially-bounded people however defined culturally, will decry the use of the word "regionalism" to describe their ambitions, claiming that they represent not "regions," but historic nations or states. I recognize the ambiguity of the term and the normative implications thereof. For purposes of this paper I will avoid wrestling with these implications, but I will attempt to be consistent in my use of the term to refer to generally accepted territorial entities within states (e.g. Flanders as a "region" in Belgium; Scotland as a "region" of the United Kingdom), with apologies to those who may take umbrage at this usage.

² See, for example, recent discussions of the European dimension of Scottish, Welsh, Catalan and Cornish nationalism: Mitchell, 1997; Malloy, 1996; Thomas, 1996; Keating, 1996; Christansen, 1995.

³ Tsebelis (1994) describes the conditions under which the EP may serve as a "conditional agenda setter" and argues that over time, the EP will become a more powerful actor in setting the legislative agenda. See Moser (1996) for a response to this, and Tsebelis' own follow-up (1996).

⁴ e.g. "ungrouped" MEPs have fewer opportunities during the various Question Times of the EP; cannot take advantage of procedures that allow groupings to table motions or raise other points; and do not receive the levels of technical support or funding that do EP groupings.

⁵ See, for example, Esman 1995. The minorities section was eventually disbanded in 1939, after the League had long since been shown to be unable to compel cooperation from unwilling signatories.

⁶ For example, India was an early patron of the Indian minority in South Africa; a coalition of Arab and African states, along with the Soviet bloc, could muster sufficient strength to pass resolutions in favour of Palestinians (although these then have tended to be vetoed by the US in the Security Council), and so on

⁷ Some Asian and Arab states have argued that this supposed "content" of sovereignty is inherently Western, Christian, and biased against other cultural interpretations of statehood; this argument emerges, for example, in the disputes between the United States and the People's Republic of China over human rights and trade relations.

⁸ Gellner, 1983, p. 1.

⁹ See Mudde, 1996 on the difficulties in agreeing on a meaning for "right wing" when discussing political trends in Western Europe.

¹⁰ Mitchell (1990) has described the tension in the Scottish National Party between those who are willing to accept a devolved parliament as a stepping stone to independence, and those who view this as an unacceptable compromise, as a predominant cleavage in the party. Hooghe [. . .] and others have argued that the perception that the Flemish Volksunie "sold out" the possibility of independence when it joined a coalition government in 1978 led to the split in the party and the emergence of the splinter Vlaams Blok.

¹¹ The UK held the presidency of the Council from July to December 1986 and from July to December 1992; Belgium held the presidency from January to June 1987 and from July to December 1993.

¹² Numerous procedures guide the types of questions acceptable in Question Time: [detail]. Not all questions can be answered in the hour and a half sessions, and the EP no longer automatically "rolls over" questions to the next session, as MEPs used to complain that their questions were no longer relevant.

¹³ Oddly enough, the only rhetorical construction of a unique regional identity for Mrs. Ewing came from Conservative minister Lynda Chalker herself, sitting as the President-in-Office of the Council, during a Question Time question about new and renewable energy sources. In an interchange about the viability of wind power, Chalker indicated that the Council hoped that a wind project underway in Orkney, in Ewing's constituency would be successful, and that there being "perhaps more [wind]" in Ewing's part of the UK, this might allow wind power to make more of a contribution there. The record does not indicate whether Lady Chalker's rapier wit was fully appreciated. Annex: Official Journal of the European

Communities, Debates of the European Parliament (English) [hereafter referred to as 'Annex: OJ'], 2-343/77-78.

¹⁴ Annex: OJ, 2-341/2.

¹⁵ Annex: OJ, 2-346/159.

¹⁶ Annex: OJ, 3-425/123.

¹⁷ Annex: OJ, 3-421/182.

¹⁸ Annex: OJ, 3-424/147.

¹⁹ For example, see the Annex: OJ, 3-422/16. Allan Macartney, MEP for the SNP elected along with Ewing in 1994, has commented on the difficulty of convincing his colleagues in European institutions that Scotland is not a "region" but a historic nation and former state, and underlines the fact that language has proven a complicating factor in dispelling the notion of Scotland as a "region" with the SNP a "regionalist" party: ". . . the French, for example, they start with 'nationalism,' it would normally be that of the French state, which I would tend to call 'étatisme,' and then we had to explain to them that in Britain, we have to say 'regionalism,' but we don't describe ourselves that way anyway, we don't see ourselves as a region of a state. . . it's a problem, and because it's often misused in English, in German, in French and other languages - the difficulties of using the word, you've got to make sure they understand it."

Interview: Allan Macartney, Brussels, 30 May 1996.

²⁰ Annex: OJ, 3-439/10.

²¹ One example cited by Dillen is the pressure on housing prices in Flemish Brabant, around Brussels, which he states is caused by citizens of other EC Member States (e.g. working for European institutions) moving into the area; this has a double impact on the survival of Flemish culture in Brabant, as the incomers tend to speak French rather than Dutch. See, for example, the Annex: OJ, 3-437/161.

²² Annex: OJ, 3-433/126-127.

²³ Roth, Green grouping; Annex: OJ, 3-439/7-8.

²⁴ Annex: OJ, 3-433/126.

²⁵ These observations were drawn from Winnie Ewing's recorded interaction with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers from July to December 1986; see Annexes: OJ, 2-341 to 2-346.

²⁶ See Ewing, in Annexes: OJ, 3-420 to 3-425.

²⁷ See Dillen, in Annexes: OJ, 3-433 to 3-439.

²⁸ e.g. Annex: OJ, 2-343/77-78.

²⁹ For example, Annex: OJ, 2-343/73-75; 2-344/81-82; 2-346/80-81.

³⁰ Questions about subsidiarity, the Committee of the Regions and ERDF monies demonstrate a strong Labour - SNP convergence of interests. See for example the Council Question Time of September 16, 1992: Annex: OJ, 3-421.

³¹ Hugh McMahon (Labour MEP for Strathclyde West), asking why certain questions were ruled inadmissible, wonders whether the EP President has "been under pressure by the British Foreign Office not to embarrass the British Government on the Social Chapter. . .Is it true that the minions of Douglas Hurd have been running round the corridors saying that there is a great deal of politicking taking place over the order of questions for the European Parliament's Question Time?" Annex: OJ, 3-420/138.

³² For example, see Annexes: OJ, 2-343/73-75 and 2-343/78-79.

³³ Annex: OJ, 2-343/75.

³⁴ Annex: OJ, 3-421/182.

³⁵ Speaking during the UK Presidency statement on its programme for 1992, Ewing remarks that Douglas Hurd (the President in Office)'s book *Scotch on the Rocks* seems indicative of where the government wants to keep Scotland, "even though the North Sea oil revenue is the same as the net contribution of the UK to the European Community, not to mention the 1.8 bn in whisky revenue." Annex: OJ, 3-420/147.

³⁶ Annex: OJ, 3-425/123.

³⁷ See Annex: OJ, 3-422/16; see also Ewing's comments to the President in Office of the Council, Tristan Garel Jones, during Council of Ministers Question Time, Annex: OJ, 3-421/166; and her comments during the statement on the programme of the UK Presidency, Annex: OJ, 3-420/147.

³⁸ Annex: OJ, 3-425/123.

³⁹ The Labour Party manifesto for the recent elections states, for example: "Subsidiarity is as sound a principle in Britain as it is in Europe." Although the manifesto does not directly mention the voting system for European elections, the Constitutional Convention on which the proposal for a Scottish Parliament will, theoretically, be based agreed that such a parliament should be elected by an additional member system (*New Labour: Because Britain Deserves Better*, The Labour Party, 1997, pp. 32-33).

⁴⁰ See for example the discussion of how an independent Scotland would fight more effectively for Scottish interests in Europe than could any government in the current UK: *Yes We Can: The Manifesto for the Scottish National Party for the 1997 General Election*, SNP, 1997, pp. 27-28.

⁴¹ Annex: OJ, 3-433/126.

⁴² Annex: OJ, 3-433/127.

⁴³ Annexes: OJ, 3-433/126-7; 3-435/37; 3-437/161.

⁴⁴ Annex: OJ, 3-433/126-127.

⁴⁵ Annex: OJ, 3-439/10.

⁴⁶ Annex: OJ, 3-433/127.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ In particular with the pro-Europe stance of Jim Sillars, elected to Parliament in 1988. Interview with Margaret Ewing, Member of Parliament for the SNP, London, 28 March 1996. See also Mitchell, 1997 for an in-depth discussion.

⁵⁰ Interview with Frank Vanhecke, MEP for the Vlaams Blok, Brussels, 7 February 1996.

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