

***From Versailles to Maastricht:  
Nationalist and Regionalist Parties and  
European Integration.***

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# **Abstract**

European integration has increasingly shaped the political opportunity structure of minority nationalism. This thesis studies the attitudes and responses to European union of nationalist and regionalist parties from Brittany, Flanders, Scotland and Wales, in addition to co-operation between the parties and the emergence of transnational regionalism through the development of the European Free Alliance.

Whilst nationalist and regionalist parties responded to the broad themes of European integration, and demonstrated preferences for an intergovernmental or federal Europe, the EC has brought a range of specific opportunities and resources to aid minority nationalism and self-determination. This involved the EC's challenge to traditional national sovereignty, responses to EC policies and participation in European elections.

However, the most significant effect of European integration was its ability to shape and influence party goals and strategies for self-determination. The goals of the nationalist parties of Scotland and Wales became heavily Europeanised to fit the new European context that emerged in the 1980s with the Single European Act. This led to a reversal of policy and attitudes towards the EC, and a relaunch of the idea of self-government in the new Europe. Attitudes towards the Maastricht Treaty also demonstrated the flexible responses of nationalist parties to economic and political sovereignty in contrast to the inflexible attitudes of the 1970s.

Regionalist parties in contrast showed more stable attitudes to European union. They used the issue to complement demands for regional autonomy and federalism by linking domestic demands to European developments. Though regionalists demonstrated strong affective links to European union, they were less able to turn the issue to their advantage in political debate or elections. They increasingly Europeanised their autonomy position, often using arguments associated with nationalism rather than regionalism. This mixing of agendas brought a blurring of distinctions between nationalist and regionalist political positions.

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## **Abbreviations**

AER-Assembly of European Regions  
CAP-Common Agricultural Policy  
CDC-Convergencia Democràtica de Catalunya  
CELIB-Centre des Etudes et Liaison des Interets Breton  
COREPER-Committee of Permanent Representatives  
CSP-Confederation of Socialist Parties in the EC  
CiU-Convergència i Unió  
CVP-Christelijke Volkspartij  
D'66-Democraten '66  
EA-Eusko Alkartasuna  
EC-European Community  
ECJ-European Court of Justice  
ECU-European Currency Unit  
EDA-European Democratic Alliance  
EFA-European Free Alliance  
EFTA-European Free Trade Association  
EMS-European Monetary System  
EMU-Economic and Monetary Union  
EPD-European Progressive Democrats  
ERDF-European Regional Development Fund  
FDF-Front Démocratique des Francophones  
GRB-Groupe Régionaliste Breton  
LL-Lega Lombarda  
MOB-Mouvement pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne.  
PAB-Parti Autonomiste Breton  
PC-Plaid Cymru  
PNV-Partido Nacionalista Vasco  
POBL-Parti pour l'Organisation d'une Bretagne Libre  
PSdA-Partito Sardo d'Azione  
PVV-Partij voor Vrijheid en Vooruitgang  
RPR-Rassemblement Pour la République  
RW-Rassemblement Wallon  
SAV-Strollad ar Vro  
SEM-Single European Market  
SNP-Scottish National Party  
UDB-Union Démocratique Bretonne  
UPC-Unione di u Populu Corsu  
VB-Vlaams Blok  
VLD-Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten  
VU-Volksunie  
COS-CENTRO DEMOCRATICO Y SOCIAL

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# 1

## **Introduction: Themes And Concepts**

“Today’s Welsh separatists are those who want to keep Wales separate from Europe.”<sup>1</sup>

“The nineteenth century states have been overtaken. They are either too small or too large for efficient democracy and to fulfil their functions. A number of these must be used to build a democratic Europe of the regions.”<sup>2</sup>

“Right across Europe, nations are asserting their right to self-determination - a fundamental principle enshrined in international law. The newly-liberated nations of Eastern and Central Europe - many of them smaller and all of them poorer than Scotland - are queueing up to join the European Community, alongside many of the former EFTA countries. None of them would settle for some sort of second-rate regional status; all insist on becoming independent member states in their own right.”<sup>3</sup>

### **1. Introduction**

This thesis examines the impact of European integration upon nationalist and regionalist parties in Western Europe from the Versailles Conference in 1919 to contemporary discussions on European union in the Maastricht Treaty. During this time European integration has had a distinct effect on nationalist and regionalist parties, which derives from the fact that both European integration and nationalism/regionalism are bound up with the central issues of sovereignty and integration.

The regionalist party family shares a broadly common approach to European union, though different nationalist/regionalist parties and traditions offer their own interpretations. The flavour of these different approaches, and their particular historical contexts within the European Community, can be gathered from considering expressions of party opinion on Europe and political behaviour in relation to European issues.

This is not a study of the effect of nationalism and regionalism on international society and the EC, but an attempt to explore the unicausal effect of European and international developments upon nationalist and regionalist parties. In focusing on parties, the intention is to study their behaviour as political actors, and to square that

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1. Gwynfor Evans, *Fighting for Wales*, p.217.

2. *Wij - Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, 20th January 1973, p.6.

3. Alex Salmond MP in SNP, *Scotland: A European Nation*, p.3.

behaviour with the experience of nationalism and regionalism in European politics. The methodology to pursue this end is primarily empirical, rather than theoretical.

### *External Influences on Nationalism and Regionalism*

The exogenous political environment has a strong influence upon the behaviour and context of domestic political actors. This influence is especially strong in the case of parties seeking self-determination. Though it may appear that European integration and substate nationalism are diametrically opposed,<sup>4</sup> they both challenge the status quo of the state system. They challenge the existing constitutional system but do not necessarily attack the nation-state. Party attitudes to the duality of European integration - whether it reinforces or diminishes nation-states - will be referred to throughout this study, to explore their perceptions of Europe as a supranational body or an intergovernmental union to support the nation-state in international affairs.

Some authors have identified a reciprocal connection between European federalism and substate nationalism, with each acting to help fulfill the other.<sup>5</sup> Federalism and regionalism are seen as compatible responses to state centralism and Jacobinism, with regionalism trying to overcome these monocultural influences through support for polycultural Europeanism.<sup>6</sup> Federalism allows regionalism to escape monoculturalism through subsidiarity and political autonomy. Two cases in this study fall into this category of federal-regionalism. The others are of nationalist parties which seek self-government and independence rather than a federal state, yet still experience the exogenous influence of European integration. The reactions to this development therefore fall into two categories, with some parties trying to *rebuild* the nation-state and some trying to transform and *transcend* the nation-state, whilst demonstrating affective or utilitarian attitudes to European union.<sup>7</sup>

Nationalist and regionalist parties have a special interest in the process of European integration as it challenges state sovereignty. This primary constitutional concern is not generally shared by other party families. The general constitutional challenge of European union can be unpacked into a number of specific challenges and

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4. Martin Kolinsky (ed), *Divided Loyalties*; also see Dov Ronen, *The Quest for Self-Determination*, p.100.

5. Andrea Chiti-Batelli, "Regionalism and Federalism in Europe: A Biunivocal Connection", in Theodor Weier (ed), *Federalisme, Regionalisme et Droits des Groupes Ethniques en Europe*, p.49.

6. *Ibid.*, p.50.

7. Leon Lindberg and Stuart Scheingold, *Europe's Would-be Polity*, p.7 and p.40. An affective response involves a positive emotional response to the EC, whilst a utilitarian response is primarily interest-motivated. Also see Miles Hewstone, *Understanding Attitudes to the European Community*.

opportunities since the 1920s. The response to these opportunities has had significant effects on the parties in this study. These changes have been strategic and programmatic for the most part, but in some cases have involved the Europeanisation and re-interpretation of party goals.

Whilst European integration provides a challenge to the constitutional status quo in the nation-state system, and creates opportunities for regionalist parties to challenge the states, it also functions as an *external support system*. Much of this external support was present in the postwar period in two ways. First, the security context of the international system changed: the size of a state and its capacity to defend itself unilaterally have become less important through the development of NATO and regional security arrangements, which enabled small states to survive and develop through collective security and co-operation. Second, the economic context of the international system changed, with greater economic interdependency, the development of international and regional economic organisations and trade associations, and agreements that facilitated market access to small states.<sup>8</sup> These developments enabled small states to use external support systems, such as NATO and the European Community, to gain the economic and defence benefits of large states, whilst preserving local autonomy.

### *The Objects of Study*

This study examines the European attitudes of four nationalist and regionalist parties: the Scottish National Party (SNP), Plaid Cymru (PC), the Flemish *Volksunie* (VU), and the *Parti pour l'Organisation d'un Bretagne Libre* (POBL) and *Union Democratique Bretonne* (UDB) amongst others in Brittany. There is also consideration of the development of transnational regionalism from the late 1940s through four political organisations: the International Congress of European Nations and Regions, the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations, the European Free Alliance and the Rainbow Group in the European Parliament.

Any research strategy on nationalism and regionalism is limited by the number of parties within the regionalist family itself. The four cases have been selected to allow consideration of two features of the regionalist political family. First, there is a cleavage on *goals* within the regionalist party family at the national/regional level. The consistency of this cleavage at the European level must be examined. Second, the cases involve different and changing political contexts. Each has a different

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8. Anthony Birch, *Political Integration and Disintegration in the British Isles*, p.173.

## *Introduction*

experience of regional and local government, and the level of regional autonomy in each region shapes the environment of each party. The strong regional institutions of Flanders for example, are superior to the regional council in Brittany. The territorial bureaucracies of Scotland and Wales, which serve central government, are in contrast, examples of administrative devolution. Party political contexts also differ between the cases, along with different interpretations of the process of European integration.

The electoral contexts of the cases are also different. The electoral systems of the three countries at national and European elections provide both problems and opportunities for the parties. In France the two round system of national elections has acted as a barrier to small parties, whilst the designation of the whole country as a national constituency for European elections using proportional representation with a 5% threshold has also brought problems. The UK electoral system uses the same procedures for national and European elections, that of single member constituencies using the plurality system. The Belgian system is the most favourable to small parties as it uses proportional representation in districts in national elections, and allows voter preferences to be transferred between the districts of a province. European elections in the country are organised through a combination of territorial and linguistic lists, using the list system of proportional representation.

## *Methodology*

This study is almost wholly reliant upon original materials generated by field work in all five of the areas of study (see appendix). This involved the selection of materials and interviews with key political actors. Where possible the original material has been supplemented by general accounts of the development of the parties themselves, though this has not been possible across all of the cases. In the case of the *Volksunie* the case itself involves a general account of the party's development as it stands as the forgotten regionalist party in Western Europe. Whilst political scientists, sociologists and historians have concentrated upon French, Italian, Spanish and UK regionalist parties, the particular context and development of the *Volksunie* has been neglected. Thus there are a plethora of accounts of the unsuccessful Breton movement in English and French, yet few in French or Dutch concerning the *Volksunie*, and nothing in English.



### *Nationalism and Regionalism*

Nationalism, according to Gellner, is “primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent”.<sup>9</sup> This political principle is the basis of both substate nationalism and regionalism but each has its own interpretation of congruence. The goal of most nationalist movements involves the creation of nation-states.<sup>10</sup> This goal is questioned by regionalist parties, who propose constitutional arrangements and definitions of sovereignty that do not fit the orthodox conception of nation-states. Some of these parties are regionalist in orientation and have never sought to establish a nation-state in the classical sense, whilst others have accepted that European integration has altered the nation-state and moved it away from the classic nineteenth century conceptualisation.

These two different types of party are examples of autonomous nationalism and primary regionalism. *Autonomous nationalism* is a classification consistent with the SNP and Plaid Cymru, and refers to a separate national group which rejects its role in another, larger state, and seeks to transform its status through maximum self-determination and independence.<sup>11</sup> *Primary regionalism* can be accepted as a typification of the *Volksunie* and the Breton parties, and involves parties who base their political claims upon stateless peoples and ethnic territorial groups who were not assimilated by nation-building,<sup>12</sup> yet seek a level of political autonomy short of independence.

## **2. Approaches To European Integration**

### *Nationalism And Integration*

Three types of integration are usually the focus of academic study: social integration, through cultural interactions and communications; economic integration, with the growth of economic interactions and interdependence amongst previously autonomous economic units; and political integration, the development of common

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9. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.1.

10. Peter Alter, *Nationalism*, p.93.

11. Andrew Orridge, “Separatist and Autonomist Nationalisms: The Structure of Regional Loyalties in the Modern State”, in Colin Williams (ed), *National Separatism*, p.44.

12. Michael Hebbert, “Regionalist Aspirations in Contemporary Europe”, in Weiter, *Op. cit.*, p.501.

identities, values and loyalties that help to form and sustain a community.<sup>13</sup> Each presents problems for nationalists and regionalists.

*Social integration*, which involves cultural and linguistic issues, is not something to which nationalists and regionalists would give a favourable response unless it developed on their own terms. This type of integration helped generate such movements and parties, through the effect of integration on minority languages and culture. Social integration is strongly related to economic integration, particularly through industrialisation and urbanisation, which can have a homogenising effect on minority populations.<sup>14</sup> The response may not be economic, but may take the form of a cultural/linguistic revival. It manifested itself in literary and linguistic movements and demands for protective or emancipatory legislation for the language.

Social integration at the supranational level can be perceived rather differently: not as a threat but as an opportunity. European integration up to 1992 was not the dominant threat to minority languages and cultures. It did not aim to replace them with one single language and uniform culture. The very plurality of European culture and identity made such homogenising integration problematic. The EC may influence linguistic usage through styling certain majority languages as 'official Community languages', but this situation does not additionally threaten minority languages. If anything it threatens the status of the non-official majority languages within the EC institutions themselves.<sup>15</sup> The EC has also shown some support for minority languages through funding a minority language centre in Wales.

The real damage to minority languages has come from existing education and communications systems, policy domains in which the EC lacks significant competences as functional responsibility resides with the member states. Also, while the EC pursues economic integration, which may achieve a degree of social integration, the pattern of integration may have a limited impact on existing levels of social integration relative to language. The large population movements and linguistic erosion brought by industrialisation, urbanisation and rural decline have not yet occurred under contemporary European economic integration, and if they

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13. William Wallace, *The Transformation of Western Europe*, p.55, and also see Ernst Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces 1950-57*, p.16.

14. The effect of industrialisation and urbanisation in Wales in the nineteenth century is an example of this phenomenon, with economic integration reducing rural Welsh-speaking populations and producing a more uniform English-speaking population in the industrial South: see Kenneth Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980*.

15. The Community's two official languages are English and French. This causes problems for the other Community languages, especially the smaller languages of Danish, Dutch, Greek and Portuguese.

were to do so there is no dominant language group that would seem to be especially privileged.

Reactions to *economic integration* are often perceived relative to economic strength. Such integration may be seen as a threat to weak economies, or those disadvantaged by geography. Three of the cases in this study are peripheral, and all have experienced economic integration in larger economic areas dominated by extra-national groups. The condition of domestic economies, and their prospects for economic growth, would seem to be a key influence on attitudes to economic integration, though this is rather simplistic.

Weak economies are often prone to viewing integration as a threat to their domestic prosperity and development, and disposed to resist it through protectionism, though they could be subject to levels of economic interdependence that made such protectionism unviable. In the context of EC economic integration, different parties within the Breton movement have taken opposing stances, with some seeing interdependence as a threat to the regional economy requiring protectionism, while others have identified the internal free market as the best means to reinvigorate the regional economy. The latter reveal that nationalists and regionalists can see economic integration as an opportunity for economic modernisation, especially when economic integration involves trade-offs and subsidies. Scottish nationalists linked peripherality to this agenda of side-payments in contemporary campaigns in favour of independent Scottish membership of the EC:

“as a nation on the North-West edge of Europe, an independent Scotland will also press for the development of a stronger Community regional policy, so that the nations on the EC’s periphery do not lose out to its central ‘golden triangle’ in the distribution of resources”.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, economic integration may be accepted as an unavoidable consequence of economic interdependence. This may seem a surprising attitude to find amongst nationalists and regionalists yet it is found in two different settings: amongst regionalists who accept their interdependent role within and between states, and seek to develop interdependent political arrangements and overarching themes or ideologies which express acceptance of interdependence at the transnational level; and amongst nationalists who accept their interdependence within a larger economy but seek to regain political control of economic development through independence,

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16. SNP, *Scotland: A European Nation*, p.18.

and autonomous participation in institutions that deal with the agenda of economic interdependence.

*Political integration* is the primary focus of this study, but is present in two different senses. First, there is the domestic sense, in which regional and national movements resist political integration into multinational states and seek political autonomy within that state or the establishment of their own state. Second, there is the international sense, in which these movements react to supranational political integration. These two pressures have different effects and implications and will be explored throughout this study.

Consideration of integration within Europe has tended to bring these three types of integration together. Integration theory has sought to describe and prescribe the development of economic, social and political integration. These theories offer a guide to European integration and a menu of challenges facing the nationalist and regionalist parties in this study. In a brief exploration of these theories particular attention will be paid to the type of supranational community that is proposed and the effect it is seen to have on political loyalties within national communities, to see whether they hold threats or opportunities for nationalist and regionalist parties. Following this, there will be some consideration of alternative understandings of the European Community.

### *Functionalism*

Functionalism is most closely associated with David Mitrany. It was promoted to diffuse national loyalties within the global political system rather than concentrate them in new supranational entities.<sup>17</sup> Mitrany was suspicious about the creation of new communities, seeing in them the potential to recreate the nationalistic flaws of the nation-states they superseded.<sup>18</sup> Functionalism has been seen to be consistent with the continuation of nation-states rather than associated with their replacement.<sup>19</sup> In this way its effect on states is limited in the short to medium term. It sought to create a *Gesellschaft* at the global level rather than a specific *Gemeinschaft* or political community.<sup>20</sup>

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17. Wallace, *Op. cit.*, p.61.

18 David Mitrany, "Pan-Europa: A Hope or a Danger?", *Political Quarterly*, Vol.1, No.4, 1930, pp.457-78.

19. Lindberg and Scheingold, *Op. cit.*, p.7.

20. Ernst Haas, *Beyond the Nation-state: Functionalism and International Organisation*, p.26.

## *Introduction*

The basis of functionalism was the view that socio-economic issues were primary elements in political and national loyalties. Rather than challenge these loyalties directly through political initiatives, which would provoke a nationalist response, functionalism proposed a more indirect and non-conflictual means to challenge the primacy of national interests.<sup>21</sup> Functionalism sought to undermine the conflicts within global politics associated with nationalism and national competition. It proposed to deal with the issues of *low politics*, the technical and non-controversial aspects of socio-economic policymaking, through a web of interlocking international institutions and agencies. These would seek to deal with issues on a functional rather than a territorial basis. Countries and their political and technical elites would participate in such organisations as utilitarians seeking socio-economic benefits, but a process of social learning would diffuse primary loyalties away from the national community and enhance appreciation of international co-operation.<sup>22</sup>

From this description of functionalism it would appear that nationalists and regionalists had little to fear from functional co-operation. Since no new political community was formed then there was little prospect of the social and cultural integration that may damage national communities. The functionalist intent was to create a global society not a new superstate or super-nation. The goal of functionalism may have been acceptable, but its method was problematic.

The functionalist method was essentially elitist and administrative. If regionalism can be considered primarily as a *decentralist* and a *participatory* movement - a quest for self-determination - then the elitist and technocratic nature of the functionalist approach is problematic and particularly unappealing to these groups. The lack of popular control produces uniformity and administrative problem-solving remote from local populations. The functional approach also sought to remove the principle of territorial representation in politics since functions cut across national boundaries.<sup>23</sup> The functionalist approach was therefore suspicious of territorial prescriptions such as federalism and confederalism, as territoriality was responsible for the problem of international conflict rather than part of its solution.<sup>24</sup>

In short, while functionalism avoided the centralising and integrative tendencies of other approaches, it posed some threats to identity-based and territorial movements. Mitrany sought to defuse the potential conflict between functionalism and national

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21. *Ibid.*, p.11.

22. *Ibid.*, p.13.

23. Charles Pentland, *International Theory and European Integration*, p.75.

24. *Ibid.*, p.76.

## *Introduction*

sovereignty by stressing that functionalism was not inconsistent with the continuation of the nation-state. He sought to stress the fact that functionalism didn't offend against the national sentiment or damage sovereignty to any great degree. It transformed political self-determination into functional co-determination, but such functionalism was democratic and accountable to the nation-states. It was intended to create functional assemblies in which representatives of the nation-states sat as delegates.<sup>25</sup> However, its bureaucratic nature made it rather unappealing to decentralists.

### *Neo-functionalism*

Neo-functionalism is similar to functionalism, but more clearly focused on undermining the nation-state to create a supranational political authority with widespread legitimacy and the loyalty of national populations.<sup>26</sup> It is a transformational approach to integration that attempts to transform the political structure of Europe, rather than merely adapt it or build on top of it as the functionalists suggest.

The neo-functionalist approach involved an incremental approach to integration, within regional institutions,<sup>27</sup> which used economic and political successes in regional co-operation to develop political integration at a deeper level. Each policy success in this process was seen to generate another through *spillover* - the application of the integrative policy to another issue area through social learning and the intermeshing of policy areas. This has been described as the 'politicization hypothesis' of neo-functionalism, which refers to the cumulative tendency of spillover to bring national actors into supranational co-operation in more controversial policy areas, widening the audience and clientele of the supranational sphere and altering the political expectations of the actors involved as they look to the supranational level for initiatives and support rather than the national level.<sup>28</sup> This shift in expectation was seen to produce a shift in allegiances, and allow new loyalties to develop at the supranational level.

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25. David Mitrany, "The Process of Integration: Federal or Functional?", *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 1965, pp.119-149.

26. Lindberg and Scheingold, *Op. cit.*, p.7.

27. Here the term 'regional' applies to continental areas such as Europe or Latin America, rather than to regional sub-divisions of states such as Brittany or Flanders.

28. Philippe Schmitter, "Three Hypotheses of Neo-functionalism", *International Organization*, Vol.23, No.1, 1969, p.166.

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Neo-functionalism aspired to the supersession of the nation-state, and the creation of new loyalties and institutions. It sought to use the *Gesellschaft* to create a new regional *Gemeinschaft*. This transformation was to be achieved through the transfer of political loyalties from the institutions of the nation-state to the supranational institutions. Since loyalty to the nation-state was a consequence of the functional activities of the state, then the transfer of those functions facilitated the transfer of loyalties. Haas proposed that

“personal political loyalties are the result of satisfaction with the performance of crucial functions by an agency of government. Since actors can be loyal to several agencies simultaneously, a gradual transfer of loyalties to international organisations performing most of the crucial functions is likely”.<sup>29</sup>

This gave neo-functionalism the dual goal of continuously expanding the supranational level and also creating a new community from co-operation. Haas referred to this latter process by emphasising that

“the redirection of loyalties is crucial here because it is expected to yield a community of sentiments and loyalties, which, in turn, is conceived as a psychological prerequisite for political federation”.<sup>30</sup>

Neo-functionalism was an attempt to achieve integration through the involvement of wider political forces than administrators and bureaucrats. It sought to redirect the loyalties of political parties, interest groups, governments and publics.<sup>31</sup> This provided opportunities for participation beyond the bureaucratic level identified by functionalism. That it was intended to draw in non-governmental actors, such as political parties, is obviously of significance here - the expectation was that the support of political parties would also bring the support of voters.

Neo-functionalism tended to view the international political system as having the same characteristics and procedures as national political systems. The proponents of neo-functionalism also tended to hold the view that states could create nations, and that this could be replicated at the regional level in international society.<sup>32</sup> Thus super-nationbuilding was seen to be both possible and desirable. In seeking to create a regional superstate, neo-functionalism was creating a community on a larger

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29. Haas, *Op. cit.*, 1964, p.50.

30. *Ibid.*, p.22.

31. Pentland, *Op. cit.*, p.100.

32. *Ibid.*, p.118.

## *Introduction*

territorial principle, using territorial constitutional devices such as federalism to construct and sustain a political community.

The notion of a regional state model for integration has continued in the hands of European federalists, and maximal integrationists who seek a deeper European Community. Whilst functionalism proposed a loose international community model of integration through co-operation, neo-functionalism proposed a state model and a regional political authority. Neo-functionalism in particular was concerned with describing and predicting the end-condition of integration in Europe. It is this which is of concern to the political actors in this study, though each is concerned with constitutional models for Europe rather than theoretical models of integration.

Both functionalism and neo-functionalism have loose constitutional variants at the practical level. The *federalist* approach, which favours close integration and the development of a political community, can be seen to be challenged by an *intergovernmental* approach, which takes a looser, confederal approach to the European Community. Both of these approaches offer different visions of European union, and effect the preferences of political actors - especially those for whom constitutional issues and self-determination are primary concerns.

### *Federalism*

The idea of federalism has been consistently bound up with European union in the twentieth century. It has acted as an ideal for European union as well as an organising principle. Though these concepts have shared such a long-term relationship there has been no convincing convergence between them that has produced a federal Europe. This is a consequence of the division of opinion in Europe on the appropriate constitutional design for union, both within and between nations and governments.

Whilst many proponents of European union would refer to themselves as federalists, the disparate nature of the concept is a recipe for confusion. This study focuses primarily upon integral federalists: those who wish to create a regionalised European union through maximum decentralisation to regional states. But, this end-condition is contested by two types of opponents. First, the centralist federalists: those who seek weak national government structures and maximum powers for supranational institutions. Second, by those seeking to protect the constitutional status quo from attack by international institutions, and aimed instead to promote intergovernmental



solutions. This latter point of view is not federalist at all, though it can be considered as confederalist in certain circumstances.<sup>33</sup>

### *Intergovernmentalism*

Intergovernmentalism has been used as both a description and a credo for the European Community. It views nation-states as the primary actors in international affairs and organisations. Since the role of the state in international affairs is reliant upon national sovereignty then such sovereignty is not seen to be negotiable or transferable to supranational organisations, but only to intergovernmental organisations in which the nation-state holds executive power. The state's role in international organisations is seen to revolve around the promotion and defence of the national interest rather than the pursuit of integration. As a descriptive term intergovernmentalism applies to those international organisations which preserve national sovereignty and the defence of the national interest with their decisionmaking mechanisms.<sup>34</sup>

The existence of the Council of Ministers in the European Community, and of a national governmental veto, are examples of such intergovernmentalism,<sup>35</sup> which make the states the primary actors in the EC and gatekeepers with control over other actors within their states. The first entrenches the role of the nation-states within the executive of the Community, whilst the other, though reduced by the adoption of majority voting for some aspects of the Single European Act, provides a line of defence for national governments.<sup>36</sup> Those groups who would oppose the further extension of the powers of the European Commission and the expansion of supranational decisionmaking tend to wish to preserve the primacy of the Council, and view the EC as a confederal rather than a federal body, with the majority of powers resting with member states rather than the common executive. This division of powers has often been made explicit through reference to the high politics and low politics dimensions.

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33. See David Calleo, *Europe's Future: The Grand Alternatives*, p.34.

34. Carole Webb, "Theoretical Perspectives and Problems", in Helen Wallace, William Wallace and Carole Webb (eds), *Policy-making in the European Community*, p.13.

35. The National Veto arose during the decisionmaking crisis in the EC in the mid-1960s: See Miriam Camps, *European Unification in the Sixties: From the Veto to the Crisis*.

36. The Single European Act brought the institutionalisation of qualified majority voting within the Council of Ministers on issues related to the single market, though unanimity remained in the areas of taxation, employment and the free movement of people: see article 6 of the Single European Act.

The notion of *high politics* refers to those aspects of government or national sovereignty closely protected by nation-states like national security, independence and control over vital national resources. *Low politics* issues, in contrast, are seen to be relatively uncontroversial areas of economic decisionmaking. These distinctions have been made by those seeking to point to the intergovernmental nature of the European Community.<sup>37</sup> They point to the existence of a hard-shell to nation-states and a hierarchy of issues on the national agenda that are not subject to negotiation as they would undermine the existence of the nation-states itself.

Intergovernmentalism is an adaptive model for Europe, seeking to develop co-operation between nations whilst retaining the primary role of the state in international affairs. States are seen to be willing to indulge in co-operation on issues of low politics, but to preserve their monopoly of power in high politics when challenged by international organisations such as the EC. Co-operation which occurs between the nation-state and international organisations is seen to allow the advancement of national interests through bargaining and negotiation; and these aspects are the key motivations for co-operation. The attitude of nationalist and regionalist parties to compromise on these contrasting issues of high and low politics will be examined in the case studies.

### **3. The Development of European Union Since The 1920s**

#### *Pre-War European Integration*

It will become obvious from the analysis below that European integration has been a subject of concern for nationalist and regionalist parties since 1918. As the issue of European union rises on the political agenda, so does the attention of political actors to the subject. In the early period of European integration two main developments were notable. First, the campaigning efforts of Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi to promote the issue of European union. Second, the presentation of a plan for European union by the French foreign Minister Aristide Briand.

From the 1920s onwards Coudenhove-Kalergi promoted the idea of European union amongst Europe's political elites. Though lacking any governmental or diplomatic accreditation, he was reasonably successful in generating interest for the idea amongst politicians, diplomats and academics. Coudenhove-Kalergi favoured a

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37. Stanley Hoffman, "Obstinate or Obsolete: The Fate of the Nation-state in the Case of Western Europe", *Daedalus*, Vol.95, Summer 1966, pp.862-915.

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maximum position on European union, with a preference for economic and political union rather than a customs union. His intention was to move towards creating a common European *Gemeinschaft* rather than an intergovernmental union or economic entity. Europe was to be built on common cultural and political foundations, to construct common symbols and themes to stress its unity.<sup>38</sup> This involved any pan-European organisation taking on the trappings of the nation-state.

The more significant political development in this period came with the Briand Plan proposed in 1929-30. Briand had laid out suggestions for European federal union in a speech to the League of Nations General Assembly in 1929. These proposals were formalised in the *Memorandum on the Organisation of a Federal Regime in Europe* presented to the League in 1930. Briand proposed to create a number of common institutions with joint responsibility for Europe within the structures of the League of Nations, but other League members were unenthusiastic.<sup>39</sup>

Both Coudenhove-Kalergi's and Briand's efforts failed, and the League of Nations foundered, in the climate of the 1930s. These experiences were, however, influential in the period after the second world war. Efforts to promote European integration in this period occurred in a very different context from those previously. The war was seen to be the apotheosis of nationalism, and produced a European state system weakened by the economic and social destruction of six years of conflict and divided between two opposing superpowers.

### *Post-war European Integration*

The postwar movement in favour of European integration had its roots in the political and resistance networks that developed in the latter stages of the war, and were instrumental in the formation of a number of Euro-federalist organisations. Their attitudes were influenced by the experience and failure of the League of Nations and the nation-states system on which it had been constructed. The lessons of this experience, in a climate of great antipathy towards nations and nationalism, produced a strong preference for maximum prescriptions for European union. Instead of the intergovernmentalism of the League, these groups proposed supranationalism, and strong, central authorities for Europe. A centralised European federation was seen to be the best mechanism to deal with national conflicts, achieve economic union to undermine economic conflicts, and settle the problem of the

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38. Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Crusade for Pan-Europa*.

39. Richard Vaughan, *Post-war Integration in Europe*, p.11.

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restoration of the German state. The new union was also presented as a means to enable Europe's former great powers to play some role in world affairs, as a unified actor independent of the two superpowers.<sup>40</sup>

The effectiveness of these federalist groups was limited by the existence of an alternative prospectus for Europe. Rather than the whole-hearted constitutional approach of the federalists, this second set of opinions favoured a looser, intergovernmental union. Though the initiative for establishing common institutions lay in the hands of national governments, both of these alternate groups of actors sought to promote their respective positions. The meeting point was the Hague Congress in 1948. The Congress intended to produce a design for European union, and its output involved support for the creation of a European Court of Justice, a European Charter of Human Rights, and various plans for economic and political union.

The differences between federalists and intergovernmentalists were clearly evident in governmental reactions to the Hague agenda. Both France and Britain responded by proposing very different types of European union. Though both had been signatories to the Brussels Treaty in 1948 to establish a common European Assembly, there was little agreement over the role and powers of the assembly. Britain objected to the supranational nature of the assembly proposal and promoted an intergovernmental alternative that retained national sovereignty. The UK's preference manifested itself in the weak, intergovernmental Council of Europe, which employed Ministerial participation to safeguard national rights.<sup>41</sup>

The need to restructure political and economic relations between Germany and France in the postwar period provided a more definite opportunity for the development of European union than the Council of Europe approach. The Schuman Plan in 1950 was intended to close the Franco-German gap. It proposed to unite the political and economic goals of the two states through establishing a common authority for coal and steel production amongst West European countries, to undermine the economic bases of international conflicts. This initiative was presented as the first step towards federalism rather than a simple economic project, and a means to integrate the new West German state, created in 1949, into the West European political structure. The Schuman Plan came to institutional reality in the

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40. Walter Lipgens (ed), *A History of European Integration 1945-7*, pp.53-55.

41. Clive Archer, *Organising Western Europe*, p.43.

shape of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1951, which included Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and West Germany as members.

The European Coal and Steel Community established a number of common institutions to facilitate the management of the coal and steel markets. These institutional arrangements included a political compromise to protect smaller ECSC members from the political dominance of larger members.<sup>42</sup> Though the ECSC was originally designed as a supranational organisation, administered by a supranational High Authority, intergovernmental aspects were added in order to protect the smaller states. A Council of Ministers was grafted on to the ECSC structure which diluted the supranational aspect of the institution, and provided each member state with equal voting rights. Despite this intergovernmental aspect, it was the creation of federal forces, who were prepared to make compromises to sustain the dynamic of integration.

After the success of the ECSC, European governments moved to examine other opportunities for co-operation. A European Defence Community (EDC) was proposed by the French government as a means to develop a common European defence force. It was controversial as it involved the remilitarization of Germany and the merger of separate national military forces. The latter was an evident challenge to national sovereignty - it proposed a common European Defence Minister accountable to a supranational assembly - and was defeated by the French National Assembly for this reason. The idea of a European Political Community came much more informally, through meetings of the common assembly of the ECSC. The ECSC parliamentarians prepared a draft treaty for European union which outlined a common structure above individual initiatives such as the ECSC and Defence Community.

Both of these ambitious proposals were rejected by 1954, leading to crisis amongst the federalist movement. As the federal proposals for European security failed, interstate initiatives succeeded. Instead of the federal European Defence Community, the intergovernmental Western European Union was established, with British support. The federalist response to the failure of the Defence Community and the reinvigorated intergovernmental approach, was to attempt to relaunch the integration process through the creation of a European Community. Jean Monnet and other federalists took a leading role in marshalling elite support for new European policy initiatives through the Action Committee for the United States of Europe formed in

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42. Brigid Laffan, *Integration and Co-Operation in Europe*, p.32.

1955.<sup>43</sup> They intended to concentrate on economic integration, which had succeeded with the ECSC, and promoted the idea of a set of institutions to guide the creation of a common market.

### *The European Community*

The new consensus on co-operation was evident at the intergovernmental conference of the ECSC at Messina in 1955. The conference established a committee to design institutions to facilitate the creation of a European common market and a pan-European nuclear industry. It proposed the creation of a customs union between the six ECSC members, involving common policies and institutions. This agenda produced the European Economic Community and Euratom in 1957.

These new institutions were established through the Treaty of Rome. The Community proposed to achieve a level of economic integration through abolishing customs duties and tariffs between individual members and establishing a common external tariff regime. It also proposed to create a common market by providing for the free movement of goods, services and people within the market area, and developing common policies in the spheres of agriculture, transport and communications. Though the institutions of the new Community contained intergovernmental aspects through the Council of Ministers, the primary role was given to the supranational Commission to act as the motor of integration. The Commission was to be staffed with members who owed their loyalty, though not their appointment, to the supranational institutions rather than their member states. The Commission was joined by a European Court and the supranational, though weak and unelected, European Assembly.

The initial membership of the EC mirrored that of the European Coal and Steel Community. Britain continued its role as a Community outsider, though it sought to reverse its initial opposition to membership with applications in 1961 and 1967, which were vetoed by France. Britain's non-membership, in contrast to the involvement of Belgium and France in integrative projects from the early 1950s, means that two of the cases in this study experienced a period of European integration outside the Community.

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43. Archer, *Op. cit.*, p.65.

### *Intergovernmental Alternatives to the EC*

While the six Western European states established the institutions of the European Economic Community, the UK involved itself in the creation of an alternative intergovernmental trading organisation. The European Free Trade Area (EFTA) favoured a *trade association* rather than the *customs union* approach of the EC, to pursue limited economic co-operation and preserve national sovereignty. The group of countries involved in EFTA had preferred to achieve trade integration through the co-operative mechanisms of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation, but the advent of the EC brought them to establish the EFTA in 1960 as an alternative trading bloc.<sup>44</sup> The EFTA declaration outlined limited goals that contrasted markedly with those of the EC, with its federalist outlook and intention to proceed towards 'ever closer union'. EFTA can be seen as a response to the EC's approach to integration and also an indication of the unwillingness of the EFTA group to trade off sovereignty for integration. The limited goals and intergovernmental approach of the EFTA made it a plausible alternative for a number of countries to achieve limited economic co-operation and avoid isolation. As will be illustrated below, it also offered an institutional alternative for nationalist parties during periods of opposition to the European Community.

### *The Crisis of Deepening in the EC*

During its early years the European Commission set about the task of establishing a customs union and common agricultural policy between the six member states. This process was substantially disrupted by the conflict over sovereignty and integration that developed in the mid-1960s. The Treaty of Rome had indicated that the Council of Ministers would progress to majority voting on issues related to the common market rather than retain the unanimity procedure. This prospect, which undermined the national veto, along with proposals to alter the Commission's powers over agriculture and the EC budget, led the French Government to veto further integration.<sup>45</sup> Whilst the French sought the passage of the agricultural reforms, they did not want them to contribute to the expansion of the Commission's decisionmaking capacity. The Commission had linked these two issues together in a package deal to facilitate the extension of its competences, but France strongly opposed this practice, and created a crisis in 1965 when its officials and Ministers temporarily abandoned EC institutions in protest at the Commission strategy. This

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44. The signatories to the EFTA agreement included Austria, Britain, Denmark, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland, with Finland joining in 1961 and Iceland in 1970.

45. For consideration of the crisis in the Community in 1965-6 see Miriam Camps, *Op. cit.*

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effectively paralysed substantial elements of EC decisionmaking, and stifled progress towards majority voting.

French opposition to supranationalism, and promotion of the alternative intergovernmental position of a *Europe des Patries*, produced a solution to the sovereignty/integration paradox. The Luxembourg compromise of 1966 created a national veto within the Council of Ministers that removed the prospect of majority voting. The veto enabled national governments to declare some Commission policy initiatives as non-negotiable, as they affected vital national interests, leading to their non-implementation, or use the threat of the veto as a bargaining tool to extract side-payments or concessions within the Council of Ministers over particular policies. This altered the balance of power within the Community away from supranationalism towards intergovernmentalism, and effectively entrenched the intergovernmental position of the member states within the Council.

Following the disruption of the Luxembourg crisis the Community entered a period of institutional rationalisation. The three existing communities, the ECSC, the European Economic Community and Euratom, were merged into one institution governed by a single Commission. One result of this was the recognition of the intergovernmental mechanisms that had developed since 1957 but had not been included in the Treaty of Rome. The diplomatic networks that had grown up around the Council of Ministers was institutionalised as COREPER, the Committee of Permanent Representatives, to act as the working groups for Council meetings. The new arrangements were inserted into the Treaties during the merger.

### *EC Efforts at Widening and Deepening*

By the end of the 1960s the Community had lost its way on the road to integration. Not only had De Gaulle prevented the *deepening* of the Community by taking a stand on sovereignty, but he had also blocked the EC's *widening* through placing a veto on British entry in 1961 and 1967.<sup>46</sup> This in spite of the fact that the Treaty of

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46. The concepts of *deepening* and *widening* refer to the general strategies/approaches of the European Community: it can pursue integration through increasing the extent of integration amongst existing members, through new institutions and policies, or alternatively through expanding the process to include new members. These approaches are considered as opposing choices by some EC actors - the British Government for example - and though there is a distinct tension between them they are not inherently contradictory.



Rome had stated that Community membership was to be open to all democratic states in Europe.<sup>47</sup>

The period after De Gaulle's departure was notable for the Community's efforts to pursue enlargement and integration. The Hague Summit in 1969 explored the issues of expansion, economic and monetary union and foreign policy co-operation, and the EC quickly entered into negotiations with four prospective member states. The Community then moved towards developing European Political co-operation and EMU through the Werner Report in 1970. These goals were written into the communiques dealing with enlargement following the Paris Summit in 1972.

The political and economic shocks after 1972 did much to undermine the EC's new beginning. The changing status of the dollar in the global economy, the oil price rise in 1973 and the onset of economic recession all produced problems for the integrationist agenda of Paris. In difficult economic times the resurgence of national economic interests and limited rationale for co-operation reduced the appeal of further integration, and EMU, which was supposed to have been completed by 1980, was lost from the Community's political agenda until the latter 1970s. This period has been depicted as the *confederal* phase of the Community, typified by the weak, managerial role of the Commission, the predominance of intergovernmental activity and the defensive attitudes of national governments.<sup>48</sup>

The period from the Paris summit until the early 1980s has been considered as one of relative stagnation for the Community, though several institutional developments occurred. The informal summit meetings took on an enhanced status through their designation and institutionalisation as the European Council, with heads of government rather than just government Ministers taking a prominent role in EC affairs and diplomacy. This partially removed the leadership of the EC from the Commission to the European Council and further elevated the intergovernmental dimension. Despite the period of stagnation the Community successfully enlarged itself in 1973 to include Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom. The EC also deepened the process of integration through establishing direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, to replace the nationally-nominated assembly with a more democratic and supranational institution.

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47. Article 237 of the Treaty of Rome requires unanimity within the Council of Ministers before new members can join the EC, since 1987 there has also been a requirement for majority support within the European Parliament: See *Treaty Establishing the European Economic Community and Single European Act* (Luxembourg: European Communities, 1989).

48. Paul Taylor, "The Politics of the European Community: The Confederal Phase", *World Politics*, Vol. xxvii, April 1973, pp.336-60.

The Community also made an attempt to restore progress towards economic and monetary union through the establishment of the European Monetary System (EMS) in 1979. The EMS was created to produce a regime of monetary stability within the EC to facilitate internal trade. Though the device was initially subject to a great deal of intergovernmental bargaining, with poorer EC members seeking side-payments through the European Regional Development Fund in exchange for supporting the EMS,<sup>49</sup> the new regime was successful in producing more stable exchange rates and prices.<sup>50</sup> This degree of convergence was intended to produce the economic climate for economic and monetary union and market integration, though progress on these issues was not made until the mid-1980s.

### *Towards the SEA*

The early 1980s did see a further enlargement, with Greece joining the EC, but the Community continued to suffer from a negative image because of the CAP funding crisis and British dissatisfaction with budgetary contributions to the EC. Pro-integrationists within the Community saw a need to relaunch the EC in this period, to generate a new dynamism towards integration. The Genscher-Colombo initiative of the German and Italian Governments was an attempt to have the Community recommit itself to economic and political union at the Stuttgart Summit in 1983. The European Parliament also sought to relaunch integration through the preparation of the draft Treaty on European Union in 1984. The Stuttgart declaration sought to minimise the use of the national veto, through states abstaining in Council votes rather than vetoing initiatives of benefit to other member states, whilst the Parliament's initiative sought to remove the veto completely.

The reappearance of economic integration on the EC's agenda was a consequence of efforts of integrationists in the Commission and member states, and committed intergovernmentalists, who saw market integration as beneficial to their national interests. The Commission had pursued the issue of market integration for some time in the early 1980s, but it was the Council of Ministers which really seized the initiative through the appointment of the Dooge Committee on Institutional Affairs, to examine the need for institutional changes to aid the process of market integration, and package together the Community's preference for institutional development with the member states desires for economic benefits. The Franco-German nexus within

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49. Roy Jenkins, *European Diary 1977-1981*, p.350.

50. David Cameron, "The 1992 Initiative: Causes and Consequences", in Alberta Sbragia (ed), *Euro-Politics: Institutions and Policymaking in the New European Community*, p.47.

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the Community was also adept at linking the single market to the agenda of political union, which brought the intergovernmental conference to amend the Treaty of Rome and institute the Single European Act.

The Treaty amendments that comprised the Single European Act reintroduced an element missing from the Community since the 1960s: qualified majority voting. This procedure was to be used in the policy domains of the internal market, removing the unanimity rule in these areas and undermining the national veto. This produced the situation in which member states were seen to be using the EC and the Council of Ministers as instruments for *pooled sovereignty*, accepting joint action in certain areas whilst retaining sovereignty in others.<sup>51</sup>

The internal market aspects of the Single European Market achieved considerable prominence, and sought to produce the level of economic integration originally intended in the Treaty of Rome. The blockages in internal Community trade were due to a number of non-tariff fiscal, technical and physical barriers to trade. The Commission therefore developed policies to deal with the level of customs controls between EC states; the harmonisation and mutual recognition of national technical standards, regulations and contract arrangements; and differing VAT and excise rates.<sup>52</sup> The removal of these barriers was seen to provide a substantial trading boost to the Community's members with cost-reductions on trade, improved price efficiency and new patterns in comparative advantage.

### *From Single Market to EMU*

The success of the single market programme in relaunching the Community and providing the path towards economic and monetary union was considerable. While for some Community members, such as the United Kingdom, the single market was an end in itself, for others it was a route to EMU and political union. Following the success of the Single European Act, the Council appointed the Committee for the Study of Economic and Monetary Union to examine the prospects for deeper economic integration. The Committee itself held the view that the single market had substantially restructured interstate economic relations:

“by greatly strengthening economic interdependence between member countries, the Single Market will reduce the room for

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51. Robert Keohane and Stanley Hoffmann (eds), *The New European Community: Decisionmaking and Institutional Change*, p.7.

52. For more on goals of the single market initiative see Paulo Cecchini, *The European Challenge 1992: The Benefits of the Single Market*.

independent policy manoeuvre and amplify the existing cross-border effects of developments originating in each member country.”<sup>53</sup>

The ambitious nature of the Delors Report’s proposals on EMU brought an intergovernmental conference to discuss and prepare the necessary amendments to the Treaty of Rome. The Franco-German alliance within the EC also succeeded in forcing the issue of political union onto the Community agenda, which brought a second intergovernmental conference. A year of bargaining and negotiation in both conferences brought forth the Maastricht Treaty at the end of 1991, which sought to design the institutions, policies and timetable to implement the Delors Report. The Treaty followed the three stage process outlined in the report, with the transition phases to complete economic and monetary union to be achieved by 1st January 1999.

The first stage of EMU sought to achieve economic policy convergence between the EC member states, with the Community’s Finance Ministers meeting through Ecofin to monitor and enforce convergence guidelines. The convergence criteria agreed at Maastricht were detailed and involved stringent monetary and fiscal targets for member states to be accepted into the transition to complete EMU;

1. The member state’s inflation level had to be no more than 1.5% above the average of the three lowest national rates of inflation within the EC;
2. Interest rates had to be no higher than 2% above the average of the three lowest national interest rate levels in the EC;
3. The budget deficit of national governments had to be within 3% of GDP;
4. Gross public sector debt had to be kept within 60% of GDP;
5. National currency had to be within the 2.25% divergence band of the European Monetary System for two years in advance of EMU, without any unilateral devaluation.<sup>54</sup>

These criteria were to be implemented and monitored by Ecofin, and subsequently by the European Monetary Institute established at the second stage of EMU in 1994. This institution was to take over the role of Ecofin in co-ordinating national monetary policies, facilitate the use of the ECU, strengthen the levels of co-operation between national central banks and monitor the operation of the European Monetary System. By the 31st December 1996 the European Council was to consider the levels of fulfilment of the stipulated convergence criteria, and if a majority of EC

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53. Committee for the Study of Economic and Monetary Union, *Report on Economic and Monetary Union in the European Community*, p.10.

54. “Protocol on the Convergence criteria referred to in Article 109j of the Treaty establishing the European Community”, *Treaty on European Union*, 1992.

states had achieved these conditions then the Community would progress towards the third stage. This staging post to EMU was the aspect of most concern to the Danish and UK governments during the Maastricht negotiations and both secured opt-outs within the Treaty on their final agreement and participation in stage three.<sup>55</sup>

The European System of Central Banks was to be established by July 1998 at the latest, in preparation for stage three and the emergence of an independent European Central Bank to manage European monetary policy. During this period the ECU would become a currency in its own right, and exchange rates would be fixed to facilitate the exchange of national currencies for the ECU.

Whilst the Treaty made progress on EMU, there was more limited agreement on aspects of political union. Foreign policy was not elevated to become an EC policy domain. However, an intergovernmental body for joint decisionmaking in foreign policy was constructed alongside the EC, not subject to supranational influences. As in other areas, the UK government negotiated an opt-out on joint decisionmaking in the area of foreign affairs. The member states were able to achieve increased co-operation in home affairs and justice, though this was limited. There were also political problems over the Community's desire to insert the social chapter into the Treaty over the veto of the British. In a hybrid move the eleven other members agreed the chapter and inserted it as a protocol to the Treaty. This exercise and the general use of opt-outs and protocols in the Maastricht Treaty may have set a number of precedents that undermine the Community decisionmaking process. Aspects of the Treaty were picked apart by intergovernmentalism and national interests, and may have created a precedent for the emergence of an *a la carte* Community rather than a unified one.<sup>56</sup>

Whilst Maastricht was signed and largely ratified, its impact was difficult to predict. It was conceived during a more optimistic environment for integration, but required implementation in a period in which economic problems reduced the enthusiasm for further economic integration, and the crises in the former Yugoslavia showed the weakness of European political union in the foreign policy sphere. Domestic economic and political problems, and the political scepticism of European electorates over integration further tarnished the Maastricht agreement. The public's lukewarm support for integration evident in the French and Danish referenda in 1992 and

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55. "Protocol on certain provisions relating to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland" and "Protocol on certain provisions relating to Denmark", *ibid.*

56. The idea of integration developing on an *a la carte* basis was first propounded by Ralf Dahrendorf in 1979. See Laffan, *Op. cit.*, p.13.

problems with the EMS from 1992-3 also stalled progress towards economic and monetary union.

### **4. The Party Dimension**

#### *The Political Opportunity Structure of European Integration*

European integration has offered a variable political opportunity structure for political actors since the 1920s. This relationship between political contexts and behaviours is a product of group activities and strategies and also of the various openings and resources in the political system itself.<sup>57</sup> A political opportunity structure can be seen to have three aspects: first, it may help or hinder the agenda-setting efforts of a political organisation; second, it influences the process of alliance formation with sympathetic political actors; third, it influences the policies and strategies of political organisations.<sup>58</sup>

Stateless nations and their political systems offer a definite structure of opportunities for political actors. They present “a space offering several possibilities of action to those people living and working within it”.<sup>59</sup> The bounded communities of this study are also subject to exogenous factors such as pressures from neighbouring communities and the political or economic centre. European integration is one such exogenous influence, and the endogenous political response to it forms the core of this study.

The European issue has provided a new opening for nationalist and regionalist parties, exposing the weak spot of sovereignty in the established state-nations and providing an external support system to aid autonomy. Each party has faced a different political opportunity structure, and adopted different behaviours and responses to European integration, though each exhibited similar behaviour in linking the issue to their own drive for autonomy. This in itself constitutes the main response to the political opportunity structure: hitching autonomy and independence to exogenous factors that challenge and undermine state sovereignty.

In addition to considering the EC/subnational interface as a political opportunity structure, the European issue is a *political resource*. It is an external resource for

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57. Peter Eisinger, “The Conditions of Protest Behaviour in American Cities”, *American Political Science Review*, Vol.67, March 1973, p.11.

58. Dieter Rucht, “Environment Movement Organisations in West Germany and France”, in Bert Klandermans (ed), *Organising For Change: Social Movement Organisations in Europe and the United States*, p.68.

59. Stein Rokkan and Derek Urwin, *Economy, Territory, Identity*, p.3.

political parties deployed in their political strategies and debates. The role of the EC as an *external support system* to assist in the autonomy or independence of small states is one example of its usage as a resource. Such deployment may be contingent upon the suitability of the political opportunity structure. For nationalist and regionalist parties, which are usually but not always opposition parties, the opportunities come in the shape of elections and referenda as well as through general political discourse on constitutional issues and political questions. Such parties would be expected to take account of this external political influence and resource in their consideration of constitutional reforms. Some of this was manifest in the debates and proposals on such reforms. The examination of the deployment of this political resource, through *linkage politics*, shall receive treatment throughout this study.

### *The Meaning Of Europe: Supranationalism And Sovereignty*

As an idea, European union has meant very different things to different people over time.<sup>60</sup> It is not a uniform concept but open to competing expectations and aspirations. This very looseness and conceptual ambiguity has been convenient for many political actors, though some have argued that the idea itself has been undermined by its ambiguity.<sup>61</sup> European union is a contested notion. It can be regarded as an article of faith for some such as the European Movement or as a demon by those political groups seeking to preserve British sovereignty. The idea has been used by centralist federalists, intergovernmental federalists, decentralist federalists, functionalists, neo-functionalists, and by most political parties in contemporary Europe. The flexibility of the notion of European union should not detract from the fact that it is contested, with a degree of conflict over what the term means and what the substance of the union should involve. This level of generality is shared by the nationalist and regionalist parties in this study, though they occasionally provide more exact definitions of their conception of European union.

Though European union is conceptually vague, and therefore malleable, the European Community has an empirical reality that has led to more serious interpretations by political actors. Nationalists and regionalists could afford to be indulgent with the concept of European union but the reality of a set of institutions, policies and power relations in the EC required some re-evaluation of self-determination and sovereignty. The new institutional and policy implications of the

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60. Calleo, *Op. cit.*, p.36.

61. Stanley Hoffmann, "Europe's Identity Crisis: Between the Past and America", *Daedalus*, Vol.93, Fall 1964, p.1273.

European Community, brought a behavioural change to some political parties. Vague international goodwill and feelings about the efficacy of co-operation were interrupted by political reality and new sets of stimuli and considerations, related to sovereignty and integration.

In the strict historical sense sovereignty refers to the belief that a society or body-politic has absolute political power.<sup>62</sup> In the international system this domestic assertion of state sovereignty has brought acceptance of the principle of self-determination and the sovereign independence of nation-states. This study will seek to define the attitudes of the political parties to sovereignty through examining its interpretation at the domestic and international level. This will allow some depiction of their respective absolutist or pragmatic positions. Though supranational institutions have developed which hold powers and responsibilities above the state they are not sovereign bodies but alliances of sovereign states. The European Community, for example, has been characterised as an intergovernmental union rather than a sovereign body.<sup>63</sup> Its limited powers rely upon member states' acceptance of limits on their individual national sovereignty. This study will examine how parties who support different levels of self-determination reconcile their demands for sovereignty with the existence of European institutions.

Since the European Community involves some trade-off between national and supranational sovereignty parties and movements concerned with national self-determination face a dilemma. As nation-builders, nationalists and regionalists may regard the European Community as a constraint on the exercise of national sovereignty in certain areas of policy or in overall policy. Alternatively they may see positive benefits from sharing sovereignty with a supranational organisation. This 'sharing' is problematic for nationalists seeking independence. For they are normally seeking to attain complete sovereignty from their multinational states, not to share it, and then concede some to another external body. For regionalists, by contrast, there is no contradiction. They propose to share a more equal degree of sovereignty within their state through decentralisation, and in the EC, through *integral federalism*.

Whilst focusing upon political sovereignty, and exploring the notions of independence and interdependence in the case studies, the notion of economic sovereignty is also important, as it can be seen to underlie political independence.

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62. F.H. Hinsley, *Sovereignty*, p.158.

63. Stanley Hoffmann, *Op. cit.*, has been among the strong proponents of this view.



Here it is party attitudes to economic autarky and interdependence that are of interest. Economic sovereignty can be seen as

“the de facto power of a national government to control economic conditions within its territories”.<sup>64</sup>

This power is difficult to measure, but an analysis of the beliefs and expectations of the nationalist and regionalist parties in this area will suffice. Identifying what the parties believe about economic sovereignty will offer some guide to their attitudes on economic integration. Two of the Breton parties in this study, for example, hold contrasting views of economic integration. The moderate regionalist parties associated with Yann Fouere have favoured liberal economic principles and open markets, whilst the socialist UDB has favoured protectionism. Both of these views have implications for attitudes and responses to European integration.

Attitudes to economic sovereignty fall logically into two polar types. Regionalists may be protectionist and autarkic or internationalist and oriented towards economic modernisation.<sup>65</sup> Alternatively, parties may follow a mixture of these two approaches, according to the particular economic issue or period. Exploring and defining these positions in each case will offer some explanation of a party's attitude to the EC and the threat or opportunity that it offers to the notion of economic sovereignty.

### *Conceptualising Party Responses to European Integration*

European integration is an overlapping phenomenon which occurs within and between national and international political systems. Developments in one area are linked to another. The focus here is predominantly on unidirectional influences, that of international issues on domestic, subnational actors. There is a reciprocal relationship between the two systems however, and effects that occur and have influence across systems. This is the context which facilitates *political linkage*.

Linkage is “any recurrent sequence of behaviour that originates in one system and is reacted to in another”.<sup>66</sup> The national and international systems involve a sequence of inputs and outputs which generate reciprocal responses. For weak domestic

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64. A.M.C. Waterman: “Nationalism, Sovereignty and Economic Policy”, *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, Vol.2, No.1, 1974, p.6.

65. Michael Keating, “Minority Nationalism and the State: The European Case”, in Michael Watson (ed), *Contemporary Minority Nationalism*, p.189.

66. James Rosenau, *Linkage Politics: Essays On The Convergence Of National And International Systems*, p.45.

actors, such as the cases in this study, this is an essentially reactive experience. Policy outputs in the national system are therefore generated by behaviour in the international system and vice-versa. Such linkages effect the level of independence or interdependence in a society and can also have integrative or disintegrative effects.<sup>67</sup>

The nature of the linkage between autonomy and European integration involves subnational parties reacting to policy outputs from the international system and the European Community. As well as reacting to outputs - the *policy response* - the parties are also making a *systemic response* to the design, substance and future of those systems and institutions, and to their impact upon domestic political goals and contexts. The argument of this study is that nationalist and regionalist parties react to these outputs and institutions through a series of distinctive political linkages. Linkage has some similarities with the notion of *policy coupling*, a concept which refers to the process through which issues or problems within political debate are linked to other issues. It involves the re-articulation and repackaging of an issue through attaching it to a new theme or development.<sup>68</sup> The difference between linkage and coupling is that the former can refer to *policies* and to *fundamental party goals*, whilst the latter is really only about policies.

*Political linkage* involves a number of distinct strategies according to the prevailing interpretation of political opportunities and contexts. Three types of linkage are examined in this thesis. Parties may pursue *negative linkage* on European integration: this involves complete opposition to European developments, indicating a preference for maximum sovereignty. Parties may alternatively practice *strategic negative linkage*, or qualified opposition, as a strategy to facilitate bargaining over economic resources, side-payments, and also EC membership and representation. Parties may also use bargaining as part of their articulation of *positive linkage*, which views European developments as complementary to the pursuit of national/regional autonomy, and uses the European context to support it.

Linkage is not the only response to European integration by nationalist and regionalist parties. Two other behavioural responses are identifiable: the attempt to employ and benefit from the *demonstration effect* and the development of *internationalisation strategies* to externalise the autonomy issue.

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67. *Ibid.*, p.47.

68. John Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives And Public Policies*, p.181.

The *demonstration effect* refers to the level of encouragement that regionalist parties receive from the success of other parties and movements within their political family.<sup>69</sup> Such success gives a psychological boost to parties internally, and enables them to make historicist appeals to their mass publics that the tide of history is turning in favour of decentralisation and small nations.

Contemporary European nationalism and regionalism has employed two appeals of this nature. Regionalists have made frequent reference to the decentralising trends of the contemporary phase of European integration, which is seen to give life to a *Europe of the regions*. The second appeal is related to the re-emergence of small and intermediate nations in Eastern Europe since 1989. The message is that small nations have broken free from Soviet domination, and small nations in the West should follow their example. This 'demonstration effect' is really a demonstration of 'the art of the possible'. This latter aspect has a lengthy pedigree amongst nationalists and regionalists, but has come into usage again since 1989.<sup>70</sup>

Four waves of state formation can be identified since the nineteenth century: the emergence of Latin American states in that century, the post-1918 period in Europe and the post-1945 development of new states in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific,<sup>71</sup> and the re-emergence of independent nations in Europe since 1989. The three latter waves have been of some significance for nationalist and regionalist parties and movements.

The post-Versailles period of state formation offered considerable encouragement to national movements. Though the principle of self-determination was not adopted by the signatories to the Versailles settlement, national movements could claim that it had been adopted in reality through the creation of new states and the demise of the Habsburg Empire. A number of national movements attempted to attach their demands to the Versailles process, seeking to influence the peacemakers through exploiting Woodrow Wilson's fourteenth point giving guarantees of international protection for minorities seeking self-determination. These national movements sought to deploy the 'national principle' and the right to self-determination in support of their arguments for autonomy.<sup>72</sup>

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69. Walker Conner, "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying?", *World Politics*, Vol.24, 1972, pp.319-55.

70. See Gwynfor Evans, *Fighting For Wales*, p.212; and Gordon Wilson, "Address to SNP National Conference 1989", *The Scots Independent*, November 1989, pp.5-6.

71. James Mayall, *Nationalism And International Society*, p.64.

72. E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations And Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, p.136.

The Breton movement was one of those involved in taking its case to Versailles. A group of Breton notables presented a petition to the peace conference in 1919 demanding linguistic and cultural rights for Brittany.<sup>73</sup> Elements within the Flemish Movement also sought to play a role in the proceedings. The more extreme Activist tendency within the movement, comprised of those fundamentalists who had collaborated with the Germans during the occupation in WW1, had sent a telegram to Woodrow Wilson demanding self-government for Flanders.<sup>74</sup>

These efforts were not successful but illustrate the propensity of national movements to apply developments in international politics to their own contexts. From 1905 to 1922 eleven new states were formed in Europe, with six created in 1918 alone, as a result of Versailles. Nine of these new states were established as a consequence of political secession.<sup>75</sup> The emergence of Albania, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Poland was not lost on nationalist and regionalist movements in Western Europe. Though there was an identification with these new states, and a degree of encouragement gained from their creation, the context which gave birth to them had a limited effect in Europe. The League of Nations Treaty on minorities only applied to Eastern Europe. Therefore the Western minorities could not use the League as an instrument to aid their linguistic and cultural autonomy.

The two subsequent waves of state formation in the third world and in contemporary Europe have also been important for nationalist and regionalist parties. The process of decolonisation gave nationalism and secession a new legitimacy in international affairs, it also reiterated the belief that alien rule was illegitimate.<sup>76</sup> It gave the principle of self-determination a new status through its inclusion in the charter of the United Nations, and was strengthened through General Assembly resolutions and the UN Convention of Civil and Political Rights in 1966.<sup>77</sup> Regionalists and nationalists have promoted the principle of self-determination and sought to give their political aims some legitimacy through employing this concept, and demanding its implementation in their own context.<sup>78</sup> Decolonisation also allowed nationalists

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73. Meic Stephens, *Linguistic Minorities in Western Europe*, p.373. Scottish nationalists also called for Scottish representation at the Paris peace conference in 1919, see H. J. Hanham, *Scottish Nationalism*, pp.110-111.

74. "Flemish Committee Telegram To Wilson", Theo Hermans (ed), *The Flemish Movement: A Documentary History 1780-1990*.

75. Mayall, *Op. cit.*, p.28.

76. Walker Connor, "Ethnonationalism in the First World", in Milton Esman (ed), *Ethnic Conflict in the Western World*, p.32.

77. Mayall, *Op. cit.*, p.28.

78. For an example see Parti pour L'Organisation d'une Bretagne Libre, *Pour Une Democratie Bretonne*, p.12.

and regionalists to identify a leftist aspect to nationalism and secession. This progressive element helped them to relegitimise nationalism and reclaim it from the experience of Europe since the 1920s. It also brought regionalists to develop leftist critiques of centre-periphery relations in their own states that focused upon claims of colonisation.<sup>79</sup> Decolonisation, and responses to it amongst regionalists, helped to generate a form of socialist-regionalism and led to the formation of a number of political parties and organisations such as the *Union Democratique Bretonne*.

The *internationalisation strategy* involved efforts by regionalist parties to place their agendas for autonomy within the context of international developments and develop transnational linkages to articulate and publicise this context. Such internationalisation involved the establishment of three transnational political organisations: the International Congress of European Nations and Regions, the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations and the European Free Alliance which will be studied below. This co-operative strategy was accompanied by the efforts of individual parties and movement to raise their issue in international politics,<sup>80</sup> which will also receive attention in this thesis.

## **5. Conclusion**

Nationalist and regionalist parties are particularly suitable phenomena for a study of European integration. As constitutional parties, seeking to form or protect political communities and national identities and develop national/regional sovereignty, they share some of the same agenda as European integration. These overlapping aspects mean that Europe has a stronger impact on these parties than on others. Nationalism and regionalism are both partial and territorial, they do not share the universalistic attributes of other political parties and ideologies. These territorial, particularistic and identitive aspects make their experience of European integration quite distinct as political objects and subjects and particularly susceptible to the neo-functionalist end-condition.

The cases in this thesis will be dealt with chronologically, in order to define the stimulus/response of each movement and party to successive waves of European integration in the 1920s, the 1940s, the formation of the ECSC and European

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79. Robert Lafont, *La Revolution Regionaliste* ; Gwynfor Evans, *A National Future For Wales*.

80. Scottish Nationalists have occasionally taken their demands for self-determination to international organisations, see "Scotland's Claim of Right to the United Nations Organisation", *The Scots Independent*, October 1947; "Declaration on Behalf of the People of Scotland", Scottish National Party, 1970; John Law, "The Scotland UN Committee", *The Bulletin of Scottish Politics*, No.1, Autumn 1980, p.97.

## ***Introduction***

Community in the 1950s, and the development of the EC from then until the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. There will be an explanation of the political opportunity structure of each case, through individual and comparative consideration, to enable the identification of particular contextual factors. The similarities and differences of the cases will also be identified to draw firm conclusions about the behaviour of the nationalist and regionalist family of political parties towards European integration.

In examining these contexts and responses particular attention will be paid to the effect of Europe in shaping and changing the political goals of the parties under study. The effect of Europe, and the Europeanisation of party goals will receive attention, as will party efforts to exploit the opportunities provided by European integration and use it as an external support system for self-determination.

## 2

# **The Scottish National Party And Europe: Independence Through Intergovernmentalism**

“A Community of member states is a network of power and shifting power relations. The apparatus for making decisions reflects the power-structure nature of the Community. Those outwith the power structure may lobby through setting up information offices, which help delegations make their point to this or that body within the Community. But by definition lobbyists can only cajole and plead, and without sanctions available are kept outside when the doors close and decisionmakers decide. When the real players gather round the top table of the Council of Ministers, it is only member states that count. They exercise power.”<sup>1</sup>

### **1.Introduction**

The Scottish National Party (SNP) is a distinctive political case within the regionalist party family because it is a nationalist party seeking independence. It resides within the regionalist family because it is an example of autonomy parties commonly found in stateless nations in Europe. In contrast to continental parties, the SNP lacks a regionalist and federalist tradition. Rather the emphasis has been on home rule, independence or self-government. In the contemporary period independence has been the SNP's fundamental goal, rather than intermediate solutions such as devolution.

The SNP's nation-statism has been criticised by some authors as an example of Gaullism, favouring a *Europe des patries*, rather than a decentralised federation.<sup>2</sup> Such criticisms do point to the particular European constitutional arrangement favoured by the SNP - intergovernmentalism or confederalism. These responses have appeared in the current debates on independence in Scotland, but will be examined over the longer term to determine their significance.

The SNP's contemporary response to European union has arisen at a difficult time for state-nationalists. Having come to terms with a European Community shaped on

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1. Jim Sillars, *Independence in Europe*, p.7.

2. See Stephen Maxwell, “Scotland in a Wider Europe”, *Radical Scotland*, No.40, August/September 1989, p.25.

an intergovernmental model, nationalists have found themselves faced with the development of a new European Community committed to *deepening*,<sup>3</sup> and a level of regionalisation that has altered the existing intergovernmental position of the EC. This has led political opponents to assert that Scotland's constitutional future is regionalist rather than statist, as independence is obsolete. This view is opportunistic, using the changing balance of sovereignty and integration to allege the death of the nation-state. It has been used by opponents to discredit the SNP's *Independence in Europe* programme, and Europeanise devolution to place it within the context of a *Europe of the regions*.<sup>4</sup> Thus, not only is Europe both a challenge and a political resource to the SNP, but something that can be used by its opponents to attack independence and promote competing constitutional options.

### **2. The Development Of The SNP**

The SNP was formed through the merger of the Scottish Party and the National Party of Scotland (NPS) in 1934. Though the Scottish question had been salient since the formation of the cross-party Scottish Home Rule Association in 1886, it did not generate a separate political party until the formation of the NPS in 1928. There are a number of general accounts of the development of the party and the Scottish national movement, some of which will be referred to below. None has sought to explore the relationship between the national question and Europe in detail.<sup>5</sup>

The electoral progress of the SNP in Westminster parliamentary elections is detailed below (table 2.1) and offers some picture of the party's development. What is missing is the party's performance in by-elections, where the SNP has been successful in raising its profile and electing members. This was evident in the growing electoral support for the SNP in the 1930s and early 1940s, as the party forced electoral contests in Scotland when the major parties had agreed not to contest vacant seats as part of the national coalition. This brought the party's first electoral success in a by-election in 1945, which was followed by those at Hamilton in 1967, and Govan in 1973 and 1988.

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3. Helen Wallace, *Widening and Deepening: The New European Agenda*.

4. For an example see David Martin, "The Democratic Deficit", in Owen Dudley Edwards (ed), *A Claim of Right For Scotland*; and for consideration of this position see Peter Lynch, "European Integration and Regional Autonomy", Political Studies Association, Leicester University, 1993.

5. The exceptions are; Brent Steel, *The Ethnonational Threat To Supranational Integration: Impact on British Attitudes To European Integration* unpublished PhD dissertation, Washington State University, 1984; Macartney, "Independence in Europe", in Parry and Brown (eds), *Scottish Government Yearbook*; Mitchell, "The Implications of European Integration for Scottish Nationalism", conference paper, European Consortium for Political Research, Bochum, 1990.



## *The SNP And Europe*

Though the SNP has failed to make any great advance in terms of seats since 1974, its vote has risen from its lowpoint in 1983 to achieve the same level in 1992 as it attained in the first general election in 1974. In that period the economic factor of North Sea oil was an important ingredient in mobilising support for the SNP, along with general public concern at the need for more attention to be paid to Scottish issues. We can consider oil as the first great political resource for the SNP, which markedly altered the party's political opportunity structure. This study will explore whether the European Community has played a similar role for the SNP in the 1980s and 1990s.

**Table 2.1 Electoral Support for the SNP 1929-92**

<u>Election</u>	<u>% Votes</u>	<u>Support</u>	<u>Seats</u>
1929	0.1	*3313	0
1931	1.0	20954	0
1935	1.1	25642	0
1945	1.2	30595	0
1950	0.4	9708	0
1951	0.3	7299	0
1955	0.5	12112	0
1959	0.8	21738	0
1964	2.4	64441	0
1966	5.0	128474	0
1970	11.4	306802	1
1974 (Feb)	21.9	633130	7
1974 (Oct)	30.4	839608	11
1979	17.3	504180	2
1983	11.8	331975	2
1987	14.0	416873	3
1992	21.5	629034	3

\*Two candidates standing on behalf of the National Party of Scotland.

Sources: F.W.S. Craig: *British Parliamentary Election Results 1918-1949*, (London: MacMillan, 1977); James Kellas: *The Scottish Political System*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Richard Rose and Ian McAllister: *United Kingdom Facts*, (London: MacMillan, 1982).

### **3.The SNP And Europe To 1957**

The European question had little early impact upon Scottish nationalism. Even when there was consideration of the issue, such as in 1930, the focus was minimal. Discussion of Europe and federalism in the nationalist press occasionally appeared, but they were seldom connected. Self-government in Scotland was initially considered in the context of the British Empire, through the pursuit of dominion status. As early as 1926 though, nationalists had taken some notice of the notion of world federation.<sup>6</sup>

Discussion of such maximal commitments was limited and inconclusive. Nationalists were more involved with examining the domestic consequences of constitutional arrangements than exploring their international contexts. When federalism was discussed, for example, it was in reference to its suitability in settling the issue of Scottish autonomy within the UK rather than Europe.<sup>7</sup> Though it occasionally manifested an extra-European dimension that examined the merits of global rather than European federalism, the linkage between sovereignty, home rule and European union was mostly ignored. Where linkage was made, it was made in a restrictive and somewhat dismissive fashion. The Briand plan for a federal Europe in 1930,<sup>8</sup> was only discussed because Scotland was excluded from participation because of the absence of self-government.<sup>9</sup> The substance of the Briand proposal was neglected, despite its implications for national sovereignty and the operation of the League of Nations.

The national movement was divided into four main strands of opinion in the 1930s.<sup>10</sup> Two different groups supported devolution: one sought a piecemeal approach to home rule with the gradual growth of autonomy, whilst another favoured a federal solution for Scotland within the UK. Against these autonomists stood two groups of secessionists: those favouring complete independence and those proposing dominion-status within the British Empire.

Inattentiveness to European union should not be taken as an indication of an isolationist tendency within the national movement. After its formation in 1934 the SNP was outward-looking: it participated in a conference in Brittany, organised

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6. *The Scots Independent*, December 1926, p.5.

7. *The Scots Independent*, November 1928, p.3.

8. For details see Vaughan, *Post-War Integration in Europe*, p.11.

9. *The Scots Independent*, November 1930, p.1.

10. Webb, *The Growth of Nationalism in Scotland*, p.49.

delegations to Northern Ireland, the Irish Republic and the Isle of Man, and developed links with Plaid Cymru. The goals of the new party also displayed a firm tendency to international participation rather than isolationism. Like its predecessor the NPS, the SNP proposed Scottish membership of the League of Nations, with a Scottish parliament seen as the form that would facilitate “the Scottish people taking their natural place amongst the nations of Europe in the van of progress and peace”.<sup>11</sup>

The SNP did discuss Europe and federalism in a marginal way in these years. One nationalist declared in 1939 that “far from being a parochial issue, home rule for Scotland is indissolubly bound up with the larger question of European Federalism (the only possible solution to Europe’s problems).”<sup>12</sup> The nationalist press also explored the issue of federal union and the creation of a North Atlantic union of democratic states.<sup>13</sup> This suggestion was given a very cautious appraisal, with one nationalist remarking that “as nationalists we cannot avoid the conclusion that Federal Union might in the long run spell death to the federated national units.”<sup>14</sup> Federalism was seen to mean integration. Nationalists were more concerned with the attitudes of federalists to home rule for Scotland than federalism itself. The SNP avoided links with organisations like Federal Union during the second World War,<sup>15</sup> and the European and federal questions continued to receive little attention.

The SNP took little account of supranationalism in the 1930s, preferring the loose intergovernmentalism of the League of Nations. The absence of any coherent policy on Europe was not remedied until the 1940s. The key feature of SNP policy in the international arena in this period was pragmatism. The party put forward cautious proposals for self-government, which would have had minimal international impact. Self-government involved some retention of the UK framework, through Anglo-Scottish intergovernmental co-operation, and the development of joint councils on defence, foreign affairs and economic policy.<sup>16</sup> These proposals would have created a limited nation-state, with a minimal role in international affairs.

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11. *The Scots Independent*, October 1935, p.1.

12. *The Scots Independent*, October 1939, p.3.

13. See Streit, *Union Now: A Proposal For A Federal Union Of The Democracies of The North Atlantic*.

14. John MacDonald, *The Scots Independent*, December 1939, p.4.

15. For an account of this organisation see Lipgens, *A History of European Integration: Volume 1, 1945-47*.

16. Brand, *The National Movement in Scotland*, p.200.

### *SNP Support for European Union*

The adoption of a clearer position on European union coincided with the election of Douglas Young as the SNP's leader in 1942. Young had earlier advocated federalism as a constitutional mechanism to aid the decolonisation process in the Empire, and reduce international conflict in Europe.<sup>17</sup> Now the issue was re-examined with an emphasis on autonomy within a European context. The development of a position on European union was facilitated by the SNP's acceptance of the necessity of limits on national sovereignty.<sup>18</sup> In accepting constraints on the nation-state in international affairs the party also made a commitment to develop co-operation with other European nations.<sup>19</sup> Young's influence led the SNP National Council in 1943 to move from vague support for co-operation, to a commitment that Scotland would participate in the establishment of European and international organisations.<sup>20</sup>

In 1948 the SNP adopted a position on Europe broadly similar to their current *Independence in Europe* programme. Though Young was involved in promoting the European idea and the new policy,<sup>21</sup> he was on the threshold of leaving the SNP. However, the European issue did not fade away with Young's departure. It was given a more profound and political meaning by the then SNP leader Dr Robert McIntyre.

For a short time in 1945 McIntyre was the SNP's first MP. His impact on the SNP during the 1940s and 1950s was considerable. It was McIntyre who picked up the European issue and developed the explicit linkage between self-government and European union. He was aware that any Scottish role in Europe and European development was contingent, pointing out that

“if the Scottish people wish to play a part in the preservation of freedom and in the new European Federation they have to regain control of their own affairs”.<sup>22</sup>

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17. *The Scots Independent*, January 1940, p.4.

18. *The Scots Independent*, May 1941, p.11.

19. *The Scots Independent*, July 1943, p.4.

20. Minutes of SNP National Council, 1943: National Library of Scotland, Acc 6419, box 44.

21. Douglas Young, “The International Importance of Scottish Nationalism”, The Scots Secretariat, Glasgow, 1948.

22. *The Scots Independent*, April 1948, p.2.

## *The SNP And Europe*

The SNP developed this linkage through their conference policy in 1948:

“the SNP welcomes steps towards the Federation of Europe but emphatically declares that the only just basis for such a federation is the equal co-operation of self-governing democratic countries. Domination such as that exercised by the British government over Scotland can have no place in a free Europe. Scotland is entitled to direct representation in any European Federation which may consider matters of customs, trade and military co-operation”.<sup>23</sup>

### *The SNP and the International Congress*

The new opening to Europe in 1948 was exemplified by the party's attempts at participation in the Congress of Europe at the Hague.<sup>24</sup> This meeting had been convened by the United Europe Movement in order to discuss the prospects for European union. The SNP did not participate at the Hague, but did succeed in getting involved in the Congress of European Federalists in Paris in April 1949. McIntyre represented the party at this congress. This organisation, which grew into the International Congress of European Communities and Regions, was comprised of political organisations from different nations and regions in Europe, with rather different political aspirations for their regions.<sup>25</sup> Both the SNP and Plaid Cymru made it clear to the Congress that they represented ‘nations’ not ‘regions’ or provinces, and sought national self-government.

This initial encounter with European regionalism was not particularly fruitful, but was a harbinger of the future. The sole outcome of the Congress for the SNP - beyond the learning process involved - was that the Congress sent a declaration to the council of the United Europe Movement in support of regional and community representation in a federal Europe.<sup>26</sup> This was insufficient for the SNP, but did mean that the Congress took some political action.

Later in 1949 the SNP became involved in the International Congress of European Communities and Regions.<sup>27</sup> The SNP took some interest in this organisation, with McIntyre addressing its Federal Council in 1950.<sup>28</sup> The party's involvement dropped away in the early 1950s, however, as it failed to develop beyond a

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23. Minutes of the National Conference of the Scottish National Party, 1948: National Library of Scotland Acc 6419, box 45.

24. *The Scots Independent*, July 1948, p.2.

25. This organisation and its membership will be described and analysed in chapter 6.

26. *The Scots Independent*, May 1949, p.7.

27. *The Scots Independent*, September 1949, p.5.

28. *The Scots Independent*, September 1950, p.6.

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discussion forum. The SNP's departure led the Congress to seek alternative representatives from Scotland, with the home rule group, the Scottish Covenant Association, invited to attend the Liege Congress in 1953,<sup>29</sup> and the eccentric fringe movement, the Patriots Association, attending the Munster Congress in 1954.<sup>30</sup>

### *Representative Linkage*

This period of participation in the European debate led the SNP to develop one of its enduring themes, that of representation/non-representation in European institutions. This theme has been frequently deployed in the contexts of *negative linkage* and *positive linkage*. Its durability was a consequence of its flexibility. It could be used as an argument for or against European union and co-operation, and also involved an element of bargaining. The SNP used the representational theme in relation to the Schuman Declaration and the establishment of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), demanding Scottish representation in the new institutions.<sup>31</sup> The Schuman plan also afforded another opportunity to the SNP, beyond positive linkage: the chance to attack the UK political system for its isolationism in Europe. The attitudes of the UK parties to the ECSC allowed the SNP to cast itself as internationalist.<sup>32</sup> The SNP blamed the UK government for the collapse of the European Defence Community in 1954, because of the isolationist tendency of the UK state and parties.<sup>33</sup>

In presenting the case for Scottish membership of European organisations, the SNP sought to reconcile sovereignty and integration. The party tried to deal with this problem by pointing to the different position of Scotland in the UK and in Europe. In order to deflect any criticism of the apparent paradox of secession from Britain but integration into Europe the SNP sought to differentiate between the two cases:

“the objection will, of course, be raised that all this only means exchanging one controlling authority for that of a whole set of nations.....(this) presents a situation very much different from that of subjection to a single and much greater nation with interests of its own to consider”.<sup>34</sup>

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29. The fourth Congress of European Regions and Nations was held from the 10th to 13th September 1953 in Liege: Letter from the Information Bureau of the Congress in Copenhagen to the Scottish Covenant Association, 15th May 1953: National Library of Scotland, Dep 242.

30. *The Scots Independent*, 12th June 1954.

31. *The Scots Independent*, June 1950, p.1.

32. *The Scots Independent*, July 1950, pp.1-3.

33. *The Scots Independent*, 2nd October 1954, p.4.

34. “European Integration As A Safeguard For Small Nations”, *The Scots Independent*, 23rd April 1955, p.2.

This argument was forgotten in the 1960s and 1970s as Scotland remained frozen out of European participation, and the greater political opportunities of opposing Europe became apparent to the SNP. This strategic switch, which took a more absolutist view of national sovereignty, conflicted with the earlier flexibility of the party on sovereignty and the efficacy of international and European co-operation. Now Brussels became the same as London, characterised by centralism and tendencies towards economic and military policies above all else.

### **4. SNP Attitudes To Europe Since 1957**

#### *SNP Opposition to the EC*

The SNP's policy change on Europe may have been inevitable for two reasons: first, because of its preference for independence rather than regional autonomy, and second, because of political developments in Britain and the EC. At the time of the creation of the European Community in 1957 the constitutional position of Scotland was static, despite altered external circumstances. The new European context that followed the Treaty of Rome left SNP aspirations for participation in limbo. Scotland was not represented in any European institutions, and also remained outside the EC.

Scotland was still affected by the EC's evolution and policies and the reality of initial non-membership of the EC had significant effects on SNP attitudes and responses. These effects were most evident as the UK government sought to negotiate entry to the EC in the 1960s and 1970s. Entry from the outside, through the UK, exacerbated the situation for the nationalists. In this process the SNP saw Scotland as doubly disadvantaged: excluded from the bargaining and negotiating process on entry to the EC, and from independent participation when membership was achieved. This post-1957 context alienated the nationalists. If the UK had joined the EC in 1957 then this response may have developed in a rather different way.<sup>35</sup> As it was the SNP was subject to a very British context and reaction.

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35. It is difficult to postdict SNP behaviour if the UK had joined the EC in 1957. Would it have led to an independence in Europe approach or to a platform of dual secession from the UK and the EC? Given the hostility that was to develop to the EC the latter may have been adopted, but the pragmatism of the SNP and its desire for international co-operation may have made it untenable. Dual secession was too inflexible though the party would not necessarily have dealt with it in an unequivocal way.

The response in the 1960s was markedly different from the *positive linkage* of the 1940s to 1950s.<sup>36</sup> Generally the SNP called for Scotland and the UK to stay out of the EC, but for Scottish representation if membership was achieved. The party had recognised the need to alter its pre-1957 policy at the time of the EC's formation,<sup>37</sup> and began to consider the development of new EC institutions. In doing this the party identified the EC as a security community with the potential to develop as a political federation,<sup>38</sup> that reduced democratic participation.<sup>39</sup>

This view brought a more cautious approach to the EC, in contrast to earlier enthusiasm for European union.<sup>40</sup> The party was particularly concerned to protect Scottish economic interests in the context of UK negotiations in the EC, and called for the establishment of a Scottish Council to handle the Scottish aspects of EC negotiations.<sup>41</sup> This caution was a staging post towards the SNP's policy reversal on Europe: it brought the SNP to oppose membership of the EC in 1962,<sup>42</sup> and call for a referendum on Scottish and UK entry.<sup>43</sup>

Turning against the EC appeared to indicate a hardening of attitudes towards sovereignty in contrast to previous flexibility. However, the party leader, Arthur Donaldson, held the view that 'complete' independence was a non-viable proposition: the SNP only sought "equal independence" with other states, accepting limitations on sovereignty to enable international co-operation. The SNP therefore sought to maintain a window of opportunity for European union.<sup>44</sup>

Though sovereignty remained an elastic concept within the party, it was moving towards a more fundamental position of opposition to the EC. Such opposition was clothed in Scottish arguments and circumstances. The party sought to lobby the UK government, the European Court of Justice, and the President of the European Commission, to draw their attention to Scotland's right to be involved in negotiations. The SNP argued that the Treaty of Union of 1707 was affected by the removal of sovereignty from the UK to the European Parliament - a development which was not foreseen and provided for in the Treaty - and that the Act of Union

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36. The changing attitudes of the SNP were similar to Plaid Cymru, see chapter 3.

37. Letter from John Smart, SNP National Secretary to Arthur Donaldson, 11th September 1957: National Library of Scotland, Acc 6038, box 1.

38. Arthur Donaldson: *The Scots Independent*, 14th September 1957, p.1.

39. *The Scots Independent*, 8th March 1958, p.1.

40. *The Scots Independent*, 19th April 1958.

41. Resolution No.3, Minutes of SNP National Council, 17th-18th May 1958.

42. *The Glasgow Herald*, 28th May 1962, p.3.

43. SNP, *Aims and Policy of the Scottish National Party*, p.16.

44. Letter from Arthur Donaldson, SNP Chairman, to A.J.C. Edwards, 3rd January 1961: National Library of Scotland, Acc 6038, box 1.



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would make accession illegal without consent from a Scottish parliament. The new Scottish Parliament would then seek a seat on the European Council and full representation within European institutions.<sup>45</sup>

The Government replied to this position by arguing that the Treaty of Union had given sovereignty to the British parliament, and therefore a rightful role in negotiating with the European Community. In responding to the nationalists the Government sought to minimise the impact of the EC. It was described as a purely economic organisation in which UK involvement would be limited to the economic sphere.<sup>46</sup> The party regarded this reply as vague, shortsighted and somewhat provocative. There was no indication of any Scottish role in negotiations, which was no surprise, but the SNP was critical of the government's narrow economic view of the EC which disregarded the propensity of other member states to see it as a political community.<sup>47</sup>

From then on the SNP's new opposition to European union was based upon two objections. First, the Common Market was seen to cause economic problems for Scotland. Second, attaining self-government for Scotland in advance of UK accession to the EC was seen as an imperative.<sup>48</sup> Independence, then Europe, was the preference. Though it tried to use the European issue to distinguish between the UK parties and itself, the SNP did not make great use of the theme in the 1960s. Europe was absent from publicity and policy documents. Though undergoing a period of vigorous policy development at the time, the SNP did not mention the EC or the Common Market in its 1966 policy manifesto "SNP and You", even though it had a section dealing with international affairs.<sup>49</sup>

### *Towards Membership of the Community*

The prospect of UK accession to the EC in the late 1960s gave the issue saliency in Scotland. As the UK government became involved in discussions on membership, the SNP became more attentive. The road to accession brought the nationalists to reinforce their opposition to the Community. The party conference in 1971 followed the Heath-Pompidou summit in Paris that gave clearance to UK membership. In

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45. Scottish National Party press statement, November 1961: National Library of Scotland, *ibid*.

46. Prime Minister's letter to the SNP, 19th December 1961: National Library of Scotland, Acc 6038, box 1.

47. Scottish National Party press statement, 9th January 1962: National Library of Scotland, Acc 6038, box 1.

48. *The Glasgow Herald*, 6th June 1966, p.17.

49. Scottish National Party, *SNP and You*.

response the SNP conference strongly supported a motion that advanced a two-pronged strategy for dealing with Europe. The party committed itself to campaigning against accession, through lobbying the EC and Commonwealth governments; publicising the merits of a wider free-trade grouping than that provided by the EC; and working with other organisations that opposed EC membership.<sup>50</sup> The second response was based on the expectation that UK membership was inevitable as the House of Commons would support ratification. In the event of ratification the SNP committed itself to campaigning for Scottish representation; defending Scottish interests in the EC; and assisting those political forces seeking a confederal EC;<sup>51</sup> all on the proviso that Scotland would be free to leave the EC after independence.

There was ambiguity here. In the first place the SNP opposed EC membership, in the second it campaigned for Scottish representation in the EC. If representation was guaranteed there was a hint that opposition would disappear. This bargaining strategy developed despite hardline opponents who saw the EC as a “bureaucratic and undemocratic structure” with economic policies that would be “a serious threat to employment in Scotland”.<sup>52</sup>

The party strongly supported the leadership’s position of opposition, though there were efforts by pro-Europeans to commit the SNP to *Independence in Europe*.<sup>53</sup> Attitudes on European strategy had hardened and became apparent in statements made by the party leadership. The party leader, Billy Wolfe, regarded the EC as “based on centralist control”, and led strong opposition to membership.<sup>54</sup> Wolfe was involved in three separate SNP delegations to the EC in 1970, 1972 and 1974, to stress to the Commission that an independent Scotland would not be held to agreements negotiated by the UK. Such visits only confirmed SNP opposition. Wolfe described the EC as a “bureaucracy even more remote and less sympathetic than Whitehall”,<sup>55</sup> a direct reversal of the arguments for European union advanced by the SNP in the 1950s. However, the party President, Robert McIntyre, sought to turn opposition in a more fruitful direction in this period by calling for a referendum on EC membership in Scotland.<sup>56</sup>

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50. Resolution 1, Outcome of Business Report: SNP Annual National Conference, 28th May 1971.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

53. *The Glasgow Herald*, 29th May 1971, p.10.

54. *The Scots Independent*, October 1971, p.13.

55. *Ibid.*, p.5.

56. *The Scots Independent*, August 1971, p.5.

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It might appear that the SNP's oppositional strategy to the European Community was well established in 1971, with the party secure in this belief that its position was an accurate reflection of public attitudes to the EC.<sup>57</sup> This was not the case however. The party conference in 1972 saw renewed efforts by pro-Europeans to alter strategy on the EC if accession was achieved. A resolution committing the SNP to campaign for *Independence in Europe* was included on the conference agenda but not debated because of lack of time.<sup>58</sup> This resolution was one sign of the emerging *Independence in Europe* option in the 1970s, although it would probably have been defeated.

To address the economic and political disadvantages of non-membership of the EC the SNP outlined two alternatives for international trade and co-operation. The party advanced the idea of a loose grouping to promote a common foreign and defence policy amongst the seventeen members of the Council of Europe,<sup>59</sup> and a free trade organisation based around the members of the OECD.<sup>60</sup> Both were presented as alternatives to EC membership, though with the proviso of support for a confederal EC and independent Scottish membership.

The SNP conference in 1973 sought to develop McIntyre's earlier suggestion with a proposal that Scotland would have the right to hold a referendum on membership, post-independence. The original anti-EC edge to this proposal was diluted through an amendment that any future Scottish government would implement any popular decision on membership after the renegotiation of entry terms.<sup>61</sup> This amended the oppositional position that sought withdrawal on more unequivocal terms and recognised that UK accession was already negotiated and only required the official signing ceremony to become effective.

### *The 1975 Referendum on the European Community*

Accession to the EC was realised in 1973, though both main parties were divided over the diminution of parliamentary sovereignty. The Heath Government had successfully dealt with accession, but the Labour administration from 1974 was not so fortunate. Some Labour members were squarely opposed to the EC, taking an

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57. *The Scots Independent*, June 1971, p.1.

58. Resolution number 23, Outcome of Business Report: Scottish National Party Annual National Conference, 1972.

59. *The Scots Independent*, July 1971, p.13.

60. Resolution 1: SNP Annual National Conference, 1971.

61. Resolution 44 and amendment (i): SNP Annual National Conference, 1973.

absolutist view of parliamentary sovereignty, whilst others were more concerned with the accession agreement negotiated by the Conservatives.

Labour had been divided on the European Communities Act in 1972, and its annual conference had proposed a renegotiation of the terms of entry to the EC, with a public say on the outcome of renegotiations through a general election or consultative referendum.<sup>62</sup> Labour retained this commitment at the conclusion of renegotiations in March 1975, though it led to a divided party during the referendum campaign.

The division within the Labour and Conservative parties on Europe provided a new opportunity for the SNP. Though the position adopted by the SNP was rather ambiguous, its message was clearer and more instrumental than those of the main parties. The nationalists had never considered the issue of Europe as an issue in itself, but had traditionally linked it to autonomy. The referendum of 1975 provided a key opportunity for such linkage. One of the SNP's senior officials remarked that Scottish sovereignty was the main issue in the referendum, as voters would have to decide whether Scotland would remain an unrepresented province within the EC or reach out for sovereign status.<sup>63</sup> The referendum did not provide for any such thing in legislative or electoral terms but the political potential of separate results in Scotland and the rest of the UK was clear. One Scottish newspaper commented that

“to discard the separate view of Scotland would add fuel to nationalist fires, and the argument that Scotland's interests are not represented at Westminster would gain considerable credibility”.<sup>64</sup>

The Labour Government was aware of the *political linkage* employed by the nationalists and took measures to undermine it. Labour's strategy of *delinkage* was evident in the White Paper on the referendum. The contents of the White Paper began to leak out from January 1975, based upon rumours that the EC issue was to be subject to a national count rather than to regional or constituency counting arrangements. As the Euro-referendum was the first national referendum in the UK, no precedents existed for its administration, leading the cabinet to discuss the issue at length.<sup>65</sup>

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62. Featherstone, *Socialist Parties and European Integration*, p.59.

63. *The Scotsman*, 22nd May 1975, p.18.

64. *The Scotsman*, 5th May, 1975, p.1.

65. Butler and Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, p.56.

The delinkage strategy of the government revolved around the proposal for a national count, which would prevent separate counts for Scotland and Wales.<sup>66</sup> Central counting and a single UK declaration would have undermined the SNP's efforts at linkage through merging the Scottish result in the UK vote. Labour's general secretary, Ron Hayward, had briefed the party's National Executive Committee to oppose regional and constituency counting arrangements on the explicit understanding that such provisions would only help the nationalists.<sup>67</sup>

As its strategy relied upon a separate Scottish vote in the referendum, the SNP discussed holding a parallel referendum to allow the calculation of a Scottish total. However the cost and complexity of this proposal brought the party to settle on local ballots and opinion surveys to measure the Scottish vote.<sup>68</sup> Also, in spite of opposition to the national count, the SNP supported the Government at the first reading of the Referendum Bill in March, even though Labour had explicitly pointed out that the counting arrangements were intended to prevent the referendum from being used as a device by those who wished to divide the nation.<sup>69</sup> Supporting the Bill may have appeared a tactical error. However, the SNP's linkage relied upon the referendum actually taking place. The party could also justify its support as it had policy that proposed the use of referenda on the European question, and expected that the arrangements for national count would be dropped because of administrative complexity and political pressure. The party intended to pursue this latter course during future debates on the Bill. In time, such efforts became unnecessary, as the cabinet allowed a free vote in the Commons on the counting arrangements which rejected the national count in favour of a decentralised solution.

The SNP sought to shape a particular appeal around the European question. It tried to project itself as an international party, to counter charges of isolationism stemming from its opposition to EC membership. The party published the policy document "Scotland International", and announced a series of discussions with OPEC and the United Nations.<sup>70</sup> One of the party's MPs, Douglas Henderson, stated that there was a need to examine Scotland's European alternatives and look beyond Europe to find a role in international affairs. Instead of being forced into the "EEC straitjacket",

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66. "Referendum on United Kingdom membership of the European Community", Cmnd 4925, HMSO, London, February 1975.

67. *The Scotsman*, 28th January 1975, p.11.

68. *The Scotsman*, 24th February 1975, p.1.

69. *The Scotsman*, 12th March 1975, p.1.

70. *The Scotsman*, 6th March 1975, p.9.

there was a desire to use the referendum as a means for Scotland to choose a role in world affairs.<sup>71</sup>

The SNP National Assembly in January 1975 unanimously agreed to support a 'No' vote in the referendum. This position may have seemed clear, but it masked internal disagreement. Dissent was successfully managed however, with those nationalists who favoured separate Scottish membership of the EC agreeing to abide by the party's policy and maintain a diplomatic silence during the referendum.<sup>72</sup> One newspaper editorial remarked that for the SNP, "No means maybe", and pointed to tactical reasons for the SNP's stance over Europe: that it would make the SNP the only united political group in the referendum and leave it in a strong position to benefit from the outcome.<sup>73</sup>

The fragmentation of the Labour Party over Europe was part of the reason for the SNP's position. The referendum campaign brought a very mixed response from Labour. The Secretary of State for Scotland, Willie Ross, spoke against the EC, as did the devolution Minister, Harry Ewing, who expressed the view that continued EC membership would derail the prospects for strong economic powers being effectively devolved to a Scottish Assembly.<sup>74</sup> Labour's pro-Europeans responded by publicising the benefits of EC membership and attempting to delink the EC and devolution questions, stressing that the referendum was about Europe not the constitutional question.<sup>75</sup>

The SNP made little of the devolution issue during the referendum. It did attempt to use some of the government's own programme for Scotland in the campaign. The proposal to create the Scottish Development Agency (SDA), to aid economic development, can be seen as one of the economic, output-oriented responses to nationalism.<sup>76</sup> The SNP pointed out that the powers of the new agency conflicted with the competition arrangements in the Treaty of Rome, and made the government's proposals for Scotland incompatible with aspects of EC membership.<sup>77</sup>

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71. *The Scotsman*, 25th March 1975, p.7.

72. *The Scotsman*, 20th January 1975, p.5.

73. *The Scotsman* editorial, *ibid.*, p.6.

74. *The Scotsman*, 27th May 1975, p.7.

75. This was the position adopted by Labour's EC Commissioner, George Thomson: *The Scotsman*, 26th May 1975, p.4.

76. Keating, *State and Regional Nationalism*, p.174.

77. *The Scotsman*, 9th May 1975, p.6.

Another main economic theme during the campaign was the situation of the Scottish fishing industry, through dissatisfaction with the government's renegotiations with the EC. The fishermen had hoped that the government would have renegotiated the Common Fisheries Policy but the failure to gain more concessions allowed the SNP to attack the EC and the Labour government for neglecting Scottish interests: both were a consequence of the lack of Scottish representation.

The main theme, and slogan, adopted by the SNP in the campaign was "No voice, no entry". Though it was ambiguous, it was indicative of a more flexible attitude to the EC than might have been expected given the official opposition of the party. That such flexibility was possible at the height of the referendum is notable. Behind it lay some expectation that the nationalists would succeed in their efforts to drive a wedge between the Scottish and UK electorates, and emerge on the winning side in the referendum. This expectation was not unrealistic, as opinion polls showed strong reservations about the EC.<sup>78</sup>

The European question cut across the main cleavages of fundamentalists and gradualists inside the SNP,<sup>79</sup> so that hardline independence activists linked up with devolutionists to oppose the EC: one through a maximalist view of sovereignty, and the other because of concern with the centralised and bureaucratic nature of the Community. Meanwhile other activists, from both sides of the cleavage, supported European membership as an aid to independence and a challenge to Westminster, which would pressure any future Scottish Assembly to become involved in European and international issues. The cleavage on the EC was most evident within the SNP leadership, with a Scottish-based National Executive who were anti-EC, and a parliamentary group in Westminster who were sympathetic to the Community.<sup>80</sup>

Though the SNP claimed it was fully united behind the 'No' campaign on Europe, the evidence did not bear that out. Large conference and National Council votes supporting withdrawal from the EC - which occurred just three days before the referendum itself - could not mask the different voices of the SNP on Europe, which generated ambiguity: it was partly natural because of divisions within the party, but also intended to keep the door open to independent membership. The SNP's plural attitudes towards the EC are illustrated by different statements and interpretations

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78. See polls cited in Butler and Kitzinger, *Op. cit.*, p.151.

79. Mitchell, "Factions, Tendencies and Consensus in the SNP in the 1980s", in Parry and Brown (eds), *Scottish Government Yearbook*, p.57.

80. *The Scotsman*, 28th May 1975, p.11.

made by its leading lights during the campaign. The SNP's finance spokesman, Douglas Crawford MP, remarked that

"we in the SNP are looking beyond the referendum. While we are against EEC membership without a sovereign Scottish voice in Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, it is still important for us to look beyond June 5 and lay contingency plans".<sup>81</sup>

Another MP, Iain McCormick, deepened the ambiguity by stating that he opposed EC membership in the referendum but

"if this vote should go 'Yes' I would regard it as my duty to get Scotland independent membership of the Community".<sup>82</sup>

SNP fundamentalists were unhappy with such statements, and preferred an unequivocal position. The SNP parliamentary leader, Donald Stewart, rejected these ambiguous messages and expressed complete opposition to the Community. Stewart was critical of those within the SNP who were compromising the party on the EC question: "why should the position of nationalists be other than an uncomplicated 'No' ?", he asked, complaining of the "ambiguities and confusions" employed by some party representatives. For Stewart complete opposition to Europe was justifiable because the EC

"represents everything that our party has fought against: centralisation, undemocratic procedures, power politics, and a fetish for abolishing cultural differences".<sup>83</sup>

The problems of dealing with the EC issue unambiguously was illustrated immediately by newspaper coverage of the SNP position. Whilst Stewart's hardline position was reported on one page, another contained an appeal from the SNP MP, George Reid: it called for a tactical 'No' vote, with Scotland deciding upon EC or EFTA membership after independence. Opposition in the referendum was identified as "a solid gesture of dissent that can be used as a tangible bargaining counter once the referendum is over; as direct evidence that Scotland must decide her own links with the EEC".<sup>84</sup> Other SNP MPs pointed to the strong bargaining position that the referendum result would provide, leaving Scotland free to decide upon European links afresh.<sup>85</sup>

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81. *The Scotsman*, 13th May 1975, p.7.

82. *The Scotsman*, 28th May 1975, p.8.

83. *The Scotsman*, 2nd June 1975, p.3

84. *Ibid.*, p.6.

85. See Margaret Bain MP: *The Scotsman*, 27th January 1975, p.5; and Gordon Wilson MP: *The Scotsman*, 18th April 1975, p.15.



The dual approach to Europe was not necessarily a weakness for the SNP, as long as it avoided serious internal divisions. Externally, it enabled the party to appeal to different strands of popular opinion, without prejudicing future policy on the EC: hardliners could attract support from anti-EC currents in the Labour electorate, while pro-Europeans adopted an instrumental approach consistent with attracting those whose attitudes on Europe were more equivocal. The fact that other parties were publicly divided on the EC made it easy for the SNP to conceal these different opinions, as it only campaigned on one side in the referendum.

Though Scottish public opinion converged with the SNP position in early 1975, this position was gradually reversed. Support for continued membership of the EC increased from 29% in February to 45% in June, while opposition declined from 45% to 32%.<sup>86</sup> The slide in support for the 'No' campaign continued until polling day, though a Scottish dimension to the issue did emerge. One poll found 64% support for Scottish representation in the EC.<sup>87</sup> This development raised a number of questions about SNP strategy. Should it not have pursued *positive linkage* through the independence in Europe option, rather than *negative linkage* and *strategic negative linkage*? The idea of using positive linkage as a mechanism to drive a cleavage between the Scottish and UK electorate was not realistic in the 1975 referendum, as it was assumed that the UK would vote in favour of continued membership. However, membership itself may have been a secondary issue, with the SNP primarily concerned with using the referendum to detach support from Labour.

Some observers argued that the SNP had more to gain from positive linkage as the EC did not challenge national sovereignty, but allowed opt-outs and derogations on specific policies.<sup>88</sup> This type of argument was influential in the party's policy change in the 1980s, but was not so helpful in the 1970s: the position was not purely related to national sovereignty but to the prevailing interpretation of the political opportunity structure. The political benefits of supporting continued membership were obscure. The Scottish and UK votes might have been the same - so no nationalist cleavage would have been visible - and the party would not necessarily have picked up electoral support for its stance. Either way, in support or opposition, the benefits and importance of the referendum for the party may have been overestimated. The SNP succeeded in getting its message on Europe to the voters, but it didn't mean

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86. *The Glasgow Herald*, 2nd June 1975, p.13.

87. *The Scotsman*, 31st May 1975, p.1.

88. J. D. Vassie, *The Scotsman*, 22nd May 1975, p.10.

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increased support for the party. Opinion surveys indicated that the EC was relatively unimportant for SNP supporters in contrast to devolution and oil, despite intense campaigning on the EC.<sup>89</sup>

The economic scenario of Scotland outside the EC but England inside also caused problems for the SNP. Integration between the two economies was not seen to facilitate short-term secession, according to the SNP's Douglas Crawford.<sup>90</sup> Integration with England was one problem, integration into the international economy was another. The Scottish Economic Research Council's analyses in 1974 had demonstrated a strong degree of economic interdependence. It was calculated that 25% of Scottish exports went to EC countries, compared to 11% to the EFTA group, 18% to North America, 16% to the rest of the UK and 30% to the rest of the world.<sup>91</sup> Had the SNP pursued an unambiguous policy of opposition and dual secession then such EC export dependency would have undermined the party.

The referendum produced a 'Yes' vote of 58.4% in Scotland. Though this figure was 10.2% less than in England, the nationalists had failed to reverse the southern result. None of the Scottish regions voted against continued membership. The SNP was obviously disappointed with the result. It responded to the referendum by repeating its earlier call for Scottish representation in EC institutions and for the Labour Government to alter its devolution proposals to give a Scottish Assembly some representation in the EC. Negative linkage was reoriented as the party re-issued its ambiguous and positive appeal, accepting the referendum result and using it as a means to argue for a Scottish voice.

### *The Post-Referendum Changes*

Home rule and the referendum result brought a new political development in Scottish politics. The Scottish Labour Party (SLP) was formed in late 1975 by two Labour MPs who favoured maximum devolution. The EC referendum in June 1975 gave encouragement to the venture.<sup>92</sup> One of the party's leaders, Jim Sillars, had previously made political linkage between devolution and the European Community,<sup>93</sup> and the unequivocal nature of the referendum led him to re-evaluate

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89. Miller, *The End of British Politics: Scottish and English Political Behaviour in the 1970s*, p.125.

90. *The Scotsman*, 29th May 1975, p.1.

91. *The Scotsman*, 22nd May 1975, p.10.

92. See *The Scotsman*, 4th June 1975, p.13; 7th June 1975, p.1; and 10th June 1975, p.1. On the last occasion Sillars held a press conference hinting at the formation of the Scottish Labour Party and promoting the concept of *Independence in Europe*.

93. Jim Sillars MP, Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard* 1216, 4th February 1975.

independence. The SLP was established to combine the traditions of socialism and nationalism, and increasingly stressed the European theme. The party's initial aims were

“to secure the establishment of a powerful Scottish parliament to work in full democratic partnership with the rest of the UK and represent Scotland in the institutions of the EEC”.<sup>94</sup>

Though formed to pursue maximum devolution, the SLP progressed towards *Independence in Europe*. In debates on the Scotland and Wales Bill in 1976, Sillars made frequent reference to the efficacy of independence within the EC. He commented that “within the EEC the concept of separation is not a valid one”<sup>95</sup> and that “independence outside the EEC is entirely different in quality from independence inside”.<sup>96</sup> By 1977, the SLP had gravitated towards independence and emphasised the need for autonomy for Scotland in Europe.<sup>97</sup> Yet the party failed to develop to offer a challenge to the SNP or Labour. Its demise after the 1979 general election led its members to return to the Labour Party, though some prominent members joined the SNP. Sillars joined the SNP in 1981, and promoted the *Independence in Europe* option from the mid-1980s.

It was not just the referendum that prompted SNP revisionism on the EC. The advent of direct elections to the European Parliament (EP) was also influential. The party had already been drawn into a degree of Europeanisation through having a seat in the nominated EP. This brought the party's European spokesperson in the House of Commons, Winnie Ewing, to represent the party in Strasbourg. Though the European portfolio was initially rather unattractive, participation in the Strasbourg assembly provided useful opportunities to present Scotland's case.

Direct elections brought one particular problem for the SNP: should the party contest the elections when still officially opposed to the EC? In the circumstances, participation in the nominated assembly had undermined the argument for non-participation, despite fears that the elections were a step towards the creation of a centralised political community. The party's electoralism also meant that every electoral opportunity was welcome.

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94. Drucker, *Breakaway: The Scottish Labour Party*, p.147.

95. Jim Sillars MP, Scotland and Wales Bill, second reading, Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard* 922, 14th December 1976, p.1324.

96. *Ibid.*, p.1368.

97. Drucker, *Op. cit.*, p.134.

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The European elections in 1979 followed two substantial defeats for the nationalists. Though a narrow majority had voted in favour of the devolution proposals at the referendum in March, the fact that the election required a 40% threshold of the electorate meant defeat for the Scotland Act. In addition, SNP support slumped at the general election, and cost it nine of its eleven seats. The election of a Conservative government also lessened the chances of constitutional change. The European elections were more encouraging. The party gained 19.4% compared to 17.3% at the general election, and had one MEP elected. This slight recovery in the European elections may be a consequence of their *second order nature*,<sup>98</sup> but it enabled the SNP to bounce back from two heavy defeats.

The election of Mrs Ewing facilitated a gradual evolution in opinion inside the SNP. As an individual MEP and member of the European Progressive Democrats in the parliament, Ewing gradually imported a more positive European orientation into the party. This effect was achieved through publicising her successes in the European Parliament, gaining funds for her constituency, visits by other MEPs to SNP conferences, and consistently raising European issues in the SNP. The party remained opposed to EC membership in this period, however, reaffirming its opposition during the 1983 general election.<sup>99</sup>

### *The 1983 SNP Conference*

The efforts of SNP leader, Gordon Wilson, to make the party less negative and isolationist brought a new European policy at the 1983 conference. The proposal that the SNP should support Scottish membership of NATO was defeated, but hardline opposition to Europe and devolution was ended. The pro-European resolution was couched in cautious terms, and promoted EC membership as an aid to secession because it involved minimal disruption to the Scottish economy. Wilson described EC membership as

“a first class way of pushing the advantages of political independence without any threat of economic dislocation. Within the common trading umbrella the move to independence can take place smoothly and easily”.<sup>100</sup>

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98. This concept will be discussed further in chapter 7, see Reif (ed), *Ten European Elections: Campaigns and Results of the 1979/81 First Direct Elections to the European Parliament*.

99. Scottish National Party, *Choose Scotland - The Challenge of Independence*, general election manifesto, 1983, p.11.

100. *The Glasgow Herald*, 1st October 1983, p.5.

The motion proposed that a referendum on Scottish membership would take place after independence, but that the SNP would favour independent membership if negotiations were successful. Such endorsement was not exactly cast-iron support for the EC, but does not detract from the fact that it was a policy reversal. It was passed overwhelmingly at the conference, despite opposition,<sup>101</sup> and enabled the party to conduct a more positive campaign in the 1984 European elections.

The new position was not accepted by all members of the SNP. At the subsequent party conference in 1984, anti-EC members tried to modify SNP support for the Community. The anti-EC motion tried to commit the party to oppose any increase in EC powers unless accepted by a referendum in Scotland, and declared that the SNP must retain Scottish sovereignty in economic and fiscal policy. Anti-EC members attempted to limit SNP policy on Europe rather than reverse it. Such efforts were unsuccessful, but did show the fragility of the pro-EC position, with strong support for the anti-EC proposal.<sup>102</sup>

### **5. Independence in Europe: The Ultimate Positive Linkage**

#### **Preparing for Independence in Europe**

The path to the adoption of *Independence in Europe* was smoothed by three factors: growing elite and membership consensus on the EC, attempts by party elites to promote a more advanced European position than that of 1983, and the evolution of positive attitudes to the Community after its relaunch with the Single European Act.

This new context provided a useful backdrop to *Independence in Europe*. Just as the negative image of the EC had proved useful to opponents of the EC in the 1970s, the *new* Community was of use to *Euro-realists* within the SNP. It enabled them to use the contemporary EC to reverse older arguments against the Community. In the 1984 European election manifesto the SNP leader argued that

“many of the fears that the Common Market would become a superstate have been eased by experience. Far from becoming a new European despotism where bureaucracy triumphed over national rights, the enlarging of the Community in recent years has diluted some of the dangers of centralism. The bigger it gets, the looser it becomes”.<sup>103</sup>

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101. Resolution 35, Outcome of business report, SNP Annual National Conference 1983.

102. The anti-EC motion gained 115 votes against 158: Resolution 9, Outcome of Business Report, SNP Annual National Conference, 1983.

103. European election manifesto, Scottish National Party, 1984.

Context wasn't everything however. In order to make capital out of the new context the party had to develop and maintain a level of internal support for European membership.<sup>104</sup> In addition to maintaining this coalition, a major effort was made by one of the party's figures on the left, Jim Sillars, to develop the intellectual case for independent Scottish membership of the EC.

Sillars proposed *Independence in Europe* in a pamphlet in 1985, and a book in 1986. Sillars' views played a vital part in shaping SNP strategy on the European question: making it consider its role in the development of a 'Euro-nationalism' that would share sovereignty between European nations. His intention was to move the party away from 'separatism' and the isolationism of the 1970s towards a more constructive policy, and utilise the stability of the EC to counter political opponents who saw independence bringing economic dislocation. Beyond this objective, Euro-nationalism was a vague concept, more concerned with Europeanising the SNP and independence, than applying European themes and issues to the SNP, but then its primary aim was domestic.

Sillars' approach was influential because of his popularity within the SNP, his role on the left of the party, and the fruitful context for raising the European question: the changing nature of the EC, and the hostile position of the Conservative Government to Europe. Sillars can be considered as a *policy entrepreneur*, similar to Douglas Young in the 1940s, acting as an advocate for a particular idea or policy.<sup>105</sup> The success of such individuals is often attributable to their position within an organisation, their expertise and the available political resources. As a figure on the left, and a *gradualist* at the time, Sillars' approach enabled various sections of the party to reassess the prospect of EC membership. Previous opposition to the EC had come from a coalition of *fundamentalists* who took a maximalist view of sovereignty, and leftist members who saw the EC as a superstate with centralist and superpower ambitions. The strength of Sillars' approach was that it could be sold to both fundamentalists and gradualists in the SNP: to reinforce the argument for independence and damage devolution.

The internal discussions on EC policy, did stimulate anti-EC opposition. The SNP's National Executive had adopted a policy on the Single European Act in the absence of other policymaking bodies, and sought to present this position at the party's

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104. This produced the Euro-Realist coalition in the party, which encompassed moderate fundamentalists and gradualists on both the left and right of the SNP.

105. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies*, p.129.

## *The SNP And Europe*

National Council in June 1986.<sup>106</sup> The National Council responded negatively, and defeated the leadership's position through amendments that produced an anodyne commitment to examine the implications of the Single European Act rather than positive support for *Independence in Europe*.<sup>107</sup> This outcome was difficult to interpret. It may have been National Council's reaction to the leadership supplanting its policymaking function, rather than a comment on the SEA itself.

The National Council vote did not undermine the leadership strategy very much. Euro-realists continued to control the EC debate in the upper levels of the party. In losing the argument on Europe within senior decisionmaking structures,<sup>108</sup> anti-EC activists began to make public criticism of the proposed policy change. Critics sought to use existing SNP policy commitments on landholding and regional development as arguments against the EC, as each would be undermined by Community policies. In addition, opponents pointed to the weakened position of member states in the European Council after the Single European Act. Qualified majority voting was seen to undermine the national veto, which the SNP had previously endorsed to protect vital Scottish interests.<sup>109</sup>

### *The 1988 SNP Conference*

Opponents of *Independence in Europe* faced a number of disadvantages in their efforts to defeat the policy. The debate followed the contours of contemporary UK debates between pro-Europeans and Euro-sceptics. As they had to argue directly against the EC motions they had little opportunity to propose alternatives, and found themselves trapped into arguing against the EC *per se* rather than being able to adopt a more constructive approach. The dearth of alternatives to the EC and isolation (dual secession), even led one opponent to propose a reformed Commonwealth as a trading alternative to the Community.

The structure of debate did not help anti-EC members, and neither did the behaviour of the party leadership. The senior officebearers of the SNP were already using the

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106. SNP National Secretary's report to National Council, 4th June 1986.

107. Minutes of SNP National Council, 4th June 1986, p.5. Opponents of the leadership's stance removed positive sections of the NEC policy that stated that the SEA did not threaten national sovereignty, was no problem for existing SNP policy on the EC, and was an opportunity to achieve independence without separation.

108. The anti-EC members had failed to have their motions placed upon the conference agenda. They were also unsuccessful in the selection of 24 amendments to the pro-EC motions. The pro-EC members were determined that opponents would have to argue from a direct negative stance, in an all or nothing style, rather than have the opportunity to dilute the independence in Europe position through amendments.

109. *The Scotsman*, 13th September 1988, p.13.

*Independence in Europe* slogan, and included it on the cover of the party's conference agenda. It was chosen as the conference slogan, showing considerable confidence that it would become party policy. Such confidence was not misplaced. Both pro-EC motions were passed by overwhelming majorities at the conference.<sup>110</sup> It re-launched the party and the independence issue in preparation for the 1989 European elections.

*Independence in Europe* was the product of just two conference resolutions. This minimal development was a subject of criticism, with concern that the new policy lacked substance, and that the SNP had committed itself to unforeseen future developments in European integration. Two resolutions do not make a programme, but more substantive aspects of the policy followed as the SNP reacted to the evolving European political agenda. The resolution that committed the party to *Independence in Europe*, resolution 29, gave the SNP leadership three specific tasks:

“1. To continue its efforts to alert the Scottish people and their institutions to the creation of the single market in the European Community in 1992.

2. To continue its efforts to emphasise that within the context of the European Community the achievement of Scottish independence will accelerate Scotland to a full say in all Community policy without any adverse effect upon trade relations with all other members of the Community including England.

3. To continue its efforts to highlight that unless Scotland achieves independence within the Community, and is thus able to protect Scottish interests, the single market of 1992 will have devastating consequences for what is left of Scottish control and our economy”.<sup>111</sup>

The substance of *Independence in Europe* grew since 1988, though its impact was difficult to determine. It helped give the independence issue wider public support, though the unpopularity of Mrs Thatcher's government had already achieved this by the mid-1980s. Both the Thatcher effect and the EC effect raised support for independence above that experienced in the 1970s. But the contemporary popularity of independence, and *Independence in Europe*, did not help the SNP to regain its peak electoral support of 1974. The correlation between the SNP and independence in the 1970s found strong support for the party, but weak support for its

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110. Resolution 29 and 30, outcome of business report, SNP Annual National Conference, 1988.

111. Resolution 29, SNP Annual National Conference, Inverness, 1988. The passage of these motions led a small group of fundamentalist dissidents to leave the party to establish the Scottish Sovereignty Movement, committed to independence outside the EC. Little came of this organisation in terms of number or political profile though some of its members kept up a debate in the letters pages of the papers that embarrassed the SNP.



constitutional option. In the 1980s to 1990s this was reversed, with strong support for independence but weaker support for the SNP.

In 1989 the SNP formally launched its *Independence in Europe* platform, written by Jim Sillars. This document presented the political and economic aspects of the new policy, to enhance the case for independence by contrasting Scotland's independent role in European institutions with UK governmental practices. Sillars recognised that sovereignty was being redefined by European integration, a process that would continue as the EC moved beyond the single market towards EMU.<sup>112</sup> This economic and social development, if left untouched, would leave the Scottish economy vulnerable to centralising forces, takeovers and declining Scottish economic control. He argued that independence and Scottish involvement in EC decisionmaking and negotiations were necessary to deal with these threats.

Sillars saw little problem for Scottish sovereignty within the European Community: Scotland would be repatriating powers from London and so would be gaining powers rather than merely surrendering them to Brussels. Most of the existing powers of Westminster and Whitehall were seen to be destined for Scotland.<sup>113</sup> In addition, the Community was not seen as a threat to national policymaking and activity. The SNP assumed that the EC's jurisdiction could expand, but would remain constrained by the Treaty of Rome and its subsequent amendments. Finally, the party did not see the political behaviour or style of the EC as threatening because of its consensual nature, and the possibility of recourse to the national veto should a member state feel its interests were threatened.<sup>114</sup>

Though the national veto was partly undermined by the Single European Act, it still remained in force. Other aspects of the EC were also attractive to the SNP. The party argued that Scotland would gain from representation in the European Council, in COREPER, the ability to appoint a European Commissioner, and gain more seats in the European Parliament. This list was the same set of institutional benefits demanded in the 1970s by those pursuing *strategic negative linkage*, recycled in the new context of complete *positive linkage*.

The EC was seen to have a substantial institutional impact on Scotland, with *Independence in Europe* generating a diplomatic and political multiplier effect. The dimensions of Scottish government and administration were seen to be radically

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112. Jim Sillars, *Independence in Europe*, p.5.

113. *Ibid.*, p.23.

114. *Ibid.*, p.13.

## *The SNP And Europe*

altered in this context, propelling Scottish civil servants into all aspects of EC affairs and enabling Scotland to claim its share of official positions in the European Commission. A role in the Council, the Commission and in intergovernmental negotiations, would reduce the provincial outlook of Scottish administration through involvement in European and global affairs.<sup>115</sup>

The international economic context was seen to have a strong impact on Scotland and her relation with Europe. Sillars remarked

“we live in an increasingly internationalising world, and it would not be sensible for us to attempt an escape from it into some kind Scottish bolt-hole on which we pulled the shutters. That would lock us out of the world, at precisely the time when we need to get into the world and become a player”.<sup>116</sup>

Becoming a player, in the SNP's analysis, required a Scottish government, with the ability to work within the European Community to address the problems of the Scottish economy. Gellner has observed that “the nationalist state is not only the protector of a culture, but also of a new and often initially fragile economy”.<sup>117</sup> The SNP's intention was to use independence in the EC as an aid to economic development, with economic integration necessitating independent representation, and also providing an umbrella for development. In this context the new European initiative was acceptance of interdependence, and a move away from protectionism and autarky.

### *The SNP and EMU*

The *Independence in Europe* programme of 1989 was timebound, and could not deal effectively with the future European agenda. Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) was one example of this, though it generated several discussion papers and debates at the time. SNP policy on EMU was first considered in late 1990 in the party's National Assembly, an institutionalised discussion forum for activists and senior office-bearers. This forum debated two briefing papers on EMU prepared by SNP office-bearers. The first paper sought to define the limits of Scottish sovereignty within the EC through examination of a range of policy areas in which *pooled*

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115. *Ibid.*, p.22.

116. *Ibid.*, p.14.

117. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.15.

*sovereignty* was seen to increase the powers of small countries rather than limit them, as long as a confederal framework was retained.<sup>118</sup>

The second paper, prepared by Sillars, considered possible responses to EMU. It dealt with the issue of national sovereignty in a pragmatic fashion. First, in becoming a full member of the EC the SNP recognised that it would be necessary to accept the prevailing policy and institutional status quo of the Community, and ruled out the prospect of independent Scottish accession bringing fundamental change to the EC's institutions and policies.<sup>119</sup> Second, since Scotland had no national sovereignty within the UK then any level of sovereignty gained within the EC was an advance.<sup>120</sup> Third, the EC was firmly identified as a union of nation-states

“who have pooled their sovereignty in certain policy areas, but they have not thereby handed it over to any single body but themselves meeting as a single Council”.<sup>121</sup>

Some of these messages were intended to reassure fundamentalists within the SNP and also point out that independent membership in the context of EMU did not lead to the death of nation-states.

The greater part of Sillar's paper was concerned with assessing the impact of the Delors Committee proposals for Economic and Monetary Union.<sup>122</sup> It attempted to be both informative and analytical in guiding SNP activists towards considering EMU. As the first stage of the transition to EMU had been achieved, the paper sought to assess stages two and three. The economic options involved supporting the creation of a European central bank, and determining its political status, and then deciding upon the merits of a single currency and specific criteria for economic convergence. Consideration was also given to SNP attitudes to political union, with Sillars outlining four possible options:

- (i) to reject further transfers of sovereignty to the EC;
- (ii) to accept the necessity for more transfers of sovereignty but place no limits upon them;
- (iii) to agree upon limited transfers of sovereignty that retain the EC's confederal character and require unanimity to amend the Treaty of Rome;

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118. George Leslie, "Discussion Paper on SNP Policy on Scotland in Europe", SNP National Assembly, 9th December 1990.

119. Jim Sillars, "Scottish Independence in Europe", SNP National Assembly, 9th December 1990, p.2.

120. *Ibid.*, p.3.

121. *Ibid.*, p.15.

122. "Report on Economic and Monetary Union in the European Communities", Committee for the study of Economic and Monetary Union, European Communities, Brussels, 1989.

## *The SNP And Europe*

(iv) to accept limited transfers of sovereignty with the proviso that they be accompanied by an enhanced role for the European Parliament in the Council of Ministers and the appointment of European Commissioners.<sup>123</sup>

Though this paper did not put forward specific recommendations, the choices for the SNP were narrowed to preserve the coherence of *Independence in Europe*. The decisions made at the SNP's special conference on Europe in 1991 reflected some of these constraints. The majority of the resolutions dealing with EC questions had been submitted by the SNP's institutionalised policymaking bodies rather than by the activists,<sup>124</sup> though that did not prevent them gaining strong support.

The special conference confirmed the party's support for a confederal European Community, with support for institutional adjustments to make the EC more democratic;<sup>125</sup> gave support to the creation of an independent European central bank,<sup>126</sup> and a single European currency;<sup>127</sup> and supported the Social Charter and Community enlargement.

This conference determined party attitudes to the issue agenda of the intergovernmental conferences on economic and political union that preceded the Maastricht Treaty. It brought a triple orientation to the European question in this period: to deal with the criticisms and proposals of competing parties, to develop political bargaining around the question of a European central bank and to seek to exploit the government's European weaknesses over the Maastricht Treaty through calling for a referendum on the Treaty.

The SNP's "Memo to Maastricht" in December 1991 updated the case for *Independence in Europe* in the new context of EC *deepening* and also dealt with the positions of competing parties. This document sought to dismiss the prospect and attractiveness of regional status for Scotland in the EC, as an alternative to national membership. The "regional" option, which involved federalism or the *Europe of the Regions* position, had been adopted by the Liberal and Labour parties in response to developments within the EC and the SNP's new programme.<sup>128</sup> The SNP was

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123. Sillars, *Op. cit.*, 1990, p.17.

124. Seven out of ten resolutions came from central party fora rather than local organisations, reflecting the elite nature of the EC issue.

125. Resolution 5: SNP Special National Conference, 23rd March 1991.

126. Resolution 9, *ibid.*

127. Resolution 10, *ibid.*

128. Peter Lynch: "European Integration and Regional Autonomy: The Parallel Discourse", Political Studies Association Conference, Leicester University, 1993.

particularly keen to point out the differences between *Independence in Europe* and regionalism, and outline the inferiority of the latter position.

The party also dealt with the legal implications of secession/integration in the EC context. Political opponents had presented the argument that Scottish membership after secession could not be guaranteed as it would have technically ceased to be part of a member state and its membership application could be vetoed by other member states. The EC has had experience of countries acceding to the EC but very little in the way of countries leaving. The only precedent involved Greenland from 1982-5, but there is no legal precedent to illuminate the Scottish situation. This uncertainty led opponents of the SNP to claim that Scottish membership could not be achieved, and that readmission and the application/negotiation procedure would be damaging. The SNP answered such criticisms by asserting that secession created two successor states from the UK, each would hold equal status within the EC,<sup>129</sup> and have to apply for separate membership. This issue is rather circumspect however, as the European Community has no position or precedent on the issue and Scotland would provide a test case.

The SNP also used Maastricht to indulge in political bidding, calling for the proposed European central bank to be located in Scotland,<sup>130</sup> assisted by the fact that other parties lobbied for the bank to be located in London. The political geography of pitting Edinburgh against London was attractive for the SNP, and it argued that London had already received European largesse in the shape of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and was unlikely to receive any more.<sup>131</sup>

Maastricht brought a return to earlier patterns of *linkage*. Though supportive of the Treaty the SNP sought to exploit the political dynamics of Maastricht by calling for a referendum linked to the constitutional question in Scotland. The SNP's efforts to make capital out of the Maastricht issue were aided by the result of the Danish referendum in June 1992 in three ways. First, it helped its argument for a referendum. Second, it meant that it was possible to alter sections of the Maastricht Treaty. Third, it showed the ability of small nations to influence the development of the Community. The SNP leader, Alex Salmond, made use of this latter point saying that "this result finally crushes the claim that small nations can have no influence in the European Community".<sup>132</sup>

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129. Scottish National Party, *Memo to Maastricht*, p.3.

130. *Ibid.*, p.5.

131. Scottish National Party News release, 23rd May 1992.

132. *The Scotsman*, 4th June 1992, p.4.

Events following the Danish referendum brought a defensive response from the SNP. The party was particularly sensitive about speculation that the Treaty could be adopted without Danish support, and undermine the unanimity rule on which the Community and *Independence in Europe* programme were constructed. Jim Sillars dealt with this possibility by stating that

“we have heard statements from various sources saying that the rest of the Community could proceed with Maastricht without the Danes.....such a move would be a fundamental breach of Article 236 of the Treaties establishing the Community. It leaves no room for doubt: ratification is required by all Member States in accordance with their respective constitutional arrangements”.<sup>133</sup>

The SNP sought to use the new uncertainty over Maastricht to push for a dual referendum and the application of subsidiarity to ensure decentralisation in the UK.<sup>134</sup> The SNP sought to use subsidiarity to promote the Scottish dimension and demands for self-government, while the Government employed subsidiarity as a political resource to defend UK sovereignty from the European level. The SNP leader sought to exploit the Government’s singular usage of the subsidiarity concept by complaining that according to the Conservatives “subsidiarity means power for Westminster, but none for anywhere else”.<sup>135</sup> Whilst the rhetorical position of the SNP was clear, the political position towards Maastricht in the voting lobbies of the House of Commons was confused. The SNP supported opposition amendments during the second reading of the European Communities (amendments) Bill in 1992, but then voted for a second reading of the bill with the Government.<sup>136</sup> There was a particular concern to avoid appearing anti-EC, to prevent any resurrection of the party’s opposition in the 1970s and protect the *Independence in Europe* policy.

The government’s problems with the European Monetary System (EMS) in September 1992 provided further opportunities for the SNP to develop linkage. It significantly raised the temperature on the Maastricht Treaty. The government’s reduced parliamentary majority at the 1992 general election meant that the legislative ratification of the Treaty was problematic. The SNP and PC sought to exploit this situation by linking a constitutional referendum in Scotland and Wales to support for Maastricht in the lobby of the House of Commons. These referenda were presented

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133. Scottish National Party news release, 4th June 1992.

134. *The Herald*, 18th June 1992, p.4.

135. Alex Salmond MP, Parliamentary Debates, *Hansard* 205, 21st May 1992, p.556.

136. The second reading was passed by 336 votes to 92, *Ibid.*, p600.

as the price for nationalist support for Maastricht in talks with the Conservative Prime Minister,<sup>137</sup> and also gained support at the SNP conference in 1992.<sup>138</sup>

The SNP's proposal for a referendum was popular in Scotland, though it did not lead to increased support for the nationalists. One opinion poll found 66% of SNP supporters favoured a referendum on the Maastricht Treaty, compared to 61% of voters in Scotland. The Treaty itself was not widely supported in Scotland, though it was not necessarily widely understood either. Only 25% of SNP voters favoured the Treaty, compared to 31% against, and 41% undecided.<sup>139</sup> Given the Government's weak situation in the House of Commons, further political opportunities arose through the ratification procedures for the Maastricht Treaty. The government tried to test its position in the Commons through introducing the parliamentary innovation of a 'paving motion', a means to see how much support there was for the Treaty before proceeding with the second reading stage. This brought the SNP to vote against this motion, along with Labour and Conservative dissidents in order to embarrass the Government.

The government's difficulties over Maastricht also led the SNP, as well as PC, to support the Conservatives over aspects of the Maastricht bill that dealt with the proposed Committee of the Regions. Under the Treaty, the nomination of members of the Committee of the Regions was left to national governments. The opposition parties proposed an amendment to the bill that would have ensured that Committee members had to be elected members of local government. The strength of the opposition, and the willingness of Conservative backbenchers to vote against numerous aspects of the Treaty left the government short of a majority. Conservative efforts to avoid another defeat on the Treaty led them to approach the nationalists with a deal. The SNP pursued two objectives in this deal: eight Scottish representatives on the Committee (out of the UK delegation of 24), and also the removal of government control of nominations. To achieve the latter, the SNP proposed that Scottish representatives on the Committee should be selected on proportional arrangements, so that each party in Scotland would have members approximate to its share of the vote in the 1992 general election.<sup>140</sup> This proposal was confirmed through a loose verbal and written agreement with the Secretary of State for Scotland, Ian Lang.

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137. *The Herald*, 24th September 1992, p.9.

138. Resolution 30, SNP Annual National Conference, Perth, September 1992.

139. *The Herald*, 2nd October 1992, p.2, confirmed by a subsequent poll in *The Herald*, 25th May 1993.

140. *The Scotsman*, 9th March 1993, p.1.

The SNP had previously modelled itself on opposition to the Conservatives, and found this strategy undermined. The event had no significance for party attitudes to Europe, but greater importance for the party leadership and the SNP's efforts to embarrass the Labour opposition. The consequences of the deal were numerous. First, the party suffered a short-term loss in support.<sup>141</sup> Second, the issue provoked internal conflict within the party.<sup>142</sup> Third, the deal undermined the SNP's attempts to portray Labour as the collaborationist party, as it opposed the insertion of a referendum clause into the Maastricht bill proposed by Liberals, nationalists and a number of anti-Maastricht Conservatives.<sup>143</sup> This position was the democratic high ground for the SNP, and the deal with the Conservatives meant that it was then lost for the duration of debates on the bill. Fourth, and most importantly, the event gave Labour the excuse to walk out of interparty talks between the SNP, Labour and Liberal Democrats on proposals to advance constitutional change. The Maastricht vote therefore torpedoed the SNP's own efforts to gain advantage through putting pressure on Labour to respond to demands for more radical action on the autonomy issue in Scotland.

Whilst the issue did not affect the SNP position on Europe, it brought short-term problems. It placed the party on the defensive during a period in which it had exerted considerable pressure on Labour. Beyond this deal, the Maastricht debate yielded very little for the nationalists. Since the SNP had debated the contents of the Maastricht agreements in advance of the bill coming before parliament there was little left to discuss in the Commons.

Between 1975 and 1993 there had been a reversal of the SNP's position on the EC and the political context of European integration. In 1975, there was an expectation that Scotland would vote against Europe, whilst the rest of the UK voted in favour. In 1993, though the SNP expected that it could drive a new European cleavage between Scotland and the UK on the European question, with Scotland now pro-EC and the UK isolationist, it was confronted by weak support for the Maastricht Treaty in Scotland. This weakness, and the absence of voter knowledge on the Treaty, tempered efforts to exploit the Maastricht Treaty.

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141. One opinion poll recorded a 4% reduction in SNP support following the Maastricht deal, see *The Herald*, 2nd April 1993, p.2.

142. See *Scotland on Sunday*, 14th March 1993, p.1.

143. See *The Herald*, 27th April 1993, p.8 and 5th May 1993, p.9.



## **6. The SNP And Transnational Co-operation**

The contemporary involvement of the SNP in transnational organisations was a facet of its success in continually electing a member to the European Parliament. This post-1979 development was not without its contradictions however. The SNP did not participate in the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations - evidence of its disdain for regionalism and the efficacy of associating with micro-regionalist parties, and of its state-nationalist tradition. The problem of finding suitable parties or groups for political co-operation did not arise until the direct elections themselves. Before 1979 the SNP's nominated MEP did not join any group in the European Parliament, but remained an independent member.

The expansion of the EP with direct elections brought an increase in political group sizes and types. This brought Mrs Ewing to consider the range of group alternatives available for the SNP. In doing so, she was given considerable individual autonomy to select a group, with minimal involvement from the SNP leadership or membership. In the absence of a regionalist/nationalist group, Ewing joined the European Progressive Democrats (EPD) formed by the French RPR and Fianna Fail, an *ad hoc* parliamentary alliance between state-nationalist parties. This decision was endorsed by the SNP National Executive.

The relationship between EPD members was limited, though it suited the parties involved. The group operated as a formal unit within the EP, but had very loose internal ties. There was no common manifesto or programme, members had maximum autonomy within the group, and there was little or no ideological or political cohesion as a basis for its actions. Since it was a parliamentary alliance rather than an electoral alliance, coherence was unimportant.<sup>144</sup> The EPD's impact upon the SNP was minimal. Inter-party links beyond the parliament were very weak, with no attempt to develop a wider federation or association. The greatest degree of warmth within the EPD developed between the SNP and Fianna Fail members, with the latter occasionally attending the SNP conference, and an SNP delegation attending the Fianna Fail congress in 1988.<sup>145</sup>

The development of the EPD coincided with that of the European Free Alliance (EFA). The formation of the EFA led some SNP members to consider membership

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144. Duverger, *Political Parties*, p.330.

145. Mrs Ewing and the SNP National Secretary, John Swinney, visited the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis in February 1988; *The Scots Independent*, April 1988, p.4.

in the new organisation, and the party began to attend EFA meetings from April 1983.<sup>146</sup> Observer status was pursued to ensure the SNP did not undermine its association with the EPD. One of the observers subsequently submitted a report to the SNP National Executive recommending that the party retain its observer status in the medium-term and look at full membership of the EFA in the longer term. The two SNP observers became prime motivators behind SNP participation, and the party agreed to continue its political involvement provided that it did not involve any financial commitment.<sup>147</sup> The SNP members wished to involve the party in the EFA as a prelude to full membership, and sought to make an input to the EFA policy to develop a degree of political convergence between the organisation and the SNP: preparing for full membership by closing the policy distance between the SNP and EFA.

There were efforts to have the SNP change political groups within the European Parliament in the 1983-6 period. The EFA parties sought to attract the SNP to the Rainbow Group and some within the SNP also pursued this end. The party's National Executive agreed to maintain its role in the group, which was renamed as the European Democratic Alliance (EDA), following the 1984 European election,<sup>148</sup> though some voices argued for a change in group at the party's National Council in 1986. Here Mrs Ewing successfully argued for continuing the party's role in the group, and defeated the proponents of accession to the Rainbow Group.<sup>149</sup>

Though entering into co-operation with the EFA, the SNP remained part of the EDA. This alliance caused problems with the EFA, which was attempting to form a specifically regionalist political group, and also affected the SNP's relationship with PC. This relationship was problematic in the 1984-7 period for a number of reasons.<sup>150</sup> First, PC was unhappy with the SNP's role in the EDA, particularly its alliance with the RPR. Second, the SNP was suspicious of PC during this period because of its growing *regionalism*, which was largely articulated by the PC leader, Dafydd Elis Thomas. These problems persisted in spite of the development of a parliamentary alliance between the two organisations in the 1986-1987 period,

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146. Minutes of the European Free Alliance Congress, Eupen, Belgium, 22-23 April 1983: EFA Bureau, Brussels, 1983.

147. Interview with George Leslie, Vice-Convenor for Local Government and delegate to EFA, Scottish National Party: 6th November 1992, Glasgow.

148. SNP National Secretary's report to National Council, 1st December 1984, p.3.

149. Minutes of SNP National Council, 1st March 1986, p.4.

150. Interview with Dr Phil Williams, former Vice-Chair Policy and Research, and EFA delegate, Plaid Cymru: 13th November 1991, Abersystwyth.

designed to enhance their bargaining power in the event of a minority government after the 1987 general election.

Into the late 1980s the SNP's role in the EDA was threatened by the rightward drift of the RPR: evident during its cohabitation with the Socialist President in the 1986-8 period. The RPR's move to the right on issues like immigration, made continuing SNP involvement difficult. However, relations within the group remained positive. The RPR in the European Parliament posed no problems, in contrast to its behaviour in domestic politics. Labour MPs in Scotland began to raise the alliance with the RPR as a means to question the SNP's adopted centre-left stance.

The political problems with the RPR and the more positive developments within the EFA and Rainbow configuration provided grounds for the SNP to switch group in the European Parliament. Mrs Ewing warned the SNP executive of the possibility of a change in group coming very quickly after the European elections in 1989.<sup>151</sup> This situation brought the SNP into the Rainbow Group, but did not undermine the party's commitment to independence.

## **7. Conclusion:**

After 1988 SNP policy on Europe sought to make independence feasible, coherent and safe for Scotland. It involved relaunching the new Europeanised view of independence as the big idea in Scottish politics, and one intended to undermine lesser forms of autonomy such as devolution. One consequence was pragmatic: the SNP accepted that an altered and limited state was better than none at all. The nation-state previously held ultimate responsibility for national economic development, defence and foreign affairs,<sup>152</sup> yet its economic primacy was reduced through interdependency and political change. In the Maastricht Treaty debates in particular, the SNP has modified the concept of economic and political sovereignty to take account of European and global developments and tailor its programme to suit contemporary events. The notion of economic sovereignty and political sovereignty became separated, with one treated differently from the other by nationalists.<sup>153</sup>

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151. Interview with Mrs Winnie Ewing MEP for the Highlands and Islands 1979-94: 25th February 1992, Brussels.

152. Mayall, *Op. cit.*, p.85.

153. Other authors have made this observation in the context of the developing world: see Harris, *National Liberation*, p.23.

## *The SNP And Europe*

The SNP's transformed Euro-linkages are, in Panebianco's language, examples of the "re-articulation of ends" rather than the "succession of ends" within a political party.<sup>154</sup> The SNP has retained its commitment to independence but redefined the idea and reality of independence in the Scottish context. Independence now means pooled sovereignty intergovernmentalism and acceptance of the limited capacities of the nation-state in the global economy.

Had the party experienced a *succession of ends*, with radical changes to its programme, aims and identity, then it would have abandoned independence in favour of regionalism. Instead, the contemporary phase of European integration was used to reinforce and relaunch nation-state independence. The 1988 SNP conference, and the adoption of the *Independence in Europe* programme, allowed the relaunch of independence through the economic and political security of the EC. For the SNP, European integration has been about *building* rather than *transcending* the nation-state.

Agenda-linkage is not a risk-free activity however. If independence is reliant upon European integration then it may be a hostage to fortune. Economic and political integration are not linear processes. Haas has described the potential for integration to create a number of 'turbulent fields' which disrupt integrative progress and lead to increases in demands for national decisionmaking.<sup>155</sup> In pursuing a process of partisan Europeanisation the SNP may have put itself at the mercy of turbulent fields, over which it has neither influence nor control.

The SNP's strategy of setting the independence option within the context of the European single market and reduced tariff and customs barriers may come unstuck if the process of economic integration falters. This outcome may develop through elements of the single market failing to operate or more likely, with the economic disadvantages of peripherality causing problems for the Scottish economy.

There are also difficulties with political integration, as the SNP was wary of this development. It was committed to the democratisation of the EC, but cautious about the extension of the powers of the European Parliament and weakening of the Council of Ministers. The SNP position relied upon the continuation of intergovernmentalism, rather than the evolution of supranationalism, seeking a confederation rather than a federation. Political federalism within the EC would take

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154. Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, p.257.

155. Haas, "The Obsolescence of Regional Integration Theory", paper no.25, Institute of International Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1975.

## *The SNP And Europe*

the SNP back to considering the independence issue within an autonomous context, though it may be that the SNP is willing to accept certain economic pay-offs from the EC in exchange for greater political integration.

The SNP was inevitably cast in a reactive mode as regards both economic and political integration, which made policy responses limited and ineffective. This reactivism was also a function of the SNP's predominantly instrumental attitude to Europe. In this respect it has operated like other British parties, using the EC context to support its domestic agenda. It became committed to *Independence in Europe* to use the EC to facilitate the argument for independence, and the reality of independence itself. There was no great affection or Euro-enthusiasm evident within the party. This in itself may offer some protection for the SNP against the 'turbulent fields' of integration.

### 3

## **Plaid Cymru And Europe: From Nationalism To Regionalism**

“There can be no nationalism in one country. Our small-nation nationalism recognises the rights and democratic aspirations of all other national, language, ethnic and minority groups worldwide...this is not the old nationalism of nation-states with their insistence on borders and sovereignty but a new understanding of the role of the national community as an important level of political power, sharing power with other nations and regions, and decentralising power so that communities have real say in running themselves”.<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Introduction**

Plaid Cymru (PC) can be considered as the intermediate case in this study, and in the regionalist political family. This is because it eschews separatist nationalism but has also traditionally rejected regionalism. The party has preferred to subscribe to *self-government* or *home rule*, and has taken a sceptical view of independence. However, there has been a level of disagreement within the party over its goals: with some favouring independence rather than more general aims. This conflict ran through the party in the 1920s and 1930s, fueled by the opposition of the party President, Saunders Lewis, to independence and nationalism,<sup>2</sup> and also re-emerged in a different form in the 1980s as a consequence of European integration. These two developments can be seen to give the debate over party goals a certain symmetry, in which the European question is influential.

### **2. The Development of Welsh Nationalism**

Plaid Cymru was formed in 1925 by a group of nationalists at a meeting in a cafe at the Welsh cultural festival, the Eisteddfod, in Pwllheli. In contrast to other nationalist and regionalist parties considered here, PC has been the only nationalist party formed in Wales, and has continued as a single political actor since its formation. It was created from a number of pre-existing groups which had developed in Wales at the close of the first world war such as Byddin yr Iaith (The

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1. Dafydd Elis Thomas, President of Plaid Cymru 1983-91, *The Welsh Nation*, November/December 1989, p.4.

2.D. Hwyl Davies, *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945: A Call to Nationhood*.

Language Army), Byddin Ymreolwyr Cymru (The Wales Home Rule Army) and Mudiad Cymru (The Free Wales Movement). All contained future nationalist leaders and activists such as Saunders Lewis and Ambrose Bebb. These micro-organisations acted as elite groups rather than political movements. They had been preceded by the development of the home rule issue in the 1890s in the Cymru Fydd group formed by Liberal MPs like Tom Ellis and David Lloyd George.<sup>3</sup>

The early establishment of PC, with attempts to develop a separate political philosophy, programme, exclusive membership, and an electoral strategy,<sup>4</sup> brought an early stability to Welsh nationalism, and avoided the organisational complexity and cross-party bodies found in other national movements. The movement experienced this phase of multiple organisations in the 1920s in advance of the formation of the party,<sup>5</sup> with the coalescence of these organisations bringing party formation. The maturing of the party lasted from the 1920s right into the 1960s, as the party's programme expanded from the core issues of home rule and language rights to international affairs and socio-economic policies.

PC's political agenda initially included three *external support systems*: dominion status for Wales, a similar constitutional status to independent Commonwealth states such as Australia and Canada; Welsh membership of the League of Nations; and support for European union. These provided a variety of political, economic and security supports for small nations. PC has had an underlying positive disposition to European union throughout its existence, though it has not prevented it from changing policy quite markedly on Europe when it was deemed necessary.<sup>6</sup> PC can therefore be seen to have operated pragmatically on the European issue, international co-operation and the European Community itself.

Plaid Cymru's electoral performance over time can be divided into three periods: that when the party contested only a few seats within its region; the expansion phase from 1945 to 1966 when the party committed itself to fielding candidates in greater numbers; and the period since 1966 when it has contested every seat in Wales and began to surpass the threshold of representation. In the earlier period from 1929 to 1945 the electoral effort was limited to contesting the University of Wales seat and that of Caernarfonshire. These contests produced marginal votes for Plaid Cymru,

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3. Kenneth Morgan, *The Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880 to 1980*, p.41.

4. Ian McAllister, "Party Organisation and Minority Nationalism: A Comparative Study in the United Kingdom", *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.9, 1981, p.238.

5. Davies, *Op. cit.*

6. Denis Balsom and Peter Madgwick, "Wales, European Integration and Devolution", in Martin Kolinsky (ed), *Divided Loyalties*, p.78.

and the only advances came with the by-elections at Caernarfon Boroughs and Neath in 1945, though the support gained at these elections ebbed away at the general election in the same year. Despite the low number of votes polled in the general election the performance was notable for the fact that the party contested eight seats, and resolved to contest more in future.<sup>7</sup>

Subsequent by-elections in 1946 boosted the standing of PC in traditionally Labour seats, but these small advances passed by without the party making greater capital of its ability to gather support in such areas. From then the electoral growth of the party was fairly consistent, peaking in 1970, though gaining no seats, and then appearing to be in steady decline until the 1992 election, as the party traded off national support for geographical concentration and limited electoral success. This trade-off left the party representing North and West Wales - the rural areas with the higher concentrations of Welsh speakers - rather than those of industrial and urban South Wales. This pattern emerged in spite of the PC's efforts to become more oriented to the South through the leftward movement of the party and its designation as a socialist party in 1981,<sup>8</sup> and the post-modern strategy involving alliance with the Greens in the early 1990s. These developments in the 1980s did not succeed in producing any breakthrough for the PC in South Wales, though the party succeeded in entrenching itself in North Wales and gained a seat in West Wales at the 1992 general election.

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7. Alan Butt Phillip, *The Welsh Question: Nationalism in Welsh Politics 1945-70*, p.74.

8. Phillip Cooke, "Ethnicity, Economy and Civil Society: Three Theories of Political Regionalism", in Colin Williams and Elenore Kofman (eds), *Community Conflict, Partition and Nationalism*, p.218.



**Table 3.1 Electoral Support For Plaid Cymru 1929-92**

<u>Year</u>	<u>Votes</u>	<u>% of Welsh Total</u>	<u>Seats Won</u>
1929	609		
1931	2050		
1935	2534		
1945	14751	1.1	
1950	17580	1.2	
1951	10920	0.8	
1955	45119	3.2	
1959	77571	5.3	
1964	69507	4.8	
1966	61071	4.3	
1970	175016	11.5	
1974 (Feb)	171374	10.7	2
1974 (Oct)	166321	10.8	3
1979	132544	8.1	2
1983	125309	7.8	2
1987	125589	7.3	3
1992	*154957	7.9	4

\*This includes the votes for joint PC/Green candidates.

Sources: Alan Butt Phillip, *The Welsh Question: Nationalism in Welsh Politics 1945-70* and Denis Balsom, *The Wales Yearbook 1991* (Cardiff: HTV Cymru, 1990); *THE TIMES GUIDE TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS APRIL 1992* (LONDON: TIMES BOOKS, 1992)

### **3. Welsh Nationalism And European Union 1925-57**

#### **The Early Years of Plaid Cymru**

Plaid Cymru's role in Welsh politics was very limited in its formative years. Though the party membership grew from 500 in 1930 to 2500 in 1945,<sup>9</sup> it made little public impact. PC contested very few elections in this period, with the most notable activity in the public sphere coming through the adoption of civil disobedience by a section of its leadership in 1936 with the destruction of the RAF bombing school at Penlyberth. The slow organisational and electoral development of the party did not prevent the gradual evolution of policies related to international affairs within the organisation. Debates on such issues were pursued through the party's Welsh language newspaper *Y Ddraig Goch* (The Red Dragon) founded in 1926 with a circulation of approximately 4000-7000 in the 1930s, and through *The Welsh Nationalist*, the PC English language newspaper that had a circulation of around 2000.<sup>10</sup> These two papers, and the party's summer schools and meetings, were the main forums for internal political debate. The Welsh language paper, in particular, was instrumental in leading PC discussions on European union.

9. Butt Phillip, *Op. cit.*, p.17.

10. *Ibid.*, p.18.

The aims of PC were formally established in 1931. The party called for dominion status for Wales, action on the Welsh language and culture and Welsh membership of the League of Nations.<sup>11</sup> These three goals were a reflection of the groundwork of the early PC leaders, particularly that of the President, Saunders Lewis, who sought to link the issue of Welsh autonomy to developments in international society. In his lecture to the PC summer school in 1925, Lewis placed both Wales and nationalism in international historical contexts. Lewis emphasised that Wales was an old European nation, not merely a region of Britain. Wales had existed in the pre-national Europe of the middle ages, during the period of shared religious traditions under the common supranational authority of the Catholic Church. Lewis argued that this early European union, based upon a common elite language and literature in Latin, and a common ecclesiastical authority, had been undermined by nationalism. He saw this emergent nationalism as both materialistic and *etatiste*, in seeking to establish the nation-state as the primary form of political organisation and develop linguistic and cultural unity within its boundaries. Lewis considered this managed uniformity as a regrettable contrast to the more varied culture that predated the reformation.

Lewis regarded nationalism as a potentially destructive force between societies, particularly when practiced by England on Wales.<sup>12</sup> In his efforts to create a political philosophy for PC Lewis sought to reconnect Wales with Europe, to encourage national diversity as a force against British uniformity and present a positive alternative to materialistic and statist nationalism. The European aspect was later pursued through a volume of essays published by Lewis in Welsh.<sup>13</sup> Here, Lewis argued that if Wales was to play any role in Europe, whether cultural or political, it would have to achieve self-government as the nation-state was the natural form of society. European union would be useful both to deal with destructive state nationalism and to help Wales and Welsh development. Lewis adhered to the mainstream view of European integration as a means of ensuring peace in international society. In this respect he regarded Europe as a security community,<sup>14</sup> and a cultural community, but not as a political or economic community as such.

Lewis also hitched the European issue to the political opportunity structure of Welsh nationalism. Though Lewis' work was based upon intellectual connections, it

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11. The Welsh Nationalist Party, *Welsh National Party Aims 1931*.

12. Saunders Lewis, *Principles of Nationalism*.

13. Saunders Lewis, *Canlyn Arthur*.

14. For definitions and discussion of this concept see K. C. Wheare, *Federal Government*, p.37 and Preston King, *Federalism and Federation*, pp.79-85.

contained elements of political instrumentalism. Lewis was genuine in his support for European union, and pursued the political linkage throughout the 1920s and 1930s by championing the cause of Welsh autonomy and European union in the party's Welsh language newspaper as twin challenges to state sovereignty and materialistic nationalism.<sup>15</sup> These two themes remained a durable influence on Plaid Cymru, particularly as the party tried to square its support for European union with economic integration and the perceived centralisation of the European Community in later years.

Lewis' political philosophy and attitude to Europe were derived from a number of interacting sources. Lewis' conversion to Catholicism, which was quite exceptional in Wales, led him to examine the experience of pre-reformation Europe, and analyse the condition of Europe in a similar manner to more contemporary academics.<sup>16</sup> Lewis also showed a predilection for France and French political writers such as Charles Maurras and Maurice Barres, as well as Irish writers such as Yeats and Synge.<sup>17</sup> The Francophile in Lewis was an aspect shared with other Welsh nationalists such as Ambrose Bebb, though they also showed concern for Brittany. The Francophile tendency led one writer to remark that "it became something of a tradition up to the second world war that the Welsh nationalist should adopt France as his second country".<sup>18</sup> This tradition had been established by the writings of Emrys Ap Iwan in the late nineteenth century, who had argued for Europe rather than the Empire to form an alternative political arena for Welsh nationalism.<sup>19</sup> There was, however, some inconsistency here. Lewis' description, and condemnation, of materialist and statist nationalism would seem to apply fairly accurately to France, with Brittany as one of the obvious victims of this type of nationalism. Embracing it appears rather incoherent in retrospect.

Plaid Cymru's newspapers have covered European issues since their establishment, partly to encourage Welsh people to consider international political issues independently of England,<sup>20</sup> but also to make use of the *demonstration effect* through publicising the experiences and successes of other small nations who have achieved self-government. Linking Wales to such countries as Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Norway, Denmark and Ireland was an attempt to encourage nation-

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15. Dafydd Jones, "Politics" in Jones and Thomas (eds), *Presenting Saunders Lewis*, p.32.

16. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*.

17. Dafydd Jones, *Op. cit.*, p.23.

18. *Ibid.*, p.54.

19. *Ibid.*, p.56.

20. Gwynfor Evans, *Fighting for Wales*, p.156.

building by emulation. Such countries were repeatedly presented as models for Welsh national development and international involvement. This list of countries was raised in an article in *The Welsh Nationalist* in May 1934, and bears comparison with contemporary national models, despite the tendency towards regionalism within contemporary Welsh nationalism. This identification with nation-states, and their different agenda in international affairs, was reinforced by demands for a Welsh seat at the League of Nations, as protection against aggression by larger states. That League membership was advanced as a primary goal of PC is clear,<sup>21</sup> and also significant, with nationalists trying to enlist the League as a defence mechanism for Wales and also discussing the possibility of the development of a world federation of states with its own police force and settlements bank - again with Wales as a member.<sup>22</sup>

The prospect of European union itself was undermined by conflicts that damaged the League of Nations. From the nationalist's viewpoint, union was also frustrated by the absence of Welsh self-government, and the actions of the British Government in international affairs. The government was seen to be unwilling to consider European interests and solidarity, and the nationalists expressed concern

“at seeing ourselves committed by our European rulers to a policy intended to make any real European co-operation impossible”.<sup>23</sup>

The European rulers in this case were the British Government, whom PC regarded as obsessed with state sovereignty. Though claiming a role for Wales in international affairs, it is highly doubtful that it would have had any impact upon the instability in European politics during the 1920s and 1930s. Though there was, and remains, a tendency for nationalists to talk up their role in international affairs, a practice usually accompanied by denunciations of big-state politics, realism is not the issue here. To an extent nationalist parties were merely setting out their positions on the issues of the day, offering a set of principles to guide the behaviour of their small, embryo states and raising them up above the society of states to claim some special mission in international affairs. In the Welsh case, this involved working to bring peace to the international system - a reflection of Christian and pacifist influences within the party - and also criticising the goals and behaviour of the main actors in the international political system.

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21. *The Welsh Nationalist*, March 1932, p.1; Welsh Nationalist Party, *Op. cit.*, 1931.

22. *The Welsh Nationalist*, March 1933, p.1.

23. *The Welsh Nationalist*, June 1941, p.4.

### *Plaid Cymru in the Postwar Years*

The late 1940s and 1950s found PC attending to its domestic organisation and campaigning needs. The issue of European union was underplayed in this period as the party concentrated on developing its political role in Wales rather than trying to outline a political philosophy. The retirement of the party leader, Saunders Lewis, and the election of his successor Gwynfor Evans in the post-war period brought a number of changes to the party. Though Evans remained committed to Lewis' position on European union,<sup>24</sup> the issue had little saliency for PC until the debates on membership of the Common Market in the 1960s. Whilst PC's foreign policy agenda played a minor role, the party was transformed from a pressure group of Welsh activists, occasionally contesting elections, into a campaigning movement that was to grow into a more significant political party.

Party membership grew under the new leadership, and the number of local organisations increased.<sup>25</sup> PC also began to contest elections more regularly. Eight seats were fought in 1945, though the party achieved seven lost deposits in the process. By-elections proved more fruitful with PC gaining almost 30% at Ogmore in 1946 and 20% in Aberdare, despite traditional Labour support in these areas.<sup>26</sup> The greater consistency in electoral politics was accompanied by the adoption of campaigning and protest tactics which gave PC a profile in both local and all-Wales issues, and effectively radicalised the party. It also showed that parties could still operate as movements and pressure groups, adopting different political strategies to suit the needs of the organisation. The radicalism of the new PC was evident through the direct action campaigns against the military authorities, the Forestry Commission, the Ministry of Agriculture and Liverpool City Corporation, over the issue of landholdings and planning proposals that effected Welsh language communities and damaged the environment.

Whilst PC's campaigning and electoral mobilisations developed, the issue of European integration was progressing. From the close of the second world war a number of developments took place: Winston Churchill's speech in favour of European union in 1946, the process of European reconstruction and the Marshall Plan, the Hague Congress of the European movement in 1948 and the establishment of the Council of Europe in 1949. The attitude of PC to such developments is

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24. See Gwynfor Evans, *Plaid Cymru and Wales*.

25. Butt Phillip, *Op. cit.*, p.73.

26. *Ibid.*, p.75.

difficult to discern, though there was some positive response to the discussions within the SNP, and its adoption of European federation as a goal of Scottish nationalism.<sup>27</sup> The Hague Congress seems to have passed by with little impact, though PC did seek involvement at the subsequent Paris Congress of regional minorities organised in 1949. Like the SNP, the Welsh nationalists joined the International Congress of European Communities and Regions, attending its meetings from 1949 to at least 1954. PC's participation in this organisation was deeper than that of the SNP. The party's General Secretary attended the Congress meetings and was elected to its permanent committee at the inaugural Congress in 1949,<sup>28</sup> and continued to attend the meeting until the fourth Congress in Munster in 1954.<sup>29</sup>

Though PC was a more serious participant in the Congress' meetings than the SNP, it shared the latter's scepticism about the organisation. There was concern that the Congress seemed oriented towards acting as a forum for regions and regional interests rather than for minority nationalism, and sought to avoid the political consequences of regional autonomy and self-determination.<sup>30</sup> PC's participation at these meetings provided a useful learning process for it in distinguishing between nationalist and regionalist aspirations and movements. Though these meetings, and PC's involvement with the International Congress provided very little tangible rewards for Welsh nationalism, they were indicative of a positive disposition to European union and a willingness to co-operate with transnational regionalist bodies.

The proposals and agreements on European union during the 1950s led PC to reassess Welsh prospects in Europe. As one nationalist pointed out, "the most compelling economic topic of our day is the imminent reality of economic integration in Western Europe. This must be welcomed by Plaid Cymru, which had always called for greater co-operation with Europe in general".<sup>31</sup> The political potential of the new institutions was not lost on Plaid Cymru, which thought that Europe was

"probably creating a permanent political entity, which will undoubtedly develop even closer ties".<sup>32</sup>

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27. *The Welsh Nation*, July 1948, p.4.

28. Minutes of the Welsh National Party Executive Committee, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, Box A.B1, 1974-5.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *The Welsh Nation*, August 1951, pp.3-5, and June 1955, pp.3-4.

31. *The Welsh Nation*, January 1957, p.4.

32. *Ibid.*

Though these were rather vague linkages and observations, they demonstrated the party's awareness of the danger in having Wales locked out of European organisations. Wales' absence from the European Coal and Steel Community was seen as particularly costly, in addition to the lack of opportunity for the representation of Welsh interests in ongoing negotiations between the UK Government and the nascent European institutions.<sup>33</sup> This representational linkage was to become an orthodox response. However, in recognising the process of *deepening* within the new Community and the prospect of political integration, the party showed an awareness of the fact that the new EC held more serious integrative potential than weak institutions like the Council of Europe.

PC did not miss the opportunity for linkage as a tool to exploit the UK Government's negative bargaining on European union. As one nationalist confidently remarked,

“a Welsh Government would gladly enter into discussion and negotiation over a European Customs Union, with due regard to the requirements of the nation of Wales and her people”.<sup>34</sup>

The lack of self-government dented such confidence, and undermined the previous policy of *positive linkage*, particularly as the party crossed the threshold between broad support for European union to face the reality of institutional Europe. The fact that Wales was locked out of the European Community in 1957 but remained locked into the United Kingdom brought PC to reinterpret the political opportunity structure of European integration and develop a new approach and strategy to linkage.

#### **4. Plaid Cymru And Europe Since the Establishment of the European Community**

Despite its earlier pro-European traditions PC turned against the European Community in the years following its creation in 1957. Welsh exclusion from the EC led to growing disquiet, and then to complete opposition to Welsh membership. In the early 1960s PC expressed concern at Welsh exclusion from the Common Market negotiations undertaken by the British Government.<sup>35</sup> Such exclusion was not surprising given Wales' subordinate status within Britain. PC's answer was to develop and deploy *negative linkage*, complaining of exclusion and non-

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33. *The Welsh Nation*, March 1957, p.4.

34. *Ibid.*

35. “The Coal Industry and International Economic Relationships”, resolution no.5, Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1961.

representation in contrast to the more positive linkage practiced between 1925 and 1957 which sought to talk up the role of Wales as an international political actor seeking to participate in European politics. In the pre-1957 period nationalist support for a united Europe did not envisage or suggest any particular institutional form. It was more of a positive value orientation, a belief in the efficacy of European union rather than a detailed policy. That PC had no more than a vague idea about the construction of Europe was not surprising. It was a small oppositional party with no nationally elected members, and little experience or function in national and international politics. In the 1950s, when European integration took an institutional form, it was still a micro-party. The form and content of European union was decided by others. The influence of the institutional structure of Europe in turning PC against the EC is unclear. The reality of Welsh exclusion seems to be the dominant factor in the immediate post-1957 period, though other factors were to develop in the 1960s and 1970s.

PC's early response to the perceived weakness of Wales' position in Europe was to propose a common front with other small nations and minorities.<sup>36</sup> The establishment of the European Community had made co-operation more pressing than it had been in the 1950s with the International Congress. However, the development of a new period of transnational regionalism had to wait until the 1970s and British accession to the European Community.

PC's position on Europe hardened as the 1960s progressed. The previous strategy of positive linkage was seldom deployed, though occasionally given an airing in certain circumstances. It was replaced by a mixture of outright and qualified opposition to the EC, which were essentially negative linkages, and by political ambiguity. Such ambiguity was because of Welsh exclusion from negotiations and the party's view that Wales could not be committed on the outcome of UK-EC negotiations until it received separate representation within the Community.<sup>37</sup> Ambiguity also derived from the fact that PC always wanted to hold out the prospect of Welsh membership of the EC if the price was right in negotiations. Such qualified opposition was shared by the SNP. It was as if the party felt that the European Community would make Wales an offer it couldn't refuse in any post-independence context. Such ambiguity was even sustained during the referendum campaign in 1975, in spite of the party's commitment to unqualified opposition to the EC. Ambiguity played a key role in maintaining party unity in this period, as the internal

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36. "Co-operation with Small Nations", resolution No.4, Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1962.

37. Butt Phillip, *Op. cit.*, p.182.



cleavages of the party prevented it from adopting a fundamental attack on the Community in pursuit of maximum political and economic sovereignty for Wales.

*The Development of Negative Linkage*

In 1969 the party's European policy began to develop a more consistent theme. The party conference at Aberystwyth expressed opposition to UK membership of the EC, regarding all negotiations and discussions as inadequate if Wales lacked representation.<sup>38</sup> The conference noted the potentially negative economic impact of the EC on Welsh agriculture, and expressed the expectation that the political attitudes of the six EC countries would lead them to develop as a monolithic satellite of the United States.<sup>39</sup> This new theme was to be developed in future by anti-EC activists within the party as part of a leftist agenda that identified the EC as a security community produced by the cold war and US sponsorship.

As an alternative to the European Community the party reaffirmed its proposal for a UK customs union following Welsh independence, which had been proposed at conference in 1960. This rather curious external support system suggests that PC had a very limited view of self-government which fell well short of the classic notion of independence. The proposal sought to develop economic integration within the United Kingdom, in the context of Scottish and Welsh independence, and secure continued free trade within the UK and access to the English market for Welsh products. In choosing the UK over the EC, the party adopted a rather conservative position, aimed at deflecting criticism of separatism. The proposal included several aspects that resembled the EC institutions. PC called for intergovernmental structures to administer the customs union, with a common executive and interministerial conferences.<sup>40</sup>

PC's efforts to focus on the problems of UK membership of the Community were aided by an omission in policy by the Welsh Office in 1970. During the Crowther-Hunt (later Kilbrandon) hearings on constitutional reform - the Royal Commission on the Constitution established by the Labour Government - it emerged that the Welsh Office, which had been established in 1964 as the territorial bureaucracy for

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38. "Wales and Europe", resolution No.16 and amendment, Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1969.

39. *The Welsh Nation*, November, 1969, p.2.

40. "British Customs Union", resolution A, Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1960; Gwynfor Evans, *Self-Government for Wales and a Common Market for the Nations of Britain*.

Wales, had made no assessment of the effects of EC membership on the Welsh economy.<sup>41</sup> This administrative lapse occurred in spite of ongoing negotiations between the European Commission and the UK Government. It suggests some failure at the level of the Welsh Office, but also indicates its status within the UK Government structure. Had the bureaucracy been consulted on the negotiations then an assessment of the policy impact of the EC would have been required. In admitting that it was unprepared, the Welsh Office gave the nationalists the opportunity to make capital from the fact that Wales had no role or input in the negotiating process. If the Welsh Office was not advising the UK Government on Welsh interests during entry negotiations then no one was. The publication of the Government White Paper on UK membership brought further criticism from PC.<sup>42</sup> The Government's economic assessment of membership treated the UK economy as an undifferentiated whole, ignoring regional economic differentials.<sup>43</sup> This inadequacy brought the party to call for a separate White Paper for Wales and Welsh membership of the Community.<sup>44</sup>

Despite its political opposition, and efforts to exploit weaknesses in the case for UK membership of the EC, PC still asserted that it was a pro-European party. During the House of Commons debates on accession to the Community in 1967 the party leader, Gwynfor Evans stated

"I am not against the idea of the Common Market. I am saying that if we go in in our present position the effect on Wales could be devastating".<sup>45</sup>

Such ambiguity persisted in the 1970s, along with the dual position that expressed support for European union but not for the European Community as the institutional manifestation of that union. PC's view of Europe moved towards a *Europe of the Regions* rather than nation-states as the best option for Welsh involvement,<sup>46</sup> though the door was still open to independent Welsh membership of the EC "if Wales had her own government, if she were in the Common Market as a separate political entity".<sup>47</sup> This bargaining position implied that EC membership could be beneficial if self-government brought a Welsh government to negotiate with the EC, on the

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41. *The Welsh Nation*, February 1970, p.6.

42. "Britain and the European Communities: An Economic Assessment", Cmnd 4289, HMSO, London, February 1970.

43. *The Welsh Nation*, March 1970, p.1.

44. Gwynn Matthews, *Wales and the European Common Market*.

45. Gwynfor Evans, *Voice of Wales - The Parliamentary Speeches of Gwynfor Evans*, p.29.

46. *Ibid.*

47. *Ibid.*, p.26.

assumption that this would lead to favourable concessions for Welsh industry and agriculture.

In agriculture, PC presented a number of issues that arose from the absence of any Welsh role in EC negotiations, building upon the differences between Welsh and UK agriculture. The distinctiveness of Welsh agriculture was often deployed as an argument for autonomy, especially when considered in the EC context. Nationalists in Scotland gave similar emphasis to the fishing industry, whose role in the 1974-9 period was enhanced by the fact that nine of the eleven SNP MPs represented constituencies with fishing interests. The Welsh agricultural industry was seen to be more dependent on subsidies and deficiency payments than the UK industry, and PC expected that the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) would bring particular problems in this area in the absence of transitional relief for Welsh farmers.<sup>48</sup> PC expected that CAP would bring an end to subsidies for hill-farming, and also anticipated problems in the livestock industry through reduced subsidies and increased food costs for animals as the CAP structure increased cereal prices.<sup>49</sup> The strength of hill-farming in Welsh-speaking areas made the CAP issue a cultural and economic priority for PC, which sought to retain employment in the industry to prevent rural - and linguistic - depopulation. The provisions of the Mansholt Plan to encourage the amalgamation of agricultural landholdings were seen as another threat to Welsh farmers, penalising the structure of the industry and its small farm basis. PC again linked this situation to Welsh autonomy, optimistically declaring that independent Welsh negotiations would have brought more favourable terms.

In addition to drawing attention to Welsh interests in the negotiations, PC's approach to Europe in the early 1970s focused upon the domestic and European contexts. Within the UK system PC sought assurances that accession would not restrict the transfer of government functions from London to Wales, and that UK regional policy would not be undermined by the Community.<sup>50</sup> PC pointed out to the Community that the constitutional arrangements of the UK were fluid, and any future Welsh Government could not be held to the terms being negotiated by the UK Government.<sup>51</sup> The party also proposed that referenda should be conducted in all territories of the UK on the subject of EC accession, and the suspension of negotiations by the Government until the public had decided upon the principle of

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48. Matthews, *Op. cit.*, p.13.

49. *Ibid.*

50. "Wales and the European Community", resolution No.20, Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1970.

51. *Ibid.*

membership itself. This 'federal' referenda required all four of the nations of the UK to support membership, after which each would have separate representation in EC negotiations, with a second batch of referenda required to approve the outcome of the negotiations.<sup>52</sup> The *secession potential* of such referenda was clear.

The idea of dual referenda was to exploit the consensus position adopted by the major parties on European accession, which pursued the orthodox parliamentary route to ratify British membership. With no commitment to the Westminster system and parliamentary sovereignty, PC could adopt the more populist approach of calling for referenda. Two reasons for the dual referenda strategy were evident. First, there was some expectation that a referendum would weaken the ties between voters and the main parties, through offering the electorate a free vote on an issue which they could cast against their party. Second, the approach enabled significant political linkage between autonomy and Europe, particularly through the form of the referenda. Both were attempts to drive a cleavage between the Welsh and UK electorates, to be exploited in future to increase support for autonomy.

PC also began to question the role of the European Community in the international political system, in leftist terms consistent with some academic critiques of the EC.<sup>53</sup> PC did not share the view that EC enlargement was an aid to integration in Europe. Rather the EC's close relationship to the United States would ensure that Eastern Europe would perceive it as a developing political and military threat, and use that threat as a justification for increasing their nuclear and conventional weapons.<sup>54</sup> This leftist theme was extended to the party's view of the EC as a whole, as the 1971 conference stated

"the Common Market is a club of old imperial and capitalist countries and it is not a club into which we would wish to see Wales dragged".<sup>55</sup>

PC was also critical of the institutions of the EC. The fact that the European Assembly was a nominated body, and that the European Commission was not responsible to it, was held to be unsatisfactory. PC did not, however, favour direct elections to the Assembly to democratise it, as that was seen to undermine the role of national legislatures - though PC seems to have ignored the fact that this meant Westminster rather than Cardiff. The party had a rather contradictory position here,

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52. *Ibid.*

53. Johan Galtung, *The European Community: A Superpower in the Making*.

54. "Europe - The White Paper", resolution A (v), Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1971.

55. *Ibid.*

on the one hand complaining of the lack of democracy within EC institutions and on the other denying the efficacy of direct elections to redress the problem. PC also criticised the allocation of votes within the European Council, favouring one vote per country instead of votes being distributed according to the size of the country. A suspicion of large states was evident here, along with the desire to achieve formal sovereign equality regardless of size, just as it was in the 1920s and 1930s. The economic agenda of the EC also found little favour with PC. The absence of a Community regional policy, and the perception of integration having negative effects upon labour mobility in Wales were part of the reason for this. There was a fear that increased labour mobility in the EC would mean further depopulation in Wales, as local people emigrated to enhance their employment prospects. This unemployment exit was also seen to provide a rational disincentive to the development of job creation schemes in Wales by the Government and EC, who would prefer to allow the free market in labour in the Community tackle unemployment rather than intervene in regional economies.<sup>56</sup> Economic integration was also seen to affect the language situation through freedom of movement, described above, and the lack of regional policy to offset this pressure.

In the cultural domain, PC was critical of the government's White Paper on accession for its failure to present the case for Welsh as a Community language, or as a minority language within the EC. The party was also sceptical about the effects of membership on industrial policy. PC did not share the government's optimism that Community membership would generate economic growth. There was concern that Wales would be joining a bounded economic space which would have deterrent effects upon inward investment from countries outside the EC and Europe - such as the USA and Japan - though this concern has been largely reversed through the development of the single market and Welsh success in inward investment in the 1980s and 1990s. The Community was also seen to offer little to the Welsh coal and steel industries beyond external controls on production and pricing that Wales would be unable to influence.

The 1971 position of PC was also notable for the fact that the party abandoned ambiguity and detailed the issues which would need to be settled in order to satisfy the conditions for Welsh entry into the EC. Plaid Cymru stressed that it was seeking to strengthen relations between Wales and Europe, but did not want to do so from a position of weakness. The party expressed the hope that the Community itself did not develop structures which could preclude any future Welsh membership of the

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<sup>56</sup>. *Ibid.*

EC through threatening Welsh autonomy and interests. The nationalists declared that they wanted to gain assurances from the EC that it would not operate economic policies which would have a negative effect on Wales because of its peripheral geographical and economic situation, and that the EC would seek to develop a wider European union that embraced Eastern Europe and was not wholly oriented towards the United States.<sup>57</sup> This demand was unrealistic - in fact the idea that a minor party in a region of a prospective member state could make demands was unrealistic - but illustrated the party's commitment to a broader Europe than that embraced by the EC.

Once UK entry was assured PC sought to redefine its goals in relation to the European Community. Membership was no longer an issue as the UK joined the organisation in 1973 through becoming a signatory of the Treaty of Rome. As membership was a *fait accompli* the party turned to defending Welsh interests within the EC, detailing the party's attitude to future membership in the post-independence context and developing a bargaining position on EC issues. PC committed itself to holding a referendum on membership after self-government, and to campaigning against membership in that situation if the Community showed signs of developing as a unitary state or establishing a common defence force.<sup>58</sup> In the interim, PC committed itself to campaigning for Wales to retain its allocation of two members in the European Assembly in face of direct elections - this claim moved upwards as the Assembly's planned membership expanded - and for the Welsh Office to establish a lobbying office in Brussels.<sup>59</sup> This latter suggestion had to wait until 1992 to be fulfilled.

Europe provided another opportunity for the nationalists in 1973 in the form of political co-operation with continental regionalist parties. PC was invited to the conference of *Strollad Ar Vro* (SAV), the Breton regionalist party, to participate in discussions on the development of a common European forum.<sup>60</sup> PC involved itself in these co-operative efforts - propelled and facilitated by UK membership of the EC - and established the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations with other regionalist parties. This acted as a lobbying and publicity office for regional parties in Brussels, seeking to raise the profile of the stateless nations within the EC.<sup>61</sup>

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57. *Ibid.*

58. "Europe", resolution No.23, Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1973.

59. *Ibid.*

60. Letter from Yann Fouere of Strollad Ar Vro to Plaid Cymru, 1st October 1973: PC archives, National Library of Wales, *Op. cit.*

61. Minutes of a meeting to establish the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations, 10th October 1973, *Ibid.*

This organisation only involved one other major regional party, the Basque PNV in exile, which was not even part of a member state of the EC. The remaining members of the Bureau were microregionalist parties. SAV itself was small, a characteristic shared by the *Mouvement Socialiste Occitan*, *Mouvement ELSA* from Alsace and Mebyon Kernow from Cornwall. These were political parties, however, rather than cultural movements or economic lobbies. This ensured that the Bureau did not share a similar internal fragmentation to the International Congress of European Communities and Regions.

The period between the Plaid Cymru conference in 1973 and the referendum on continued British membership of the EC in 1975 was a very successful one for PC. It included two general elections in 1974, which brought considerable electoral success for nationalists in Scotland and Wales. Though PC's overall vote declined in 1974 compared to 1970, the increased geographical concentration of its support brought two seats in February 1974 with 10.7% of Welsh votes, and then three seats in October 1974 with 10.8%. In 1970 PC had gained 11.5%, its electoral peak in general elections, yet it had gained no seats. The marked improvement in representation gave PC a new profile in the House of Commons and a high degree of political visibility in Wales.

### *The European Referendum 1975*

The growth of the party coincided with renewed opportunities for linkage on the autonomy and European questions afforded by the referendum on British membership. The period in advance of the vote nearly produced a significant change in the party's outlook on the EC that would have changed its behaviour during the referendum. The party conference in Aberystwyth in early 1975, which had been held over from 1974 because of the October general election, almost committed the party to abandoning opposition to the EC and supporting continued membership through the adoption of a policy supportive of a *Europe of the Regions*. This proposal was rejected as the party stuck to its hardline policy of opposition. The conference did reveal cleavages on Europe that were similar to those found in other parties, though with different edges. Part of the compromise worked out at the conference between pro and anti-Europeans involved the party's response to the government's renegotiated package on accession.

PC's pro-European MP, Dafydd Wigley, wanted the party to delay the adoption of a definitive stance on EC membership until these renegotiations were completed and made public.<sup>62</sup> Wigley sought to enlist the party's support for a proposal to delay any decision until a special conference on the EC and referendum strategy, but this was rejected at Aberystwyth. The party preferred to commit itself to a clearer oppositional stance on the EC, at the instigation of the party's anti-EC MP, Dafydd Elis Thomas, who wanted an unequivocal policy on the EC to contrast with the divisions of the other parties on Europe. Such clarity would have enabled PC to begin campaigning for the referendum immediately. The idea of the special conference on the EC remained however, as part of the compromise between the opposing forces on the European question.

The pre-referendum conference also considered the changes that would have to be implemented at the Community level for the party to support membership. Some of these took the shape of impossible demands. The conference called on the Community to reject any military role, abandon the aim of becoming a unitary state, and allow member states to exercise full control of their own socio-economic development. These issues of *high politics* cannot be considered as bargainable. The new hardened position aligned the party with the left of the Labour Party, giving it a competitive entry into the Labour strongholds of South Wales.<sup>63</sup> This was part of the rationale for the strategy on Europe itself.<sup>64</sup> This left the question of party unity. The conference passed a resolution imposing party discipline upon its MPs, insisting that they must follow party policy in the House of Commons.<sup>65</sup> This development was seen as a consequence of the election of three MPs and the formation of a parliamentary group rather than an effort to ensure cohesion on the European question, though it is notable that it was passed in close proximity to debate upon an issue that divided the party's MPs and activists.

The conference revealed a triple cleavage on the European question within the party. Some members were clearly pro-EC and favoured independent membership for Wales; some totally opposed the EC from a socialist or Galtungian perspective, viewing it as a capitalist superstate, or from a fundamentalist nationalist perspective that was fearful of the erosion of Welsh sovereignty; a third group was keen to develop a regionalist position that would facilitate maximum decentralisation but also European union. These cleavages re-emerged in the shape of the *Independence in*

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62. *The Western Mail*, 6th January 1975, p.9.

63. David Butler and Uwe Kitzinger, *The 1975 Referendum*, p.154.

64. Interview with Dafydd Elis Thomas, House of Commons, London, 11th December 1991.

65. *The Western Mail*, 7th January 1975, p.7.



*Europe* and *Europe of the Regions* positions in the late 1980s which will be discussed below.

The reaffirmation of opposition in 1975 was aided by a series of study papers produced by the party's research group dealing with the position of Wales in the likelihood of continued UK membership of the Community.<sup>66</sup> This analysis was produced as part of the PC referendum campaign and can be regarded as "an objective" look at the Common Market by anti-Marketeers. The research involved a sectoral economic study of the EC impact on Wales, and also dealt with the political questions related to the Community's future development, the alternative routes to European union, the opportunities for Welsh co-operation with countries outside the EC, and a detailed assessment of the structure and attractions of the European Free Trade Area (EFTA).

PC expressed a strong preference in favour of the EFTA organisation. It favoured its looser trading structure and limited aims rather than the more centralised and political ambitions of the EC. The membership of EFTA was also an attraction to PC, with a predominance of social democratic and neutral countries within the organisation. Thus the EFTA was not only attractive in its economic goals, it was also politically correct. The EFTA was presented as the best structure for Welsh co-operation in Europe, though the party also favoured negotiating associate membership of the European Coal and Steel Community.<sup>67</sup> Choosing EFTA was intended to make the party appear less isolationist in the referendum campaign, and allow PC to connect the Welsh economy to an alternative trading bloc. The reliance on EFTA was curious, as it invested the organisation with a degree of stability and strength that it lacked. Its stability was questionable as a number of countries had exited from the organisation or sought to leave. Its largest member, Britain, had sought to exit in 1961 along with Denmark, and again in 1967, before finally leaving with Denmark and Ireland in 1973. Norway also sought to leave EFTA to join the EC in 1961 and 1973, though this latter attempt was prevented by a referendum.<sup>68</sup>

The *Europe of the Regions* position was also considered and dismissed in the party's referendum study papers. The fact that Wales could join the EC and seek to change it from the inside in conjunction with other peripheral ethnic groups was not taken seriously. It was dismissed as a 'romantic' and 'idealised' attempt to replace the reality of the Community. Such regionalism was not seen to be possible in the

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66. Plaid Cymru Research Group, *The Referendum Study Papers*.

67. *The Welsh Nation*, 12-18th December 1975, p.1.

68. Brigid Laffan, *Integration and Co-operation in Europe*, p.12.

EC of 1975. The study proposed that the pursuit of a *Europe of the Regions* would be best made outside the EC rather than inside, building upon such as the Celtic League to create an alternative political community.<sup>69</sup>

The referendum campaign itself brought varied opportunities for the nationalists. Some of its efforts in the campaign brought a cautious response from its political competitors in spite of being on the same side in the referendum. PC sought to involve themselves in the 'Wales Get Britain Out Campaign', the regional umbrella organisation for anti-EC campaigners, but received a mixed response. PC's efforts to get the organisation to develop a more independent campaign in Wales was thwarted by other members though it did succeed in having the group adopt a more distinctive regional campaign rather than a replication of the UK campaign. The party's General Secretary was elected to the organisation's executive committee, and some joint campaigning was developed.<sup>70</sup>

The Labour government's initial decision to make the referendum subject to a national count led PC to declare that it would run its own parallel referendum. The party's MPs also threatened to vote against the referendum bill in parliament, unless a separate count for Wales was granted. Though PC supported the referendum in principle it was of little strategic value to the party if national counting arrangements were instituted. The party set about examining the prospects for its own referendum,<sup>71</sup> but the government came to accept the principle of regional counting arrangements which made such a measure unnecessary. PC had voted against the bill initially to demonstrate its opposition to the counting arrangements, but now found itself free to support it. In the months leading up to the referendum PC sent a delegation to the European Commission to have talks with EC representatives. It also used this visit to announce its formal co-operation with the Bretons in the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations.<sup>72</sup> Both can be considered as attempts to boost the transnational role of PC and ward off accusations of isolationism during the referendum campaign, though the delegation idea had been developed well before there was any prospect of a referendum.

The settlement of the counting arrangements and the belief that the Government's renegotiations had not altered the unattractiveness of EC membership led PC to

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69. Michael Geddes, "Wales and Regional Development in the EEC": in *The Referendum Study Papers*, p.9.

70. *The Western Mail*, 15th February 1975, p.5.

71. *The Western Mail*, 28th February 1975, p.6.

72. *The Western Mail*, 26th February 1975, p.2.

abandon its plans for a special conference on the EC. The party's National Council agreed to make opposition more unequivocal. The renegotiated package enabled the PC parliamentary group to calculate the effect of the CAP on Welsh farming, a concern shared by the Farmer's Union of Wales. This meeting laid out three main reasons for the party's opposition to the EC: the Community's pursuit of political union, the proposal for an elected European Parliament, and the lack of adequate regional policies.<sup>73</sup> Two of these three issues were bargainable, leaving some room for compromise. The opposition to direct elections was made at a time when PC was attempting to gain representation in the nominated Assembly. Labour members had boycotted the European Assembly in protest at the terms of membership, leaving several seats vacant. When PC tried to apply to fill one of the seats it was blocked by the Labour Party, leaving Wales unrepresented in the Assembly. This failure did not bring an end to hopes of European representation. The party was soon involved in discussions with Fianna Fail over the formation of a political group in the Assembly,<sup>74</sup> though to no avail. PC remained unrepresented in the European Assembly, operating through the Bureau rather than the parliament.

PC campaigned vigorously during the referendum on various economic and political themes, though its pro-EC MP kept out of the campaign in deference to the position agreed at the 1975 conference. Despite unequivocal opposition to the EC, the party still employed some ambiguity in order to keep pro-Europeans happy. Such ambiguity was calculated to aid the party. The PC campaign slogan "Europe Yes, EEC No" was one illustration. The party's campaign was further confused by the proposal from the party's former leader, Saunders Lewis, for voters to abstain from the referendum to avoid the twin evils of supporting a centralised EC or voting against European co-operation.<sup>75</sup>

The PC campaign did not convince Welsh voters to leave the EC, nor did it succeed in driving a cleavage between the Welsh and UK electorates. The referendum result was a disappointment for the party. All of the Welsh Counties voted for continued membership, including the PC heartland of Gwynedd which delivered a 70.6% vote for the EC. Wales as a whole supported the EC by 66.5%, quite close to the UK average of 67.2%. The differential achieved by linkage was minimal. The defeat caused some problems for PC, and a rapid change in strategy in light of the result. As the party had connected the issues of autonomy and Europe during the campaign

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73. *The Western Mail*, 8th April 1975, p.9.

74. Senator Brian Lenihan of Fianna Fail held meetings with the SNP and Plaid Cymru on this issue; *The Western Mail*, 1st May 1975, p.5.

75. Balsom and Madgewick, *Op. cit.*, p.78.

through negative linkage, it was free to put some distance between the two issues as a consequence of the result. PC attempted immediate *delinkage*, pointing out that voters saw Europe and self-government as two distinct issues, and that defeat for the party on Europe did not mean that self-government was also unpopular.<sup>76</sup>

### *Post-Referendum Attitudes*

PC did revise its attitude and strategy to the EC in light of the referendum, though policy was not to change substantially until the 1980s. The party accepted the result of the referendum - given its unambiguous nature in Wales it had little choice - and developed a modified position. PC's response to continued British membership was to return to bargaining mode. The party's representatives met with the Belgian Prime Minister, Leo Tindemans, in July 1975, to participate in consultations over the inquiry on European Union. Just weeks after the referendum, the party presented the case for "full national status for Wales inside the European Communities" to the Tindemans inquiry.<sup>77</sup> This new approach continued in the post-referendum period, with PC campaigning for national rights in the EC. The party called for increased Welsh representation in the European Assembly and for national status with a complement of ten members in the parliament, nine members on the Economic and Social Committee, the right to nominate Commissioners, membership of the Council of Ministers, and amendments to the Treaty of Rome.<sup>78</sup> There was an element of bargaining here, but it was essentially the demand for *Independence in Europe*. The referendum result had the effect of freeing the party's pro-Europeans, who elaborated a very different future for Wales in Europe than during the referendum.

PC also began to link the European question to discussions on devolution taking place in Wales and at Westminster. PC argued for direct links between a Welsh Assembly and the European institutions, increased regional policy measures to aid Welsh economic development, and frequently repeated its demand for better Welsh representation in the European Assembly. The party was not satisfied with the constituency allocations for direct elections which only gave four seats to Wales. It argued that fairer representation would only be achieved through self-government, which would increase its seats in the European Parliament to a size similar to Ireland.<sup>79</sup>

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76. *The Western Mail*, 9th June 1975, p.5.

77. "Memorandum presented by Plaid Cymru to M. Tindemans, Prime Minister of Belgium, During his Inquiry into European Union, Cardiff 2nd July 1975", Plaid Cymru, Cardiff, 1975.

78. "European Economic Community", resolution No.3 and "European Social Fund", resolution No.4, Plaid Cymru National Conference, October 1975.

79. *The Welsh Nation*, 19th to 25th March 1976, p.1.

The party's position on the European Community did enter a new period of flexibility after the referendum, though it still appeared confused. The new flexibility was partly produced by direct elections. These were to provide a new issue, and a new electoral process, for the development of linkage. Despite its earlier opposition to direct elections,<sup>80</sup> the party decided to contest the elections and use them in its electoral strategy for autonomy.<sup>81</sup> This, in contrast to the party's involvement with the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations, opened up a more convincing second front for Welsh autonomy, adding an electoral approach to what had previously been a lobbying strategy. Though the party committed itself to participating in the elections, it wished to play down their significance for the EC. The party did not believe that direct elections in themselves would play an important role in the democratisation of the Community, instead they might provide grounds for the development of a unitary political structure for Europe. Agreement to participate did not blind PC to the role of the elected parliament in the construction of a European 'superstate'.

The first direct elections in 1979 took place during a difficult period for Plaid Cymru. The referendum on devolution had been a disaster for the nationalists with only 20.8% support for a Welsh parliament. In PC's Gwynedd heartland only 34.4% had supported devolution.<sup>82</sup> This result, followed by the slight decline in the party's vote in the subsequent general election to 8.1%, combined with the loss of a seat, left the party both disillusioned and exhausted. The third electoral test in June, the European elections, was consequently greeted by minimal campaigning. The result was, however, encouraging for PC. The party gained 11.7%, its highest ever national share in Wales.

In the 1980s PC's dual position of opposition and bargaining on the EC was maintained. Though the party was feeling its way towards a new policy, negativism was still evident. The opponents of the EC within the party continued to publicise the costs and failings of the Community. The EC was blamed for having brought job losses in the Welsh manufacturing sector,<sup>83</sup> and producing inferior standards of living to the EFTA economies.<sup>84</sup> But as the 1980s progressed the shape of the Community began to change, with the enlargement of 1981 and the proposed

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80. Plaid Cymru National Conference 1975, *Op.cit.*

81. "Direct Elections to the Assembly of the European Communities", resolution No.1 (ii), Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1977.

82. Balsom, *Op. cit.*, 1990.

83. *The Welsh Nation*, February 1982, p.8.

84. *The Welsh Nation*, August 1982, p.8.

Mediterranean expansion in 1986. Enlargement changed the balance of the Community, making EFTA less attractive, and producing policies within the EC that PC found more attractive.

*A New European Policy*

There was some evidence of changing attitudes towards the party's policy on Europe in advance of the 1983 conference in Treorci. *Independence in Europe* was promoted as a means to avoid the economic difficulties of separation.<sup>85</sup> The conference itself focused upon three different positions: one explicitly opposed to the EC, one implicitly supportive, and one a restatement of an earlier ambiguous position. The anti-Community proposal sought to equate the party strategy of contesting European elections with that of Westminster, with electoralism bringing a dilution of the party's aims and objectives. A second proposal suggested that the party should seek membership of the Confederation of Socialist Parties (CSP) of the European Parliament, with the intention of working to reform the European Community from the inside.<sup>86</sup> PC had declared itself a socialist party in 1981, and affiliated to the Socialist International. It was also a member of the European Free Alliance of regionalist parties, having just become a full member in 1983. Membership of EFA precluded that of the CSP, though the party should not have anticipated a warm welcome from the socialists as PC brought no MEPs to the group and was in electoral competition with one of the CSP's members. The political practicalities of this proposal were dubious but it does show the intention of working within the institutions of the Community.

The third position debated, and accepted, at the party conference involved a lengthy condemnation of the policy failures of the EC and the lack of Welsh representation. It proposed that EC membership be put to a referendum after self-government, without any political recommendation on the issue from Plaid Cymru.<sup>87</sup> This position was essentially a reaffirmation of the policy in 1970, calling for two referenda on EC membership. This policy was adopted but was not to remain in effect for very long. It was a staging post towards a pro-EC position, as the party re-examined the political opportunities offered by a changing Community.

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85. Minutes of the General Assembly of the European Free Alliance, Eupen, Belgium, 22nd-23rd April 1983.

86. "European Common Market", resolution No.11 (iii), Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1983.

87. *Ibid.*

Though PC's policy in 1983 was essentially only a restatement, the party had not retained the hostile position from 1975. Events within the Community and changed attitudes within the party provided the context for a new position. The crisis in the EC in 1983-4 was seen as an opportunity by PC. Dissatisfaction with the CAP, the EC budget and the negotiations relating to the Mediterranean enlargement all cast a shadow over the Community. Instead of seizing on these developments to campaign against continued membership, PC used them to argue for a more decentralised EC, reflecting the attitudes of its partners in the European Free Alliance.

The expectation of increasing the party's share of the vote and gaining representation at the European elections was also a factor in generating a more positive approach to Europe. Something more positive was required than merely trying to capitalise on anti-EC feeling. The result was a policy change in advance of the European elections, that had not been put to party conference, which proposed a *Europe of the Regions* position for the party.<sup>88</sup>

This position was more consistent with the party's decentralist and pro-European traditions than outright opposition. PC's appeal in the election was confused however. The argument for self-government received a considerable boost during the European election campaign through the strong stance of the Irish Government over milk quotas. The new CAP regime for milk discussed in 1984 was seen to be unfavourable to Irish dairy farmers, and the government fought a vigorous campaign to avoid cuts in milk production. This allowed PC to show the ability of small countries to defend their interests in the EC, and the efficacy of the national veto to defend Welsh agricultural interests if the country achieved independent status within the Community. Such nation-statism was not consistent with the party's new policy. PC was committed to the regionalisation of the Community, exploiting the issue of the veto meant that they were also arguing for *Independence in Europe*.

Despite embracing the *Europe of the Regions*, PC maintained its demand for full Welsh representation within the Community. There were considerable inconsistencies here. Regions did not have the right to nominate European Commissioners, attend and vote at sessions of European Council or receive a national complement of MEPs, but these remained high on PC's agenda for Europe.<sup>89</sup> This dichotomy persisted since 1984, accompanied by bargaining demands consistent with full national status. Confused though this was, it should

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88. *The Welsh Nation*, March 1984, p.8.

89. Plaid Cymru, *A Voice for Wales in Europe*, European Election Manifesto, 1984.

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not obscure the fact that the party committed itself to support for the European Community. Acceptance of the EC did bring some internal dissent within the party and the formation of an ultra-fundamentalist group outside PC. This group, the Covenanters, remained small, with no members who had been prominent in the party. This small split was confined to those who had other policy differences with the party than Europe.

The 1984 European elections were reasonably successful for PC but marked no significant advance. It gained 12% of the vote in Wales, more than in 1979 and significantly above the party's general election average. PC did not win any seats, however, and only managed fourth place in each of the Welsh constituencies. Though the party was in a healthier state than at the last European elections in 1979, it committed few resources to the election campaign. The European elections were still clearly regarded as inferior to general elections. The party had sought to address this problem informally in advance of the 1984 elections. It had been proposed that the party's two MPs resign their seats in the House of Commons and contest the European election, thus redefining the importance of Brussels vis-a-vis Westminster.<sup>90</sup> This proposal was not acted upon. It held obvious problems as the party stood to lose its only seats at Westminster and yet still gain no representation in the European Parliament. It was also unclear which seats the two MPs would have hoped to contest. Both came from Northwest Wales, which meant that one would have contested the North Wales seat leaving the other to choose a far less promising constituency. This proposal had its origins in the party's Commission of inquiry in 1981, which had examined PC strategy and organisation. The minority report of the Commission had argued for the party to de-emphasise Westminster elections and promote the local electoral arena in Wales, but was not accepted by the Commission as a whole.<sup>91</sup> The European strategy, if adopted would have meant the party giving the European elections *first order* status, which it later gave to the elections in 1989.

### *The 1989 European Election*

The importance of the European elections was not lost on PC after 1984. PC was to identify the 1989 European elections as offering "a particular opportunity to place the Welsh national question within a European context".<sup>92</sup> This opportunity was enhanced by the fact that PC had gained a third seat in the North Wales constituency at the general election in 1987, and hoped to gain from its geographical concentration

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90. Interview with Dr. Phil Williams, Vice-Chair of Plaid Cymru, 1991.

91. *Report of the Plaid Cymru Commission of Inquiry*.

92. "European Elections", resolution, Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1987.



of support in this region. With three seats in this area, PC expected to have a good chance of winning the seat in 1989. In pursuit of obtaining this seat PC implemented half of its private proposal from 1984. One of the party's MPs, the party leader in fact, stood in the North Wales seat as the best means to promote linkage and achieve electoral success. During the campaign in 1989 PC claimed that it was polling around 20% in Wales and stood to gain the North Wales constituency in a three-way fight with the main parties. The nationalists actually only achieved 12.3% in Wales, and they also failed to win the targetted European seat.

Though PC became the third party in Wales for the first time since 1979 it was the Green Party which made the greatest electoral impact. PC's support only increased by 0.3% between the two European elections, and this marginal improvement was solely due to the party's performance in North Wales. In the other three seats the party's vote fell, with the Greens picking up votes from the nationalists and from the Liberal Democrats. The arrival of the Greens, coupled to Labour's success in styling the European elections as a referendum on Thatcherism, had allowed UK issues and developments to remain more important than Welsh and European questions. PC's agenda was submerged under stronger opposition forces in the shape of the Green wave and the anti-Thatcher tide. Though PC had previously been the recipient of *second order* benefits, the 1989 experience indicated that these occasions could also help main opposition parties and new parties.

The success of the Greens in Wales led PC to look to the development of an electoral alliance with them. The two parties selected joint candidates for by-elections and some constituencies in the 1992 general election. This succeeded in giving PC a fourth seat. The linkage with the Greens had a threefold motivation. First, it was evidence of attempts to develop elements of a post-modern strategy by the party President, Dafydd Elis Thomas, to take PC into the *new politics* agenda of social movements. Second, it was a means for the party to reach out to the English population in Wales. Third, it intended to make PC politics more relevant to non-Welsh speakers, particularly in South Wales. Whether such co-operation would persist was doubtful. Divisions between the parties emanating on the Green side, as well as significant divisions within the Welsh Greens made future prospects for co-operation both limited and unlikely.<sup>93</sup> One development that came from this relationship was the 'Greening' of the PC programme. The party adopted new environmental and economic policies as part of its relationship with the Greens,

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93. Peter Lynch, "Political Co-operation Between Green and Regionalist Parties", unpublished paper, 1993.

which brought PC to support an economic policy for the European Community based upon sustainable economic growth.<sup>94</sup>

*Autonomy In Two Stages*

During the European elections PC presented its dual position of independence for Wales and a *Europe of the Regions*, proposing that the Europe of states would transform itself into a community of decentralised regions.<sup>95</sup> This position was adopted by the party conference in October 1989. Since then PC presented *Independence in Europe* as a short-term approach to achieve self-government, with the longer term aim of accommodating continental demands for regional self-government through the reformation of the EC into a *Europe of the Regions*. This two-step policy used the prospect of *Independence in Europe* as a campaigning tool because it was easily understood and popular amongst voters who favoured devolution.<sup>96</sup> In proposing independence PC was not prepared to accept the institutional status quo of the EC in the same way as the SNP. The party proposed to alter the structure and behaviour of the Community, in common with continental regionalist parties, rather than leave it as “an ad hoc compromise for a limited association of six countries”.<sup>97</sup>

In 1990 PC formally adopted its two-step strategy for autonomy, whilst supporting the continued transfer of power from the nation-state to the European Community.<sup>98</sup> Whilst the SNP concentrated on mapping out a role for Scotland as an independent state in the EC, PC sought to elaborate its two-step strategy by indicating its preferences for the future institutional development of the Community. PC, in common with continental regionalists, proposed the establishment of a second chamber of the European Parliament, comprised of nominated representatives from the parliaments of the nations and regions of the EC. This senate would be accorded powers through the transfer of legislative responsibilities from the European Parliament and other EC institutions. The Senate would also play a role in the nomination and appointment of European Commissioners. PC proposed that regional representatives should be added to the Council of Ministers and that its function should be changed to act as a consultative rather than deliberative body. This new senate was to be established by 1995, with powers to scrutinise and

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94. Plaid Cymru, *Towards 2000: Plaid Cymru's Programme for Wales in Europe*, general election manifesto, 1992, p.14.

95. *The Welsh Nation*, May 1989, p.4.

96. Opinion poll in *The Western Mail*, 12th February 1990, p.5.

97. Phil Williams, *Constitutional Options for Europe*.

98. “Wales and Europe”, resolution, Plaid Cymru National Conference, 1990.

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initiate European legislation, and able to act in tandem with the European Parliament in taking over the powers of the European Council and Commission in the year 2000.

### *Maastricht and Economic And Monetary Union*

PC's proposals for institutional reform seem to have outran party thinking on EMU. The party agreed to support Welsh membership of the European Monetary System (EMS) but avoided committing itself to EMU despite calling for any European Central Bank to be accountable to the European Parliament and Senate. The party seems to have assumed that a Welsh parliament would have discretion in these areas, but did not specify what policy they should follow. Despite this absence, the party conference gave strong support for "Wales in Europe", making it the flagship policy for the 1990s.

PC's position on the Maastricht Treaty and economic integration had similarities to the SNP. There was the strategic goal of linking *subsidiarity* to the principle of decentralisation within states,<sup>99</sup> and the phrase has, as a result, become code for 'home rule'. The party also argued for the Maastricht Treaty to be put to a referendum linked to the constitutional question in Wales, an echo of earlier support for referenda in 1970 and 1975, in spite of expressing the view that the completion of the single market and the EMS had brought *de facto* economic integration. Indeed in late 1991 the party even dismissed the referendum device itself in stating that it was "too late to debate monetary union and a referendum could decide nothing".<sup>100</sup> This attitude was rather inconsistent. PC supported referenda for democratic and political purposes in the past, though this negative attitude was replaced with a more instrumental position on Maastricht, as the party called for dual referenda on home rule and Maastricht.

PC identified the economic challenge of Maastricht but did not appear to comment on the substance of the challenge. Instead it focused upon the effect of economic integration on the Welsh economy. PC wanted the centralising effects of EMU to be offset by increases in the EC's regional and social funds - what has become known as the cohesion fund - accompanied by a process of regional twinning to link weak regional economies to strong one and reduce the disadvantages of those outside the golden triangle. Thus they sought greater European funds as side-payments for

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99. *The Western Mail*, 18th June 1992, p.1.

100. Plaid Cymru, *Wales and Maastricht*, p.2.

economic integration and resources for economic modernisation. Such regional twinning was also part of the economic strategy of the Welsh Office in the early 1990s, with the negotiation of a number of economic and trading agreements with the EC's motor regions; Baden Wurrtemberg, Catalonia, Lombardy and Rhone-Alpes.

Beyond economic policy PC also addressed the issues of agricultural policy and decentralisation in its assessment of the Maastricht Treaty. The party pointed to the levels of decentralisation in other European countries such as Germany and Spain in order to identify Wales with mainstream European regionalisation.<sup>101</sup> This argument was an attempt to deploy the *demonstration effect* and also a means for the party to say that 'history is on our side'. Subsidiarity was one element of this rhetoric, though the party employed other aspects of Euro-speak in arguing that the UK suffered from a 'democratic deficit'.<sup>102</sup>

Similar to the SNP, PC used the occasion of voting on the Maastricht Treaty to seek political concessions from the government. The numerical weakness of the government over amendments to the proposed Committee of the Regions allowed PC to strike a deal with the Conservatives. PC supported the government in exchange for 3-4 Welsh seats on the Committee, with members of the Committee nominated by the parties in Wales. In addition, PC received a commitment that the Secretary of State for Wales would develop an all-Wales forum to discuss Welsh issues outside parliament.<sup>103</sup>

## **5. Conclusion**

Plaid Cymru's evolution on Europe has followed similar contours to the SNP, but the content of this process was very different. The most pronounced divergence occurred in the 1980s as PC moved away from nationalism towards regionalism in response to developments in the EC. This shift altered the party's formerly ambiguous position on self-government, which had been vague and general since the early work of Saunders Lewis, and remained so in discussions on the EC in the mid-1970s. From a general commitment to self-government, the party moved to supporting both *Independence in Europe* and a *Europe of the Regions*. Both are highly specific positions, and also contradictory, though not necessarily understood as such by the mass public. The influence of the party leaders was important in

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101. *Ibid.*, p.6.

102. *Ibid.*

103. *The Western Mail*, 9th March 1993, p.1.

determining European policy with one formulating the early commitment to European union and another affecting the transition to regionalism. The latter has left the current party President, Dafydd Wigley, with the problem of extricating the party from the regionalist aspect of its two-track strategy. Wigley proposed that the party simplify its position on Europe and stress the independence message, in doing so he sought to downplay the regionalist position.<sup>104</sup>

The former party leader, Dafydd Elis Thomas, who guided the party towards regionalism, experienced a complete u-turn on the European issue. In the 1970s Thomas was one of the strongest opponents of EC membership, employing a leftist critique of the Community, but this position changed completely with the development of a 'regionalised' EC. Thomas also talked of the development of post-nationalism in Europe, and the decline of nationalism as a motivating force in politics,<sup>105</sup> which was difficult to maintain when trying to capitalise on the *demonstration effect* of the re-emergence of small nations in Eastern Europe. In the post-national context Thomas identified Wales' future as that of a 'Euro-region' rather than a nation-state, therefore removing the need for secession.<sup>106</sup> Some of the reason for this shift was Thomas' understanding of interdependence and belief in the crisis of the nation-state, which was no longer able to tackle global problems:

"radioactivity is no respecter of national boundaries created by eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Passport control and territorial boundaries cannot control the real drives and energies of our increasingly interdependent, international, interstate mode of living".<sup>107</sup>

This abandonment of the nation-state occurred at a time when the European Community had altered the scope, content and prospect of secession significantly.

European integration, in its contemporary phase not only brought PC to reassess sovereignty but brought it to reassess the notion of self-government and confirmed the party's opposition to outright independence as a long-term goal in the 1980s, taking the party back to Lewis' negative definitions of the nation-state and nationalism in the 1920s. The effect of European integration, and in particular the

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104. Dafydd Wigley remarked that "From now on 'independence in Europe' is the only practical way ahead. Not regionalism, not devolution, not 'home rule'", *Western Mail*, 15th February 1992, p.5.

105. *The Scotsman*, 7th October 1989, p.8.

106. Dafydd Elis Thomas, "Together and Apart", *New Statesman and Society*, 24th April 1992, p.20.

107. Dafydd Elis Thomas, "Socialism and Nationalism for our Times", *Radical Scotland*, No.22, August/September 1986, p.24.

'new' European Community, was to move PC away from broad definitions of self-government towards regionalism. Therefore the overall effect of European integration in the contemporary period was to provide the party with new goals that resembled the continental regionalist tradition. The fact that the policy position of PC was contradictory makes it difficult to cast the 1980s experience as a clear *succession of ends*,<sup>108</sup> though the fact that it defined a clear position on autonomy in contrast to earlier vagueness was notable.

Europe altered the goal of the party from self-government to that of independence followed by regional status. The succession of ends here was part of the escape from nationalism and the orthodox nation-state structure. It was evidence of an element of anti-etatisme within PC more often found amongst continental regionalist parties who favour federalism than the statism of the SNP, the Irish Parliamentary Party or Sinn Fein. The adoption of regionalism left the party needing to define what form of community would succeed the nation-state and also how Welsh self-government would lead to fundamental institutional reform within a European Community in which states remained predominant. The SNP position was essentially a status quo position on the EC itself, whereas PC's agenda and aims involved fundamental changes to the Community. Such transformation was both ambitious and unrealistic. As a strategy it was also weak as its fulfilment was dependent upon external political developments. The post-1992 party leadership was engaged in moving away from this position to emphasise the first part of the two-step strategy and de-emphasise the second. Having affected linkage on the issues of European union and Welsh autonomy since its formation the party needed to achieve partial delinkage to escape the weakness of the regionalist position.

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108. Panebianco, *op. cit.*, p.257.

## 4

# **The Breton Movement and Europe: The Intellectual Linkages Of International Federalism**

“The Europe of tomorrow cannot do without its regional and national forces, in the ethnic sense, nor the fertile contribution that they represent. Moreover, the Europe of regional-states, the Europe of Peoples, will not only bring about their autonomy. For they alone have the capacity to undermine the myth of the nation-state. They alone have the dynamism to achieve the transformation of centralised states into federal states.”<sup>1</sup>

### **1.Introduction**

The Breton movement presents a very different case to that of the SNP and PC as its response to Europe has been distinctive and also more consistent, although it has not been able to make any great political capital out of the issue. The reason for studying the attitudes of the Breton movement to European integration is threefold. First, to examine the prevalence of European linkages across different types of regionalist organisations and contexts. Second, to look at the European attitudes of a set of parties which have made very little impact in electoral politics. And third, to look at the influence of the European dimension in a set of weak, unstable political organisations. The two latter aspects offer considerable contrast with the other cases in this thesis.

The most obvious difference between the Breton movement and those in the UK is that it has a longstanding predisposition towards regionalism and federalism, and a different attitude to national sovereignty than its Scottish and Welsh counterparts. Though it has sought to mobilise on the cleavage of national identity, and language, rather than on a purely territorial basis, it has seldom taken its nationalism to the logic of complete self-determination through secession. Instead, it has proposed regional autonomy and dual federalism. The Breton movement has not sought to create its own state, but to transform political arrangements within France to obtain sovereign equality with the national state and international community.

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1. Yann Fouère, *L'Europe aux Cent Drapeaux*, p.196.

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The development of the Breton movement has also been very different from that of the Flemish movement studied here, though each shared a number of similar experiences. Both movements had their roots in the nineteenth century and mirror Hroch's depiction of the early development of national consciousness through literature and history: the 'scholarly' phase of national movements.<sup>2</sup> Both movements generated political parties in the twentieth century as politics entered the democratic age and franchise extensions ushered in mass politics.<sup>3</sup> Sections of each movement also diverted into collaboration with German occupiers in WW2, a development which delegitimised regionalism in the postwar period, and stalled the formation of new parties until the mid-1950s.

Despite the small size and instability of the Breton movement, it has been subject to a plethora of historical literature on the development of political regionalism in France.<sup>4</sup> These have tended to neglect the European dimension in the movement's development however. Brittany, through France, has been a member of the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Community since their foundation. Such as the Briand declaration of 1930 also brought the question of Europe into political debate very early. The Breton movement's response to European issues will be examined from the Versailles settlement onwards. However, before then it is necessary to detail the development of regionalism in Brittany.

### **2. The Development Of The Breton Movement**

In other case studies in this thesis analysis has been confined to one main political party, though others receive a walk-on part. The Breton case does not share this organisational simplicity. The key defining characteristic of the Breton movement is that it remains just that, a movement, and not a mass movement either. Nicholas has referred to the Breton movement as an "attitude" rather than a "structure".<sup>5</sup> This is an oversimplification, as structures exist. But it does point to the fact that there is no consistent or predominant organisation within the movement. Instead the Breton movement has generated a large number of political parties, groups and economic

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2. Miroslav Hroch, *The Social Preconditions for National Revival in Europe*.

3. See S. M. Lipset and S. Rokkan (eds), *Party Systems and Voter Alignments*.

4. Patricia Elton Mayo, *The Roots of Identity: Three National Movements in Contemporary Europe*; Michel Nicholas, *Histoire du Mouvement Breton - Emsav, Le Séparatisme en Bretagne*; Jack Reece, *The Bretons Against France*.

5. Nicholas, *ibid.*, 1982, p.26.



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and cultural organisations, which is illustrative of the movement's persistent instability.

Since the movement's early mobilisation in the nineteenth century, the Breton context has not produced a social movement organisation or party with any great capacity for organisational survival or expansion. The only contemporary organisation which has endured is the *Union Démocratique Bretonne*. A less stable moderate grouping around Yann Fouère has also endured, though this tendency has generated three different political groups since 1957. Organisational complexity and fragmentation, coupled with weak mobilisation, placed strong constraints upon the Breton's capacity to capitalise upon the political opportunity structure offered by European integration. Despite these problems, a number of parties, including those mentioned above, attempted issue linkage between Europe and the Breton question.

The first significant Breton political organisation was formed in 1898. The *Union Regionaliste Bretonne* (URB) sought administrative devolution for Brittany, and the region's recognition as a distinct community.<sup>6</sup> This organisation was oriented towards aristocratic and rural interests, and the agricultural decline of the region. The traditionalism of the URB led to the emergence of a splinter organisation in 1911: the *Federation Regionaliste Bretonne*. It was animated by the urban bourgeoisie and the professional classes, and sought to escape from the rural agenda to mobilise industrial and commercial groups into forming a modernising coalition for the economic development of the region.<sup>7</sup>

Economic regionalism was joined by more political regionalism in 1911, with the formation of the *Parti National Breton* (PNB). This organisation was of a more radical disposition than its two predecessors, formed by students and young people, and committed to Breton independence and the adoption of Breton as the national language of the new state.<sup>8</sup> This organisation was one of the few examples of separatism within the Breton movement's otherwise strong regionalist tradition.

### **3. The Breton Movement And Europe To 1957**

The European issue had little discernible impact upon the Bretons until the conclusion of the first world war. Elements within the Breton movement had been active in presenting the Breton case to the Versailles conference, but this initiative led

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6. Yann Fouère, *Histoire Résumée du Mouvement Breton*, p.23.

7. Nicholas, 1982, *Op. cit.*, p.67.

8. Fouère, 1977, *Op. cit.*, p.23.

## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

nowhere. Instead, the postwar years saw the development of a more consciously political movement, generated initially by the formation of the *Groupe Regionaliste Breton* (GRB) in 1918. This organisation initially concerned itself exclusively with Breton issues, and limited its attention to domestic appeals. It sought to influence the attitudes of the Breton political and economic elite through its journal *Breiz Atao*. The group was formed by younger Breton activists, influenced by the principle of national self-determination that formed part of Woodrow Wilson's fourteen points, and by involvement in the Versailles process.<sup>9</sup> The group made little political headway beyond publishing a journal, which argued for regional autonomy rather than separation in its early years. Though the GRB was somewhat inspired by the activities of the national movement in Ireland in and after 1916, it generated little activity beyond hitching this *demonstration effect* to the Breton cause.

The most notable aspect of the *Groupe Regionaliste Breton* in the 1920s was its support for pan-Celticism. The group tried to develop political links with Scottish and Welsh nationalists, and present the notion of a Celtic alliance as a meaningful political community.<sup>10</sup> Such inter-Celtic links had developed in the cultural sphere in the nineteenth century between Wales and Brittany - and they later generated such organisations as the Celtic Congress - but the Celtic political project came to little. It can, however, be seen as part of the internationalisation of the Breton movement that led to links with other organisations and national minorities, and the adoption of international federalism.

The activists around the GRB gained great encouragement from the politicisation of the national cleavage in Alsace in the mid-1920s. The position of the minorities in this area brought the development of a Germanophone political party and its suppression by the French state. The *demonstration effect* of the *Elsass Lotharingischer Autonomisten Partei* radicalised the Breton movement,<sup>11</sup> and encouraged the adoption of domestic federalism to address the position of other minority populations in France. The Alsace situation also provided some of the political impetus for the formation of a new political party out of the *Groupe Regionaliste Breton* in 1927. It was this juncture that took the issue of European integration to centre stage within the Breton movement, and brought the first coherent presentation of dual federalism in Breton regionalism.

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9. Olier Mordrel, *L'Idée Bretonne*, p.97.

10. Alain Deniel, *Le Mouvement Breton*, p.73.

11. *Ibid.*, p.75.

## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

### *The Parti Autonomiste Breton*

The *Parti Autonomiste Breton* (PAB) had a short political life in Brittany from 1927-31. However, its strong federalist position proved influential to its successors in the movement. The PAB's position of dual federalism sought the creation of a federal state within the French Republic, which would emancipate both the Bretons and other minorities. The multi-national aspect of the state was seen to make this solution viable. It was the French version of the 'home rule all round' solution presented intermittently in the United Kingdom. However, the PAB also embraced the principle of international federalism: a French federation would be balanced by the development of a European federation based on nations and minorities rather than on centralised states.

In pursuit of its dual goals, the PAB sought to develop organisational links with other national minorities. It attempted to form the Central Council of French National Minorities in partnership with the Alsace and Corsican movements, whilst trying to develop contacts with other European minorities and regionalist movements.<sup>12</sup> The PAB's federalism aimed at transcending nation-states, an early model of the *Europe of the Regions* position, and creating a European union of more natural, ethnic nations.<sup>13</sup> This approach carried with it the explicit belief that European federalism would bring the withering away of the state,<sup>14</sup> an expectation shared with Marxists and contemporary neo-functionalists.

At its second congress at Chateaulin in 1928 the PAB pursued its internationalisation strategy: the congress was attended by representatives from other nationalist and regionalist movements in Ireland, Wales, Flanders, Corsica and Alsace.<sup>15</sup> The Chateaulin congress, and the subsequent meeting in 1929, aimed to develop the PAB's organisation and programme. The party committed itself to political and administrative autonomy for Brittany, rather than independence - which cleared up some of the ambiguity developed amongst the members of *Breiz Atao* and the *Groupe Regionaliste Bretonne* which were more nationalist and vague about federalism<sup>16</sup> - and to European union as a means to develop both a security community and an economic union, with the latter providing the economic grounds and co-operative practices for common security. The PAB also presented federalism

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12. Nicholas, 1982, *Op. cit.*, p.78.

13. Mordrel, *Op. cit.*, p.108.

14. Mordrel, *ibid.*, quoting from a pamphlet written and published by the author in 1922.

15. Fouère, 1977, *Op. cit.*, p.31.

16. Deniel, *Op. cit.*, p.79.

## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

as a mechanism against the state, with any union to be based upon nations not state structures.<sup>17</sup> Dual federalism was seen to offer autonomous solutions for national and regional minorities in France and other countries.

Though the programme and organisation of the PAB was developing, it still faced the obstacle of electoral representation. Though in existence for only two years, the party acted to implement an electoral strategy on two occasions in 1930. This electoral mobilisation brought the party face to face with the barriers of a French electoral system that penalised small parties. The PAB contested a by-election at Guingamp in April 1930, but only received 0.02%, in spite of strong campaigning. PAB also stood a candidate in the legislative elections in October 1930, contesting Rennes-Sud. Here the result was even worse, with only 81 votes achieved from 16084.<sup>18</sup> Such low results established an electoral precedent for the electoralists amongst the Breton movement that was often repeated.

These elections left the PAB financially ruined and politically divided, and the party's internal cleavages on the autonomy issue threatened to split the organisation. The early adoption of an electoral strategy proved costly, with little reward from such an all or nothing approach in a small, weakly institutionalised organisation. Such defeats opened internal cleavages on the core goals of the party, with conflict between its fundamentalists, who sought Breton autonomy as their only goal and disregarded the European dimension, and the federalists, who linked autonomy to the agenda of Europe and international federalism.

These divisions, coupled to the organisation's electoral failure, brought its demise in 1931.<sup>19</sup> This cleavage on 'ends' - with disputes over the efficacy of European union as a political resource for Breton autonomy - may have endured were it not for the experiences of the 1930s and the second world war, which removed this fundamentalist group through its associations with the extreme right. This tendency desired Breton autonomy alone, and did not want to subordinate it to either French or European federalism,<sup>20</sup> and its conflict with the federalists brought the end of the PAB and the development of new Breton organisations based upon the two PAB cleavages.

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17. "Declaration adoptee a Chateaulin, le 18 aout 1929, par le Congres du Parti Autonomiste Breton", in Maurice Duhamel, *La Question Bretonne dans son cadre Européen*.

18. Deniel, *Op. cit.*, p.90.

19. Jack Reece, *Op. cit.*, 1977.

20. Deniel, *Op. cit.*, p.96.

## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

The *Parti National Breton* (PNB) was formed by the fundamentalist wing of the PAB, and displayed rightist and pro-nation-state views. It degenerated into more extreme positions as the 1930s progressed. It contrasted with the more moderate and cross-class *Ligue Fédéraliste de Bretagne*, which developed from the federalist wing of the PAB.<sup>21</sup> The *Ligue* continued the PAB's efforts to develop co-operation and solidarity between national minorities and regional movements in France. The *Ligue* remained a pressure group, however, and failed to develop into either a party or a movement. It continued as an elite forum for several years, publishing a journal on European minorities, but resembled the pre-party phase of the *Groupe Régionaliste Breton* and *Breiz Atao*. The *Ligue* did not establish an exclusive membership or pursue an electoral strategy,<sup>22</sup> it remained as a cross-party group with members from other organisations and parties.<sup>23</sup>

### *Maurice Duhamel and International Federalism*

Though the *Parti Autonomiste Breton* failed as an electoral organisation it succeeded in establishing an enduring linkage between the Breton and European questions. The party, through one of its founders, Maurice Duhamel, managed to develop a coherent and integrated approach to the autonomy issue through international federalism. Duhamel was the main animator behind the party's intellectual linkage, and can be regarded as a *policy entrepreneur*<sup>24</sup> similar to advocates of European linkage in other parties. Duhamel laid out the intellectual case for dual federalism in a PAB pamphlet and book in 1929: the author's approach set the Breton question in international context, and used it to develop an autonomous future for the region that did not require separatism.

Duhamel saw two prominent currents in international politics in this period: the revival of nations and nationalism, and the desire for international agreement and co-operation.<sup>25</sup> These remained important themes for the Bretons and other regionalist movements throughout the century. Duhamel was careful to stress that the nationalism of the Bretons, Alsaciens and Corsicans was not opposed to internationalism, but shared its roots in the experiences of WW1. Duhamel saw that the international community had failed to deal with the problems of national minorities in the post-Versailles years. Despite the creation of new states at the

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21. Nicholas, 1982, *Op. cit.*, p.81.

22. Ian McAllister, "Party Organisation and Minority Nationalism: A Comparative Study in the United Kingdom", *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol.9, 1981, p.238.

23. Deniel, *Op. cit.*, p.143.

24. Kingdon, *Op. cit.*, p.129.

25. Maurice Duhamel, *Le Fédéralisme International et le Réveil des Nationalités*, p.1.

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postwar peace conference, the national question had only achieved a partial resolution. The conference had created states but not always nation-states, multi-national Empires had given way to states which contained plural national groups: for example Slovenes remained in Italy and Hungarians in Romania.

Duhamel saw that national problems remained in Europe, despite the growing tendency towards economic interdependency and international co-operation, that he interpreted as trends towards global economic union.<sup>26</sup> These transnational developments and interdependencies in the economic sphere<sup>27</sup> were creating the grounds, and the necessity, for political union in Europe, in which states would become provinces within a federal union. This would mirror the earlier experiences of small states involved in the nation-building processes that created multi-national states,<sup>28</sup> yet would manage to transcend the nation-state itself. However, in contrast to contemporary neo-functionalists, Duhamel did not see nations as economic entities but as political and cultural constructs, which required a degree of political sovereignty to be retained amongst individual peoples and groups. Territorial federalism was seen as the best way to balance the need for local participation with the twin pressures of political sovereignty and economic union.

Duhamel's prescription for dual federalism promoted the issue of interdependence above that of independence for two main reasons. First, autarky was seen to be unachievable. Duhamel held that economic boundaries could not be frozen in the same way as political boundaries. The interdependent nature of the Breton and French economy required free trade. In the European sphere this meant the pursuit of liberal policies within a European common market, and the reduction of international conflict to economic competition.<sup>29</sup> Second, Duhamel saw no future for Brittany as an independent state, subject to external political and economic dominance by Britain, France and other global actors. Duhamel's alternative was an equal role for Brittany in a decentralised European federation of peoples which would produce a more egalitarian society of states.

Another notable objective of Duhamel's work was to place the Breton problem in international context: to make international federalism credible, internationalise the Breton question and confer it with a degree of domestic and international political legitimacy. This linkage enabled the Breton cause to be hitched to others, as was the

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26. *Ibid.*, p.7.

27. See Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye (eds), *Transnational Relations and World Politics*.

28. Duhamel, 1928, *Op. cit.*, p.7.

29. *Ibid.*, p.8.

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case with the situation in Alsace. Such identification was intended to legitimise the movement, but also link it to progressive trends in other societies.

In placing the the Breton question in international context, Duhamel explicitly presented it as one national minority problem amongst many: not just in France but in Europe generally, for that is the logic of dual federalism. It was a *universalist* approach to Breton autonomy that contrasted strongly with the *unilateral* efforts of national movements in the case of Scotland and Ireland. Duhamel saw that the solution of the Breton question could not be settled in isolation from the other minorities in France and Europe. Minority problems were seen to be interdependent. This interdependence was the logic for federalism. It existed in contrast to secession which was politically questionable as it undermined the chance of a global solution for France to develop as a federal state and tackle all minority problems universally.<sup>30</sup>

Duhamel's understanding of federalism was essentially decentralist. Within France, federalism was to divide powers between the central institutions, the regions and communes. It would have required the creation or designation of regions themselves. Duhamel intended to preserve as much power and autonomy at the lowest levels, and create mini-states rather than regions.<sup>31</sup> In the case of Brittany this policy meant giving cultural autonomy to the subnational level, through the removal of legislation and pressures for linguistic and cultural homogeneity in France.<sup>32</sup>

Duhamel had a strong distaste for regionalism. He saw it as a limited and negative force, used as an administrative tool by the state rather than as a political ideal. Duhamel held that the state saw regions as purely territorial entities, without cultural or historical significance. His preference was similar to social federalism, which required regions to have an ethnic-historical bases, to turn them into genuine political communities.<sup>33</sup> In the Breton case, state regionalism might create regions from amalgamations of departments to leave Brittany as part of an enlarged "region de l'Ouest" with non-Breton departments, as central authorities designed a regional system that maintained their political dominance.<sup>34</sup>

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30. Duhamel, 1928, *Op. cit.*, p.15.

31. Maurice Duhamel, *La Question Bretonne dans son Cadre Européen*, p.86.

32. *Ibid.*, p.84.

33. For a discussion of social federalism see W.S. Livingstone, *Federalism and Constitutional Change*.

34. Duhamel, 1929, *Op. cit.*, p.88.

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Duhamel's suspicions of centrally-inspired regionalism and regionalisation were quite prescient. His critique could be applied to the deconcentrations of the 1950 and 1960s, and to the Socialist reform of the state in 1981. Duhamel recognised that regionalism and decentralisation were concepts and practices that would not challenge the unitary nature of the state, and would conflict with federalism through preserving the pre-eminence of central authorities. Duhamel's federalism was intended to prevent the centralist possibilities latent in regionalism, and allow multinational and multilingual France, to preserve subnational autonomy and social and cultural freedom.<sup>35</sup>

Duhamel's efforts established a coherent tradition of linkage in the Breton movement, but it was received by a small audience. When the PAB collapsed, Duhamel's circle of intellectuals survived to form the *Ligue*, but the ability to popularise the issue of international federalism was lost. The *Ligue* was an elite device, rather than a mobilising vehicle, and it and the *Parti National Breton* adopted lobbying strategies as pressure groups on the Breton question rather than an electoral appeal in the manner of the PAB. The latter's failure had closed off any electoral strategy in the Breton movement in the 1930s.

### *Regionalism Turns to the Right*

Whilst the *Ligue* evolved as a think tank, the PNB developed a loose popular front strategy, and sought to endorse candidates from other parties who favoured greater autonomy for Brittany. The Breton movement therefore moved back from contesting elections in its own right to acting as a cross-party pressure group.<sup>36</sup> The PNB endorsed 41 candidates in the 1936 legislative elections, who stood for the *Front Breton*, as well as their own party. Fifteen of these candidates were elected, and formed themselves into the *Comite de Defense des Producteurs Bretons* in the National Assembly to lobby for the region's economic interests.<sup>37</sup> This limited, and conservative, economic regionalism was not what the PNB had intended. The party had merely further institutionalised the role of the Breton notables in centre-local relations and given them greater legitimacy in Brittany by reinforcing their role as interlocutors.

The history of a section of the Breton movement in the latter 1930s and early 1940s was a permanent blemish upon the movement. In the mid-1930s, the PNB

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35. *Ibid.*, p.114.

36. McAllister, *Op. cit.*

37. Nicholas, 1982, *Op. cit.*, p.138.



## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

developed a corporatist ideology and began to show some political sympathy with the extreme right. The party became pro-German in this period, especially as the Germans were perceived to be anti-French. The political development of Nazism and Fascism provided ideological and mobilisation models for the more extreme elements within the Breton movement, and the activities of these members led to the banning of the PNB by the French government, which brought some of its leaders to seek 'asylum' in Germany. The extreme Bretons in this period reinterpreted the political opportunity structure for regional autonomy and came to the conclusion that it was achievable via German involvement.

During the German occupation and the Vichy period, some Breton activists collaborated with the authorities, and were granted a Consultative Council for Brittany in 1942. Both the Nazi and Vichy authorities were prepared to concede elements of cultural autonomy to national minorities in France, to gain local support and divide opposition. The attitudes of elements of the Breton movement were clearly opportunistic at this time, hoping to gain concessions on autonomy from the occupiers that were previously unavailable within the French state. The long-term effect of this collaboration was wholly negative. It brought suppression and unpopularity after 1945, with Breton activists imprisoned for collaboration. It effectively delegitimised the Breton cause after the war and made the movement suspect in the eyes of the state and the population.

### *The Development of Economic Regionalism*

The development of the Breton movement after the second world war initially owed more to economic regionalism than to political regionalism, perhaps a consequence of the wartime experience itself. Coombes identified two different types of regionalism in Europe: one that is separatist or irredentist, and another that is utilitarian, and attempts to advance regional economic demands.<sup>38</sup> This latter element came to prominence after 1945, and remained influential into the 1960s. Since the war had taken political regionalism off the regionalist agenda, the new economic regionalism was relatively apolitical and attempted to gain economic concessions through negotiation with the state. Such economic demands were bargainable, and easier for the state to accommodate. However, it developed an agenda of economic and social modernisation that affected traditional centre-local relations, and reopened debate on political autonomy.

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38. David Coombes, "Europe and the Regions", in Bernard Crick (ed), *National Identities*, p.134.

## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

Breton utilitarian regionalism developed through the establishment of CELIB, the *Comite pour Etudes et Liaison des Interets Breton*. It was created as a non-party lobbying and research group, with an open membership that included federalists and modernising notables. It sought to aggregate and advance economic, social and cultural interests in the region, and promoted them within the general context of postwar French economic development and global economic modernisation. The strong federalist presence in CELIB was a consequence of separate but related political developments in Brittany. CELIB acted as a lobbying and coordinating organisation for regional interests, and presented its regional economic proposals to the central authorities.

### *The Union Breton des Federalistes*

Some of the modernising elements within CELIB were also ardent federalists, and raised the issue of regional autonomy in the post-war period. One of CELIB's founding members, Joseph Matray, had been involved in the journal *Le Peuple Breton* in 1947, and it became a mechanism for the internationalisation of the Breton question during postwar discussions on European co-operation. The journal's politics were similar to the *Ligue Fédéraliste Breton* in 1931: proposing dual federalism as the domestic and international solution to the problems of national minorities. The journal was the intellectual seedbed for CELIB. It called for the development of a regional lobby in Brittany, and the re-establishment of the Breton Front in the National Assembly to ensure more coherent lobbying, and provide the means to research the needs of the regional economy.<sup>39</sup>

The new journal was the product of increased interest in federalism in France after the liberation. Such interest was both domestic and European, though it had its origins in the latter. The *Comité Français pour la Fédération Européenne* (CFFE) was founded after the war by federalist politicians, and quickly established the *Comité International pour la Fédération Européenne* to lobby more widely for European co-operation and develop contacts with other European federalists.<sup>40</sup> The federalist movement in this period developed more distinctively through the efforts of the journal, *La Fédération* in 1946-7, which generated both an organisation and a decentralist political philosophy - integral federalism - which made the linkage between French and European federalism. It had its origins in both Proudhonian and

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39. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th November 1947, p.5.

40. Walter Lippens, *A History of European Integration: Volume 1, 1945-47*, p.125.

## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

Catholic political and social ideas, and converged with the federalist and democratic aspirations of the regionalist movements.

Integral federalism held that society and government should be based upon natural and historical groups and communities such as the family, the workplace, community or region, rather than at the level of the nation-state.<sup>41</sup> The anti-étatiste element to integral federalism sought to achieve the maximum decentralisation of power to communes, municipalities, producers' organisations, professional organisations and trade unions, all acting independently of political parties in pursuit of their own interests.

*La Fédération* promoted these ideas, and also played a role in the formation of the *Union Européennes des Fédéralistes* (UEF): a co-ordinating organisation for European federalist groups. The UEF was responsible for organising the Hague Congress of European federalists in 1948 through the Joint International Committee of the movements for European unity.<sup>42</sup> This congress politicised Breton federalists, and encouraged them to relaunch dual federalism as a political project. French federalists had been requested to provide a delegation for the Hague Congress. They turned to the federalists from Brittany, organised around the *Peuple Breton*, to provide a regional component to the French grouping.<sup>43</sup> This invitation was made at a time when the *Peuple Breton* group had started to concern itself with other national minorities in Europe, and developed an interest in the Basque Country, Scotland, Val d'Aosta and Wales.<sup>44</sup>

Consistent with its own dual federalism, and with the times, the *Peuple Breton* (PB) group tackled the question of European integration. The journal discussed the prospect of administrative reform in France producing a level of autonomy for Brittany and the political and economic situation for greater European co-operation. The PB group pointed out that federalism would have to take place within and between nations, to produce genuinely decentralised federations rather than retain the centralised units that would create a European union of large economic and military powers.<sup>45</sup> The PB was also wary of customs unions, as they had very limited economic aims. It favoured a genuine political union in contrast to the economic and security communities identified at the time in Europe.<sup>46</sup> The group was more

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41. *Ibid.*, p.352.

42. *Ibid.*, p.682.

43. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th November 1947, p.29.

44. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th December 1947.

45. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th March 1948, p.26.

46. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th April 1948, p.28.

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concerned with achieving European integration than with worrying about its effect on Breton sovereignty.

The *Peuple Breton's* involvement in the *Union Bretonne des Fédéralistes* (UBF), brought the Breton question to the Hague Congress of the European movement in 1948. There the Bretons put forward the case for abandoning state sovereignty in favour of dual federalism and for changes in internal state structures to allow subnational participation in international affairs.<sup>47</sup> Domestically, the UBF proposed the unification of the five Breton *departements* into one region, with a parliament responsible for cultural, administrative and socio-economic affairs, with some discretion in external relations.

The UBF used the Hague Congress to develop contacts with Irish, Scottish and Welsh delegations. The Congress also acted as a learning process for the Breton federalists, as they were able to identify the level of commitment and motivations of various political actors to European union. They identified two distinct types of federalist. One saw European union as a means to develop a security community with some diminution of national sovereignty, while a second was more disposed towards intergovernmental co-operation and the preservation of national sovereignty.<sup>48</sup> The UBF's decentralist agenda was sidelined at the Congress, and it found itself in a minority.<sup>49</sup> The European movement was not particularly well-disposed to regionalists and national minorities. As one author has pointed out

“the major thrust of the postwar European movement was to create a political system to contain the nationalisms that had provoked two world wars. In that climate the lesser known subnational or regional proposals of many European federalists were virtually ignored”.<sup>50</sup>

Dissatisfaction with the ‘federalists’ at the Hague led the UBF to pressure the *Union des Fédéralistes Français* (UFF) to organise a Congress of European regions and peoples.<sup>51</sup> This ‘alternative’ Congress was a decentralised version of the Hague, and a vehicle for the UBF and others to press their decentralist vision of European union. This Congress met in Paris in 1949, with the UBF playing a leading role as the Congress secretariat.

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47. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th June 1948, p.5.

48. *Ibid.*, p.8.

49. *Ibid.*, p.9.

50. Charles Foster (ed), *Nations Without A State: Ethnic Minorities In Western Europe*, p.1.

51. *Le Peuple Breton*, 16th July 1948, p.6.

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The experience of the Hague, and the behaviour of centralising federalists did not dissuade the Bretons from supporting European union. The UBF was aware of the potential for a federal Europe to develop 'superstate' pretensions, but thought that union would generate tensions that led to decentralisation. European union was to have a transformative aspect within member states:<sup>52</sup> an expectation shared by contemporary regionalists and decentralists. As a counterpoint to centralisation the Bretons advanced the notion of Europe as a "federation of diversity" and "group of communities", with the implication that such social federalism and diversity could not go unrecognised in the administration of states.<sup>53</sup> Though the UBF's use of federalism was *positive linkage* in itself, the group also made more instrumental linkages by calling for Breton representation in future European institutions, in the context of the French state.<sup>54</sup>

In common with other regionalists, the UBF placed a degree of faith in European developments to aid its cause.<sup>55</sup> This expectation required those designing European federal institutions to share the UBF's decentralist version of federalism. Had they shared a concern for decentralisation, they would also have supported the UBF's desire to produce more traditional historical and cultural units within each state. The UBF was keen to avoid the development of 'artificial' state units, and preferred state boundaries to coincide with linguistic and cultural units.<sup>56</sup> As integral federalists in the Proudhonian mould, the UBF supported two internal federalisms within the French state: the ethnic territorial federalism mentioned above, but also functional federalism, and the representation of socio-economic and professional interests within and across the state.<sup>57</sup> Each would act to balance the competing territorial and functional pressures for representation within the state.<sup>58</sup>

The position of the Bretons within the French state, and the centralised nature of state structures, brought a tendency to regard the state as a tyrannical Leviathan.<sup>59</sup> This perception also influenced attitudes to those states involved in developing common European institutions. The agendas of the Breton movement and national

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52. *Le Peuple Breton*, September 1948, p.7.

53. *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*

55. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th October 1948, p.2.

56. *Ibid.*, p.6.

57. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *Du Principe Fédératif et de la nécessité de reconstituer le parti de la révolution*. For a discussion of Proudhon's works see K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of Republican Socialism*.

58. These two modes of representation have often been viewed as competing alternatives, see Sidney Tarrow, Peter Katzenstein and Luigi Graziano (eds), *Territorial Politics in Industrial Nations*.

59. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th November 1948, p.2.

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governments in Europe were, of course, very different. The UBF's aims contrasted with a governmental agenda focused on interstate relations in the sphere of defence, monetary policy and customs arrangements. For the UBF, Europe's political elites were essentially unionists, seeking a limited union and unconcerned with substate concerns and demands. The supranational commitment of these governments was also questioned by the UBF, as they were seen to be reluctant to cede national sovereignty to achieve common goals, and establish European institutions independent of national political influence. The proposal for a European Assembly to be comprised of national rather than supranational representatives was held up as one illustration of this obstruction.<sup>60</sup>

The evolving debate on European union made the UBF aware of two things. First, decentralists had lost the argument on the type of federalism to be adopted for Europe. Second, the likely framework for European union brought no opportunities for subnational representation and participation.

Though it became heavily involved in the federalist movement and was paramount in the development of transnational regionalism, the UBF did not become transformed into a political party. It kept clear of party political conflict and avoided divisive socio-economic questions through a catch-all approach. As an organisation, its cross-party strategy relied upon influencing other bodies, and using the UFF to press its case at the transnational level. It operated as an elite intellectual association rather than a movement and generated no demand for political action or mobilisation.

Whilst the UBF made intellectual linkages between Europe and regional autonomy, the partisan development of Breton regionalism remained stalled. Nationalism was discredited in Brittany and Europe. Following the right-wing deviance of the Parti National Breton in the 1930s, the postwar Breton movement manifested itself in the UBF, the economic regionalism of CELIB and cultural associations. In this context it took until 1957 for a new Breton political organisation to be formed.

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60. *Ibid.*, p.7.

#### **4. The Breton Movement And Europe Since 1957**

##### **4.1. Moderate Regionalism**

The *Mouvement pour l'Organisation de la Bretagne* (MOB) was established by moderate regionalists in 1957. Though a number of former members of the PNB were involved, it was essentially inspired by the membership and experiences of CELIB.<sup>61</sup> The key feature of the MOB was its *apolitisme*. It took a broad and non-ideological view of politics to avoid the ideological fragmentation of the interwar years, which facilitated its role as a cross-party body. It can be regarded as a pressure group rather than a political party.

MOB was not an exclusive organisation and allowed multiple memberships. This cross-party stance was assisted by the absence of any electoral strategy within the organisation. It aimed to raise the salience of Breton cultural and economic issues in the region, and in other parties, rather than divert its attentions into dealing with domestic socio-economic questions. MOB's position on Europe was similar to that established by Duhamel and repeated by the UBF,<sup>62</sup> but it had little time to develop. The formation of the European Community in the same year as the MOB had little impact. It did not influence the new party's attitude to Europe or lead it to reinterpret domestic political opportunities. Rather it led the MOB to restate the position of Duhamel and relaunch the notion of a *Europe of the Regions* in a more substantial way.

The *apolitisme* of the MOB was not easily sustained in this period. Generational change and new adherents to the Breton movement made a non-ideological stance problematic, particularly amongst the new, younger members from the leftist student groups. Generational and ideological differences were compounded by the MOB's failure to take a stand on the Algerian war of independence.<sup>63</sup> Ignoring such an issue damaged its credibility, particularly as it involved a French colony. The MOB's failure to side with the independence movement in Algeria was intended to avoid identification as enemies of France (as in 1939-45), and prevent the splintering of the movement. However, these constraints helped contribute to its decline.

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61. Nicholas, 1982, *Op. cit.*, p.178.

62. Fouère, 1977, *Op. cit.*, p.83.

63. Nicholas, 1982, *Op. cit.*, p.191.

## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

The MOB shed several ideological splinters before its demise in the mid-1960s. The first was in 1962, with the establishment of the anti-capitalist and more nationalist group *Sav-Breizh*, which supported the creation of a separate, leftist Breton state.<sup>64</sup> This minor rupture was followed by the departure of a large number of the MOB's younger generation, to form the socialist *Union Démocratique Bretonne* (UDB) in late 1963. The UDB emerged as an ideological Breton party, pursuing an electoral strategy and exclusive membership, in complete contrast to the MOB. These splinters effectively brought an end to the MOB, and the organisation faded into obscurity. The moderate regionalists behind the organisation did not retire from politics however, they re-emerged in 1972 to play a role in the formation of a new Breton regionalist party.

### *Yann Fouère and A Europe of a Hundred Flags*

Though European union was not substantively dealt with by the MOB, one of its members sought to adapt the Breton preference for dual federalism to postwar circumstances. The work of Yann Fouère relaunched decentralist federalism, with different emphases from Duhamel. Fouère was influenced by the ideas of de Rougement and Héraud, but viewed the subnational level on a more equal footing with established states. Federalism was seen to be necessary to deal with the incompatible nature of the Breton and French nations and states. It would undermine the exclusivity of sovereignty at the international level through creating a pluri-national structure, which would serve as a model at the domestic level.<sup>65</sup>

Fouère saw Europe evolving through three distinct stages. First, Europe was feudal and absolutist in its character and organisation. Second, it was composed of nation-states and multi-national Empires. And third, Europe was to consist of supranational authorities and decentralised, regional structures. Whilst there was empirical evidence for the first two stages, the third was hypothetical and propagandist.

The rationale for identifying a 'third Europe', apart from its rhetorical role as an appeal to historical inevitability, was to distinguish between a decentralist European union and one developed at the hands of the nineteenth century states. For Fouère, the European Community was a statist construct, influenced by Jacobinism.<sup>66</sup> The EC was an example of the defeat of 'genuine' federalism at the hands of nationalism

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64. *Ibid.*, p.263.

65. Yann Fouère, *De La Bretagne, A La France, A L'Europe*, p.19.

66. Yann Fouère *L'Europe Aux Cent Drapeaux*, p.21.



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and national interests.<sup>67</sup> The demise of the European Defence Community (EDC) in the French National Assembly in 1954 was an example. The EDC treaty had proposed the creation of a supranational assembly to oversee its affairs, similar to the European Coal and Steel Community, which proved to be its undoing. The failure of the EDC convinced Fouère that the European states were more concerned with preserving national sovereignty through intergovernmentalism than developing a wider and more participatory union.<sup>68</sup> The second Europe of nation-states, was protecting itself from the third Europe of supranationalism and decentralisation.

Fouère saw three possible options for European union in this period: the development of a confederal union of states, the complete integration of existing states and nations into one unit and the establishment of a federal union that diluted national sovereignty.<sup>69</sup> Fouère favoured federal union, and offered some description of its institutional appearance. The union was to exist independently of the member states, with a federal executive and bicameral legislature. The first chamber was to hold national representatives allocated on the basis of population size, with the second chamber having equal representation for member states and regions, to provide a federal and supranational reality to union rather than a centralised intergovernmental situation. The federal institutions were to be responsible for defence, foreign policy, customs, social security, transport, trade policy and human rights and liberties.<sup>70</sup> The 'superstate' aspect to the union was dismissed as the preference of the second Europe, which would be overcome by decentralisation.

Fouère's plan for European federation involved the creation of regional states at the subnational level. Each state was to be based upon history, culture and language, with economic criteria given secondary importance to avoid the creation of economic regions on the French model in the 1950s.<sup>71</sup> Ethnic-national groups were to converge with the regional state, allowing each nation to manifest itself in a state.<sup>72</sup> Fouère adopted this nationalist demand to counter the French process of nation-building:

“in Brittany, the state models itself on the nation. It's the nation that fashions the state, because the state must be of service to the nation.

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67. *Ibid.*, p.27.

68 *Ibid.*, p.31.

69. *Ibid.*, p.40.

70. *Ibid.*, p.166.

71. See R.E.M. Irving, "Regionalism in France", in James Cornford (ed), *The Failure of the State*; and Jack Hayward, *The State and the Market Economy*.

72. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p.1.

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In France, to the contrary, it is the state that creates the nation. The state existed before the nation".<sup>73</sup>

Each regional state was to consist of a minimum of one to two million people up to a maximum population of seven to eight million. The size principle was intended to maintain a rough equality between regional states in the federation, and maintain a closeness to the domestic population. The regional states were to be responsible for all policy domains not given to the federal institutions.

Fouère's liberalism manifested itself in economic policy.

Economic protectionism was a consequence of nation-state pretensions about sovereignty, motivating states to pursue autarky rather than accept interdependence. Proper European union would remove such practices and institute a free market regime within the federation, allowing region-states to have responsibility for regional economic policy.<sup>74</sup> This market preference was one aspect of Fouère's politics that brought conflicts with the left within the Breton movement, and gave each wing of the movement very different priorities and visions of the EC.

### *Strollad Ar Vro*

Moderate regionalists faded from political action with the demise of the MOB. In the 1970s they regrouped to form *Strollad Ar Vro* (SAV). Unlike MOB, this organisation was formed as a political party to contest elections rather than act as a lobbying group. The moderates within the Breton movement had not followed an electoral strategy for some time, and it was not to be their strength. SAV itself shared the non-ideological preference of MOB. This trait, in addition to having members who had been previously associated with the PNB, brought conflict with the *Union Democratique Breton*: as each fought to establish itself as the vanguard. Such fractionalisation was compounded by a double ballot electoral system which penalised small parties,<sup>75</sup> and made elections a test of survival. The desire to survive or to establish political supremacy, along with personal and ideological differences, generated bitterness between the parties.

The SAV programme claimed a neutral position on socio-economic policy, though it was clearly anti-communist and corporatist.<sup>76</sup> This antipathy towards the Marxist left

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73. Fouère, *Op. cit.*, 1958, p.8.

74. Fouère, *Op. cit.*, 1968, p.139.

75. See Byron Criddle, "Electoral Systems in France", *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol.45, No.1, January 1992, pp.108-16.

76. Nicholas, *Op. cit.*, 1982, p.269.

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made any relationship with the UDB impossible. One year after its launch SAV took a considerable gamble to become the premier regionalist party. Instead of adopting a gradual or localist approach to electoralism, SAV took one large step in the 1973 legislative elections. The party presented twenty-seven candidates in Brittany out of a possible thirty-three. SAV's candidates gained around 30,000 votes between them at the first round of elections, worth around 2.6% of the Breton vote.<sup>77</sup> The party narrowly defeated the UDB in the two seats it contested and gained short-term electoral dominance within the Breton camp. The immediate gain of legitimacy was undermined by the cost of contesting the election. It was estimated that SAV had spent FF 1,650,000 during the election campaign in order to contest the 27 seats.<sup>78</sup> This was an intolerable burden for a micro-party with a very limited resource and membership base.

As in 1930, the cost of electioneering was debilitating, and the financial costs of the 1973 elections removed SAV from electoral competition. The party later attempted to contest the 1979 European elections, but was thwarted because of financial barriers. As elections were no longer an option for the moderate Bretons, the SAV returned to the European strategy of the UBF and instigated the creation of the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations in the 1973-4 period. It involved SAV, Plaid Cymru, the Occitan movement, Cornish regionalists and the exiled Basque PNV.

The SAV congress in 1973 created *L'Union Federaliste des Communautes Ethniques Europeenes*, a transnational forum which preceded the establishment of the Bureau. This new approach was aided by the enlargement of the EC in 1973, which brought UK accession, and therefore new nationalist parties. The Bureau was financed by its regionalist members, an expensive financial commitment for SAV, and operated in Brussels from 1975. It was the first transnational regionalist reaction to the new political opportunity structure of the EC, though it was limited in size and scope.

### *The Parti pour L'Organisation d'une Bretagne Libre*

SAV became moribund as an organisation in the late 1970s but Fouère and the moderates rallied to produce the *Parti pour L'Organisation d'une Bretagne Libre* (POBL) in 1982. This organisation was slightly more radical than the MOB and SAV, and favoured a Breton parliament with its own government, administration

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77. *Ibid.*, p.270.

78. Mordrel, *Op. cit.*, p.232.

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and constitution.<sup>79</sup> A more radical stance on Breton autonomy was necessitated by the decentralist reforms of the Socialist Government,<sup>80</sup> which had created a Breton regional government on equal terms with other regions, in contrast to the superior autonomy statute given to Corsica.<sup>81</sup> The POBL stressed that its more maximalist demands for autonomy were not indicative of separatism, and used Fouère's "Europe of one hundred flags" concept to effect a *positive linkage* that avoided isolationism. The POBL called for the new regional governments to be allowed to pursue their own interests in European and international affairs, and made the familiar call for Breton representation in the EC.<sup>82</sup>

In a similar vein to SAV, the POBL claimed it was the sole legitimate representative of Breton feeling.<sup>83</sup> The POBL's involvement in the European Free Alliance in the early 1980s, as the sole Breton representative, helped to boost its vanguard pretensions,<sup>84</sup> but masked the party's difficulties within Brittany itself. The POBL's membership remained small and its electoral strategy limited: the party leadership had learned something from the experience of SAV in 1973. Despite its Europeanism the POBL played no role in the 1984 European elections, though its newspaper did cover the activities of its partners in the European Free Alliance.<sup>85</sup> The first electoral contest for the POBL came with the cantonal elections in April 1985, three years after its formation. The party's five candidates polled badly in Rennes but received stronger support in Finistère.<sup>86</sup> The results were not good, but the party's cautious approach prevented it from repeating the mistakes of 1973.

The electoral and financial barriers to electoralism led the POBL to consider an alliance with other Breton parties at the regional council elections in 1986. The fact that the other electoralist party, the UDB, had moved away from alliances with the Communists and *Parti Socialiste* in this period helped provide the context for a regionalist alliance. The regional elections were conducted using proportional representation, with a 5% threshold for representation. The POBL held discussions on an alliance with the UDB and the small *Emgann* organisation to surpass the

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79. *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*, July-August 1984, p.3.

80. See Sonia Mazey, "Decentralisation: La Grande Affaire du Septennat", in Sonia Mazey and Michael Newman (eds), *Mitterrand's France*,

81. See Elenore Kofman, "Regional Autonomy and the One and Indivisible French Republic", *Environment and Planning: Government and Policy*, Vol.3, No.4, 1985, pp.11-25.

82. *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*, March 1985, p.10.

83. Fouère did so on behalf of the SAV at the party's congress in 1973: Minutes of the meeting to discuss the establishment of the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations, 10th October 1973: Plaid Cymru archives, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

84. *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*, March 1985, p.5.

85. *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*, October 1984.

86. *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*, April 1985, p.5.

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threshold,<sup>87</sup> but no alliance was forthcoming. The UDB and POBL presented separate lists at the election, with the POBL frozen out of a leftist list organised by the UDB, PSU, *Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire* and ecologists, which stood in all five *departements* in Brittany.<sup>88</sup>

The POBL contested only one *departement* in the regional election, but was unable to compete alone. The party then avoided the electoral sphere, preferring to raise and publicise specific issues within the Breton context. The party was aware of the developments in the EC in this period, such as the Single European Act,<sup>89</sup> but was unable to deal with it. The lack of organisational and electoral means left the party operating as a pressure group. This demobilisation of moderate regionalism raised the standing of the UDB even further, and threatened the status of the POBL within the electoralist European Free Alliance.

The POBL continued to use the European issue in Breton politics, and called for the regional council to be transformed into a stronger parliament with powers to address the agenda of the single market,<sup>90</sup> but the organisation was unable to translate such positive linkages into organisational or electoral resources. The weakness of the POBL in the late 1980s was evident from its failure to support the candidacy of the Corsican nationalist leader, Max Simeoni, who stood in the European elections on a list with the *Verts*. The POBL was too weak to take part in the campaign, in contrast to the UDB, though Simeoni tried to reach out to the POBL after 1989 by inviting them to the Congress of the Corsican UPC in Bastia.<sup>91</sup>

### 4.2. Radical Regionalism - The Union Démocratique Bretonne

The *Union Démocratique Bretonne* (UDB) was formed in late 1963 by eleven dissenting students who departed from the MOB.<sup>92</sup> Similar to the economic regionalists of CELIB, the UDB was a modernising force within the Breton movement, influenced by the postwar socio-economic and political environment and committed to popular mobilisation. The UDB can be initially regarded as a student party: it was established by them and they were its main recruits during its early development. The student and intellectual tendencies within the left of the Breton

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87. *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*, June 1985, pp.3-4.

88. Michel Nicholas and Jean Pihar, *Les Bretons et la Politique: 30 Ans de Scrutins en Bretagne 1958-88*, p.180.

89. *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*, April 1988, p.3.

90. *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*, June 1988, p.4.

91. *L'Avenir de la Bretagne*, November 1989, p.8.

92. Nicholas, *Op. cit.*, 1982, p.190.

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movement used the organisation to synthesise the traditions of socialism and nationalism into a new leftist regionalism, whilst escaping from the right wing, collaborationist baggage of the past.

Despite its intellectual composition, which could have made it a similar pressure group or elite association to the UBF, the UDB developed as a political party in a much clearer way than the organisations of moderate regionalism. The UDB sustained an electoral mobilisation strategy since 1973, despite frequent setbacks and considerable strategic reorientation in the 1980s. Though the UDB has never managed complete organisational stability and high institutionalisation, with two periods of organisational disruption in the 1960s and the 1980s, it has achieved a degree of longevity that is unparalleled within the Breton movement. The socialist wing of the movement survived largely within one organisation since 1963, whereas the moderate regionalists progressed through three unsuccessful organisations.

The UDB's attitude to European integration was curious, and spanned its socialism and regionalism. The party's founding statement contained a commitment to the federal integration of European peoples amongst its thirteen points,<sup>93</sup> but this rhetorical commitment tells very little. The party's critique of the European Community was much more informative. The UDB consistently viewed the EC as a capitalist institution and was critical of its free market agricultural policies. The party condemned the CAP as a mechanism for reducing the traditional farming sector in Brittany,<sup>94</sup> leading to depopulation in rural and Breton-speaking areas, and sought to develop support in rural Brittany. This strategy was untypical of European socialist parties, but consistent with the UDB's strategy of defending the regional economy. The UDB was critical of much of the CAP system in the 1960s, and held up the Mansholt Plan as one factor contributing to Brittany's socio-economic decline through downward pricing adjustments in the dairy sector and efforts to remove small dairy herds from production.<sup>95</sup>

The UDB saw such policies as evidence of a colonial relationship between the EC and regions, with EC policies contributing to depopulation and deindustrialisation.<sup>96</sup> Though favouring European union, the UDB consistently depicted the EC as flawed because of the behaviour of capitalist states. The EC itself was seen as a capitalist institution, with the common market determined by business pressure groups and

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93. *Le Peuple Breton*, January 1964, p.1.

94. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th July 1967, p.3.

95. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th May 1968, p.1.

96. *Ibid.*

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pro-business governments.<sup>97</sup> The UDB did not respond by advocating secession from the EC, one of the political responses in Scotland and Wales, but proposed a socialist EC. The Community, despite its flaws, was reformable. This perspective gave the UDB the triple ideological goal of a socialist Brittany, within a socialist France, inside a socialist EC.

The UDB maintained that EC policies perpetuated regional underdevelopment within the Community, but also contributed to economic problems in the third world.<sup>98</sup> The Community practised internal and external colonialism, a key theme of the UDB into the 1970s. The party applied the colonial theme to much of its political analysis, adopting the slogan/programme *Bretagne = colonie* in 1973, and accused the EC of colonising Brittany and its economy.<sup>99</sup> The colonial theme enabled the party to link socialism to autonomy, whilst adding aspects of the analyses of progressive third world nationalists.

The UDB's preferred solution for Europe was a combination of a socialist EC and a federalist Europe of peoples. The latter element was similar to other factions in the Breton movement, and not greatly different from the MOB, SAV and POBL. What differentiated the UDB on Europe was its ideological position, which led to a number of general and specific criticisms of the EC and its policies. The moderate regionalists gave support to the concept of European union, but were mostly silent on the EC itself. The UDB, in contrast, spent little time elaborating the need for a *Europe of the Regions* or international federalism, but concentrated on the politics and economics of the EC itself, and its impact on Brittany. As a party aiming at social and political mobilisation, the UDB's critique of EC policy was intended to be instrumental rather than intellectual: to raise and defend the interests of specific Breton groups. The socialism/regionalism nexus was also developed through opposition to the defence industry, the proliferation of military bases and the reliance upon the tourist industry.<sup>100</sup> These were elements of a *new left* approach amongst UDB activists, demonstrating a pacifist and environmentalist orientation similar to other regionalist and nationalist organisations. They were later to become prominent in the UDB's activism over nuclear power and in its opening to the environmental movement.<sup>101</sup>

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97. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th September 1967, p.2.

98. A similar proposition to that expounded at length by Johan Galtung, *Op. cit.*

99. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th September 1967, p.6.

100. *Le Peuple Breton*, 10th April 1970, p.6.

101. Breton regionalists had several opportunities to play on the environmental issue. The proposals for a nuclear power station at Plogoff were the most prominent, see Wolfgang Rudig, *Anti-nuclear Movements*, pp.174-77.

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In the late 1960s the UDB adopted an electoral approach, with discussions on co-operation with other left parties in Brittany. This process was developing at the same time as extremists within the Breton movement were active in the terrorist *Federation pour la Liberation de Bretagne* (FLB), the extreme left terrorist group whose members had been expelled from the UDB.<sup>102</sup> The UDB produced a *programme minimum democratique regional* during the 1968 legislative elections and distributed it amongst the parties of the left. The programme called for the establishment of a Breton assembly and for a range of socio-economic policies for the region.<sup>103</sup> The programme was the opening phase of the party's effort to align itself with the left and pursue an electoral strategy.

### *The 1969 and 1972 Referenda*

Though the UDB refrained from direct electoral involvement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, it had two significant opportunities to link its agenda to national and supranational developments. First, the party campaigned for a 'No' vote in the 1969 referendum on regional reform conducted by De Gaulle. The UDB opposed government proposals for decentralisation,<sup>104</sup> which were intended to reinforce the role of the Prefecture and the CODER, the unelected functional assemblies introduced in 1964. Apart from opposing the substance of the government's proposals, the UDB used the elections as a referendum on Gaullism: as part of its strategy to reduce the power of the right in Brittany. The UDB called on voters to defeat De Gaulle, undermine capitalism and centralism, and promote the prospect of a socialist Brittany.<sup>105</sup> The defeat of De Gaulle did not bring any gains for the UDB however, as it had no role in the Presidential election that followed. It merely argued for voter abstention,<sup>106</sup> an ineffective electoral strategy that did nothing for the left in Brittany. The referendum did show a positive awareness of the merits of *political linkage* however, and a desire to use the resources of the political opportunity structure in an instrumental fashion.

The second opportunity for the UDB came with the referendum on EC enlargement in 1972. The UDB had already entered electoral politics at a minor level by this stage, through lists with the Communists and PSU in municipal elections in 1971.

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102. See Patricia Elton Mayo, *Op. cit.*, p.49.

103. *Le Peuple Breton*, 15th July 1968, p.1.

104. *Le Peuple Breton*, March/April 1969, p.2.

105. *Le Peuple Breton*, 20th April 1969, p.1.

106. *Le Peuple Breton*, 10th June 1969, p.2.



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The EC referendum offered a larger opportunity to the party, though one that was undercapitalised. The referendum had been called to allow Pompidou to use popular support to revoke De Gaulle's veto on UK membership of the EC. The entry of Ireland, Denmark and Norway was also included in the referendum - subsumed within a simple yes/no question on EC enlargement.

The UDB campaigned against enlargement, with opposition conditioned by a number of instrumental factors and motivations. The party adopted *negative linkage* during the referendum campaign, for tactical and ideological reasons. The referendum was seen as an opportunity to challenge Pompidou, the right, and capitalism.<sup>107</sup> The party sought to use the referendum similar to the 1969 practice. The party opposed enlargement because it buttressed the socio-economic status quo, and called on those who had suffered from the liberal economic policies of the EC to form an electoral coalition against enlargement. The UDB issued a joint communique with other regionalist organisations, such as the Basque *Enbata* and *Lutte Occitane*, highlighting common opposition to enlargement,<sup>108</sup> but little of its regionalism was deployed in the referendum campaign.

Though the UDB had the opportunity to exploit the EC question in a distinctive way, it approached it from a socio-economic perspective rather than a regionalist position: despite the fact that most parties in France, except the Communists, supported enlargement. The socio-economic tone of the UDB campaign was attributable to its socialism, but also to its economic defence role as it sought to gather support amongst those sectors of the regional economy that would suffer from EC enlargement. The fishing industry, concentrated in Western Brittany and one of the largest in the EC, was one prospective economic 'loser' from enlargement.

However, the UDB was unsuccessful, with France and Brittany supporting enlargement by substantial majorities. The Bretons recorded a 'Yes' vote of 74.8%, compared to overall French support of 67.7%,<sup>109</sup> and any gains the UDB made in the election were difficult to measure. The use of *negative linkage* was clear, but not deployed in a purely regionalist fashion. The organisational outcome for the party was positive. It had actively campaigned and used the experience as preparation for future electoral contests.

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107. *Le Peuple Breton*, April 1972, p.1.

108. *Le Peuple Breton*, May 1972, p.4.

109. Nicholas and Pihar, *Op. cit.*, p.110.

## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

In 1973 the UDB entered the national electoral arena for the first time. The party contested the legislative elections with five candidates, gaining a total of 6062 votes. These results were gained at the first ballot. At the second ballot the party dropped out and urged its supporters to vote for the left candidates. This electoral alliance was constructed on the back of the earlier alliance between the UDB and left parties in 1971, and marked the beginning of the UDB's formal relationship with the French left.

Duverger identified a number of alliance possibilities within the French political system: parties could have joint candidates, joint lists, adopt the practice of mutually standing down in the second round of voting, or make agreements on the redistribution of preferences.<sup>110</sup> The UDB had developed joint lists at the local level in 1971, and adopted the practice of standing down in 1973 - not that it had much choice given its status as a micro-party.

The next electoral test for the UDB was the local elections in 1976. The party's nine candidates performed reasonably well, with five candidates gaining over 5%. This encouraged the party to continue its electoral role. The UDB's role in the union of the left list in 1977 brought 37 councillors in the municipal elections, with 20 elected in the first round.<sup>111</sup> These successes gave the UDB councillors in the urban centres of Rennes, Brest, Nantes and other towns in the region,<sup>112</sup> and vindicated the party's alliance strategy. As the party's support and profile increased, its membership grew to reach 2000 by 1980.<sup>113</sup> Though it remained a micro-party it was at least operating on an upward trend.

From this period onwards, the party entered regular electoral competition, and increased the number of candidates contesting seats. It entered 17 candidates in the legislative elections of 1978, and gained an average of 1%. These elections, however, marked the beginning of the decline of the union of the left. The 1978 elections were supposed to have brought the breakthrough of the combined PS and PCF into national government in France, but the conservative parties retained an overall majority in the National Assembly. This electoral failure, coupled with a growing feeling within the UDB that it was being co-opted by the French left, led the UDB to consider its future as a more autonomous force.<sup>114</sup> The UDB leadership

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110. Duverger, *Op. cit.*, p.331.

111. *Le Peuple Breton*, April 1977, p.15.

112. *Le Peuple Breton*, May 1977, p.6.

113. Nicholas, *Op. cit.*, 1982, p.325.

114. Vaughan Rogers, "Brittany", in Michael Watson (ed), *Contemporary Minority Nationalism*, p.74.

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felt that the organisation's goals and policies had been subordinated to the unsuccessful national electoral goals of the French left. The strategy to deal with incorporation involved a return to nationalism.

### *Moving Away From The Left*

The UDB's Congress at Brest in 1978 discussed the notion of a Breton state and the question of separatism, and presented itself as a revolutionary nationalist party with a programme that could not be assimilated by ideological groups on the French left. In turning away from the main left parties the UDB sought to restore its regionalist credentials by developing linkages with other regional parties to produce a joint candidate for the 1981 Presidential elections.<sup>115</sup> The motivation for this move had more to do with relations with the left than any expectation of having an independent role in the Presidential elections. Not surprisingly this effort was unsuccessful, leaving the UDB to form joint lists with the *Parti Socialiste* at the legislative elections following Mitterrand's success in 1981. The UDB entered 15 candidates onto a joint list with the PS. The only alternative was non-participation, which would have completely undermined the UDB's strategy and approach. This effort was costly however, with an estimated bill of FF 250,000 for the party.<sup>116</sup> The costs of national electoral participation still far outweighed any benefits involved.

The cost of the election in 1981 brought financial problems for the UDB, and the policies of the Socialists brought political problems. The economic context of the early 1980s and the failure of the government's economic programme created difficulties for a party which had tied itself to the fate of the French left. The UDB was damaged by government policies and faced with the dilemma of distancing itself from the Government yet remaining an identifiable socialist party. The UDB had to choose between supporting the government and its programme, and suffering with its loss of popularity, or opposing the government and seeking an autonomous course which would undermine any future electoral alliance with the Socialists. The party tried to resolve this by adopting the compromise solution of "solidarity not alignment" in 1982, which brought divisions within the UDB and the departure of some members to the Socialists. The party then positioned itself in a state of semi-opposition to the government, criticising aspects of economic policy but still open to electoral co-operation.

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115. *Ibid.*, p.75.

116. *Le Peuple Breton*, January 1982.

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The alliance with the French left had been the key component of the UDB's electoral strategy. Without such an alliance its involvement in elections was severely curtailed. Though this relationship allowed the UDB to ride the left's electoral wave from the 1970s, it had led to programmatic compromises. The party had to accept the political and economic integration of Brittany within the French state, and found itself undermined by the regionalism of the left parties. Both the Communists and the Socialists moved towards supporting regional decentralisation within France, proposing the establishment of regional assemblies, and the abolition of the centrally-controlled regional prefects. Some sections of the left even adopted the UDB's slogans.<sup>117</sup> Despite these problems the UDB continued to pursue electoral mobilisation, though limited by its relations with the left.<sup>118</sup> The party complained of having insufficient candidates placed on the union lists, which was how the UDB got people elected, so it was not gaining as many elected offices as it would have liked.

The party's changing attitude towards the left did not greatly effect the UDB position on Europe. Party policy remained the same. What did change was the party's tactical responses to European elections. Having ignored the first direct elections in 1979, and taken umbrage with the left, the UDB removed any positive role for itself in the 1984 elections. The party was too small to present its own list and none was negotiated with the European Free Alliance, though the UDB had begun to attend EFA meetings.<sup>119</sup> The party responded to the European elections by calling for abstentions and a change in electoral procedures to allow small parties to overcome the threshold requirements of the national list system. During the 1984 election the UDB campaigned for abstentions and blank ballots to be cast and took some comfort from the fact that turnout was very low, meaning that 44.5% of Bretons had not voted.<sup>120</sup> The fact that low turnouts were common in European elections was conveniently forgotten.

The elections to the Breton regional council in 1986 offered the clearest opportunity for the UDB to address the Breton question in electoral terms. The party adopted a new alliance strategy that comprised a list with the *Parti Socialiste Unifié*, the *Ligue*

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117. This was practiced by the *Parti Socialiste* in Finistère: See Vaughan Rogers, "Ethnicity, Inequality and Integration: Ethnic Activism in Post-war Brittany", in Peter Morris (ed), *Equality and Inequality in France*, p.139.

118. The UDB had wanted to nominate 250 candidates at the 1983 municipal elections, but was prevented from doing so by the united left list: *Le Peuple Breton*, February 1983, p.14. Considering that the UDB membership had declined since its identifiable peak of 2000 members in 1980 to around 800 (according to Rogers, *ibid.*, 1990, p.79) the number of candidates was very ambitious.

119. *Le Peuple Breton*, June 1984, p.4.

120. *Le Peuple Breton*, July/August 1984, p.5

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*Communiste Revolutionnaire* and the ecologists. The progress of this alternative left alliance was limited, but representation was gained through the institution of proportional representation for the regional elections. The list's combined total of 1.5% was worth one seat, which was held by the UDB.

### *The UDB's Transnational Links*

Though the UDB had failed to make any great impact in Breton politics beyond local elections, the party had developed contacts with other regionalist parties. A UDB delegation had visited the House of Commons in 1975 at the invitation of the SNP, and also had meetings with Plaid Cymru,<sup>121</sup> but little came from this development. Various organisations were invited to attend the UDB congress in 1976, but only minor movements and fringe organisations attended. The big parties stayed away, or sent their youth section in the case of the VU, leaving marginal organisations to attend.<sup>122</sup> No efforts were made to turn the congress into a common event or organisation. It can be seen as the UDB's limited response to exclusion from participation in the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations.

In the 1980s the UDB moved very slowly towards involvement with the European Free Alliance (EFA), perhaps because of the role of the POBL within the organisation. The involvement of both ideological wings of the Breton movement brought a degree of *rapprochement* and repaired some of its historical fragmentation. The UDB first became involved in the EFA at the invitation of Plaid Cymru. The Welsh nationalists were hosting the EFA Congress and had agreed with the EFA bureau to invite the UDB to attend as observers.<sup>123</sup> This invitation was part of the EFA strategy to attract electoral organisations into membership, and develop the ground for a national list of regionalists at the European elections through addressing Breton fragmentation. The European theme was re-adopted within the UDB following the party's involvement with the EFA, and employed as the key theme at the UDB Congress at Toussaint in 1986. The party also developed a specific European Bureau within its structure to address the issue.<sup>124</sup>

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121. *Le Peuple Breton*, August 1975, p.16.

122. The organisations which attended the Congress were: *Mebyon Kernow* of Cornwall; *Cymru Goch*, a Welsh socialist group; the *Union do Pobo Galego* from Galicia; *Lutte Occitane*; *Le Parti Socialiste du Peuple Basque*; the *Volksunie Jongeren* (VUJO); and the *Jeunesse Fédéralistes Mondiales*; *Le Peuple Breton*, June 1976, p.10.

123. *Le Peuple Breton*, September 1986, p.11.

124. *An Emsaver*, August/September 1987, p.3.

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The party was accepted as a full member of the European Free Alliance at the organisation's Congress in Brussels in September 1987.<sup>125</sup> The party's role in the EFA, and its attitude to the European Community, remained anomalous however. The socialism of the UDB, and its strong ideological commitment, made it an unlikely adherent to the EFA's common programme and policies. Its role was also confused by its opposition to most EC policies and initiatives. The UDB's entry into transnational relationships, and re-adoption of European themes, coincided with the launch of the Single European Act. The effects of the single market, and the notion of economic integration are inimicable to the UDB: the economic threat to a Breton economy and society already vulnerable to peripheralisation and depopulation.<sup>126</sup> Instead of seeing an opportunity in the contemporary phase of European integration, the UDB's ideological stance interpreted it as a threat. The party was more worried at the prospect of economic integration than the loss of sovereignty.

The UDB's involvement in the European Free Alliance did bring electoral reorientation away from the left, and allowed a new electoral relationship with other regionalist parties. EFA brought the opportunity to fulfil the earlier efforts of the *Parti Autonomiste Breton* and SAV to develop inter-party co-operation within the regionalist family in France. The UDB responded to EFA efforts to stimulate inter-regionalist co-operation, and began to explore the possibility of an electoral alliance for 1989.<sup>127</sup> The UDB Congress agreed to EFA-inspired proposals to construct a common national list with the Basques, Corsicans, Occitans and *Verts*, and looked to widen the list where possible to improve the chances of regionalist representation in the European Parliament. The UDB optimistically announced that the regionalists could expect to gain 2 MEPs from such a list, with the assumption that the UDB would have one of them.<sup>128</sup>

The agreement concluded between the *Verts* and the regionalists was not as generous as the UDB had hoped. Only one place was given to the regionalists on the *Verts* list, on the understanding that they would receive a member amongst the first four elected as long as the list surpassed the 5% threshold. The final outcome of negotiations placed the leader of the Corsican UPC Max Simeoni, in third place on the *Verts* list. The UDB also concluded an agreement with the UPC to give it a full-time liaison officer in the European Parliament.<sup>129</sup>

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125. *Le Peuple Breton*, October 1987, p.4.

126. *Le Peuple Breton*, September 1987, p.4.

127. *Le Peuple Breton*, June 1988, p.2.

128. *Le Peuple Breton*, December 1988, p.11.

129. *Le Peuple Breton*, June 1989, p.4.

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The regionalist strategy was successful in 1989, Simeoni campaigned for preference votes in Brittany, and the UDB worked in the European campaign in a positive way for the first time. Despite a strong abstention rate at the elections the *Verts*/EFA list easily surpassed the 5% threshold. The list gained 10.6% in France overall, with better than average regional results in Brittany with 12.2%, and Corsica with 15.5%. These were the list's best regional scores outside Alsace, and enabled the regionalists to claim the venture a success.<sup>130</sup>

Given the previous history of electoral failure amongst regionalist parties in France this first success by Simeoni was encouraging, though it will probably stand as a one-off. Though the regionalist position has remained constant - still able to form an alliance - that of the *Verts* has changed considerably. The *Verts* had originally been denied representation in the European Parliament because of the divisions within the environmental movement that produced competing Green lists in 1984. The *Verts* strategy in 1989 required an alliance with other parties to avoid falling below the threshold as in 1984. However the reconciliation of moderates and fundamentalists within the environmental movement, and the development of alliances between the *Verts* and *Generation Ecologie* (GE) for the 1993 legislative elections, may have removed any need for an electoral alliance with the regionalists in 1994. Both the *Verts* and GE gained 6 seats each at the regional elections in Brittany in 1992, with a combined share of the vote of 15.6%.<sup>131</sup> This result showed the combined potential of the two parties, which far surpassed anything that could be gained from a renewed alliance with the regionalists. This prospect was evident from the fact that the regionalist parties in Brittany ran together in the 1992 regional elections, bringing a rapprochement between the UDB and POBL. This electoral alliance was notable, but did not lead to success. The two parties only achieved an average of 2% in Brittany, in spite of expectations that inter-regionalist co-operation would yield electoral representation.

After the 1989 European elections, the UDB continued to play on the European aspects of its appeal and programme. The party's Congress at Plestin in 1990 reaffirmed its commitment to develop European and international contacts and internationalise the horizons of the Breton movement. The UDB's efforts to deal with the economic changes brought about by the Single European Act and with the political changes of the post-cold war period led to the adoption of environmental

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130. Analysis of European election results in France by Michel Nicholas, Department of Political Science, University of Rennes II: *Le Peuple Breton*, August/September 1989, p.9.

131. *Le Monde*, 24th March 1992, p.8.

## *The Breton Movement and Europe*

and pacifist themes. The UDB's *Plan Ecologique Breton* was produced to develop an environmental critique of EC economic and social policy, and there were proposals to reduce defence spending and reverse the development of the military and defence industry in Brittany.<sup>132</sup>

### *EMU, Maastricht and the 1992 Referendum*

The issue of Economic and Monetary Union also offered some political opportunities to the UDB. The party called for direct regional representation in the EC and the establishment of a Senate within the European Parliament to provide a forum for regional representatives.<sup>133</sup> The party also sponsored a conference in Nantes on the European question to discuss regional autonomy within the EC, and the role of regionalism and regional governments in Europe.<sup>134</sup> This concern for a strong regional role in the EC did not translate into support for provisions in the Maastricht Treaty. The UDB interpreted the Treaty as providing opportunities for regional participation, but limiting regional autonomy as it was central government which would decide upon regional representation in the EC.<sup>135</sup> In addition, the weak, consultative nature of the Committee of the Regions undermined its autonomous role.

Apart from regional aspects within the Maastricht Treaty, other items dealing with economic and political union were not supported by the UDB. The party saw economic integration through the single market leading to improved employment opportunities in some areas, but continued economic decline in peripheral Brittany. The single market and EMU would also increase the economic domination of the centre, with greater economic inequalities between centre and periphery.<sup>136</sup> Non-economic aspects of the Treaty were also suspect in the UDB's eyes. The Community's desire to involve itself in cultural and educational issues was viewed as a potential threat. The Maastricht Treaty committed the EC to developing and promoting "the European dimension in education, particularly through the teaching and dissemination of the languages of the Member States" and also the "improvement of the knowledge and dissemination of the culture and history of the European peoples".<sup>137</sup> The UDB remained suspicious of EC competences in these

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132. *Le Peuple Breton*, December 1990, p.11.

133. *Le Peuple Breton*, June 1991, p.19.

134. *Le Peuple Breton*, December 1991, p.2.

135. *Le Peuple Breton*, January 1992, p.4: making reference to article 198a, "Treaty on European Union", Conference of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, 7th February 1992, p.111.

136. *Le Peuple Breton*, July/August 1992, p.12.

137. Articles 126 and 128, Treaty on European Union, *Op. cit.*, 1992, pp.60-3.



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areas, and saw them as having the potential for standardisation and uniformity, through aiding majority languages at the expense of minority languages. By moving into these cultural/linguistic areas the EC may be entering into 'Europe-building', a contemporary example of nation-building. It may not work to the benefit of one particular majority language over another, but it does have implications for minority languages.

Despite dissenting from large parts of the Maastricht Treaty, the UDB did not campaign against it during the referendum in September 1992. The UDB's response to the referendum was domestic and tactical. Opposition to the Treaty would have made them appear anti-European and isolationist, and lead to depiction as "archaic nationalists" rather than European federalists.<sup>138</sup> This problem of political identity led the party to recommend that voters cast a blank ballot in the referendum. The domestic criticism of voting against Maastricht which would appear locally in the media, to which a microparty could not respond, was seen to make opposing the Treaty very risky. Like other nationalist and regionalist parties, the desire to avoid being accused of being anti-European was important. The party didn't want to face the situation in which opposition to Maastricht was interpreted as opposition to European integration.<sup>139</sup>

The Maastricht Treaty referendum seemed to contain more threats than opportunities for the UDB. The referendum developed as a plebiscite on the Mitterrand Presidency, which the leftist UDB would not wish to assist, and involved a degree of French nationalism that was not to the party's taste. Even if the party had swallowed its fears of appearing anti-European to campaign against the Treaty it would have found itself sharing platforms with the *Parti Communiste* and the *Front National* which would have further isolated the party from the moderate left, and benefited the parties of the right. The Maastricht Treaty gained strong support in the referendum in Brittany though, achieving 59.7% support, the second highest regional result in France. The effect of the UDB's blank ballot strategy is difficult to judge, since such a microparty would have had little impact in any case. But the experience does show the party's limited room for manoeuvre and inability to take advantage of the political opportunity structure offered by the Maastricht Treaty.

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138. *Le Peuple Breton*, July/August 1992, p.13.

139. *Ibid.*, p.12.

## 5. Conclusion

This analysis of the attitudes and behaviour of the Breton movement to European integration has shown that the issue has been important to various political actors within the movement. However the persistent weakness of the Breton parties has meant that the European issue has been a frequent but rather ineffective political linkage. Indeed the frequency of the linkage was one of the most stable things about the Breton parties. The parties have been too weak to deploy the linkage as a *political resource* beyond using it as a means to ward off accusations of separatism and isolationism. This in spite of various referendum and electoral opportunities to utilise the issue. The electoral system in particular was responsible for this deficiency, keeping the Breton parties out of national and European competition and preventing them from being able to pick up *second order* benefits from European contests.

The issue of international federalism has been the enduring linkage of the movement, rather than just that of regional autonomy itself. In this respect, the Bretons were responding to their own agenda and to that of other federalist movements and writers in the twentieth century. The early and consistent linkages with European integration suggest that the Bretons have *affective* rather than *utilitarian* attitudes to the question of European union, even if they have sometimes made the linkage in an instrumental fashion.<sup>140</sup>

This genuine concern for Europe has brought the Breton movement very little positive political gain. It has generated strong intellectual positions which have aided the philosophical case for a *Europe of the regions*, and created two transnational regionalist organisations, but it has not helped the Breton parties to develop. The fragmentation of the Breton movement and the nature of the French electoral system have been partly responsible for the failure of Breton regionalism to develop at the electoral level - leaving the movement frozen in the same position since the 1920s.<sup>141</sup> The European question may have been most significant for the Breton movement in allowing it to play a role in developing dual federalism and a *Europe of the Regions*, and have a role in regionalist politics out of all proportion to its size.

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140. For more on these two alternative attitudinal responses to the EC see; Miles Hewstone, *Understanding Attitudes to the European Community*.

141. The Breton movement would still seem to be placed around phase A to B of Hroch's threefold typology, occasionally making it to B then regressing back into A: See Hroch, *Op. cit.*

## 5

# **The Volksunie And Europe: Federalisation and Europeanisation**

“The Flemish people must acquire as complete as possible self-government and this can be achieved in Belgium via federalism. The Volksunie not only demands self-government for Flanders. All peoples have the right to self-government. People’s nationalism leads to international understanding. A united Europe must base its co-operation on the freedom and right of self-determination of the peoples.”<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Introduction**

The *Volksunie* (VU) is one of the most successful regionalist parties in West European politics, though it has received very little analysis. The success of the party is evident through the fact that it has achieved and maintained national political representation since its inception in 1954, participated in two coalition governments in 1977-8 and 1988-91, which is an exceptional situation for a regionalist party, and played a considerable role in generating the electoral dynamic behind the institutional changes that created Flemish institutions and federalised the Belgian state. These successes have, to an extent, led to its undoing and this theme will be examined later.

The case of the VU is a different instance of nationalism/regionalism to those presented in preceding chapters. Some of the differences are because of the political and historical context of Flanders, while others relate to the political development of regional government within the region. In the first instance Flanders, unlike the other cases, is not a peripheral region within Belgium, or within the European Community. It is geographically located at the centre, but also operates as an interface region between two larger national units. This interface provides a very different context for the Flemish national movement: it is a fragment detached from its national community in the Netherlands, which means there is potential for *irredentism* as well as autonomy.

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1. Hugo Schiltz, *Volksunie: Identity, History, Programme*, p.3.

*Pan-Netherlandism* gained political expression in two main periods: first, following the first world war, through the *Activist* movement (who had sought maximum autonomy and had been prepared to collaborate with the German occupying forces) which proposed the destruction of Belgium in favour of a unificationist Dutch-speaking state;<sup>2</sup> and second, the *Verdinaso* movement in the 1930s, which adopted the goal of pan-Netherlandism from 1934.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, the Flemish have a distinct role within the Belgian state. The Flemish community are the numerical majority within Belgium,<sup>4</sup> with an advanced industrial economy that compares favourably with the economically strongest regions of the EC.<sup>5</sup> The politics of the Flemish majority situation is structured by the fact that it is not all territorially concentrated. The sizeable Flemish minority within Brussels has made territorial *independence* unattractive as it would lead to the abandonment of this minority amongst a Francophone-dominant community.<sup>6</sup> The VU has placed itself as the defender of this minority and used this issue extensively in Belgian politics.

Flanders has three further distinctions which mark it out from other cases in this study. First, it has been involved in the Benelux union, a customs union with the other low countries: with Luxembourg from 1922, and with the Netherlands since 1943-4. Second, Belgium was a founder member of the European Community in 1957. Belgium is therefore a small, interdependent country, requiring some *external support system* in both the political and economic spheres, to sustain its independence. But it has experienced, and widely accepted, two different types of external support in Benelux and the EC. This experience is important as it shapes the political opportunity structure, even if it had no great role in the development of Flemish nationalism. Though it provided a useful external support for the autonomy issue in Flanders, the international context has been subordinate to the political and demographic context of Belgium that militated against Flemish independence.

The third distinction between Flanders and other regions is evident in the institutional development of regionalism. The *federalisation* of the Belgian state has

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2. "The Ten Commandments of the Flemish Nationalist", an article in the *Activist* magazine "Vlaanderen", 1922, document 38, in Theo Hermans (ed), *The Flemish Movement: A Documentary History 1780-1990*, p.262.

3. Jean Stengers, "Belgium" in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber (eds), *The European Right*, p.151.

4. The total population of Belgium in 1985 was 9,858,000, which comprised 5,673,000 in Flanders, 3,207,000 in Wallonie and 978,000 in Brussels, *Eurostat - Regions Statistical Yearbook* (Luxembourg: European Communities, 1988), p.26.

5. *Ibid.*

6. It is generally estimated that 20% of the population of Brussels is comprised of Dutch-speakers, though exact figures are difficult as the linguistic census was removed in the 1960s: see Group Coudenbergh, *The New Belgian Institutional Framework*, p.7.

been slow but continuous, has produced a substantial reform of the state and the establishment of strong regional institutions through a process of constitutional reform that developed in five stages from 1970 to 1993. The successful federalisation of Belgium in this period has had significant implications for both the European dimension and the VU as shall be demonstrated below.

Unlike Scotland, and to a lesser extent Wales, there has been little opinion polling on the EC and constitutional questions in Flanders. The small pieces of evidence that have emerged tell very little about popular opinion on constitutional questions in Flanders. One author employed a number of opinion surveys in a lengthy study of Belgian politics and society and touched on both institutional and European questions, but these produced no great surprises. On European union, different polls taken in 1957, 1962 and 1975 all showed majority support for union, with no major cleavages until 1975, when it appears that the Walloon and Brussels populations favoured European political union and stressed the importance of the EC dimension much more strongly than the Flemish.<sup>7</sup> There were wide margins between the Flemish and Francophones on this question, but its significance is difficult to interpret. More significant were evident changes in support for the unitary state as opposed to federation between 1975 and 1982: the Flemish population moved towards support for federalism, while the Francophones moved away from it.<sup>8</sup>

Traditionally, Belgian politics has been structured by three competing political cleavages. Two of these cleavages, religion and class, have been subject to considerable *institutionalisation* within the political system. The third cleavage, that of language has been rather unstable and weakly institutionalised.<sup>9</sup> Since the formation of the Belgian state in 1830, politics was organised between clericals and anti-clericals, capital and labour and latterly between Francophones and Flemish.<sup>10</sup> The religious and class conflicts remain influential, but it is the linguistic cleavage that has become increasingly politicised since the extension of the franchise in 1919 that established universal male suffrage.<sup>11</sup>

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7. Kenneth McRae, *Conflict and Compromise in Multilingual Societies: Belgium*, p.119.

8. *Ibid.*

9. Derek Urwin, "Social Cleavages and Political Parties in Belgium: Problems of Institutionalisation", *Political Studies*, Vol.18, No.3, 1970, p.332.

10. Val Lorwin, "Belgium: Religion, Class and Language in National Politics", in Robert Dahl (ed), *Political Oppositions in Western Democracies*, p.147.

11. Wilfried Dewachter, "Changes in Particratic: The Belgian Party System 1944 to 1986", in Hans Daalder (ed), *Party Systems in Western Europe*, p.287.

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The changes in the franchise from 1890-94 had initially provided an electoral opportunity for Flemish nationalists in two different ways: first, it gave the predominantly Flemish Catholic Party an electoral dominance in the Belgian state, and second, it provided the opportunity for the formation of a separate Flemish national party. The suffrage extensions enabled the Flemish Christian People's Party to have a small measure of electoral success from 1894 to 1918.<sup>12</sup> The need for a separate party was more evident following the introduction of proportional representation in 1899 which undermined the Flemish role in politics through removing the dominance of the Catholic Party in the party system. The next franchise extensions of 1918, following the politicisation of the Flemish in the first world war, brought the establishment of the *Frontpartij*, which competed successfully as a semi-confessional Flemish national party during the 1920s.<sup>13</sup> Europe was not a notable issue during this period, though the external dimension and its implications were evident during and after WW1.

### **2. The Development of the Volksunie**

The electoral record of the VU since its formation in 1954 has been impressive. The party's performance was aided by a system of proportional representation that supported small parties through the redistribution of preference votes at the provincial level.

The theme of European integration has been evident within the VU's programme since the 1960s, though it was given very little prominence until the party competed in European elections, and developed a motor role in the establishment of the European Free Alliance. These two issues were the most important for the party, especially within the context of the domestic federalisation of Belgium.

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12. Lode Wils, "Introduction", in Hermans, *Op. cit.*, p.14.

13. See Sheperd Clough, *A History of the Flemish Movement in Belgium*, p.230.

**Table 5.1 Electoral Support for the Volksunie 1958-1991 (First Chamber)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>% Flanders</b>	<b>% Belgium</b>	<b>Seats</b>
1958	3.4	2.0	1
1961	6.0	3.5	5
1965	11.6	6.7	12
1968	16.9	9.8	20
1971	18.8	11.1	21
1974	16.8	10.2	22
1977	16.3	10.0	20
1978	11.5	7.0	14
1981	15.9	9.8	20
1985	12.7	7.9	16
1987	12.9	8.0	16
1991	9.3	5.9	10

**The Formation of the Volksunie**

The VU was formed in Brussels by a group of nationalists in 1954.<sup>14</sup> This was not the first effort to form a Flemish national party in the post-war period. The non-confessional VU was preceded by efforts to form confessional Flemish parties in 1949 and 1954.<sup>15</sup> The *Vlaamse Concentratie* had been established as an electoral list in 1949, by dissident nationalists from the Christian Democratic Party, who attempted to create a new Flemish national party in spite of the post-war repression of the Flemish movement by the Belgian state.<sup>16</sup> Much of the effort of party formation was conducted privately as a consequence of the collaboration of extremist sections of the Flemish movement during the wartime occupation. As in Brittany, the nationalists suffered from their identification with extremists who had become prominent, but not particularly popular, during the German occupation.<sup>17</sup>

The post-war suppression of the Flemish movement, and the overreaction of the state, affected the programme of the *Vlaamse Concentratie* as well as its formation.

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14. Toon Van Overstraaten, *Op De Barrikaden: Het Verhaal van de Vlaamse Natie in wording*, p.20.

15. R.E.M. Irving, *The Christian Democratic Parties of Western Europe*, p.168.

16. John Fitzmaurice, *The Politics of Belgium*, p.177.

17. Maurice-Pierre Herremans, "La Volksunie I", *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No.148, Brussels, 4th May 1962, p.7.

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The party demanded an end to the suppression of the movement and an amnesty for those accused of collaboration with the Germans. These short-term goals were supplemented by the more substantial objectives of securing linguistic reforms within Belgium: the establishment and freezing of a language border between the two communities, linguistic protection for the Flemish minority in Brussels, and the placement of geographical limits upon the Brussels metropolitan area. These linguistic aims were presented along with the explicitly political aim of reforming the Belgian state into a federation.<sup>18</sup>

The *Vlaamse Concentratie* gained 104,000 votes on this platform in 1949, and 2% of the Belgian vote. The party did not surpass the *threshold of representation* however, and this failure led to the party's demise. Though the Flemish movement's first post-war electoral organisation failed, the issues raised by the party remained, along with the voters and members who supported it. Those involved in the organisation were active in presenting Flemish national lists at the municipal elections in 1952. On this occasion nationalists were successful at gaining local electoral representation in Antwerp. This success provided a base for the new Flemish movement and led to the first nationally elected Flemish representative in the post-war period at the 1954 general election. In the early 1950s the Flemish nationalist activists<sup>19</sup> continued to follow the Christian Democratic orientation of the *Vlaamse Concentratie*. The strength of the Christian Social Party in this period made Flanders a one party dominant system.<sup>20</sup> This context, in addition to the fact that some of the new Flemish activists had been dissidents from the Christian Social Party, accounted for the confessionalism of the pre-*Volksunie* parties. It was most evident in the 1954 elections when the Flemish nationalists designated themselves the *Christelijke Vlaamse Volksunie*: a throwback to the party formed in the 1890s,<sup>21</sup> and to the *Frontpartij* formed at the close of the first world war which employed religious symbolism in its nationalism.

This second nationalist party achieved the electoral success that eluded the first. Herman Wagemans was elected as a deputy for Antwerp in 1954, with the party gaining 2.2% of the vote in Belgium, worth 3.9% in Flanders. Wagemans was

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18. Marcel Laloire, "Les Partis Belges", *Res Publica*, Vol.8, No.4, 1961, p.348.

19. The term activist is used in the general political sense to describe someone who is actively engaged in politics. It is not a reference to Activists or Activism: the extreme wing of the Flemish movement who sought to use the German occupation during the first world war to promote self-government for Flanders.

20. For a definition of the concept see Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*.

21. The *Christelijke Vlaamse Volksunie* is best understood as "The Flemish Christian People's Union".



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closely involved in the transition from the confessional party to the deconfessionalised VU that occurred shortly after the general election.<sup>22</sup> Though Wagemans retired from politics after one term, the VU successfully retained his Antwerp seat through the election of the party President, Frans van der Elst, at the general election in 1958. After retaining its singular representation, in spite of a slight decline in electoral support, the VU continued to maintain its threshold of representation at a significant level in every subsequent election.

### *The Volksunie in Flemish Society*

The VU was the primary electoral expression of the Flemish movement, yet existed within a subculture of other organisations and associations. These complementary organisations were part of the VU's support network,<sup>23</sup> through supporting and legitimising issues of concern to the party rather than the party itself. It includes the Flemish movement organisation itself - the *Vlaamse Volksbeweging* - which was established in 1954 as the organisational umbrella for the Flemish movement,<sup>24</sup> with a number of other associations such as the *Leuvense Studenten Verbond*, the Flemish universities and media and the political foundations such as the *Davidfonds*, the *Willemsfonds* and the *Vermeylensfonds*.<sup>25</sup> These organisations did not support the VU, indeed the latter foundations were formed by its political competitors, but they provided the means for wider discussion and debate on the Flemish question and contributed to the Flemish *milieu*.

Whilst participating in a wider Flemish *subculture*, the VU sought to develop its own particular political space and create the means to deliver its own message to the Flemish population rather than rely upon other elements of the subculture. Belgium, like the Netherlands had a strong degree of *verzuiling* or pillarisation,<sup>26</sup> with different elements of society having distinctive subcultural organisations that limited social integration across subcultures but supported it inside them. At the organisational level of society this manifested itself in the vertical role of the party in health and insurance companies, the press, trades unions, etc, with the traditional parties organising their own variants of these bodies. The VU, though opposed to

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22. Herremans, May 1962, *Op. cit.*, p.9.

23. Bert Klandermans (editor), *Social Movement Organizations in Europe and the United States of America*, p.305.

24. Maurice-Pierre Herremans, "Le Mouvement Populaire Flamand (De Vlaamse Volksbeweging)", *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No.130, Brussels, November 1961, p.3; and Herremans, "Le Mouvement Populaire Flamand", *Res Publica*, Vol.4, No.2, 1962, pp.195-7.

25. Fitzmaurice, *Op. cit.*, p.208.

26. See Arend Lijphart, *The Politics of Accommodation*.

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the traditional party *verzuiling*, had its own associations and insurance funds,<sup>27</sup> and its own party newspaper since 1955.<sup>28</sup> The importance of a sympathetic party paper for an emerging political organisation was obvious,<sup>29</sup> especially within the context of a party-oriented media which reflected the traditional subcultures and political cleavages within the Flemish community. The VU used its own press as a campaigning tool, but also as a means to diminish the role of the traditional subcultures. In this sense, the party can be considered as a *modernising* force.

### *The Expansion of the Party*

The early 1960s were the growth phase of the VU. In this period the party began to achieve sustained electoral success. Until 1961 the party had regarded itself as a *pressure group* rather than an electoral organisation, even though it had contested elections.<sup>30</sup> The party began to move away from the linguistic and cultural agenda to address socio-economic and institutional questions. This broadening of the base of the party brought electoral success, though not amongst the social groups that the party had targetted as shall become clear below. The 1961 general election brought the first substantial success for the VU. The party contested all of the Flemish electoral *arrondissements* and Brussels, gaining 3.5% of the vote in Belgium, 6% in Flanders, and five deputies and two senators. The enlargement of the party's parliamentary delegation, from one to seven, brought parliamentary activity and publicity across a range of policy areas, accompanied by extra-parliamentary action more consistent with the organisation's role in the Flemish movement.

The VU campaigned heavily on the linguistic demography of Brussels following the 1961 election. The VU and other Flemish parties regarded the expansion of bilingual Brussels into Flemish communities as an 'oil stain' that would continue to spread.<sup>31</sup> The VU called for the freezing of the language border in Belgium, and an end to the linguistic censuses which could bring linguistic changes to Flemish communities. Such censuses were seen to benefit the French language, as French language education had higher status and utility because of its primacy in higher status

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27. Herremans, May 1962, *Op. cit.*, p.12.

28. *De Volksunie* was published from 1955-65, when its name was changed to *Wij - Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, the paper's circulation grew in the early 1960s as the party increased its support, see "La Presse Périodique Radicale Flamand", *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No.331-332, Brussels, September 1966, p.9.

29. Maurice Duverger, *Op. cit.*, p.45.

30. Party President Frans Van der Elst gave the pre-1961 party this description, referring to the VU as a *drukkingsgroep*, Maurits Pierre Herremans, "La Volksunie II", CH du CRISP No. 169, October 1962, p.15.

31. For consideration of the Brussels question see Martine De Ridder and Luis Ricardo Fraga, "The Brussels Issue in Belgian Politics", *West European Politics*, vol.9, No.3, 1988, pp.376-93.

occupations.<sup>32</sup> This problem was dealt with through the division of Belgium into four linguistic regions in 1961: a unilingual Dutch-speaking region in Flanders, a unilingual Francophone region in Wallonie, a German language region in the East and a bilingual Brussels region.

The early 1960s was the period of party-building, with the VU engaged in orthodox parliamentary and electoral activity and in protest politics. Working in parallel with the *Vlaamse Volksbeweging* and the *Vlaams Aktiecomité Brussel en Taalgrens*, the VU campaigned vigorously on the language question, and adopted a range of new political campaigning techniques and activities that were not exploited by the traditional parties. They enabled the party to appear as a new, vibrant force in politics - the essence of modernity - and mobilise its sympathisers into forming a mass party organisation. Such mobilisation was conditioned by the fact that the party lacked the institutional means to achieve its goals, and had arisen in a social movement milieu.

Its role as a *new* party and political *outsider* made it necessary to develop an autonomous mass base for the party. Such non-traditional activities as door canvassing, festivals, cultural events and annual *landdagen* (political meetings) generated political momentum and a mass membership base. Such mobilisations were also very effective mechanisms for socialising and utilising the expanding party membership. It gave the VU a very high and active profile in Flanders which was to pay dividends in future electoral contests.

As the party developed its organisational and electoral base it also sought to expand its political and economic programme. The original party programme was fairly limited in content and detail. It called for the federalisation of the Belgian state; the freezing of the language border between the two communities; the suppression of the linguistic census; a special statute for Brussels; and amnesty for those accused of collaboration during the war; and the industrialisation and development of the Flemish economy.<sup>33</sup> Support for federalism was the centrepiece of the VU programme and the primary goal of its *volksnationalisme*. This objective was embodied in the party's congress resolutions in 1961. The VU rejected the "nationalism of the state", and held up federalism as the best means to achieve "a

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32. Jean Ellen Kane, "Flemish and Wallon Nationalism: Devolution of a Previously Unitary State", in Uri Ra'anan and John Roche (eds), *Ethnic Resurgence in Modern Democratic States*, p.131.

33. Herremans, October 1962, *Op. cit.*, p.11.

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decisive and global solution to the Flemish question”.<sup>34</sup> Similar to the Breton movement, and other European regionalists, the VU sought a global rather than a unilateral solution to the desire for self-determination in Belgium: Federalism for Flanders also meant federalism for Wallonie.

The party’s commitment to federalism contained a European aspect, with both the domestic and European dimensions intended to distance the party from state-nationalism as practiced by unitary states, and from the more extreme variants of nationalism that appeared in Europe in the twentieth century. The Flemish movement experienced two phases of extreme nationalism in this century, with the development of the *Vlaams Nationaal Verbond* (VNV) in the 1930s and the establishment of *Vlaams Blok* in 1978. In the eyes of the VU these were not expressions of democratic and participatory *Volksnationalisme*, but of extreme nationalism and intolerance.<sup>35</sup> The VU sought to develop its anti-state and non-exclusive nationalism as a means to escape the past history of the Flemish movement.

### *The Mechelen Congress*

In early 1960s the VU transformed itself from a pressure group into a party, mostly through the programmatic expansion of 1963. The Mechelen Congress of that year developed several organisational and policy initiatives. The Congress approved proposals to democratise the party’s internal structures to encourage local participation by activists and ordinary party members, and develop a *decentralised* mass party. The Congress also discussed the state reform process, the issue of self-employment and the socio-economic development of Flanders.

The socio-economic agenda debated at the Congress was the VU’s first substantial attempt to develop a platform beyond its primary issue-agenda of linguistic and institutional questions. Some of the programme originated in the party’s socio-economic workgroup that met since 1961 to flesh out the VU’s federal programme with specific policy initiatives on the economy, the role of centralised financial investment in Brussels and Francophone dominance of the finance industry.<sup>36</sup>

In assessing the socio-economic position of Flanders the VU paid particular attention to the level of foreign ownership in the economy, and by foreign they meant non-

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34. *Ibid.*, p.20.

35. See Hugo de Schaupheliere and Yannis Thanassekos (eds), *Extreem Rechts in West Europa*; and Stengers, *Op. cit.*

36. Sociaal Economische Werkgroep van de Volksunie, *Voor de Hal Driemaal Zal Kraaien*, p.4.

Flemish; the levels of employee mobility, as a reflection of career and geographical factors; and the need for wider industrialisation across Flanders, on a decentralised basis, in order to overcome the structural imbalances of the regional economy. There was particular concern within the party about the unemployment level in Flanders, and the specific problems of the coalfields in the Limburg province in the Northeast of the region. Federalism was presented as the institutional mechanism to address these problems, with regional rather than national government having responsibility for structural interventions to aid Flemish economic development. The VU depicted the unitary state as failing the Flemish economy: federalism was required to put it right. Under the VU programme such regional intervention would decentralise industry and provide a level of economic democracy in Flemish society.<sup>37</sup>

The importance of the Mechelen programme, the first major policy development undertaken by the VU, was obvious from the opportunity it gave the party to broaden its electoral base and reach out beyond those concerned with cultural and linguistic issues to wider social groups. The socio-economic programme was an attempt to gain and sustain a mass, working class electorate, which was then mobilised by socialism and Social Catholicism. The programme also acted to legitimise and reinforce the VU's demand for federalism: a goal enhanced by the presentation of economic grievances.<sup>38</sup> The programme provided an economic rationale for federalism, and also gave the electorate and media a clear picture of the prospective political and economic position of Flanders under a federal system.

Though the programme was intended to challenge the working class electorate of the *Parti Social Chretien* (PSC), its contents actually resembled that of the *Parti Socialiste* (PS). The new socio-economic approach proved popular within the party, and formed the core of its electoral programme in 1965. The resolutions adopted at the Mechelen Congress were pressed into service for the election campaign, and for the VU's ten year economic development programme for Flanders which was published in 1965.<sup>39</sup>

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37. "Le Congrès de Malines de la Volksunie", *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No.230, 7th February 1964, pp.3-13.

38. The role of economic grievances acting as a stimulus to regionalism and nationalism was part of Birch's study of nationalism within the UK: Anthony Birch, *Political Integration and Disintegration in the British Isles*.

39. Sociaal Economische Werkgroep, *Ontwikkelingsplan voor Vlaanderen 1965-75*.

### *The 1965 Election*

The VU was successful in the 1965 general election: it was the first occasion in which the party broke through in substantial numbers. The VU gained 12 seats in the Chamber, with 6.7% of the vote in Belgium, 11.6% in Flanders. Ever since this election the party has managed to sustain parliamentary representation in double figures. In the post-1965 period the VU extended its extraparliamentary activities to build up working class support. The Mechelen Programme therefore encouraged the radicalisation of the VU on socio-economic issues. The party was involved in organising demonstrations and campaigns on unemployment and the factory closures. The VU was particularly involved in the campaign against closures in the mining industry in Zwartburg in Limburg Province.<sup>40</sup> It committed resources and activists to the campaign to save the coal industry. It was able to exploit this issue as the government made little effort to produce a reconversion plan to aid the region's re-development following industrial closures. The VU ran intense campaigns in the Limburg area, where it was and remained electorally weak, but it seems to have had little effect on the VU's support.

Though the party vigorously pursued a working class electorate its support remained predominantly middle class. The social base of the VU electorate in this period closely resembled that of the Liberals in the region: with support from professional groups employed in the private sector in Brussels who had not attained career mobility through the linguistic reforms of 1963, and disenchanted Christian Social voters in 1965 and 1968.<sup>41</sup>

The VU may have been in search of a working class electorate but it had not found one. These events were the beginning of the development of a progressive agenda inside the VU however: encouraged by the rise and political involvement of a post-1968 generation within the party. This generation made its way through the party's youth organisations into politics, and had some impact upon the party in the period from the 1970s onwards. At the same time as these groups entered the party, an earlier generation of activists also gravitated towards leadership positions. This group, the *governmentalists*, advocated the professionalisation of the party and a departure from pressure group politics. This tendency was influential in the 1970s

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40. See the articles "Vlaams en Sociaal" and "Limburg", in *Wij - Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, 5th February 1966, pp.9 and 24.

41. Keith Hill, "Belgium", in Richard Rose (ed), *Electoral Behaviour: A Comparative Handbook*, pp.48-51.

through senior figures such as Hugo Schiltz and Maurits Coppieters, and succeeded in leading the party towards *governmentalism* through participation in Belgian coalitions.<sup>42</sup>

Though the socio-economic programme did not bring a substantial number of working class votes, it was important for three reasons. First, it enabled the VU to compete with other parties on an equal footing without slipping into an ideological group that alienated potential supporters. The dominance of the Christian Social tradition in Flanders made this enduring cross-class approach particularly necessary. Programmatic expansion was also beneficial because it allowed the party to debate both specific and general policy issues with opponents. Second, it allowed the party to campaign at various levels for a wider range of issues than linguistic and institutional reform. Third, it acted to substantiate the party's goal of federalism, and show how institutional change would address contemporary economic problems.

The socio-economic programme also demonstrated a more radical and modernising aspect to the VU. There was some degree of antipathy towards the free market system and a desire to balance it through social support and intervention. There was particular concern over economic concentration and the role of big business.<sup>43</sup> In the mid-1960s the VU contained a leftist group and a more Christian Democratic wing. However, although the party moved to the left on the socio-economic agenda it was not sufficient to keep some of the former group within the party. A small leftist splinter departed in 1964 as the VU adopted a cross-class front. Though they formed leftist nationalist lists in Brussels in the 1965 general election they had little effect and faded away.<sup>44</sup>

### **3. The Volksunie And Europe: Europeanisation And Federalisation**

The VU has been consistently successful in avoiding the conflicts over European integration experienced by other parties in this study. Indeed the issue has never caused difficulties for the VU, and only been mobilised in the period from the 1980s. In contrast to the UK, Belgium was a founder member of the European Coal and Steel Community and the European Economic Community. It was involved in the inner circle of European union since the 1950s, and the issue was greeted by

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42. See Hugo Gijssels and Jos Vander Velpen, *Het Vlaams Blok 1938-1988: Het Verdriet van Vlaanderen*, p.43.

43. See Willy Cobbart, *Welvaart en Vrijheid voor Iederen: De Sociaal-Economische Vizie van de Volksunie*.

44. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, 1966, Op. cit., pp.10-11.

## *The Volksunie And Europe*

*cross-party consensus* rather than conflict. This consensus *depoliticised* the issue and reduced the utility of the EC as a political opportunity structure during most of the VU's existence. The opportunities which came the way of the SNP and PC, in terms of referenda and exclusion from the EC, did not present themselves to the VU.

The *demobilisation* of the EC issue in Belgian politics did not mean that it was totally disregarded by Flemish nationalists. Rather, the EC was used to legitimise federalism. Like the Breton movement, the VU was both regionalist and federalist. It sought to transform and transcend the nation-state. European union was viewed as the desired and logical endpoint of the federalisation process in Belgium, with the demise of the unitary nation-state. However, this position was not the escape from separatism of other regionalist and nationalist parties. The position of the Flemish minority in Brussels and the federalist ethos of the VU removed the independence option, though it started to appear in political debate after the 1991 election as a result of federal reform and European integration. In common with the Breton movement, the issue of European union was endorsed in an *affective* way by the VU, rather than just in a *utilitarian* way. The party was not shy at making the linkages between domestic and European federalism however.

The earliest *political linkage* by the VU was a resolution adopted by the party congress in 1961. The VU passed a resolution linking the two themes of federalism and European union in the Belgian context, which stated that

“an ethnic-federalist base is a condition necessary for the promotion of co-operation and European unification, because only federalism gives the guarantees of survival to ethnic communities within a supranational community”.<sup>45</sup>

This definition appeared defensive in its outlook, based upon a purer nationalist conception of regionalism. Federalism was intended to develop domestically and then contribute to a decentralised European union rather than one constructed upon unitary states. This decentralist aspect led the VU towards a *Europe of the Regions* position, to assist in the construction of the European Free Alliance, and, in the contemporary period, to oppose sections of the Maastricht Treaty.

Whilst the VU was enthusiastic about European union in the broad sense, it had reservations about its specific institutional and political form. Concern was expressed at the Mechelen Congress about the potential of European integration

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45. Herremans, May 1962, *Op. cit.*, p.21.



producing homogenisation, standardisation and centralisation rather than a new supranational identity. The VU did not see the EC producing a specific 'European' identity or the United States of Europe creating a cultural melting-pot.<sup>46</sup> The party was more concerned with the political and economic dimensions of European integration than with language or identity. Curiously, though essentially regionalist, the VU at this time made a claim for equal status with other small nations.<sup>47</sup> This proposal indicated that the VU expected European integration to produce a convergence in the powers held by regions and states, yet also that it did not want to set limits on its own political goals. There was some recognition that integration could work to the detriment of cultural and linguistic minorities, though this was more illustrative of Flemish concern with the Dutch-speaking minority in Brussels than with the Flemish in general. As Flemish is part of a wider language community with the Netherlands, the linguistic impact of the EC is smaller than that on non-state minority languages. The VU tended to use the European question to tilt at Francophone dominance in Brussels, pointing out the unsuitability of the city to be the European capital which was not suitably pluralistic and protective of minorities.<sup>48</sup>

Though there has been widespread coverage of European and international affairs in the VU newspaper since its establishment in 1955, there was little coverage of the European Community dimension until the 1980s. The party did, however, respond to a number of developments in the EC consistent with its federalist stance. The Luxembourg crisis in the EC in 1965, generated by the reluctance of President De Gaulle to cede further sovereign powers to the Community, was one instance. The VU was critical of De Gaulle's position, seeing it as an illustration of the problems of statism and state power within the institutions of the EC.<sup>49</sup> It brought an attack on *intergovernmentalism* and support for more equal and democratic participation.

The European issue had little further impact on the VU in the 1960s. The issues of Belgian constitutional and linguistic reform were much more important. These questions predominated and the European issue was left fallow until 1969, though this one experience clearly illustrated the party's preference for federalism rather than intergovernmentalism as the guiding organisational principle for European union.

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46. *The Flemish in Today's Europe*, p.11.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, 1964, *Op. cit.*, p14.

49. *Wij - Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, 13th November 1965, p.7.

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The VU's preoccupation with domestic constitutional issues in this period was understandable. The party gained electoral popularity in the 1960s through combining linguistic, constitutional and socio-economic demands. Once the domestic constitutional questions began to be taken seriously by political competitors, and the VU gained an agenda-setting role, then this domestic orientation was dominant. This was the beginning of the process of *federalisation*, and the VU's attention became clearly focused on the institutional dimension.

### *The 1970 State Reforms*

The post-1968 Eyskens government of the Christian Social and Socialist parties adopted a constitutional reform programme which was partially implemented over the next few years. The central government itself was federalised, with the coalition having two Ministers for education, two Ministers for culture, and individual economic counsellors for Brussels, Flanders and Wallonie. This reform effectively regionalised the cabinet, and constitutional reforms institutionalised this development by establishing equal linguistic representation within the cabinet, though non-cabinet members of the government were not subject to this proportional arrangement. In future this differentiation, coupled to the expansion of regional government, was to allow the regional representation of the two main linguistic communities in the Council of Ministers at the EC level.

In addition the government divided the two houses of parliament into linguistic groups according to the territory they represented, with members from Brussels able to select their linguistic group. The 1970 constitutional reforms enshrined the designation of four linguistic regions into law, and developed special majority arrangements for amendments to these regions and their boundaries. Unilingualism was to be practiced in all territorial areas but those designated as bilingual. The special majority arrangements within the parliament also sought to ensure a degree of communal veto power to legislation. The constitutional reforms produced a special majority for future constitutional amendments, which would require that a majority of members of each language group be present in the chamber for voting, and that each group support a proposal by a two-thirds majority. This gave both the Flemish and the Francophone groups a veto power over future constitutional revisions, and meant that any future government legislation on state reform would require an enlarged coalition beyond the minimum threshold necessary for normal legislation.<sup>50</sup>

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50. In a lower chamber of 212 members a simple majority of at least 107 was sufficient for a coalition to sustain its legislative programme, concurrent special majorities altered this situation considerably, with substantial consequences for future coalition formation practices.

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The Chamber and Senate were also given an *alarm-bell* procedure, which allowed a special majority of each language group to suspend parliamentary business on certain occasions. This constitutional revision was designed to give protection to the numerical minority and prevent the Flemish majority dominating certain pieces of legislation. Politically controversial issues were to be referred to the cabinet for resolution.

These central and territorial changes were complemented by the creation of Cultural Councils and the legal establishment of provisions for the creation of regional governments in the 1970 reforms. Three Cultural Councils were created, for the Flemish, French and German languages. Each was given cultural autonomy, and the right to issue decrees with legislative force in culture, language and aspects of education. These powers were limited and shared with the centre, however, and the central government also retained a veto over Council legislation. The Councils for Dutch and French speakers were effectively centralised through both their representational and financial arrangements. The members of the Councils were members who had been elected to the national parliament and did not take the new institutions particularly seriously.<sup>51</sup> The new institutions did not enjoy political autonomy from the centre or any direct democratic aspect. Rather, they were merely the reproduction of the linguistic groups in the national parliament in two new formal bodies. Finance of these Councils remained with the centre, through block grants. This fiscal weakness did not make them very attractive to Council members either.

The constitutional reforms of 1970 also attempted to establish regional councils, with socio-economic powers, but it did not gain sufficient support in parliament. Cultural autonomy was the only concrete achievement of the Eyskens Government, though the legislation for regional councils was left intact for future implementation. The absence of regional autonomy on the federal model left the VU dissatisfied, and in a political position to demand more significant levels of autonomy for Flanders.

### *The New European Agenda*

This period of reform coincided with the development of the issue of European union within the VU. Despite an early linkage in 1961, the issue of federalism and Europe was not linked in any substantive and coherent way until the party congress in 1969. Here, the VU called for a “federation of European peoples and regions” and

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51. Anthony Mughan, “Belgium: All Periphery and No Centre”, in Yves Meny and Vincent Wright (eds), *Centre-Periphery Relations in Western Europe*, p286.

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for the democratisation of the European Parliament,<sup>52</sup> making this call more public in 1970.<sup>53</sup> This gap from 1961 to 1969 was indicative of the rhetorical nature of the issue, having symbolic importance for the VU, but little practical consequences within an essentially domestic political programme. The issue was easily deployed as a *political resource* but was not of any great prominence within the party programme.

The party took the Europe more seriously as a consequence of the development of the issue of economic and monetary union in the early 1970s.<sup>54</sup> As far as the VU was concerned the process of *deepening* within the EC required greater democratic participation and decentralisation, rather than limited institutional changes at the centre. The party used this development to outline the need for a decentralised federation,<sup>55</sup> building upon the intellectual position adopted by the VU senator and academic, Maurits Van Haegendoren. In contrast to the Breton movement, the development of an intellectual position on European federalism had some utility for the VU. It was readily applicable in parliamentary and electoral politics, as part of the process of domestic federalisation.

Van Haegendoren's position was consistent with other European regionalists, informed by dissatisfaction with the nation-state. He pointed to the functional and representational inadequacy of contemporary nation-states in dealing with major economic and security questions. The political context of the late twentieth century had removed the possibility of effective unilateral action by nation-states, but structures to replace it had not been sufficiently transformed by decentralisation and participation. For Van Haegendoren the European Community had failed, as it had not developed beyond an intergovernmental economic organisation governed by centralised states. He counterproposed a decentralised federal Europe which involved economic and social provision, and a regional equalisation process to deal with the economic problems of the EC regions. These elements were reflections of the Mechelen congress and the socio-economic programme. Van Haegendoren's federation was to consist of approximately fifty states - in contrast to the six EC members at that time. He made no attempt to detail these fifty members, but

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52. *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No.606, p11.

53. "Het Europa Der Volken", *Wij - Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, 23rd May 1970, p15.

54. This issue had arisen at the Hague summit in 1969 and generated the Werner Report on Economic and Monetary Union, "Report to the Council and Commission on the Realisation by Stages of Economic and Monetary Union in the Community", European Council and Commission, supplement to *EC Bulletin*, No.11, 1970.

55. Frans Van der Elst, "De Volksunie en Europa", *Wij - Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, 1st May 1971, p8.

followed the unusual regionalist approach of accepting that economic as well as ethnic regions would be acceptable as members.<sup>56</sup> This can be considered as an attempt to build bridges between the ethnic-regionalists and other regional groups and interests that do not use nationality as their collective starting point.

The emphasis of the *volksnationalisme* outlined by Van Haegendoren was intended to stress the community basis to national identity rather than the state basis. In this way it was similar to the view of Saunders Lewis of PC. It was held up against the status quo of limited intergovernmentalism and the alternative future of a European superstate seeking to ape the behaviour of state nationalism.<sup>57</sup> The VU's *volksnationalisme* was seen to have a cultural, community basis, helping individuals to tackle the isolation and alienation of industrial society in centralised states through communal involvement and participation.<sup>58</sup>

The 1971 debate on EMU within the party had some similarities with that in the 1990s. Then as now the VU was concerned at the undemocratic aspects of European integration and expressed support for the extension of the powers of the European Parliament to *deepen* and *democratise* the European union.<sup>59</sup> The need to strengthen the parliament was a persistent theme during the 1970s, with a desire to enable democratic participation within the European union and create genuine federal institutions, with *volksnationalisme* as the cohesive force to link peoples at the regional and transnational level.<sup>60</sup> The strengthening of the European Parliament would also increase the level of supranationalism in the EC, which the VU thought would create a genuine European federation over the opposition of the intergovernmentalists.

The period in the early 1970s when the European issue gained the attention of the VU was relatively brief, and the political success of the party drove the constitutional agenda in Belgium to a new peak. A combination of electoral success by the Flemish and Francophone community parties and changing attitudes to the need for regional government, rather than just cultural autonomy, brought the constitutional question to a head.

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56. Maurits Van Haegendoren, *Nationalisme en Federalisme*, pp.168-80.

57. This was not a new idea. The leading classical functionalist, David Mitrany, was suspicious of the notion of Euro-nationalism proposed by some authors as early as the 1920s, in which the European superstate would adopt similar behavioural characteristics to nation-states: see David Mitrany, "Pan-Europa: A Hope or a Danger?", *Political Quarterly*, Vol.1, No.4, 1930.

58. Frans Van der Elst, "L'Avenir de la Volksunie", *Res Publica*, Vol.10, No.5, 1968, p.105.

59. Van der Elst, *Op. cit.*, 1971, p.9.

60. Karel Jansegers, *De 19 van het Europa de 9*, p.3.

### *State Reform, Governmentalism And Party Crisis*

An opportunity for the VU to advance its preference for *federalisation* came in the shape of discussions on state reform in 1974-7. This period saw the involvement of the community parties in government coalitions for the first time. The effect of the 1971 constitutional reforms, with their special majority rules, made for difficult progress on reform in the absence of enlarged coalitions. The Tindemans Government of Christian Social and Liberal parties sought to deal with this problem initially through broad party talks on reform, and then adding the *Rassemblement Wallon* (RW) to the government. This governmental enlargement did not provide a special majority, but did create internal pressures within the government and the RW that made the coalition a failure.<sup>61</sup>

The state reform issue remained of primary importance to the government, and it developed inter-community dialogue to resolve the conflicts on constitutional change. A series of formal discussions took place between 1976 and 1977 involving all the political parties in parliament, to reach a compromise position on reform. The contents of these discussions formed the interparty proposals that emerged in 1977 and became known as the Egmont Pact. This agreement was constructed on the back of the six party coalition that emerged from the 1977 elections. The Flemish Christian Party (CVP) and Socialists (SP), entered into a coalition with their Francophone ideological counterparts, the *Front Democratique des Francophones* (FDF) and the VU. This development was unpopular with VU members and supporters, who tended to prefer a *protest* orientation rather than a *governmental* one. This coalition achieved a special majority in both houses and language groups, and reflected the CVP dominance in Flanders and the PS dominance in Wallonie. This meant that the two main regions and communities were strongly represented in the government, through both the main parties and the community parties. The government coalition reached agreement on the details of the Egmont Pact, which was approved in votes in the legislature as part of the government programme in 1978, but it was slowed down through opposition from members of the CVP.

The party's involvement in the Egmont Pact, and the subsequent failure of the reform package, inflicted severe damage on the VU. As a signatory to the Egmont Pact, the VU made a number of compromises to Francophones in the Brussels area, allowing public funding for Francophone linguistic facilities in the Brussels

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61. Fitzmaurice, *Op. cit.*, p.116.

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suburbs. Some VU members held that the party was aiding the spread of the Brussels 'oil slick' and internal discontent brought the resignation of one elected member of the chamber and the departure of a number of activists.<sup>62</sup> The disenchantment within the VU led to the formation of two splinter parties, in opposition to the VU compromises and governmental orientation.

The *Vlaamse Volkspartij* and the *Vlaams Nationale Partij* were formed from VU defectors, and from the more conservative and extreme members of the Flemish movement. Both parties coalesced uneasily into the *Vlaams Blok* in 1978. The VU's pragmatic and centre-left position offered a degree of *political space* for a more ideologically conservative Flemish national party with a more radical position on Flemish autonomy.<sup>63</sup> Amongst the VU membership there was some awareness that the rightist tendency was exploiting the Egmont opportunity in order to establish a new political organisation.<sup>64</sup> The *Vlaams Blok* adopted a position in favour of national independence for Flanders, rather than federalism and co-existence. It gained little support until it turned to the immigration issue in 1987. This issue, rather than nationalism, was seen to be the main element of electoral support for the new party,<sup>65</sup> but it did not prevent the *Vlaams Blok* from taking support from the VU and most other parties in subsequent elections.

### *The 1979 European Election*

Whilst involved in the domestic dimension, and in the government coalition, the European issue was of little consequence to the VU until the direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979. As a developed and successful electoral party - at least until the disruptive effect of the Egmont failure - the VU was well placed to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the election. Despite its electoral success the VU had not received an MEP in the nominated European Assembly. The nominated seats had been monopolised by the traditional parties, but elections now opened this exclusive situation to competition. The elections themselves afforded

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62. Joseph Randolph, "Ethnoregionalism in Contemporary Western Europe: The Potential for Political Accommodation", *Canadian Review of Studies in Nationalism*, Vol.8, No.2, 1981, p.334.

63. Tom De Roep, "Een Posing tot Sociale Identifikatie van Extreem Ethnische Nationalistische Partijen in de EG na 1970", unpublished thesis, Faculteit de Rechtsgeleerheid, Rijksuniversiteit Gent, 1991, p.189.

64. Interview with Hugo Coveliers, Volksunie Kamerlid for Antwerp: 27th April 1992, Antwerp. Coveliers was one of the VU members who defected to the new Vlaamse Liberalen en Demokraten in 1992.

65. Opinion poll research carried out by *De Standaard* in Antwerp from 11-13th October 1988 found that only 12% of Vlaams Blok identifiers were attracted to the party by the independence question, compared to 79% of identifiers attracted by its position on immigration: See Gijssels, *Op. cit.*, p.115.

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two opportunities to the VU. First, there was the chance to develop *political linkage* on federalism and the EC in the electoral arena. Second, there was the opportunity to develop *transnational* linkages with other regionalist parties through European institutions.

The distinct political geography of Belgium brought a territorial compromise on electoral boundaries for the European election. Two electoral colleges and three electoral constituencies were established to ensure the proper representation of the linguistic communities. Seats were allocated on a population basis: giving thirteen seats to the Flemish electoral college and eleven to the Francophone. The Flemish electoral constituency contained the four provinces plus the Leuven *arrondissement* of Brabant, with the Francophone constituency composed of the four Walloon provinces plus the Nivelles *arrondissement* of Brabant. Voters in Brussels, the third electoral constituency, were able to vote in either the Flemish or Francophone electoral college.<sup>66</sup> Despite these arrangements, the VU still complained that the Francophone community was overrepresented, and should have had only ten seats in the European Parliament instead of eleven. This complaint was also made at subsequent European elections.

Though the VU was not able to recover the levels of popularity it enjoyed during the 1965 to 1977 period, it managed to sustain European representation in all three direct elections, in spite of efforts by the traditional parties to treat the European elections as domestic affairs: using prominent political personalities to head European electoral lists that turned them into “beauty contests”;<sup>67</sup> and the arrival of new parties in the Flemish electoral system that challenged the traditional parties and the VU. The VU sought to counter the personality orientation of the traditional parties by using its own prominent members to head the lists in each province.<sup>68</sup> The VU was successful in the 1979 elections, gaining one seat in the European Parliament, despite the party’s decline in the 1978 general election, dropping to 11.5% of the vote and only 14 seats. This outcome followed the party’s role in the coalition government, which ended over the failed Egmont Pact and the internal divisions

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66. See Tom Mackie and F.W.S. Craig, *Europe Votes 2*, p.39.

67. This practice was evident in the 1984 European elections: former Prime Minister Leo Tindemans headed the Christian Peoples Party (CVP) list, Karel Van Miert represented the Socialists (SP) and Willy De Clerq represented the Liberals (PVV), See J. Gerard-Libois, M. Julin and X. Mabilie, “Elections européennes en Belgique: géographie des votes de préférence”, *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No. 1057-8, Brussels, 11th November 1984, p.7.

68. For example, the VU lists in 1984 were headed by Hugo Schiltz in Antwerp, Willy Kuijpers in Leuven *arrondissement*, Vic Anciaux and Jef Valkeniers in Brussels, and Nelly Maes and Maurits Coppieters in East Flanders.



within the VU that produced the *Vlaams Blok*. Though the context was not very positive for the VU, it was able to gain representation in 1979.

The lack of competition for the anti-establishment vote enabled the VU to hold onto its support despite the decline. Such efforts were made more difficult in the 1980s and 1990s. Maurits Coppieters was elected to the EP with just over 50,000 preference votes, and held the seat until 1981 when it was transferred to the current incumbent Jaak Vandemeulebroucke. From here the party found itself rather isolated in the European Parliament, and began a process that led to several party groups and the development of the European Free Alliance: which was the VU's personal project from the 1979 election onwards.

The VU programme in 1979 stressed the need for a *Europe of the Regions*, not as a utopian ideal, but as a realistic means to balance the centripetal forces of European integration and centralised states, with the countervailing force of regions and national communities. The VU was seeking a Europe of peoples rather than of states. This European context was seen to have a specific role in Flanders in two ways: first, it would contribute to the demise of the Belgian state, through removing some of its functions and undermining its exclusivity; second, greater European co-operation would allow a degree of cultural integration with the Netherlands.<sup>69</sup> Both of these developments were seen to enhance Flemish political autonomy. The party also tried to stress the transnational dimension to minority nationalism, with its list designated as *Volksunie-Europese Vrij Alliantie*, even though EFA was still an informal grouping of parties rather than a formal organisation.

The 1979 elections were quickly followed by the resumption of the constitutional reform process in Belgium. The tripartite coalition government that involved the three traditional parties succeeded in gaining the two-thirds majority in parliament necessary for further state reform. This coalition proceeded with the regionalisation that had been ditched post-Egmont, though they chose to ignore the Brussels question. This issue was consciously set-aside by the governing parties as no agreement could be reached on a solution for Brussels. The government therefore agreed to separate it from the regionalisation of Flanders and Wallonie so that it did not operate as a blockage on progress.

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69. Joan Hart and Bruno De Witte, "De Europese Programma's van Fianna Fail, FDF-RW en Volksunie", *Res Publica*, Vol.21, No. 1, 1979, p.104.

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### *The 1980 Federalisation*

The 1980 state reform process contained two main developments. First, changes to the Community Councils that had been established in 1970. The councils were given the right to create their own executives and powers over 'personal' issues such as family policy, welfare, community health care and the integration of immigrants. The reforms also established the regional councils which had been provided for in 1970 but not implemented. Both Flanders and Wallonie received indirectly-elected councils and executives, with each council being fully-elected in the future through the reform of the Senate into a regional chamber. This was intended to remove the possibility of overlapping membership whilst ensuring democratic legitimacy.

The powers accorded to the new regional councils essentially conformed to a *low politics* typification. The regions were given responsibility for planning, environment, conservation, housing, water and sewage, regional economic policy, certain aspects of energy policy and the supervision of local government. The regions also had limited fiscal powers, with a restricted right to raise taxes, and some small independent fiscal sources through charges, fees and borrowing. The bulk of the finance remained with the centre, by way of central grants and rebates. For regionalists the new reforms were a limited success. On the positive side they created regions, and the reform process moved beyond cultural autonomy to deal with territoriality and more genuine federalism. On the negative side the regions remained weak and fiscally dependent upon the centre.

### *The 1984 European Election*

The 1984 European elections occurred at a more fruitful time for the VU. It had recovered from its coalition experience and increased its support at the 1981 election to 16%. The party programme for this election gave a much clearer view of policy towards the EC. The VU reiterated its confederal aims within Belgium as a contribution to the construction of European union. In doing so the party struck a rather unusual note. The VU was keen to point to the strong economic and geographical position of Flanders within the EC, which was undermined by its weak political status. But instead of comparing itself to other regions - the German *Lander* for example - it compared Flanders to Denmark and Ireland.<sup>70</sup> This choice of comparison is rather irregular for a regionalist party. It indicated that Europe has

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70. "Vlaanderen in Europa: Samen aan't Werk", Verkiezingsprogramma van De Volksunie/Europese Vrij Alliantie, 17th June 1984, p.1.

blurred the boundaries between nationalist and regionalist political demands. It certainly pointed to anomalies in EC representation and structures - and undermined the 'size' and economic viability principles of autonomy, but it was essentially a *nationalist* comparison weighted towards independence. Though not pursuing the independence option, the VU was prepared to deploy the same *political resources* that the SNP used to pursue *Independence in Europe*. The changing role of Flanders in Belgium and Europe made this necessary. The region was gaining political, economic and administrative powers in Belgium through federalisation. This process meant that the region required some new type of representation in the European Community. The VU argued that Belgium had regionalised its representation to the European Parliament, through the 1979 provisions for regional/linguistic electoral constituencies, and that this practice should be extended to other European institutions to enable fuller Flemish representation.<sup>71</sup>

However, the bulk of the VU programme in 1984 was of the standard regionalist variety. The party called for the establishment of a Senate of the Regions in the European Parliament and increased powers for the European Parliament and Commission. The latter was an attempt to enhance the supranational level of decisionmaking and turn the Commission into a genuine governing executive rather than an intergovernmental body. It was intended to undermine the supremacy of the Council of Ministers, and curb the use of the national veto by Member States.<sup>72</sup> This desire to remove the veto, and reduce the role of the nation-states placed the VU in direct conflict with the SNP. It illustrated the European aspects to the internal cleavage of the regionalist political family that separates nationalists and regionalists. Though it is a key cleavage between the two sets of parties, it has not been politicised or mobilised to any noticable extent. The incompatibility of the VU's position on Europe and the *Independence in Europe* policy has therefore been a non-issue.

The VU responded to the EC's developing economic agenda in two ways. First, there was support for increasing the EC's role in social and regional policy, though these were to be reoriented to bring benefits to the regions and enhance regional autonomy rather than aid the central state.<sup>73</sup> This was an attempt to enhance regional economic resources. Second, there was strong support for the European Monetary System as a step towards further economic integration. The VU supported an

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71. Paul-H. Claeys, Nicole Loeb-Mayer and Guido Van Den Berghe, "Belgium", in Juliet Lodge (ed), *Direct Elections to the European Parliament 1984*, p.60.

72. "Vlaanderen in Europa", *Op. cit.*, 1984, p.5.

73. *Ibid.*, p.7.

enhanced currency role for the ECU, rather than a mere monetary unit, with the intention of releasing it into common usage in the global economy.<sup>74</sup>

The 1984 European election found the VU constructing provincial 'personality' lists as in 1979. The collapse of the Christian Democratic (CVP) vote in the 1984 elections enabled the VU, Socialists (SP), *Agalev* and *Vlaams Blok* to make advances. The CVP lost 15.5% in the 1984 election in Flanders, which allowed the VU to take a second seat in the European Parliament. Though the party doubled its representation the other community parties in Belgium, *Rassemblement Wallon* and the *Front Democratique des Francophones*, lost both their seats in the European Parliament.

The 1984 election was the second occasion on which the VU campaigned as a member of the European Free Alliance, though this organisation now had a degree of institutional reality which it had lacked in 1979. It was the only major regionalist party that seems to have campaigned under the transnational label.<sup>75</sup> As the prime movers behind the organisation, it was not surprising that the VU used the issue in the campaign. It was seen to be popular amongst nationalists in Flanders, and also gave some depth to the party's policy of a *Europe of the Regions*. The VU/EFA slogan and campaign theme were an exercise in *political linkage* with the party emphasising dual federalism and decentralisation, as well as the issue of nuclear disarmament, international co-operation and an end to the cold war arms manufacturing industry.<sup>76</sup> This latter issue was to cause problems for the VU during their involvement in the 1988-91 coalition government.

Between the two sets of European elections in 1984 and 1989, developments in the EC offered new opportunities to the VU and other regionalist parties. The Single European Act and the introduction of qualified majority voting in the Council of Ministers permitted more genuine transnational decisionmaking within the EC.<sup>77</sup> The new economic and institutional arrangements established the grounds for a decentralised and supranational federation in Europe, with economic and monetary union in future requiring a future degree of social federalism to deal with the socio-economic problems of integration.<sup>78</sup>

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74. *Ibid.*, p.12.

75. *Wij - Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, 14th June 1984, p.8.

76. This issue was emphasised by the VU deputy, and former leader, Hugo Schiltz at the VU congress that preceded the European elections, *Wij - Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, 7th June 1984, p.8.

77. "Vlaanderen in Europa", Vlaams Nationaal Studiecentrum, Brussels, 1987, p.2.

78. *Ibid.*, p.8.

### *The 1988 State Reforms*

The post-1988 state reform process was a consequence of continuing constitutional change and also the dynamic result of the earlier federalisations. Each of the main parties had become converted to regionalisation to develop and protect their existing powerbases in the two community-regions. These developments further institutionalised the regional cleavage in the Belgian party system. The five-party coalition, which included the VU, developed the reforms in response to the Fourons problem, which involved a bilingual area on the language border between the two communities, and the economic conflicts between the two main regions. Though the VU was a member of the Belgian government from 1988-91, its role was limited. The party gained Ministers in the Budget and Overseas Development Ministry, which gave the party a rather conservative orientation and distanced it from a key role in the state reform process.

The new agenda of federalisation in 1988 involved phased negotiations and implementation. The reforms intended to resolve the Brussels problem through special regional status; “proporz” and special majority arrangements in the Brussels executive and council; extending powers and fiscal autonomy of the two existing regional governments; and re-establishing the regional parliaments as directly elected assemblies whilst federalising the Senate. These latter aspects raised a number of problems, with conflict over the proposals to reform the Senate, the effects of the division of Brussels on suburban francophones and the urban Flemish population and over the redistribution of seats and districts in Brussels. These conflicts left the reform process incomplete. The Senate was not regionalised, the Flemish and Wallon parliaments were not democratised, and the regional governments did not gain the role in foreign affairs that they had been looking for: the VU had sought to extend the policy domain of the Flemish parliament in relations with the European Community and other international bodies, and develop Flemish representation in the international community. The party intended to extend the Flemish competence beyond the right to develop cultural relations and act autonomously in the European and international sphere.<sup>79</sup> The constitutional status quo reserved the right to act in foreign affairs for the national government, even when the issue concerned was clearly within the policy domain of the regional authorities. This problem became an issue in the community dialogue following the 1991 election.

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79. Interview with Paul Van Grembergen, Volksunie Kamerlid and Fractie leader, 29th April 1992, Brussels.

### *The 1989 European Election*

The 1989 European elections were disappointing for the VU, it suffered as a consequence of the party's role in the coalition government with the Christian Democrats and the Socialists. This governing role was not treated sympathetically by the VU's own electorate, particularly as there were alternative electoral opportunities for voicing discontent with the government. The VU was not surprised at the downturn in its support in 1989, it had expected to lose votes because of its role in the coalition,<sup>80</sup> but, as in the 1977-8 period, it accepted the risk of trading off support for gaining progress on constitutional change within the government. The VU lost one of its two seats, despite the fact that its second MEP increased his personal share of the vote.<sup>81</sup> The winners in 1989 were *Vlaams Blok*, which trebled its support to gain one seat; and *Agalev*, which improved its vote by 5% to retain its single member. The big losers were the VU and the Socialists, with all other parties gaining votes from them.<sup>82</sup> The VU lost 170,000 votes in the 1989 election, as its vote decreased from a European highpoint of 13.9% in 1984 to 8.7%. However, this loss did not lead the party to abandon its governmental strategy, even though it led to further losses in 1991.

### *The 1991 Electoral Crisis*

The 1991 general election was a defeat for all major parties in Flanders. The three governing parties, the Christian Democrats, Socialists and VU, lost support, and the radical *Vlaams Blok* and Van Rossem lists gained votes from all opponents.<sup>83</sup> The VU losses brought the party to abandon its role in the Belgian government, though it retained a role in the Flemish executive. The extent of the VU losses were not foreseen as a series of opinion polls from 1990 to 1991 had seen the party regain support fairly steadily from a low point of 8.4% in December 1990,<sup>84</sup> to a peak of 15.2% in October 1991,<sup>85</sup> before falling to 13.9% in November, when the VU left the government over Flemish-Wallon conflict over subsidies to the defence

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80. Hugo Schiltz's comments following the elections were illustrative of the VU's negative expectations in 1989, *Le Soir*, 21st June 1989, p.4.

81. *Europese Verkiezingen*, *Wij - Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, 23rd June, 1989, p.11.

82. E. Lentzen, X. Mabille and J. Vanlaer, "Les élections européennes de juin 1989", *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No.1242, Brussels, 1989, p.25.

83. Electoral analysis of changing party alignments in the 1991 election estimated that the VU lost 63,500 votes to the *Vlaams Blok* and 17,000 to Van Rossem, as well as substantial levels of support to the main parties. See *De Standaard*, 27-28th May 1992, p.3.

84. *La Libre Belgique*, 25th March 1991, p.3.

85. *De Morgen*, 2nd November 1991, p.1, with fieldwork on 29th and 30th October 1991.

industry.<sup>86</sup> The polls also gave support for the Vlaams Blok at 5-7%, though they ended up with 10.3% to the VU's 9.3% in the election.

The new government of Socialists and Christian Democrats took several months to agree its programme as the European and autonomy issues became entwined in the Maastricht Treaty. The VU and the two Green parties agreed to support the four-party government in its efforts to implement those state reforms that had not been completed in the 1988-91 period - thereby giving the government the required two-thirds majority in parliament. The majority of the parties then entered into community dialogue on the reform process in April 1992. This discussion resolved some of the issues for reform, such as the right of regions to sign international treaties, but left larger questions unanswered.

These larger questions were significant parts of the European agenda for regionalisation. In order to pursue federalisation the parties had to tackle the regionalisation of the system of agricultural supports, and therefore aspects of the CAP. In addition, the issue of community representation in the European Parliament was raised. The most difficult issue from a European and a regional perspective however, came with the need to regionalise the national budget. Dividing the budget and agreeing transfers was a difficult process, complicated by the convergence requirements of the Maastricht Treaty. The limits on budget deficits in Maastricht added extra constraints on negotiations on regionalisation: how to regionalise and reduce the Belgian national debt. Such problems led to a government crisis in March 1993, with Flemish-Wallon conflict over spending cuts to achieve convergence, though an agreement was brokered between the governing parties to prevent fresh elections. The crisis was not able to effect the reform process, with parliament agreeing to enhanced powers for the regional governments in the areas of foreign trade, agriculture and the environment.

The Maastricht process did not pass without the VU seeking to make capital out of the issue. Though supportive of the *deepening* agenda of European integration, the VU opposed the Maastricht Treaty, and voted against it in both houses of the Belgian parliament. The party was in favour of the proposals for EMU but found the democratic elements in the Treaty weak. The power and legitimacy of the European Parliament was not enhanced, and opportunities for regional participation were

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86. *Ibid.*, poll taken on 1st November after VU departs from the coalition.

minimal.<sup>87</sup> Though the party had vacillated on the issue, the Danish referendum defeat encouraged it to oppose the Treaty rather than accept the consensual position of the other parties. The need to put some distance between the VU and the traditional parties, and escape the governmental image of 1988-91, was part of the reason for the rejection of Maastricht. Another reason was a result of the Treaty proposals itself, which had failed to develop the role of the European Parliament, and had produced a subordinate Committee of the Regions rather than a more formal chamber for regional representation. The VU expressed the view that the Maastricht proposals were not regionalist enough.

#### **4. Institutional Change and Party Crisis**

Though the reform of the state in 1988 was incomplete, the community dialogue in 1992-3 produced a new federalisation package. The St Michelsberg agreement between the parties, and its subsequent passage in both houses of parliament, brought the Belgian state closer to a genuine federation.

This continuing programme of federalisation brought particular problems for the VU. Regionalist parties, as single issue parties, are very distinctive in programmatic terms because they have an identifiable end-condition. The successive reform of the state undermined the political reasons for the existence of the VU. When a party committed to constitutional reform and federalism has those goals fulfilled, then the rationale for organisational continuation is dubious. Since institutional change has brought programmatic fulfilment then the party should have little reason to continue.

Institutional change may undermine the popularity and demands of communal parties, though it may also produce the opposite effect through intensifying these regional demands.<sup>88</sup> In the 1960s and 1970s the regional electoral sphere was reinforced by political problems related to institutional reforms. In the 1980s and 1990s these problems were played out at the level of the new regional institutions. The electoral dynamic for change that brought reforms in earlier period was replaced by a functional and administrative pressure for reform. These developments cast doubt over the future role of the VU in Flemish politics, as its issue concerns became institutionalised within the party and governmental system, yet reduced in the electoral sphere.

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87. *De Standaard*, 19th June 1992, p.2. The Maastricht Treaty was later ratified by the Belgian parliament on, 17th July 1992, by 146 votes to 33. The VU voted against the Treaty on this occasion along with ECOLO, Agalev, and the *Vlaams Blok*.

88. Rokkan and Urwin, *Op. cit.*, p.144.



The VU was not oblivious to these problems. The party experienced a *reinvention* phase following the federalisation of 1988. It recognised the need for an updated regionalist appeal within a regionalised political system, and sought to recast its role in the Flemish party system and develop the political theme of democratisation.

The party showed an awareness of the new post-federal environment by adding the designation *Vlaamse Vrij Democraten* to its title. This was intended to identify the VU as a party in Flanders not just a party for Flanders, stressing its reform credentials and willingness to take part in the construction of the new Flemish region on a range of political and social questions, and de-emphasise the institutional agenda. Since the 1960s elements of the VU identified with the programme and approach of the Dutch liberal reform party the *Demokraten '66* (D'66). This party's example influenced the post-federal changes. The D'66 had been formed by young academics and intellectuals as a *new politics* party to supplant the established political and social cleavages in the Netherlands. The party sought to encourage the democratisation of Dutch politics through eradicating the pattern of coalition changes and elite accommodations that tended to occur in the absence of electoral contests and popular participation. The D'66 wanted to remove alternation in the absence of elections.

The D'66 also sought to undermine the traditional religious and social cleavages that structured Dutch political life. This preference for *depillarisation*, as a necessary component of political modernisation, was also adopted by the VU, with the VU seeking to transform the internal dynamics of Flemish politics and society rather than merely achieve institutional change. This was a consequence of the progressive agenda evident within the party since the late 1960s, with concern for both environmental and lifestyle questions, and for socio-economic issues. These were issues with which the VU sought to reinvent itself in the post-institutional climate. The issues are some evidence of a *succession of ends* within the party,<sup>89</sup> though achieved through domestic developments rather than European integration: with the VU stressing that autonomy was not an end in itself but a means to societal transformation.

Though the party was content to deal with the post-federal agenda in a limited way, the experience of the 1991 election and the implementation of state reform brought a new crisis to the party. In the period after the election the VU's former leader, Jaak

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89. Panebianco, *Op. cit.*

Gabriels, became engaged in informal discussions on the formation of a new reform party within Flanders to challenge the Christian Social and Socialist traditions. Gabriels' initiative indicated the lack of consensus within the party on the future of the VU, with some groups seeking the termination of the party whilst others sought continuation through the identification of new goals. This divergence over the *reinvention* of the party was manifest in two distinct tendencies within the party.

Both of these tendencies were committed to the modernisation of Flanders, and the removal of the subcultural tradition of organisational pillars that characterised the Christian Democrats in particular.<sup>90</sup> However, they differed markedly on the means to achieve such depillarisation, and on the future of the VU itself. The first tendency, which sought to construct a new liberal peoples party in Flanders, were primarily concerned with the adoption of a strategy of *electoral efficiency*, while the other tendency, which sought the continuation of the VU, was concerned with *constituency representation* and the maintenance and defence of the ideology and values of the VU electorate.<sup>91</sup>

The peoples party tendency was responsible for the re-positioning of the party in the late 1980s and some of the emphasis on the liberal reform programme. In pursuit of this goal they adopted a maximum electoral approach through a catch-all strategy, in conjunction with other political forces in Flanders. When Gabriels, the former leader of the VU, announced his retirement from the leadership after the 1991 election, the catch-all view led to discussions with the Flemish liberal party (PVV) on the efficacy of political co-operation between elements within the VU and the liberals. These discussions led to an agreement to establish a new party in Flanders in November 1992 - the *Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten* (VLD) - which began to attract members of the VU.

Whilst a section of the VU departed to the new party in pursuit of electoral success and governmental participation, the *constituency representation* tendency within the party sought to develop a new programme for continuation. This process of transition took place in parallel to the rise of a new and younger leadership cohort in the party. The new leadership stressed the radical anti-establishment aspect to the VU, to escape the party's unpopular governmental past from 1988-91. This was a

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90. For consideration of the development of *verzuiling* in Flanders, and attempts to reform it, see Serge Covaart, "Le débat sur le verzuiling en Flandre", *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No.1329, Brussels, 1991.

91. These alternative strategies have been drawn from Herbert Kitschelt, *The Logic of Party Formation: Ecological Politics in Belgium and West Germany*.

repeat of earlier efforts by a new leadership to restore the party's nationalist face after the Egmont crisis.

The new party leader, Bert Anciaux, sought to stake out a future for the post-federal VU through advancing six main principles of contemporary Flemish nationalism, each intended to distinguish the VU from the *Vlaams Blok* and reclaim the mantle of radical nationalism for the VU.<sup>92</sup> The six principles were: tolerance of minorities within Flanders, pacifism, a commitment to develop political and social pluralism, social justice, environmental protection, and the maintenance and extension of regional and individual autonomy.<sup>93</sup>

Though these issues fell within the tradition of the party they were not its exclusive property. These concerns might be better represented and organised by competing political parties in Flanders: *Agalev* may be better placed to represent environmental interests, the Socialists more able to organise those concerned with social justice and the new VLD may be well-placed to represent individual autonomy and pluralism. In addition, the VU's adoption of a radical, opposition aspect may fail to convince voters of its anti-establishment credentials while it retained a governmental role in the Flemish regional government.

Since the establishment of the VLD, the VU lost two prominent members of parliament, and a number of party activists. The VU sought to prevent further membership erosion in the post-federal period by developing a media advertising campaign to rally the party's supporters by appealing to their political loyalty.<sup>94</sup> Though this defensive strategy stemmed the flow of members away from the party, it did not address the fact that the party had not developed a new theme or project. The absence of a new goal or direction therefore cast some doubt over the ability of the VU to sustain itself in the post-federal period. Because of the success of federalisation, the party may be over.

### **5. Conclusion**

In contrast to other nationalist and regionalist parties the VU seldom had the opportunity to exploit the European dimension. The prevailing consensus on European integration meant that the party was unable to use the issue in political

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92. *De Standaard*, 15th June 1992, p.1.

93. "VU kiest nieuwe Voorzitter", *Wij-Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad*, 4th June 1992 p.11.

94. The VU campaign has featured prominent party figures using the slogan "Ik blijf" - I'm staying - with an appeal for members to stay loyal so that the VU can chart a post-federal course and keep autonomy on track.

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debate to divide opponents. The consensus in the Belgian parliament, and the lack of referenda on European questions, also reduced the potential for the party to exploit European union for electoral ends, rather than merely as a support for federalisation.

However, the weakness of the VU in deploying European union as a political resource was rather insignificant in light of the federalisation process. The other cases in this study may have had more use from the EC issue, but failed to make progress at the domestic level. The VU, as indicated above, succeeded in its domestic political mission, though it may use the European sphere to alter party goals to ensure organisational survival. Though the independence tradition was weak within the VU, the prospect of further European union may lead the VU to adopt an *Independence in Europe* position, and seek maximum autonomy for Flanders in Europe, or alternatively transfer its constitutional attentions more clearly to the European level, and seek to sustain itself through campaigning for a regionalised Europe.

Though the VU traditionally avoided the concepts of sovereignty and independence as notions more in tune with the Belgian state of 1830 than the Flemish region of the 1990s,<sup>95</sup> neither of these concepts mean the same in the Europe of the 1990s. The new European situation may therefore lead the party towards a reconsideration of the reality of independence.

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95. Interview with Herman Candries, Volksunie Kamerlid, 27th May 1992, Brussels.

## 6

# From Regionalism To Transnational Regionalism: European Co-operation Within the Regionalist Family

“The nationalist and autonomous parties have had to devote too much energy within the European framework to their quite natural desire to achieve emancipation, freedom and self-determination. Too much attention was focused ‘downwards’ and too little ‘upwards’. Too little of their own dynamism and inventiveness was devoted to the federal right to take their place within the international decisionmaking bodies.”<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

Until now this study has focused upon the domestic dimension of the European question, and neglected the transnational dimension. Though nationalist and regionalist parties are global phenomena, they are not bound together by a universalist outlook or ideology. However, such particularism has not prevented the development of common organisations. It was the logical extension of the *externalisation strategy*: with parties forming transnational regionalist associations rather than just setting their constitutional goals within broader Europe-wide perspectives. This associational aspect to the externalisation strategy has developed as a long-term process linked to European integration.

Research into transnational parties has concentrated upon the larger party families of Socialists, Liberals and Christian Democrats,<sup>2</sup> focusing upon integration in the party system through transnational federations and formal party groups within the European Parliament. However, they only offer a partial account of the evolution of transnational party linkages. These parties had an advantage over smaller and newer party groups because of their ideologies, historical traditions and governmental resources. Whilst the major parties had ideology to generate transnational cohesion,

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1. “A New Political Group”, European Free Alliance, Brussels, 1989, p.1.

2. Keith Featherstone, *Socialist Parties and European Integration* ; Emil Kirchner (ed), *Liberal Parties in Western Europe*; Beate Kohler and Barbara Myrzik, “Transnational Party Links”, in Roger Morgan and Stefano Silvestri (eds), *Moderates and Conservatives in Western Europe* ; G.Pridham and P. Pridham, *Transnational Party Co-operation And European Integration* .

the regionalists had the doctrine of federalism and the *Europe of the Regions* to provide some political cohesion.

The three traditional families were also participants in the process of European integration after 1945. They were the midwives of the political groups and transnational political federations in the ECSC and the European Parliament.<sup>3</sup> In the Common Assembly of the ECSC ideological ties gradually became more important than national affiliation, and the assembly began to formalise its informal structure. This brought the formal recognition of political groups in June 1953, and the establishment of Christian Democrat, Socialist and Liberal groups, with common rules governing group formation and activity. As the Common Assembly evolved into the European Assembly with the creation of the European Community in 1957, membership quotas for groups were adopted that required groups to have at least 17 members.<sup>4</sup> The three existing groups experienced no difficulty in meeting this requirement.

They also established themselves early as formal transnational groups in the European Parliament, propelled by the process of direct elections. The European Peoples Party of Christian Democrats was created in 1975/6, the Confederation of Socialist Parties of the European Community was established in 1974 and the European Liberal Democrats in 1979. Community enlargement brought new political groups in the shape of the Conservative group and the European Progressive Democrats in 1973. The main party families organised earliest because they were most successful, holding the nominated positions of the European Assembly, whilst the minor parties were excluded, present in very small numbers, or disadvantaged by the rules on group formation.

The regionalist family had similar electoral problems to other small parties, but its restricted territorial appeal and base was unique. This constraint, as subsystem parties within national political systems, was not widely shared. In European elections such concentrations presented barriers to surpassing the *threshold of representation*.<sup>5</sup> In politics that use national list systems for European elections, geographical concentrations were not necessarily advantageous: they could produce fragmented regionalism through placing regionalist parties in competition with each other. Clearly this was not the case in Scotland and Wales where the two nationalist

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3. Guy Van Oudenhove, *The Political Parties in the European Parliament: The First Ten Years*.

4. *Ibid.*, p.133.

5. John Pedersen, "Towards a New Typology of Party Lifespans and Minor Parties", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 1982, pp.1-16.

parties operated within defined boundaries that coincided with electoral districts. Here geographical concentration provided electoral rewards.

In contrast, in France and Spain the whole country was one constituency for European elections, which undermined the territorial strengths of the various regionalist parties. Spain, and to a much lesser extent France, had regionalist parties that were regionally strong but nationally weak. Most did not compete with each other in national or regional elections, but did in European elections. The regionalist response to this problem was to construct joint regionalist lists, or lists with non-regionalist parties, to increase their chances of representation. In France, for example, the weakness of regionalist parties meant that common lists were also a mechanism to surpass the *threshold of authorisation* in European elections.<sup>6</sup> The cost of competing in European elections in France prevented regionalist electoral participation in 1979 and 1984. Participation required a FF100,000 deposit for each registered list, in addition to campaign costs, only refunded if the party list passed the 5% threshold.<sup>7</sup>

Following Downs, it could be expected that regionalist parties would form joint lists as a vote-maximising strategy in European elections.<sup>8</sup> Such vote maximisation, however, conflicted with the different ideological and programmatic goals of the various regionalist parties involved. It has already been demonstrated that there are strong cleavages between members of the various regionalist parties in Brittany, equally there were different goals amongst regionalist parties in Spain. This fractionalisation occurred on the basis of different types of regionalists, which exhibited different political or economic orientations: between nationalists seeking independence and regionalists seeking 'autonomy', and between democratic regionalists and more extreme terrorist-oriented parties and movements. The fragmented nature of European nationalism and regionalism was evident both within countries and across them. It was also strongly influential in determining the composition of political federations and groups in the European Parliament.

### **2. Transnational Party Co-operation**

The nature of transnational party co-operation and development is varied, with several different levels of integration into the transnational party system. Four levels of party engagement in transnational European issues and parties have been

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6. *Ibid.*

7. Anne Stevens, "France", in Juliet Lodge (ed), *Elections to the European Parliament 1984*, p.97.

8. Anthony Downs, *An Economic Theory of Democracy*.

identified. These can be regarded as a continuum of integration into the transnational party system, though not a continuum of party strategies or responses. The placement of parties along this continuum will be tested in the comparative chapter below.

- (i) Loose party links;
- (ii) Membership of transnational groups or federations;
- (iii) Contesting elections to the European Parliament;
- (iv) Joining transnational party groups in the European Parliament.<sup>9</sup>

It is also necessary to consider whether groups or federations are genuine examples of transnational party co-operation. Indicators of group supranationality were the degree to which group policies and views transcended national interests to promote common European interests, at what level groups were able to present meaningful and coherent common viewpoints, and whether the composition of group membership was genuinely transnational.<sup>10</sup>

Measuring transnationalism and group coherence involves the examination of a number of phenomena. Party cohesion can be measured through various indicators: group membership, the pattern of group meetings - their number and agenda - the adoption of common policies and programmes, and the level of identifiable collective parliamentary behaviour such as common voting, common committee strategies and pre-meetings before plenary sessions.

In transnational party federations there is a looser agenda for examination. There is more concern to identify the level of interaction that exists outside the institutions of the European Parliament. Do extraparlimentary relations develop?<sup>11</sup> Does the federation exist and hold meetings outwith the European Parliament? Are there European-level organisations stretching out beyond the European Community itself? Are there separate bilateral relations between parties that develop within such federations?

Do they involve themselves in common electoral campaigning in European elections? What linkages do they have to national political parties? Do they seek to promote the intermeshing of national and European parliamentary and party elites? Is the

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9. Pridham and Pridham, *Op. Cit.*, 1981, p.193.

10. Geoffrey and Pippa Pridham, "Transnational Parties in the European Community", in Stanley Henig (ed), *Political Parties in the European Community*, p.249.

11. Pridham and Pridham, *ibid.*, p.278.



transnational organisation dominated by MEPs, with national elites preferring to remain in domestic political systems? Many of these questions will be explored below.

The objects of study are the International Congress of European Communities and Regions, the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations, the European Free Alliance, the Technical Co-ordination Group and the Rainbow Group. The behaviour and strategy of regionalists will be analysed in addition to identifying the genuineness of transnational co-operation and cohesion within groups and federations. This involves analysis of the development and programmes of the various organisations to determine whether they existed as transnational associations or merely as pragmatic mechanisms for obtaining parliamentary profiles and resources.

The endpoint for transnational party integration is unified party families contesting elections as single parties throughout all states, without regard to national differences. This would involve the transfer of political loyalties in a more 'electoral' sense than Haas originally intended, to produce pan-European parties in the new political community. For regionalists this goal is contradictory and unlikely. This endpoint can be treated as an ideal type, much like the different levels of societal integration laid out in the analyses of integration theory.

### **3. Transnational Regionalism In Advance of Direct Elections**

Though the bulk of this chapter deals with the development of the European Free Alliance and the Rainbow Group, there are some notable precursors to these organisations within the regionalist party family which are evidence of the lengthy tendency towards transnational regionalism in Western Europe.

#### *The Congress of European Communities And Regions*

The International Congress of European Nations and Regions was formed in 1948/9 following the Hague Congress on European union in 1948.\* It was organised through a commission within the *Union Francais des Federalistes* (UFF).<sup>12</sup> Nationalist and regionalist parties had had some involvement in the Hague

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12. *Le Peuple Breton*, number 10, July/August 1948, p.6.

\* IT QUICKLY CHANGED ITS NAME TO THE CONGRESS OF EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES AND REGIONS.

Congress, and saw this new forum as a means to gain greater participation in the development of European union.

The Congress involved a mixture of organisations and motivations. Some sought to use the Congress to give their stateless nations a higher profile in international affairs, promoting self-government through international contacts. Others, such as the Bretons, were more committed to using the Congress to generate support for a decentralised European union. The regionalist Congress that emerged in April 1949 in Paris was therefore a result of frustration with the Hague Congress, where the centralists' agenda had been successful, and evidence that some nationalists were prepared to see opportunities arising from international contacts.

The congress was primarily the product of the *Union Bretonne des Federalistes* (UBF), whose delegates had made contact with Scottish and Welsh representatives after the Hague Congress.<sup>13</sup> The Congress occurred in Paris on the 9th and 10th April 1949. Joseph Matray, the editor of *Le Peuple Breton*, was elected as Secretary-General of the Congress, and it featured delegations from the Basque Country, Bavaria, Catalonia, Cornwall, Friesland, Friuli, Nord, the Swiss Cantons, Sud Tyrol, Val d'Aosta and Wallonie, as well as organisations like the UFF, UBF, Celtic Congress, Plaid Cymru, and the SNP.<sup>14</sup>

In the first session of the congress the national delegations spoke about the history and background of their regions and movements. This must have been a revealing exercise for the SNP and Plaid Cymru, realising that they were amongst federalists and regionalists rather than groups who sought independent national status, and also amongst movements and pressure groups rather than political parties. Joseph Matray's speech to the Congress delegates may have given some forewarning to the nationalists that the Congress and its members did not share their goals. Matray talked of the need to develop a united Europe through federalism, which was the only means to guarantee state sovereignty and the rights of regions and regional sovereignty. In this he explicitly spoke against separatism, and in favour of federalisation within states to enhance regional autonomy.<sup>15</sup>

In addition to agreeing common policies, the organisation institutionalised itself as the Congress of European Communities and Regions, and elected a permanent

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13. *Le Peuple Breton*, number 9, 15th June 1949, p.8.

14. *Le Peuple Breton*, number 17, 15th May 1949, p.6.

15. *Ibid.*, p.8.

bureau to oversee the congress's goals and activities.<sup>16</sup> Plaid Cymru's General Secretary, J.E. Jones, became a member of the bureau at this initial meeting. The Congress also proposed to hold an annual conference in one of Europe's regions and elect a bureau to promote the organisation and its interests.<sup>17</sup>

The resolutions adopted by the Congress were clearly federalist. The Congress called for the transfer of state sovereignty to other organisations, and for any future European Assembly to offer genuine opportunities for regional representation. The Congress also established a special commission to draft a charter of rights of European communities and regions to advance the principles of autonomy and decentralisation. This charter was to be presented to the *Union Europeene des Federalistes*. The Congress also supported economic deconcentration in the postwar economy, particularly in relation to the Marshall Plan. Regional economic interests were to be respected, industrial overconcentration was to be avoided, and bureaucratic centralisation in economic policymaking was to be removed. The Congress also supported the introduction of a charter of cultural rights at the European level, and the opportunity for cultural communities to take their concerns to the European Court of Justice if they felt that their rights were being violated.<sup>18</sup>

Several other Congresses were held into the 1950s, though the nationalists gradually slipped away from the organisation as they recognised its regionalism and weak role. The Bretons, the key motivators in the organisation, put their efforts into domestic political and economic action in the early 1950s with the establishment of CELIB to attain a regional role in French economic planning. The climate for the Congress had also become unfavourable. It had been launched as a consequence of the Hague Congress, but the process of European integration had moved beyond this early 'congress' phase to an intergovernmental one. It was the time of the Organisation of European Economic Co-operation and the Schuman Plan, and the beginnings of governmental designs for Europe rather than for loose, discursive congresses. This new context meant obscurity for the regionalists. The European agenda was set by centralised states, not by integral federalists, who found themselves powerless, lacking both the political and organisational resources to present an alternative agenda for European union.

In conclusion, the Congress failed because of the changing political opportunity structure and its own weak strategy. The Congress did not find a role for itself

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16. *Ibid.*, p.7.

17. *Ibid.*, p.13.

18. *Ibid.*, pp.14-15.

## *Transnational Regionalism*

beyond the annual conference, and never involved itself in any real political action. It was a forum for discussion and minimal co-operation rather than for policymaking, political lobbying or electoral participation. Though genuinely transnational with some common viewpoints, the organisation failed to develop a proper role for itself. Had the organisation lasted until the formation of the European Community it might have survived by presenting the case for the regions within Europe. However, since the organisation sought a federal Europe rather than an intergovernmental one, the developments of the 1950s were seen as a defeat. This experience effectively demobilised the federalists, who were the key members of the Congress, who turned to cultural or political affairs in their own regions and communities.

### *The Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations*

The Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations was the second transnational regionalist organisation generated by the Breton movement. It was proposed by Yann Fouère of the microregionalist party SAV in 1973. Fouère proposed the Bureau and invited other regionalist parties to discuss it.<sup>19</sup> This meeting involved Plaid Cymru, the *Mouvement Socialiste Occitan*, the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV), *Mebyon Kernow* and *Mouvement ELSA* from Alsace.<sup>20</sup> The meeting had originated in a visit by Plaid Cymru and the PNV to the SAV congress in Saint Malo, which had mandated the SAV to establish a common lobbying organisation in Brussels with other regionalist parties. The accession of the UK to the EC in 1973 made this proposal feasible as it added two new parties to the EC which the regionalists could expect to count as their own.

The Bureau operated as a lobbying organisation and publicity office in Brussels, and a forum for the development of joint policies in response to European integration. For example the Bureau drafted a joint response to the Tindemanns Report in 1975, in addition to the individual submissions made by PC and others. The Bureau offered an alternative to the official Community position on integration, arguing for

“the full-blooded devolution of power downwards towards Europe’s natural social and cultural communities”.<sup>21</sup>

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19. Letter from Yann Fouère of Strollad Ar Vro to Dafydd Williams, General Secretary of Plaid Cymru, 1st October 1973: Plaid Cymru Archives, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

20. Minutes of the first meeting to establish the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations, 10th October 1973: Plaid Cymru archives, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.

21. Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations: “Draft Memorandum of the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations to the Tindemanns Report”, Brussels, 1975, p.1.

The Bureau rejected the conventional view of integration involving the slow accrual of power to a central European government, and called for a more decentralised alternative. The alternative to a Europe of nation-states involved the creation of “a Europe of nations, regions and communities”:<sup>22</sup> a more harmonious process of integration because of the belief that

“as small nations we recognise that sovereignty is a relative and not an absolute commodity, and that given self-government, we would obviously find it easier to co-operate at the European level than do the existing member states”.<sup>23</sup>

The Bureau also adopted a brief programme in 1976 titled “Declaration of Principles - Charter of the People and National Communities”. This formed the basis for its political work and supported the right of self-determination in politics, economics, culture and language; the creation of a European union that was based upon decentralised structures, the pluralist nature of Western democracies, and argued for the development of co-operation between peoples as the best basis for self-government.<sup>24</sup>

The Bureau was short-lived as a consequence of the growing political co-operation between regionalist parties and development of the European Parliament. The process of democratic reform in Spain also removed the necessity for Basque involvement, as more legitimate and overt forms of political action became possible. The linkages and policies of the Bureau found fairly immediate expression in the Bastia Congress and the foundations of the European Free Alliance. In this period, as will be illustrated below, the phenomenon of transnational regionalism moved beyond loose co-operation and lobbying strategies to develop a common party political framework to pursue electoral ends. This evolution was a consequence of the altered status and operation of the European Parliament, which undermined the lobbyist approach and replaced it with an electoralist approach.

#### **4. Political Groups In The European Parliament**

The organisational and political structure of the European Parliament is heavily influenced by the activities of formal political groups, and structured to generate transnational party groups through financial and administrative mechanisms. The European Parliament is formally administered by a bureau of twenty members

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22. *Ibid.*, 1975, p.3.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations, “Declaration of Principles - Charter of the Peoples and National Communities”, Brussels, 1976.

consisting of a President, fourteen Vice-Presidents and five Quastors.<sup>25</sup> These members have formal authority in the parliament, but it is the enlarged bureau, which includes the Presidents of political groups in the EP, that has actual authority.<sup>26</sup> The enlarged bureau, along with the meetings that take place between the group presidents and Secretary-Generals, are the real decisionmaking bodies. The bureau has the task of recognising political groups, according to the criteria laid down by the parliament.<sup>27</sup>

Such recognition conferred both political and financial benefits. Political benefits involved a role in bureau and parliamentary appointments; electing the President, Vice-President and Quastors; representation at group meetings, which played a role in allocating appointments to the various committees of the European Parliament; and choosing committee chairpersons and rapporteurships who were responsible for drafting committee reports. The allocation of committee posts was often made through use of the d'Hondt system or points system, applied by individual parliamentary committees, but political groups were often influential in negotiating certain appointments and trading positions on committees.

This might be considered as a competitive and negotiable patronage system. As there is no government and opposition in the parliament, and no single dominant group, then available benefits are subject to intra-group and intergroup competition and bargaining. Group Presidents and Secretary-Generals are also influential in determining the contents of the parliament's agenda for plenary sessions in Strasbourg. In these plenaries the group spokesmen enjoy enhanced recognition and speaking rights in debates, which afford them a degree of precedence over non-group MEPs.

Group recognition also brings financial benefits. The Parliament provides financial support for secretarial and research work.<sup>28</sup> Such resource support is very important for small parties and groups which may lack sizeable independent sources of funds. It enables them to support their MEPs, and build a critical mass of researchers and publicity officers for each group. In addition to these resources the parliament also provided considerable financial support for groups through reimbursing election

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25. Rules 14 and 15, European Parliament, "Rules and Procedures", (Luxembourg: European Communities, 1992), p.19.

26. John Fitzmaurice, *The Party Groups in the European Parliament* (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1975), p.41.

27. See rules 26, 27 and 29, European Parliament: "Rules of Procedure", *Ibid.*, pp.24-5.

28. Stanley Henig, *Power and Decision in Europe: The Political Institutions of the European Community*, p.76.

expenses in the European elections. The parliament provides post-election funds to those parties/members who receive at least 5% of votes in a member state, or compete in at least three countries and win 1% of the vote in each.<sup>29</sup> This provided a financial impetus for transnational electoral co-operation, and the development of joint lists and campaigns between family parties in various countries.

Group advantages have been limited by restrictive rules surrounding group formation. Initially the Common Assembly of the ECSC required a minimum of nine members to form a political group.<sup>30</sup> The articles in the Treaty of Rome demanded that political groups be composed of at least seventeen MEPs, though this was later reduced to fourteen members in the 1960s.<sup>31</sup> Following direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979, new rules were adopted for group formation. With 410 directly elected MEPs in the new enlarged parliament new criteria were adopted which offered a trade-off between group size and transnational composition: a minimum of ten MEPs could form a group if they came from three different countries, a minimum of fifteen if it involved two countries and a single country group required at least twenty one MEPs to gain recognition.<sup>32</sup>

This reform facilitated the establishment of new political groups such as the Rainbow Group, though the rules were altered again in the 1980s to create a more restrictive climate for group formation. This reform uprated the numerical requirements so that twelve MEPs were needed to form a group amongst three countries, eighteen from two countries and twenty three from one country.<sup>33</sup>

A combination of electoral weaknesses and the restrictive rules for group formation, created a number of *embryo* groups in the Parliament. Such embryo groups existed outside the traditional political families but were clearly separable from independent MEPs. They indicated potential, but not actual, political groups in the European Parliament, which may develop in the future through electoral success, changes in other groups, and more liberal rules on group formation. The regionalists and nationalists were one such *embryo*: identifiable in the European Free Alliance, the Technical Co-ordination Group and the Rainbow Group.

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29. David Millar, "European Elections Procedures", in Juliet Lodge (ed), *Direct Elections to the European Parliament 1984*, p.45.

30. Van Oudenhove, *Op. cit.*, p.22.

31. Fitzmaurice, *Op. cit.*, 1975, p.44

32. Henig, *Op. cit.*, 1980, p.76.

33. Rule 26, clause 4, European Parliament, "Rules of Procedure", *Op. cit.*, p.24.

## **5. The Evolution of the Rainbow Group**

The first problem in analysing the new regionalist organisations arises in distinguishing between them, as they had an overlapping membership and organisation yet existed as separate organisations. The European Free Alliance (EFA) is the transnational federation of regionalist and nationalist parties in Europe. The Rainbow Group, on the other hand, is a political group within the European Parliament that has been the home of regionalist and non-regionalist parties alike.

The EFA has always been exclusively nationalist and regionalist, though only accepting the democratic types of each tradition. The Rainbow Group has been a much wider amalgamation of parties and interests. This group had its roots in the Technical Co-ordination Group that operated from 1979 to 1984. In order to provide coherence to this analysis the Rainbow Group and EFA will be dealt with separately, but firstly something needs to be said about the Technical Co-ordination Group.

### **The Technical Co-ordination Group**

The Technical Co-ordination Group for the Defence and Promotion of Independent Members Interests operated in the European Parliament from 1979 to 1984. Since groups and group interests dominated the politics of the European Parliament, those who were not members of a group were disadvantaged. Ever since the establishment of the Common Assembly in 1952 and the evolution of political groups there had been no real role for independent members, with the parliamentary system at the transnational level loaded in favour of parties and groups.

This group involved just over half of the independent members in the parliament, and managed to gain the number required to establish a group. The remaining MEPs remained unaffiliated and included the *Front Democratique des Francophones* and the *Demokraten '66*, whom the VU sought to involve in the new group.



**Table 6.1 The Technical Co-ordination Group 1979-84**

<b><u>Party</u></b>	<b><u>MEPs</u></b>
Volksunie	1
Rassemblement Wallon	1
Independent Fianna Fail	1
Partito Radicale	3
Democratzia Proletaria	1
Partito di Unità Proletaria	1
Folkebevaegelsen Mod EF	4

The Technical Co-ordination Group was established to provide the benefits of group status without the political and ideological entanglements of established political groups. The disparate nature of the group was evident through the election of three Co-Presidents, who rotated as representatives of the group at meetings of the Political Bureau of the European Parliament.<sup>34</sup> It would not be wise to judge this group on similar transnational criteria to other political groups as it was not strictly a political group. It had a managerial and representative function within the European Parliament bureaucracy, but this was the limit of its aspirations. Its goal was to gain political and research benefits through group status, and did not involve any other common goals or intentions. Therefore, it lacked the integrative functions of other transnational party groups. Its membership comprised several parties of interest in this thesis, however, which made the Technical Co-ordination Group significant.

The group involved the *Volksunie*, *Rassemblement Wallon* (RW), Independent Fianna Fail and also the *Folkbevaegelsen Mod EF*,<sup>35</sup> the anti-EC Danish movement. In the future each was involved in the European Free Alliance or the Rainbow Group. The VU and RW suggested a regionalist embryo, though a divided one. The RW and FDF from Francophone Belgium both joined the Technical Co-ordination Group in 1979 but quickly left over tactical disagreements, though the RW member later rejoined as an independent. The VU had expected a larger embryo group, involving the SNP and Fianna Fail, and were surprised when they joined the European Progressive Democrats.<sup>36</sup> The VU's expectations of Fianna Fail were persistently misplaced. The latter was a state-nationalist party committed to protecting national sovereignty rather than developing a *Europe of the Regions*. Like the SNP, it had an independence tradition that was not consistent with federalism

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34. Francis Jacobs and Richard Corbett, *The European Parliament*, p.56.

35. J. Gerard-Libois, "Les élections pour le parlement européen, juin 1984", *Courrier Hebdomadaire du CRISP*, No.1040, 18th May 1984, p.26.

36. Maurits Coppieters, *Ik was een Europese Parlements lid*, p.8.

and regionalism.<sup>37</sup> The VU consistently disregarded this fact, and expected that Fianna Fail would join its political group. This was not the only disappointment for the VU at this time. Apart from the SNP and Fianna Fail giving the regionalist embryo a wide berth, the autonomist member from Greenland sat with the Socialist group and the VU's model reform party, the D'66, avoided the Technical Co-ordination Group to sit as independents.

The Technical Co-ordination Group was important because it brought the development and socialisation of relations between a group of MEPs and parties who could identify common interests with the potential to develop into something more lasting. This did not mean that all parties involved in the Technical Co-ordination Group joined the Rainbow Group or EFA - such as the Partido Radicale did not - but it offers some explanation for those parties which joined the Rainbow Group in 1984. A second explanation is that they had no other choice in 1984. It was the Rainbow Group or weak status as independent members.

### *The Rainbow Group 1984-89*

In theory, the Rainbow Group was a temporary home for small party families which lacked the numbers to survive as independent party groups. For some, in reality, it was a permanent home. The Rainbow Group was originally formed by newly elected Green MEPs in 1984. The Greens were one embryo comprising the Rainbow Group, others came from the Technical Co-ordination Group, with its small regionalist embryo and the Danish anti-EC movement.

The alliance between the various embryos involved was essentially pragmatic. Each subgroup continued to operate separately, with little attempt at co-ordination or integration between the embryos. At first the regionalists had wished the group to remain as the Technical Co-ordination Group and a home for unborn groups. The Greens, and particularly *Die Grunen*, with seven MEPs, preferred to build a more coherent group. The Green parties had sufficient numbers in the European Parliament in 1984 to form their own political group. That they did not do so indicated that they felt too weak and inexperienced, and desired to be members of a non-threatening group of greater size.

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37. Joan Hart and Bruno de Witte, "De Europese Programma's van Fianna Fail, FDF-RW en Volksunie", *Res Publica*, Vol.21, No.1, 1979, p.107.

The Rainbow Group had minimal experience of transnational party integration across embryo boundaries. Despite good co-operation between individual members of the group there were none of the deeper aspects of political co-operation found in other groups. The Rainbow Group operated on the principle of maximum autonomy for member parties and embryos: with no common programmes or manifestoes and no common assemblies. The common Bureau meetings were not used to discuss political issues but to allocate office space and speaking times in plenaries. Each embryo met separately through the European Free Alliance and the Green Alternative European Link (GRAEL), with the intention of transforming each into a formal political group. Though there were tensions with the group, particularly with regionalist concern at the disorganisation and unorthodox behaviour of the Green members, there was the expectation that the Rainbow Group would continue post-1989.

**Table 6.2 The Rainbow Group 1984-89**

<b><u>Party</u></b>	<b><u>MEPs</u></b>
Volksunie	2
Partito Sardo d'Azione	1
Ecolo	1
Agalev	1
Die Grunen	7
Democrazia Proletaria	1
Partito di Unità Proletaria	1
Groen Progressief Akkoord	2
Volksbeveægelsen Mod EF	4

### **The Post-1989 Rainbow Group**

The 1989 European elections brought success for both main embryos in the Rainbow Group. Both Greens and regionalists increased their representation. Though both embryos had been continuously seeking out new members in order to create their own independent family groups, it was expected that the group would continue as before, with maximum autonomy for the subgroups. The electoral success of the Green parties, with 29 MEPs, made the formation of a Green group possible.

The Greens had two choices. Either establish a Green-only political group or try to reconstitute the Rainbow Group as a Green-dominated alliance. The Greens tried the latter approach first, with acrimonious results. It would have meant continued minority status for the EFA parties: with their numerical weakness subject to

majority voting in the new Rainbow Group and greater discipline and cohesion on voting and policies in the European Parliament. This was not an attractive prospect, particularly as the Greens were choosy about which regionalists would be admitted to the new group, and it was unsuccessful. The Greens therefore formed their own family group, a move which created problems for the EFA parties as they were too weak to form their own group.

Though the EFA gained 8 MEPs in the 1989 elections, it was insufficient for group formation. Yet again they were reliant upon the Danish anti-EC movement to achieve group status. The post-1989 period produced Rainbow Group *Mark II* as can be seen in the table (6.3). The politics surrounding this remodelled group will be discussed below in the context of EFA's efforts to create a purer political group from the regionalist embryo.

**Table 6.3 The Rainbow Group 1989-94**

<b><u>Party</u></b>	<b><u>MEPs</u></b>
Volksunie	1
Independent Fianna Fail	1
Volkesbevaegelsen Mod EF	4
SNP	1
Partito Sardo d'Azione	1
Partido Andalucia	1
Unione di u Populu Corsu/Verts	1
Independent Grunen	1
Eusko Alkartasuna/Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya	1
Lega Lombarda	2

### **6. The European Free Alliance**

The European Free Alliance title was formally adopted in 1981 to describe the parties which signed the Bastia Declaration in 1979 and the Brussels Declaration in 1981. These declarations supported domestic and European decentralisation and autonomy, and a degree of co-operation between the parties. Various parties had met since 1977/8 to discuss the EFA project, and it was sufficiently developed for the VU to campaign as an EFA party in the 1979 European elections.

The Bastia agreement of 1979 was between the VU, Plaid Cymru, the *Fryske Nasjonale Partij* (FNP), the *Union Valdotaine* (UV), the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (PNV), the *Convergencia Democratica de Catalunya* (CDC), the ELV from Alsace

and the *Partei Deutschsprachiger Belgier* (PDB) of Belgian Germanophones. The agreement was signed at the congress of the *Unione di u Populu Corsu* (UPC), and used as the basis for the "European Charter of Peoples Without a State", in preparation for direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979.<sup>38</sup> This core group was the beginning of the EFA, though it was not formally institutionalised until 1981.

The advent of direct elections yielded a new electoral and institutional political opportunity structure for regionalists and nationalists, but they were badly placed to take advantage of it. They were electorally weak in their own countries which reduced their chances in European elections and, in turn, undermined the establishment of a separate regionalist group in the European Parliament.

The European elections of 1979 provided seats for the VU, the SNP and *Rassemblement Wallon* (RW), but they fragmented into two groups. The SNP joined the European Progressive Democrats along with the Gaullist RPR and Fianna Fail, whilst the VU and RW became members of the Technical Co-ordination Group. This early fragmentation set a pattern that affected attempts to establish a coherent regionalist political group in the subsequent decade. The VU sought to address this fragmentation by working to enhance inter-party co-operation amongst regionalists, and establish an overarching transnational federation of regionalist and nationalist parties. Thus there was an internal approach within the parliament and an external approach within the regionalist family.

The VU made considerable advances within Belgian politics in the 1970s, with a role in the coalition government in 1977-8. Its domestic success representation were far superior to its role in Europe. Yet the VU found itself alone in the European Parliament, aligned with non-regionalists and the unstable Wallon federalists. To strengthen its role in the European Parliament the VU sought to use its resources and status within the parliament to build links to other parties, rather than cultural movements or associations: the VU strategy was clearly focused upon electoral mobilisation in contrast to previous regionalist organisations. The party intended to construct an alliance and common programme amongst regionalists and build a more formal structure than that generated by the Bastia agreement.

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38. European Free Alliance, "Peoples Without a State: Regionalism, Autonomy and Self-government in Europe", working papers for study day, Brussels, 10th January 1981, p.10.

The Brussels congress which formally established the EFA in 1981 was achieved on the back of the Bastia congress, but attempted to fulfil rather different goals. The Brussels congress was the VU's baby, organised and managed by it. The congress was depicted as a study day on stateless nations, autonomy, regionalism and self-government, with the intention of extending the Bastia agreement to produce a larger common text amongst the participating parties.<sup>39</sup>

A number of common themes and problems were discussed at the congress: some clearly driven by European elections and the imperative of making political and organisational progress in advance of the next elections in 1984. The *Volksunie* MEP, Maurits Coppieters, was keen to promote a broad structure for regionalist co-operation, and identified the need for the EFA to develop common electoral lists to increase regionalist representation in the European Parliament.<sup>40</sup> Coppieters' colleague, Jaak Vandemeulebroucke, who became his alternate in 1981, wanted to discuss regionalist attitudes to the European Community and European integration itself, to develop common policies as a basis for future political co-operation.<sup>41</sup>

Coppieters saw five main areas of expansion for the EFA. First, there was a desire to involve the D'66 from Netherlands in the EFA. Second, there was a need to persuade the RW and the FDF to rejoin the EFA, following their departure over the membership of anti-French elements like the Bretons and Corsicans.<sup>42</sup> Third, there was an expectation that the SNP and other sympathetic parties could be attracted into membership of the EFA and a future regionalist political group. Fourth, there was the expectation that EC enlargement to include the Spanish and Portugese would bring new regionalist members, particularly in the Spanish case. Fifth, there was potential for co-operation with other small parties like the *Verts* and the *Parti Socialiste Unifié* (PSU) in France, with electoral alliances to enhance the prospects of regionalist success.<sup>43</sup>

Beyond expansion, the Brussels Congress was also concerned with developing common policies. This was the cohesion agenda of the EFA, offering one test of the genuineness of the EFA as a transnational organisation. The common text debated at Brussels was prepared and distributed by the VU, acting as the European Free

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39. *Ibid.*

40. European Free Alliance, Report of the Brussels Congress of the European Free Alliance, 8th to 10th January 1981, p.1.

41. *Ibid.*, p.2.

42. P. Claeys and N. Loeb-Mayer, "The European Elections Campaign in Belgium", in Karl-Heinz Reif (ed), *European Elections 1979/1981 and 1984*, p.9.

43. European Free Alliance, Report of the Brussels Congress, 8th to 10th January 1981, p.9.

Alliance, and there was also discussion of a paper submitted by the *Parti pour l'Organisation d'une Bretagne Libre* (POBL) presented by Yann Fouère.<sup>44</sup> The VU submission expressed the right to self-determination, the decentralist aspect of European union (integral regionalism) and sought to offer a general philosophy of political and economic life for the regionalists.<sup>45</sup> The bulk of this text was adopted at the Brussels congress as the founding statement of the EFA.

This first congress also created the organisational means for the EFA's development. It established a secretariat in the European Parliament to co-ordinate EFA meetings and affairs, managed by the VU. Parliamentary institutionalisation gave the EFA resources and personnel, and underlined the intention to establish a political group in the parliament. It also gave the VU considerable power over the development and direction of the organisation, particularly in maintaining progress towards an electoral strategy. There was no separate organisation outside the European Parliament. Such strong institutionalisation within the parliament was intended to give the organisation permanence and stability,<sup>46</sup> and avoid the short lifespans of the Congress of European Nations and Regions and the Bureau for Unrepresented European Nations.

The first bureau meeting of the European Free Alliance was in Brussels in September 1981. The expansion of EFA and the prospects for forming an EFA political group in the European Parliament were debated, along with the issue of establishing common electoral lists with other parties to produce more EFA MEPs. The chances of negotiating common lists with the new environmental parties was raised, though accorded a somewhat sceptical assessment because of the perceived difficulty of dealing with such unorthodox organisations in a parliamentary forum.<sup>47</sup> The EFA parties were willing to consider an *electoral alliance* with the Green parties, and others like the French PSU, but were less warm towards the consequences of a *parliamentary alliance*,<sup>48</sup> though this did not prevent them from establishing a common group with the Greens after the 1984 European elections.

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44. POBL, "Declaration of Principles", in working documents for the Brussels Congress, European Free Alliance, 1981.

45. European Free Alliance. "Charter of Co-operation for the Construction of a Europe of the Nations", working documents for the Brussels Congress, 1981.

46. Angelo Panebianco, *Political Parties: Organisation and Power*, p.58.

47. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA Bureau meeting, Brussels, 21st September 1981, p.4.

48. The contrast between these two types of alliances is drawn from Maurice Duverger, *Political Parties*, p.331.

## *Transnational Regionalism*

The next bureau meeting also discussed EFA expansion, exploring links with the *Union Valdotaïne* in Italy and PC in Wales. Also the organisation *Bretagne-Europe* was discussed, with a view to potential membership.<sup>49</sup> This organisation attempted to produce a list of candidates for the 1979 European elections, but faded away. It became prominent because the Breton movement had failed to pursue effective strategies of electoral mobilisation and had not competed in European elections. The issue of *Bretagne-Europe* became related to the possible membership of the UDB. It raised the problem of membership of regionalist parties which were electoral competitors. It was possible to have the POBL, the UDB and *Bretagne-Europe* all applying to join EFA, despite the potential conflicts. This problem led the EFA bureau to draft its constitution and rules, which established an applications process for new member parties to deal with the problem of intra-family competition.

### *The Institutionalisation of the EFA*

The next EFA congress in Eupen was attended by the SNP and *Rassemblement Wallon*, both with one MEP in the European Parliament but non-members of EFA. Part of Coppieters' agenda from the inaugural congress in 1981 was starting to be fulfilled. The presence of these two parties led the congress to discuss the possibility of a new political group, and also the likelihood of Fianna Fail joining them: a perennial and unrealistic item. The EFA identified two spheres in which to gain political credibility as the representative of political regionalism in Europe. First, the EFA's prestige rested upon its role in the European Parliament, second it rested upon developing relations with smaller parties so that the EFA would be genuinely pan-European. It would also enable the EFA to help microregionalist parties become larger parties, gain electoral representation, and contribute to EFA representation and prestige within the European Parliament.<sup>50</sup>

The Eupen congress also discussed the role of observers in the EFA, as opposed to that of full affiliates. EFA's constitution recognised the existence of observer status, but was intended as a temporary process: a trial period to determine whether applicants were suitable for full membership, and allow participation in the EFA to see whether membership was beneficial. This dual role of control and socialisation was undermined by the fact that some parties were content with permanent observer status. At Eupen, the VU proposed the abolition of observer status so the organisation could achieve collective and binding common policies and decisions: an

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49. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA bureau meeting, Brussels, 9th December 1981, pp.2-3.

50. European Free Alliance: Minutes of the EFA Congress, Eupen, 22nd and 23rd April 1983, p.5.



attempt to force parties such as the SNP into committing themselves to the EFA and the prospect of a regionalist party group. This proposal was rejected by the EFA members, as they preferred to maintain some level of autonomy for parties within the organisation.<sup>51</sup>

The maintenance of autonomy and continuing weakness of collective decisionmaking raised questions about the EFA. Pridham stressed the need for groups to sustain common policies and transcend national interests in order to qualify as transnational organisations.<sup>52</sup> Observer status allowed certain parties to opt out of particular common policies and pursue national interests instead. This facet undermined one transnational aspect of the European Free Alliance, but was evidence of organisational pragmatism. The trade-off between cohesion and opting out was the only way to sustain the EFA. The problem of observer status was diluted with the SNP's announcement at Eupen that it had agreed in principle to join the EFA, and with PC's agreement to become a full member at its National Council.<sup>53</sup> The accession of the SNP did not, however, lead to changes in the political groups of the European Parliament. The SNP member remained affiliated to the European Progressive Democrats.

Though observer status was maintained, other constitutional rules and procedures were adopted. Some of this formalisation was a product of organisational expansion. The EFA had grown from eight parties in 1981 to nineteen parties by 1983.<sup>54</sup> Basically three sets of rules were put forward:

1. Membership of EFA was open to political parties within the European Community that espoused democratic principles, opposed the use of violence, contested elections, and operated on a regional basis;
2. Observer status in the EFA could be given to parties currently represented in the European Parliament who were not members of the Rainbow Group, to newly formed parties, and to parties from states that had applied for EC membership but were not yet members;
3. Members of the bureau were to be bound together, and not allowed to co-operate with EFA rivals and competitors. The prospect of extending EFA membership to two rival parties from the same region was forbidden, and cultural associations were not allowed to join EFA as either full members or observers.<sup>55</sup>

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51. *Ibid.*, pp.8-9.

52. Pridham and Pridham, 1979, *Op. Cit.*, p.249.

53. Minutes of the EFA Congress, Eupen, *Ibid.*

54. *Ibid.*, p.3

55. *Ibid.*, p.4.

## *Transnational Regionalism*

These rules placed boundaries around the EFA. First, the democratic boundary, intended to exclude applications from more extremist parties. Within the regionalist and nationalist family there are parties and organisations which diverge from mainstream regionalism, and could cause embarrassment to the EFA, such as *Herri Batasuna*, *Sinn Féin* and *Vlaams Blok*. Second, there was also a geographical boundary, to make EFA representative of existing and acceding EC member states, though the fact that more countries applied to join the EC in the 1990s, with the demise of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, meant that this boundary became relatively porous. Third, there was an organisational boundary. Because EFA wanted to grow into a political party alliance, its preference for electoral organisations and exclusion of cultural associations was understandable.

The rules also dealt with the admission of regionalist competitor parties to the EFA. This problem was most evident in Brittany and Corsica. At first the statute may appear exclusive and obstructive. But it advanced two strategic imperatives. First, a desire to force microregionalist parties to sink their differences and develop co-operative and amalgamative approaches. Second, it may indicate that EFA wanted to choose the strongest electoral partner in certain regions to encourage co-operation and reduce electoral fragmentation: allowing the replacement of the inactive POBL by the electoralist UDB.

The bureau was reorganised in 1983 to establish a six person bureau of three MEPs and three EFA delegates for a three year term. This reorganisation reduced VU dominance. The first three delegates elected were Rudolf Falkena of the *Fryske Nasjionale Partij*, Alexis Betemps of the *Union Valdotaine* and Gustave Alirol of *Volem Vuire al Pais*.<sup>56</sup> The VU however retained a prominent role in the organisation: Jaak Vandemeulebroucke became the bureau's chairperson and Herman Verheirstraaten the EFA Secretary-General. The responsibilities of the bureau involved organising bureau meetings and general assemblies, preparing agendas, implementing bureau/assembly decisions, and proposing EFA political initiatives within the organisation and in the European Parliament.<sup>57</sup> These functions gave the bureau and its staff a fair degree of directive power within the organisation.

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56. *Ibid.*

57. *Ibid.*

## *Transnational Regionalism*

### *Expansion, Programmes and Elections*

Following its institutionalisation, the EFA turned to discuss expansion and preparations for the European elections in 1984. Both the SNP and PC announced they would contest their full complement of seats: eight in Scotland and four in Wales. The VU and RW were preparing to contest their own separate linguistic electoral colleges and the Brussels *arrondissement*. The preparations of the major regionalist parties were far superior to the microregionalists. The latter were absent from the European elections, or in the case of the *Fryske Nasjonale Partij*, sought to develop joint lists with the Dutch Greens and minor left parties: though this electoral alliance did not develop due to differences between the parties.<sup>58</sup>

The position of the SNP within the EFA became more stable following the EFA congress in Eupen. In December 1983, the bureau reported on discussions between the SNP and EFA, and an EFA delegation of Jaak Vandemeulebroucke and Herman Verheirstraeten to the SNP conference. There was also discussion of the development of relations between the Italian regionalist parties: with the *Union Valdotaïne*, who were present at the bureau meeting in December 1983, and with the *Partito Sardo d'Azione*.

There was already co-operation between Italian regionalists in domestic and European elections. The *Union Valdotaïne* had been involved in running a regionalist liaison office in the Italian parliament with the Friulians and Sardinians. At the 1979 European election the *Union Valdotaïne* and *Partito Sardo d'Azione* had presented a joint candidate who came near to breaking though the electoral threshold for representation.<sup>59</sup> The fact that organisational and electoral co-operation was already practiced made the prospects for success and electoral growth in Italy quite promising. The same could not be said of France. There, the various regionalist parties were weaker and less co-operative. Once again hopes were raised of developing a list with the *Verts* and PSU. These parties, however, had little concern with regional issues. They were both vulnerable to the 5% threshold and seen to require electoral partners.<sup>60</sup> Like the regionalists, these parties were disadvantaged by the financial costs of the European elections. It was calculated that regionalist participation in the 1984 elections would have cost FF2,000,000 in deposits and

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58. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA bureau, 9th December 1983, p.5.

59. *Ibid.*, p.2.

60. *Ibid.*, p.6

expenses. Of this only FF150,000 could be reimbursed by the European Parliament after the election.<sup>61</sup>

The EFA meetings leading up to the 1984 elections also sought to develop a common manifesto for the election campaign itself, to demonstrate inter-regionalist solidarity and promote regionalism as a transnational movement. Developing a common programme amongst such diverse parties was not without its problems. Phil Williams of Plaid Cymru made the point that

“any joint manifesto for these elections must be based on the lowest common denominators”.<sup>62</sup>

A small common programme was seen as beneficial, and was proposed by Plaid Cymru at the EFA meeting in April 1984. It comprised five basic principles:

1. Equal status for nations and regions in the European Community;
2. Respect for languages and cultural differences, and for the development of decentralised political institutions;
3. The strengthening of European Community regional policy;
4. A commitment to an anti-nuclear Europe;
5. Increased aid from Europe to the third world.<sup>63</sup>

This proposal resembled the EFA charter adopted at the inaugural Brussels congress in 1981. The VU was critical of the limited substance of the PC proposal, however, as it made it difficult for the EFA to proceed beyond minimal political co-operation. The VU also wished to add a section committing the EFA to the democratisation of European Community institutions and procedures.<sup>64</sup> Despite such concerns it was seen to be too late to alter the programme for the European elections,<sup>65</sup> and the EFA parties contested the elections with a minimum common programme.

The 1984 elections brought a marginal advance for the EFA parties. The VU continued to advance following its late 1970s slump, and took a second seat in the European Parliament. The common list of the *Union Valdôtaine* and the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* was also successful in electing an MEP. There was, however, defeat for the RW, which had been in a process of disintegration since the late 1970s.

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61. *Ibid.*

62. *Ibid.*, p3. At this stage the EFA minutes were still being produced in a verbatim format.

63. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA bureau, Brussels, 6th April 1984, p.3.

64. *Ibid.*, p.6.

65. *Ibid.*, p.7.

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The three EFA MEPs met with the SNP and Fianna Fail to discuss the prospects for group formation, but made no progress. The SNP had retained its single seat whilst Fianna Fail increased its representation to eight members. This provided the numerical and transnational criteria for a new regionalist group to be formed, but the latter parties chose to remain within their existing group, which expanded to include members from Greece and Portugal. The SNP was satisfied with the European Progressive Democrats, which renamed itself the European Democratic Alliance (EDA), as it provided both status and resources.<sup>66</sup> The status was because the principal members of the EDA were major parties of government, not microparties, and the resources came from the success of the group in pursuing committee placements within the parliament. For example, the EDA nominated Mrs Ewing to chair the Committee on Youth and Education and elected her vice-president of the group.

### *The Spanish Enlargement*

With no chance of forming an EFA group, the three EFA MEPs joined the Rainbow Group established by the Green parties and Danish anti-EC movement. Because of the enlargement of the EC in 1986, the EFA did not rule out the formation of a purer regionalist group in the future. Though the accession of Greece in 1981 had brought no change to the EFA, the Spanish accession was seen to create new opportunities for the EFA embryo to develop into a full-blown political group. This was because it would bring a number of successful regionalist parties into the EC. The SNP admitted that this prospect could alter its role in the EP. It conceded the difficulties of remaining outside any emergent regionalist political group given the involvement of such major parties as the *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* and *Convergencia i Unio*.<sup>67</sup>

The Spanish enlargement was a substantial opportunity for EFA to transform itself from *embryo* into family group. The VU and the EFA made a number of overtures to the Spanish regionalists: the main Basque regionalist party the PNV and the CDC of Catalonia, one half of the *Convergencia i Unio* coalition, had been associated with EFA, and the EFA had courted further involvement in the 1980s. The VU sent one of its senior elected members, Hugo Schiltz, the former party leader and government Minister, for talks with CiU leaders to encourage them to join the EFA organisation. The EFA also brought CiU members to Brussels and introduced them to the

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66. George Leslie, SNP representative at the EFA meeting, Saint Vincent, 22nd to 25th November 1984, p.2.

67. Interview with Neil Fergusson, Assistant General Secretary of the Rainbow Group, and parliamentary assistant to Winnie Ewing MEP since 1980: Brussels, 20th May 1992.

European institutional and political network.<sup>68</sup> The EFA, however, were not alone in courting the Spanish regionalists. The European Democratic Alliance unsuccessfully sought the accession of the PNV, CiU and the centrist CDS, though they found involvement with the EDA unattractive and wished to avoid association with the RPR.<sup>69</sup>

Efforts to attract the Spanish regionalists went unrewarded. Following the European elections in Spain neither the PNV nor CiU joined the EFA or Rainbow group. This was a major defeat for EFA. Any expectations of doubling the size of regionalist representation within the European Parliament were disappointed. The Spanish regionalists turned to mainstream political family groups rather than to regionalist solidarity. The two CiU MEPs divided between the European Peoples Party and the Liberal Democratic group. The PNV chose to join the European Peoples Party but left over the membership of the *Allianzo Popolare*.<sup>70</sup> The CiU intended to use its role in two mainstream family groups as part of an opening into extraregional politics in Spain, moving from regionalism into national electoral politics to fill the political space in the centre vacated by the declining CDS, but this departure from regional political mobilisation was unsuccessful.<sup>71</sup>

Though EFA was deprived of its main regionalist counterparts in Spain, there was some compensation. The 1980s saw the development of new nationalist parties in both regions, committed to maximum autonomy. Though regionalist parties have tended to be viewed as mobilising parties, acting to develop and mobilise new political cleavages, these new organisations, *Esquerra Republicana* and *Eusko Alkartasuna*, can be seen as *challenger* parties, in winning support from other parties within the established regionalist cleavage.<sup>72</sup> In the Spanish European elections in 1987, *Eusko Alkartasuna*, *Esquerra Republicana* and the *Partido Nacionalista Gallego* formed the “Coalicion Europea de los Pueblos” list, which gained 1.7% of the national vote in Spain and one MEP. This gave the EFA and the Rainbow group another MEP. Though the chances of the main regionalist parties from Spain joining the EFA or Rainbow Group in future were closed off by the entrance of radical, dissident regionalists into the organisation.

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68. Interview with Herman Verheirstraeten, Secretary-General of the European Free Alliance: Brussels, 25th February 1992.

69. Jacobs and Corbett, *Op. cit.*, p.62.

70. Interview with Neil Fergusson, *Op. cit.*

71. David Walker, “Convergencia Democrática de Catalunya: Its Successes and Problems”, *Regional Politics and Policy*, Vol.1, No.3, Autumn 1991, p.294.

72. Thomas Rochon, “Mobilizers and Challengers: Toward a Theory of New Party Success”, *International Political Science Review*, Vol.6, No.4, 1985, p.421.

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The Spanish *volte face* also undermined the EFA's continuous hopes of a nationalist realignment with the SNP and Fianna Fail. The EFA's group-building efforts brought invitations to the SNP, PNV, CDC and Fianna Fail but to no avail. The EFA also expected that the domestic parliamentary pact between the SNP and Plaid Cymru in advance of the 1987 general election would yield a change in SNP attitudes to political group membership.<sup>73</sup> It assumed that PC pressure over the SNP's association with the RPR would prove effective. However, it only led to conflict between the two parties.

The post-1987 environment of the EFA was familiar: it contained parties who were not committed to a regionalist group or to the Rainbow Group. It also had the problem of allowing competing Breton parties to join the EFA. In the former case it allowed non-Rainbow members to continue within the EFA - to do otherwise may have alienated them and lost any chance of their accession to a regionalist group entirely. In the second area, a decision on the status of the Breton micoregionalist parties was deferred.<sup>74</sup>

One positive aspect that developed following the European elections of 1984 was the common programme. Despite an increase in affiliated parties, with some EFA members involved in other political groups, this did not damage the organisational coherence of the EFA in developing common policies. From 1984 the agenda of bureau and congress meetings took a different shape. Group expansion remained a regular issue, but more serious consideration and discussion was given to policy development. The EFA General Assembly in Cardiff in 1986 was an example, with discussion and adoption of a number of common texts on agriculture, regional policy, employment, defence and energy policy.<sup>75</sup>

### *The Green-Regionalist Alliance*

The 1984 elections and the unfulfilled expectations of the Spanish accession did not deter the EFA from planning for the next round of European elections in 1989. Once again, in France there were hopes of joint lists between Greens and regionalists. The Green movement in France had experienced disappointment with European elections and the 5% threshold. In 1979 they lost out with 4.4%, standing as "Europe-Ecologie". Their performance in 1984 was compounded by fragmentation. The

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73. European Free Alliance, Minutes of EFA bureau meeting, Brussels, 10th January 1986, p.2.

74. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA General Assembly, Cardiff, 3rd and 4th July 1986, p.1.

75. *Ibid.*

movement had grown in the intervening years, and expected to gain representation, but its efforts were dissipated by the presence of two Green lists in the 1984 election. The *Verts* gained 3.36%, and the *Entente Radicale et Ecologiste*, achieved 3.31%.<sup>76</sup> This experience made the *Verts* more amenable to electoral alliances. Within the EFA, the *Parti Occitan* was given the responsibility of developing a common list between the regionalist parties in France for the 1989 elections.<sup>77</sup> The deal brokered between the EFA and the *Verts* was twofold. First the EFA was to establish and campaign for a joint list headed by the *Verts*. Second, if this list succeeded in breaking through the 5% threshold, the regionalists could expect to gain an MEP amongst the first four members elected.<sup>78</sup> The EFA also held discussions amongst its Spanish regionalist members to repeat the electoral alliance that produced a common list and one MEP in 1987.

### *Forming The New Rainbow Group*

The 1989 European elections were the first Europe-wide effort by the EFA. Its campaign involved a minimum programme and some limited joint campaigning and materials, though the bulk of the election campaigns in 1989 were carried out using domestic rather than European themes. Though the VU was reduced to one member, the French regionalists' alliance with the *Verts* was successful, and made history by producing the first nationally-elected regionalist in that country through the UPC of Corsica. The *Union Valdôtaine/Partito Sardo d'Azione* were again successful in electing a member, whilst a former member, Neil Blaney of independent Fianna Fail, was re-elected to the European Parliament. This gave EFA five MEPs, which, added to the four members of the Danish anti-EC movement provided a total of nine members in the Rainbow Group.

After the 1989 election, the difficulties encountered with the Greens outlined above brought the need to develop the EFA embryo into a full political group. Efforts to establish a self-standing regionalist group were boosted by the decision of the *Partido Andalucia* to join the EFA, which gave it six members. This encouraged the EFA to work on the SNP again. The SNP took the initiative however, and its MEP approached the EFA to discuss joining because of discontent with the RPR in France.<sup>79</sup> The subsequent accession of a dissident German Green MEP helped the

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76. Brendan Prendeville, "Les Verts", in Ferdinand Muller-Rommell (ed), *New Politics in Western Europe: The Rise and Success of Green Parties and Alternative Lists*.

77. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA Congress, Brussels, 7th and 8th September 1987, p.7.

78. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA Congress, Cagliari, 2nd to 4th May 1988, p.3.

79. Interview with Mrs Winnie Ewing MEP, Brussels, 25th February 1992.



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regionalist and Danish movement achieve the numerical requirement for recognition as a group, so the new Rainbow Group was launched with a stronger regionalist subgroup aided by the Danish MEPs from the former Rainbow Group. Regionalism and the EFA subgroup were enhanced but still too small to become a single group.

Expansion within the regionalist family post-1989 was not without problems. This came most forceably in the shape of the *Lega Lombarda* (LL) which gained two MEPs in the European elections and was subject to the attentions of political groups like the European Democratic Alliance. Initially the LL was refused EFA membership after objections by the Sardinians, but this disagreement was patched up and the LL joined as observers then as full members. The need to gain members for the new Rainbow Group and to extend the EFA, especially amongst electorally successful parties, was paramount. The LL were also keen to gain the benefits of group membership and escape the chance of ending up as independents in the parliament.

The expansion of the Rainbow Group continued after the LL accession to involve a member of the Portuguese centrist party. There was also some final justice regarding the larger Spanish regionalist parties. The PNV had run a joint list with a regionalist party in the Canary islands, this seat was to be rotated in the final years of the 1989-94 European Parliament. The new MEP decided to join the Rainbow group rather than continue the PNV's affiliation.

Following the 1989 elections the EFA more closely resembled the Rainbow group, and set itself three goals. First, the consolidation of the organisation and the new political group. Second, the development of the common programme. Third, the search for new members.<sup>80</sup> The improved synthesis between the EFA and the Rainbow group produced a more formalised structure, with biannual congresses employed to develop the common programme. This was in contrast to the sharing of congresses with the Greens in the former Rainbow group, where each organisation had only one congress each year.

### *The New Agenda of Expansion*

The expansion of the EFA entered a new phase after 1991. The EFA followed established practices with accession to membership of the *Union für Sud Tirol* and

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80. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA Congress, Oostende, 30th September 1991, p.1.

the *Unitat Catalunya*,<sup>81</sup> but the post-cold war climate and intended expansion of the European Community to the countries of the European Free Trade Area brought new opportunities for expansion. With both federation and European Parliament in mind, the EFA pursued regionalists and centre or radical parties. The Slovene movement, *Slovenska Skupnost*, became a member in 1991,<sup>82</sup> followed by the Slovak independence party, the *Slovenska Narodna Strana*, in 1992.<sup>83</sup> The EFA also had discussions with the Swedish Centre Party, centre parties around the Baltics and Scandinavia, and sought to develop dialogue with parties in Romania and Slovenia.<sup>84</sup>

The search for new EFA affiliates and new members of the Rainbow group entered an *external* expansion phase after 1991, because of expectations of the future enlargement of Community. This expansion was numerically useful for the EFA parties, as it brought potential new members, but it also brought certain dangers. It would seem to draw the EFA and Rainbow group away from the regionalist family, as if the organisation accepted that it was destined to remain an embryo organisation because of its electoral weaknesses and constraints. Perhaps the EFA felt it had exhausted its potential regionalist membership and must look elsewhere for members, even though it would dilute and deregionalise the Rainbow Group and the EFA. There would seem to be only marginal grounds for electoral expansion within the Rainbow Group, though the most striking advances may be made in Italy, which could destabilise both EFA and the Rainbow group by making the *Lega Lombarda* the dominant party.

The role of the *Lega Lombarda* was already controversial within the EFA and Rainbow group. The success of the LL and its associates in the *Lega Nord* in the Italian national elections in 1992 indicated that the future Rainbow Group would be comprised of a large number of LL members. Given the programme and tactics of the LL, its tendency towards populism and anti-immigration which make it a rather awkward EFA member,<sup>85</sup> current EFA members could expect to face credibility problems from involvement. Meanwhile the key motivator behind the EFA, the VU, entered a period of decline accompanied by fragmentation. Its continued organisational and political leadership within the EFA was a consequence of its

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81. This party is active in the Catalan areas of southern France and is not a competitor with the ERC, though related to it.

82. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA Congress, Oostende, 30th September 1991.

83. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA Congress, Brussels, 4th and 5th May 1992.

84. European Free Alliance, EFA Newsletter number 1, 4th May 1992, p.10.

85. Dwayne Woods, "The Centre no Longer Holds: The Rise of Regional Leagues in Italian Politics", *Western European Politics*, vol.15, No.2, April 1992, pp.56-76.

initial founding role and presence in the European Parliament. The VU's decline may lead to the loss of its role in the European Parliament in the 1994 European elections. The subsequent repercussions for the EFA and the Rainbow Group would be damaging.

Though this possibility casts a shadow over the organisation, it was at its most institutionalised and formalised in the early 1990s. The new constitution adopted in 1991 altered the power relations within the organisation. Though there were already full and observer membership statuses, the new constitution differentiated between voting and non-voting members. This was based upon common organisational criteria. In order to be a member with voting rights a party had to subscribe to the EFA programme, have a proper organisational structure, produce an internal party journal and have elected members at the European, national, regional or local level.<sup>86</sup> These criteria effectively disenfranchised the *Parti Fédéraliste Flamand* and the *Parti Alsacien*, and demoted them to observer status.<sup>87</sup> Here was further encouragement and pressure on affiliates to adopt electoral strategies.

The EFA also adopted a two stage process for new members, with applicants given a probationary year as observers before acceptance into full membership by the EFA congress,<sup>88</sup> creating a 'holding' function on new members. The EFA bureau was also reconstructed and enlarged to produce a nine person bureau with three tiers. The first involved the election of the EFA Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary. The Chairperson is required to be an MEP, the Vice-Chair a member of a party not represented in the European Parliament, and the EFA Secretary is required to be a staff member in the parliament.<sup>89</sup> This rule kept the peak of the organisation with the MEPs but reserved a place for the unelected parties and microparties. Three posts on the bureau were also reserved for the MEPs, and a further three for parties without EP representation, to preserve the balance between the two types of parties involved in the organisation.

The first set of elections under this new constitution found the SNP's Winnie Ewing elected to the Chair of the EFA, Gustave Alliolot of the *Parti Occitan* was re-elected as Vice-Chair, and Herman Verheirstraeten was chosen again as EFA Secretary. The bureau consisted of Jaak Vandemeulebroucke of the VU, Max Simeoni of the UPC and Francesco Speroni of the LL. The three non-MEPs elected were Jill Evans of

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86. European Free Alliance, EFA Constitution, article 1.

87. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA Congress, Oostende, *Op cit.*, p.1.

88. EFA constitution, Article 3 (c).

89. European Free Alliance, EFA Constitution, article 4, clauses (b) and (c).

PC, J. Canovas of *Eusko Alkartasuna* and Rudolf Falkena of the *Fryske Nasjonale Partij*.<sup>90</sup> This mix of representatives meant that the large parties were strong but not dominant within the group.

### **7. The Development of the EFA Common Programme**

The development of a common programme for a transnational party organisation has several purposes. Its most obvious function is related to the need for a common manifesto in European elections. There are also internal reasons for developing a programme: it provides a level of cohesion and commitment between members, and a means of developing common trust and agreements. The process of organisational growth, and an increase in involvement by professional politicians - in this case MEPs - also generated the need for common policies to guide to voting in the parliamentary arena.

The common programme of the European Free Alliance developed incrementally after 1981. The common texts adopted at Bastia in 1979 and in Brussels in 1981 formed the basis of the common programme. In reviewing the contents of the common text and policies a number of concerns must be borne in mind. There is the need to identify EFA attitudes to European integration and the development of the Community itself. The depth of the common programme is of interest, to see whether it is purely a minimum programme or has greater political coherence. Finally, it is useful to examine the EFA programme as an indicator of a common regionalist family ideology or political philosophy.

The initial common text produced in 1981 remained the organisation's founding statement. It was derived from Bastia declaration of 1979, Brussels, the "Charter of Co-operation for the Construction of a Europe of the Nations" in 1981, and debates over the common manifesto in 1984. The founding statement that emerged from these four sources had six component parts, and was an expanded version of the short programme advanced in 1984.

The founding text described the European Free Alliance as "Co-operative association of political parties" which advocate a form of "integrated regionalism".<sup>91</sup> Federalism and federal principles were the best hope for developing political decisionmaking at the lowest institutional and geographical levels through decentralisation and subsidiarity. It placed integrated regionalism as a decentralist, and identity-based

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90. European Free Alliance, Minutes of the EFA congress, Oostende, *Op. cit.*, p.2.

91. European Free Alliance, Common Text, Brussels, p.1.

variant of integral federalism. The goal of the EFA was “the creation of a Europe of the peoples”, though individual member parties views on this issue were to be respected, along with their right to develop their own policies and programme on this question beyond the common text. The ‘Europe of the peoples’ was a notably vague aim, though its obscurity was dealt with through the adoption of integrated regionalism.

EFA’s founding text displayed a strong individual and community orientation. Its federalism was intended to produce a situation in which “government and public authorities are structured or transformed so as to enable the individual to realise to the fullest possible extent their own individuality and place in society”.<sup>92</sup> In common with Héraud and Fouère and the school of integral federalism of Alexandre Marc and *La Fédération*, the ethnic or national community was advanced as the natural community for the individual, with each community based upon historical or cultural homogeneity. The community at the regional level, was contrasted with the potential remoteness of both the state and the European union. To avoid such remoteness and make the union successful in avoiding centralisation and bureaucratisation, it was to be constructed upon the ethnic and regional communities which underlay it rather than on states. This two step approach, of supranational growth and growing regional autonomy, was seen as the antidote to the replication of Jacobinism at the European level.<sup>93</sup>

The EFA therefore sought the creation of a “European fatherland, based upon ethnic and regional communities which formally recognises the rights of small minorities that are unable to form federal states”.<sup>94</sup> The process of European union and regional autonomy had a clearly federalist intent, with the EFA expressing support for

“the dismantling of existing nation-states, through a transfer of their powers to ethnic and regional communities on the one hand and to the European authority on the other”.<sup>95</sup>

The EFA attitude to integration appeared both affective and instrumental: supporting the concept and pursuit of European union, and also tying it to the interests of the regionalists themselves.

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92. *Ibid.*

93. *Ibid.*, p.2.

94. *Ibid.*

95. *Ibid.*, p.3.

## *Transnational Regionalism*

The agenda of dual federalism was everpresent in EFA's approach to European integration, and sat rather uneasily with its nationalist members. The parties who supported maximum autonomy sought nation-states, not federal units, or regional governments. The EFA's support for submaximal autonomy actually had more in common with the opponents of the independence parties in Britain and Spain. The *Europe of the Regions*, devolution and federalist goals were opposed by the SNP and *Eusko Alkartasuna* in their domestic political contexts, but supported by the Labour Party and PNV to some extent. So far this faultline within the EFA has not generated conflict, as the level of autonomy on goals and policies within the organisation allowed such differences. It may not be the EFA which politicises these cleavages, but party responses to the evolving agenda of European integration. The independence parties within EFA might reach a point of pooled or limited sovereignty beyond which they may not wish to proceed. The regionalists and dual federalists, who wish to transcend the nation-state rather than create their own, do not share this concern.

Dual federalism was a dominant theme in the EFA common text, and was expressed as the best means to protect national and regional diversity in the Community. It was the escape from a centralised European nationalism or identity,<sup>96</sup> and from the implications of the neofunctionalist concept of political community.<sup>97</sup> The common text identified three levels to political life and society: the community, the ethnic group or nation, and the supranational level, accepting a triple identity structure within European societies. Each level was seen to require full democratisation and rights to political participation. Thus the regions had to be democratically elected and able to relate to each other and the European level independently: not through the mediation of central authorities. Regional participation was to be ensured through creating a second chamber of regions in the European Parliament to institutionalise regional interests.<sup>98</sup> Yet again, there were faultlines evident here between the dual federalists and the nationalists. The nationalists, as seen in the case of the SNP, viewed such a regional chamber as a proposal used by devolutionists within the Labour and Liberal parties to head off the independence option. It had no real interest in pursuing this future regional option when the Community served nation-states and national interests.

In reflection of the linguistic and cultural basis of regionalism, the EFA also included a brief section on cultural policy in its founding statement. The EFA argued for the

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96. See Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi, *Crusade for Pan-Europe*, pp.115, 252, 257, and 268.

97. Ernst Haas, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces 1950-57*, p.5.

98. European Free Alliance, EFA Common Text, p.4

establishment of interregional structures to aid cultural co-operation between peoples, and for the Community to provide mechanisms through which the minority languages of Europe could be used in daily life.<sup>99</sup> The EFA programme and efforts in the European Parliament emphasised linguistic centralisation and homogenisation within states. Whilst EFA sought to transcend nation-states, it did not wish to create uniformity in cultural or linguistic fields. The EFA was concerned with the homogenising effects of EC policies in relation to education and language, which were seen to support majority language teaching and use, but neglected those of minorities.

The social ideas of the EFA provided evidence of a commitment to social justice and income redistribution. The EFA programme promoted the principle of “progressive social justice” and the “fair distribution of knowledge, ownership and power”.<sup>100</sup> The means to pursue social justice and redistribution did not involve centralisation and bureaucratic power, though alternative mechanisms to implement these principles were not indicated in the EFA programme. As much of the EFA founding statement was written in the early 1980s there was a strong concern for unemployment, the right to work, the humanisation of work and its redistribution to the areas in which workers live rather than vice versa.<sup>101</sup>

Though much of the socio-economic agenda of the EFA was left in the hands of the affiliated parties, dealing with domestic economic and political situations, the EFA did concern itself with the development of EC intervention in the socio-economic arena. The EFA supports the use of EC regional and social funds to pursue regionalisation as well as social justice, with a clear emphasis on the enhancement of regional autonomy through the Community’s economic development policies. The EFA’s economic policy was growth-oriented, but concerned with more even territorial economic development and the avoidance of economic and industrial concentration: EC regional policy was promoted to achieve more balanced development.

There was also a socialistic element to EFA policy, with the expressed desire of increasing the democratisation and social control of industry, particularly in the case of the multinational companies. A postmaterialist element was added by a stress on lifestyles and the environment rather than purely on production and technical

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99. *Ibid.*, p.5.

100. *Ibid.*, p.6.

101. *Ibid.*, p.6.

progress.<sup>102</sup> The EFA favoured the regionalisation of economic policymaking, and a greater local and regional role in intervention to correct the problems generated by the free market and industrial restructuring. The EFA also proposed an enhanced role for regions in economic development in the Community and locality. Europe was seen to provide the regional authorities with the potential for issue-expansion. The regional layer was important for the development of small and medium sized enterprises and regional economic networks. The EFA promoted two types of regional co-operation: one between regions and the Community institutions, the other between the regions themselves on a cross-national basis.

Whether the regions should have an institutionalised macro-economic role was unclear. Where the regions fitted into Economic and Monetary Union and the central banking arrangements of the Delors Report was an open question.<sup>103</sup> The intention would seem to be for the regional authorities to maximise their socio-economic roles at the expense of the nation-state at the micro-economic level, whilst Europe had the same effect on the nation-state at the macro-economic level: though this preference obscured the fact that the proposals for Economic and Monetary Union institutionalised the nation-states within the macro-economic framework.<sup>104</sup> Yet this fact did not deter the EFA from declaring support for EMU and a single currency. Rather, these were seen as policies which would produce economic and social benefits if implemented in the context of balanced development and regional policies. Though there was some dissatisfaction with the commitment to EMU amongst affiliated parties, the support for a strong regional policy provided a system of side-payments to those wary of the centralising economic effects of the EMU process. In this way the EFA approach was not unlike that of the European Community itself.<sup>105</sup>

Overall, the EFA argued for a federal constitution for Europe, rather than a confederal one. There was also a preference for *deepening* the integration process rather than *widening* it, though this commitment was a product of the early 1980s and the new Cold War elements in European politics. Then the EFTA and Eastern European enlargements appeared very remote. There was support for involvement of the East in the EC, to prepare them for future membership, but it was extremely vague.<sup>106</sup> The preference for *deepening* of the Community was seen to be the only

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102. *Ibid.*, p.8.

103. "Report of the Committee for Economic and Monetary Union", Committee for Economic and Monetary Union, (Luxembourg: European Communities, 1989).

104. *Ibid.*

105. See Gary Marks, "Structural Policy in the European Community", in Alberta Sbragia (ed), *Euro-Politics: Institutions and Policymaking in the New European Community*.

106. European Free Alliance, Common Text, Brussels, p.11.



## ***Transnational Regionalism***

one on offer in the early 1980s. Widening was developed in the context of Spain and Portugal but there was not the surge of interest that grew since the development of the European Economic Area and the decline of Soviet hegemony. These changes provided new circumstances, though the EFA did not jettison deeper integration for widening, but was supportive of both processes.

The common text and founding statement were very general, though subsequent policies and programmes provided more commonality and cohesion. However the fact that there were various types of regionalist and varying ideological positions evident amongst EFA party affiliates made deeper programmatic commitments difficult. Regionalism is not an ideology and this fact deprived common policymaking of any common philosophical background. Instead of a cohesive ideology the EFA had to reconcile contestable interpretations of constitutional change.

Though the EFA proceeded rather slowly in developing policies in individual policy sectors, with much of the work undertaken at the organisation's congresses each year, it generated a number of common positions. The table below indicates the range and timing of the development of the EFA common programme, with a clustering of issues evident from 1986-88.

**Table 6.4 Policy Debates at EFA Congresses 1981-88**

<b><u>Congress</u></b>	<b><u>Policy Debate</u></b>
Brussels 1981	Common founding text
Ljouwert 1982	Minority languages
Corsica 1982	Regional policy
Eupen 1983	Minority languages
Brussels 1984	Common election programme
Cardiff 1986	Agriculture, energy, regional and employment policy
Ljouwert 1987	Minority languages, social policy, European integration
Brussels 1987	Environment
Sardinia 1988	Environment, defence, economic development.

The resolutions and policies adopted at these congresses were significant additions to the generality of the founding statement. They moved beyond general principles to specific commitments, which were the basis for activities in the European Parliament. The importance of these policies beyond the EFA congress and the Rainbow group was questionable. It was domestic policies and appeals that had

greater currency in electoral politics, and the parties studied here made little use of the EFA programme or organisation in domestic politics. The VU was the obvious exception, which was exactly what would be expected. Whilst there was no EFA manifesto and minimal use of EFA materials in election campaigns, the VU was prominent in presenting the organisation within Flanders and adding it to its electoral appeal.<sup>107</sup>

### **8. Conclusion**

The development of transnational regionalism has been lengthy. It might have reached its organisational peak in the Rainbow Group and the European Free Alliance, but the fact that a number of important regionalist organisations remained outside these organisations suggest the imperfections of inter-party co-operation within the regionalist family. In addition the regionalists remained an *embryo* group within the parliament.

The advent of the European Parliament and direct elections were of considerable significance for party co-operation. Before direct elections co-operation was largely symbolic, with little political substance or impact. It was guided by microregionalist parties, with few goals or benefits beyond inter-regionalist fraternalism. Such organisations as the International Congress of European Communities and Regions began as an attempt to create a regionalist dimension to European integration, but seemed to have no central function in the absence of the Congresses themselves. The European Parliament changed this context quite markedly, and provided the forum and resources for the intermeshing of regionalist parties. The European Parliament was the motor behind transnational regionalism, but it took the VU to orchestrate its fulfilment. The particular configuration of political skills and persistence helped the VU successfully form and maintain its two co-operative organisations.

The success of the VU's efforts was clear, but the interpretation of the transnational nature of the Rainbow Group and European Free Alliance is less clear. Whilst the parties achieved some level of integration within the transnational party system - as members of a transnational federation, a formal political group within the European Parliament, and contesting European elections<sup>108</sup> - the supranational nature of these interactions and their depth within the political parties involved must be questioned. Though the regionalist organisations were genuinely transnational in composition,

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107. See Volksunie/EFA, *De Regenboog Fractie: De Europese Vrij alliantie in Het Europees Parlement*.

108. Pridham and Pridham, *Op. cit.*, 1981.

this did not necessarily lead to the adoption of supranational policies or voting in the European Parliament. The majority of the parties involved had a supranational commitment of sorts - through support for international federalism - but the programmatic result was very limited. This is not to belittle the achievements of the regionalist groups, rather to point out that their members were still oriented towards domestic politics. This trait was similar to other political parties and groups represented in the European Parliament.

The depth of party commitments to the supranational dimension and common policies must also be questioned. The relationship between member parties existed at the lowest common denominator in policy, and interactions were limited to the elite level. In small parties, which lacked substantial political resources and elected officeholders, participation in the transnational party sphere would be limited anyway. But the transnational dimension seems to have held little importance for domestic party elites or activists, and was limited to a fairly small circle. Extra-parliamentary links were restricted to visits and speeches by party leaders and MEPs, with little transnational exchange beyond this elite level.<sup>109</sup> The overwhelming majority of each party's members remained oriented towards domestic political concerns.

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109. This is borne out through examination of the attendance at the EFA Congresses, and links between the parties outwith these meetings.

## **Comparing Party Attitudes To European Integration**

### **1. Political Linkages and European Integration**

The evidence presented in the case studies above has demonstrated the prevalence of *linkage* strategies in relation to European integration. All of the parties took notice of European union and responded by linking the issue to autonomy. The nature and timing of these linkages were different, but the propensity to view European union from the standpoint of national and regional autonomy, and vice versa, was enduring.

The type of linkage differed between the cases. The UK and the continental cases experienced the main cleavage here, with a particularly “British” attitude to linkage evident in Scotland and to a lesser extent Wales. Both the Breton movement and the VU developed predominantly positive linkages between Europe and autonomy, a strategic approach facilitated by their regionalism and long-term preference for a *Europe of the Regions*. Of course, neither of these parties faced the contextual factors of the UK, in being a Community *outsider*, or the intergovernmental traditions that developed across the majority of the British political parties. Equally, there were few opportunities to develop a strategic approach to linkage in the way afforded by the 1975 referendum in the UK. There were also few other opportunities to exploit linkage because of the party political consensus on the European question and the regionalist parties’ traditional commitment to decentralisation and dual federalism. When opportunities arose - through two French referenda on Europe for example - there was hesitation over exploiting the issue for fear of appearing anti-Europe in addition to organisational weaknesses, which meant that efforts to use the issue went unnoticed.

The political context and traditions of the nationalist parties of Scotland and Wales were very different. These parties shared a degree of scepticism towards the European Community from its formation in 1957 until the 1980s. Since then elements within PC took a more *regionalist* view of Europe, while the SNP

## *Comparing Party Attitudes*

remained essentially intergovernmentalist. Overall, both parties used political linkage in a more varied and instrumental fashion than the continentals.

The variety of positive, negative and strategic negative linkages practised in the UK was a product of a number of factors. First, the context of *accession*. Particular linkages were made because the UK remained outside of EC yet sought membership. Here the nationalists took a very negative view of the prospect of accession without representation. Second, the issue of *representation*. The nationalists used the EC issue in a bid for Scottish and Welsh representation in European institutions. Third, there was *electoralism*: both parties faced party political contexts that laid the EC issue open to exploitation in electoral politics, especially against a divided Labour Party in the 1975 referendum. Such exploitation contrasted with the consensus of continental parties on European integration.

In addition, differences between the Scottish and Welsh parties and the continentals were evident through the level of internal conflict on Europe. Despite the official position of opposition to the EC of the two parties in the 1970s, the strength of opinion in support of independent membership had a tempering effect upon the parties. Whilst *strategic negative linkage* was a useful tactic for bidding up the idea of Scottish and Welsh representation in the EC it was also necessary to sustain the involvement of pro-EC elements within both parties. The ambiguity of party slogans during the referendum campaign, and the very different statements made by party elites, particularly in the case of the SNP, were indicative of the strength of the Europeanists within the parties, and the utility of strategic negative linkage. The success of this strategy was evident from the fact that the parties campaigned for only one side within the referendum and internal conflict on the referendum, and European Community generally, has remained low. By contrast, regionalist parties in Brittany and Flanders, with internal homogeneity on Europe for the most part, had little use of strategic negative linkage. Apart from the Breton divisions in the early 1930s, neither of these movements had cause to adopt strategies to sustain party coherence on European integration.

### **2. Direct Elections to the European Parliament**

The political parties in this study demonstrated different levels of responses to the opportunities provided by direct elections to the European Parliament since 1979. Though the issue of party behaviour towards European elections has been dealt with to some extent in the cases and the chapter on transnational regionalism, a

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comparison of party responses adds an extra dimension to consideration of the European electoral participation of the parties.

Elections to the European Parliament in many countries have been characterised as a *second-order* affair. They have been seen to have no role in government formation and generally viewed as less important contests by parties and voters alike.<sup>1</sup> This *second-order* conceptualisation was used to describe national elections in which the composition of the national government was not threatened, opening the way to relatively cost-free tactical and protest voting. European elections were seen to demonstrate all three second-order attributes across a range of EC member states. First, the elections were subject to a lower than average voter turnout than national contests. Second, they held better prospects for regional and small parties. Third, they tended to be characterised by a loss in support for governing parties.<sup>2</sup>

As a consequence of this *second-order* aspect, European elections held more potential for the cases in this study than for many other political parties. If the elections were seen to be less crucial in the electoral-governmental cycle of member states, then the parties in this study could reasonably expect that some voters would alter their usual voting criteria. The parties may have had some expectation that voters would be more *open* than at national elections, or that differential turnouts would have adverse effects on the larger parties which allowed smaller organisations to boost their support in percentage terms by ensuring a maximum turnout in their own electorate.

Apart from some expectation of changes in electoral behaviour, the *second-order* effect had another potential impact upon European elections. Because European elections were rather imperfect campaigns, in that they dealt with domestic political themes rather than European issues, there was some opportunity for parties to use them as occasions for political agenda-setting. Though they ignore the European aspect, the parties developed their own themes and strategies for European elections, linked to domestic goals and priorities.

The specifically *European* issue content of direct elections to the European Parliament remained weak for a number of reasons. The process of direct elections has been described as a series of loosely-connected and simultaneous national elections rather than a genuine pan-European election.<sup>3</sup> This was true for most

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1. Karl-Heinz Reif (ed), *Ten European Elections*, p.4.

2. *Ibid.*, p.9.

3. Juliet Lodge (ed), *Direct Elections to the European Parliament 1984*.

## *Comparing Party Attitudes*

political competitors, and was certainly the case for the nationalist and regionalist parties. Not only were domestic political questions predominantly at issue in these elections, but the result was often shaped by voter perceptions of the domestic, rather than European, political environment. Some of the explanation for the predominance of the domestic agenda lies with the absence of genuinely common and transnational parties across states, the lack of common electoral systems and procedures, the voters' identification of MEPs as national rather than supranational representatives, and the weakness of the European Parliament.<sup>4</sup> In addition, for individual voters, the unimportance of European institutions and powers relative to national government, the weak service role of MEPs compared to elected members of the national parliament, and the elite nature of European policies and problems can all be seen to depress voter interest and turnout.

Though the cases in this study can all be regarded as small parties, the majority have managed to play an active role in European elections. Two parties have managed to sustain electoral representation at the European level. Both the SNP and VU were successful in each of their European campaigns, in spite of adverse domestic circumstances at some elections. PC failed to exploit the European electoral dimension, despite the elevation of the European dimension within the party. The Breton parties on the other hand continued to demonstrate an incapacity to develop electoral mobilisation at any level beyond local government, and required regionalist and non-regionalist allies to play any role at the European level.

### *The Bretons In European Elections*

The Breton weaknesses described in chapter four threatened to undermine the micro-parties still further. Whilst European elections offered *second-order* opportunities for the other cases in this study, the Breton parties could legitimately view them as threats. The financial and organisational constraints that denied any role for Breton parties in European elections opened the door to alternative political organisations to use the European elections to mobilise regionalist support. This opportunity was grasped by two different sets of actors in the 1979 and 1984 elections.

In the period before the 1979 European contest a group of Breton cultural and economic figures sought to establish the *Région-Europe* list for the elections. This list involved members of CELIB, the Breton economic lobbying organisation from the 1950s, but not the UDB. The political regionalists tended to ignore the new

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4. *Ibid.*, p.265.

## *Comparing Party Attitudes*

organisation. *Région-Europe* sought to advance a programme centred around the defence of cultural diversity and support for regional economies against the twin threats of cultural and economic centralisation.<sup>5</sup> The *Région-Europe* list sought to present itself as a future political movement rather than a one-off electoral experiment - it later sought involvement in the European Free Alliance - and published a list of 81 nominees for the European elections. One for each French seat in the parliament.<sup>6</sup>

The ambitions of *Région-Europe* to achieve electoral success foundered on the same rocks as existing Breton political organisations. Like the UDB, the new body found it impossible to finance the costs of participation in Europe, which it had estimated at FF 3 million.<sup>7</sup> This financial barrier effectively excluded the organisation from the elections, leaving it to call on voters to cast a blank ballot in protest at the barriers to electoral participation in the European arena.<sup>8</sup> These financial barriers were also effective in preventing a new regional list from competing in the 1984 elections. Another group of Breton regional figures sought to establish the *Europe des Peuples* list, but again suffered from lack of funding and were forced to withdraw.<sup>9</sup>

### *The SNP and PC In European Elections*

The Breton absence from European electoral competition stands in marked contrast to the activities of other parties. Each has managed to sustain a high level of electoral mobilisation across the three direct elections, and in employing distinct domestic/European themes, they used these occasions to advance their political linkages. In the case of the SNP and Plaid Cymru the 1989 elections were key linkage elections, in which both parties campaigned for autonomy in Europe as their main theme. This *absolute* linkage offers some evidence that these parties treated the European elections as a *first-order* affair in 1989. This was a consequence of the linkage itself - the Wales in Europe and *Independence in Europe* initiatives - but also a strategic move by the parties to exploit the opportunities of the second-order process by heightening party activity to boost support. The rationale for these parties in elevating the importance of the European elections is evident in the table below.

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5. *Ouest-France*, 14th May 1979, p.7.

6. *Ouest-France*, 26th May 1979, p.8.

7. *Ouest-France*, 11th May 1979, p.8.

8. *Ouest-France*, 9th June 1979, p.4.

9. *Ouest-France*, 9th June 1984, p.3.



## *Comparing Party Attitudes*

**Table 7.1 Comparison of First And Second Order Elections in Scotland and Wales 1979 to 1992.**

<b><u>Party</u></b>	<b><u>National</u></b>	<b><u>European</u></b>	<b><u>% Increase</u></b>
<b><i>SNP</i></b>	1979: 17.3 1983: 11.8 1987: 14	1979: 19.4 1984: 17.8 1989: 25.5	2.1 6.0 11.5
<b><i>Plaid Cymru</i></b>	1979: 8.1 1983: 7.8 1987: 7.3	1979: 11.7 1984: 12 1989: 12.3	3.6 4.2 5.0

The efforts of nationalist parties to see the European elections in first-order terms, and attempt to elevate their importance through adopting themes relating autonomy to Europe was fairly clear. The fact that the SNP adopted its *Independence in Europe* programme just 9 months ahead of the European elections in 1989 - with an eye on this electoral contest - was some evidence of this, along with the way in which the *Independence in Europe* policy was deployed in the period before the election. For PC, the discussions in 1984 to promote the European elections above national elections, through the resignation of the party's two Westminster MPs to stand for Europe, and the candidacy of the party leader in the 1989 European elections, both demonstrate a growing *first-order* tendency.

The ability of the nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales to benefit from second-order effects is fairly clear in the table above. The SNP in particular managed to gain substantial electoral benefits in European elections, with the party's performance in 1989 its most successful since October 1974 when it recorded 30.5%. The SNP performance in 1989 was also notable for the fact that the party faced strong competition for second-order votes from other parties. The opposition Labour Party had cast the European elections as a referendum on the Conservative Government's handling of European issues,<sup>10</sup> and on the Premiership of Margaret Thatcher, and was largely successful in its Scottish and UK share of support. The collapse of the centre parties provided Labour with their first national electoral success since 1974, and also provided opportunities for the Green Party to pick up support.

The Greens significantly blunted PC's efforts to benefit from *second order* effects in Wales in 1989, picking up 11.3% of the vote and forcing PC into fourth place in three of the four Welsh seats.<sup>11</sup> PC's vote was still well up on its national electoral

10. Michael Burgess and Adrian Lee, "The United Kingdom", in Juliet Lodge (ed), *The 1989 Election of the European Parliament*.

11. See Tom Mackie (ed), *Europe Votes 3*.

## *Comparing Party Attitudes*

score, but it made no advance despite its optimistic forecasts. In Scotland the Greens found their performance heavily constrained by the strong showing of the SNP across the eight Scottish constituencies. The Greens only picked up 7.2% in Scotland, in contrast to the SNP's 25.5%, a result that was less than half of the Green vote for the UK of 14.5%.

### *The VU In European Elections*

The success of the nationalists in the UK contrasted markedly with the relative failure of the VU in European elections. This failure was a consequence of the fact that European elections did not conform to the second-order typification in Belgium. These elections did not share the three second-order attributes outlined above: they tended to have strong turnouts at European elections, as voting is compulsory, elections did not seem to benefit small and regional parties to the detriment of larger and traditional parties, and the straightforward anti-governmental trend evident in other systems was absent from Belgian politics. In the 1979 election the two government parties performed well, though the election was of obvious importance to first-order politics as the knowledge that there would be an electoral contest in June 1979 had a strong influence on negotiations on coalition formation following the 1978 national election.

**Table 7.2 Comparison of First And Second Order Elections in Flanders 1979 to 1991.**

<b><u>Party</u></b>	<b><u>National</u></b>	<b><u>European</u></b>	<b><u>% Decrease</u></b>
<b><i>Volksunie</i></b>	1978: 11.5	1979: 9.7	1.8
	1981: 15.9	1984: 13.9	2.0
	1987: 12.9	1989: 8.7	4.2
	1991: 9.3		

From the figures above it is obvious that the VU experienced the European elections in a very different way from the SNP and PC. Instead of gaining second-order votes, the party lost support. Part of the reason was that the VU suffered from one of the identifiable second-order problems in the 1979 and 1989 elections. The party's experience in government in 1977-8 and 1988-91 was not popular with the VU electorate, so it was the party's *governmentalism* that lost it support in a second-order fashion. However, this would not explain the loss of support between the 1981 national and 1984 European elections. Equally, it does not explain the strong performance of the governing parties in 1979.

## *Comparing Party Attitudes*

Of course, the VU faced greater competition for support in this period, with the emergence of the *Vlaams Blok*, the Liberal (PVV) recovery, and the appearance of the environmental party, *Agalev*. So, not only did the VU lose out because of its *governmentalism*, it lost out to new parties who benefitted from some element of the *second-order* effect. What is clear is that the VU performed better at national than European elections, the reverse of the trend identified in Scotland and Wales.

Though the VU performed comparatively badly in the European elections this does not mean that the autonomy question was low on the political agenda on these occasions.<sup>12</sup> On the contrary, the issue of state reform was important during the 1979 elections, because of the need to form a government in the period leading up to those elections, which would seek to implement aspects of the former Egmont Pact which had precipitated the fall of the government in 1978. The issue was also important in the 1984 elections, particularly because of the anti-Flemish backlash in Wallonie. This developed as a result of linguistic conflicts over the necessity for elected officials to be bilingual in the Fourons area of Eastern Belgium - where a mixed Flemish-Francophone area had special linguistic arrangements - and the communes around the Brussels metropolitan area. In both cases there was Flemish concern that the Mayor of one town in the Fourons, Jose Happart, and a number of other town officials around Brussels, were strictly monolingual. This broke the linguistic agreements in these areas, and the Flemish demanded the removal of the officials concerned. The Francophone community did not back down on this question and the issue was propelled into national politics. It was most evident in the 1984 European campaign when Happart was selected to stand on the list of the *Parti Socialiste*, and was duly elected with a large number of preference votes.

The consensual nature of European integration also made it difficult for the VU to exploit the autonomy/Europe linkage in elections. It prevented the party from presenting and benefitting from any distinct position or policy related to the EC. Equally, the domestic component to European campaigns was constrained because the main parties sought to avoid placing stress upon governing coalitions, something experienced by the VU in 1989.

Though the nationalist parties clearly benefitted from second-order effects, their future prospects in European elections were cast in some doubt in 1993 by the prospect of uniform electoral procedures for European elections. The European

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12. Paul Claeys and Nicole Loeb-Mayer, "The European Elections Campaign in Belgium", in Karl-Heinz Reif (ed), *European Elections 1979/81 and 1984*, p.23.

## *Comparing Party Attitudes*

Parliament had grappled with the issue of uniform electoral procedures for a number of years. The parliament's proposals for electoral harmonisation sought a common system of proportional representation in each member state. Though the report offered member states the option of establishing national or regional constituency lists, a minimum threshold of representation of 5% was proposed.<sup>13</sup> The adoption of a threshold arrangement at the national level would have removed nationalist and regionalist representation at a stroke. Political pressure from a number of parties brought the amendment of the proposals and an element of discretion to member states, to establish special arrangements that would facilitate regional variations.<sup>14</sup> The fact that uniform electoral systems require unanimity within the Council of Ministers may mean that this proposal will never be fully instituted across the EC states, though the type of system that would emerge within the UK remained unclear.

### **3. Transnational Co-operation**

The case studies on the parties and the chapter on transnational regionalism have both shown different attitudes and behaviours to transnational co-operation. Each of the organisational manifestations of transnational regionalism were clear responses to European integration. The first appearance of transnational regionalism in 1949 was a response to the perceived failures of federalism at the Hague Congress, and the dissatisfaction of regionalists with the lack of representation afforded to regional political and administrative forces in the various schemes to promote European integration. The second example of transnational regionalism developed as a direct response to the European Community, and adopted a lobbying strategy on behalf of the stateless nations. The third example developed as a result of the adoption of direct elections to the European Parliament. Though bodies like the European Free Alliance may have made some progress in the absence of such elections, the impetus and resources provided by the parliament were decisive in the development and institutionalisation of the organisation.

There is also a clear party aspect to the development of transnational regionalism. The behaviour of individual parties within this study allows the cases to be divided into two distinct groups. The VU and the Breton movement can be considered as *formative actors* in relation to transnational regionalism, whilst the SNP and PC

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13. Karel De Gucht, "Report on the draft electoral procedure for the election of Members of the European Parliament", Committee on Institutional Affairs, European Parliament, PE 200.797/fin, 26th November 1992, p.5.

14. *The Herald*, 4th March 1993, p.9.

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were *responsive actors*. Of course, the nature of responsive actors was very different. The SNP was reluctant to involve itself with regionalist parties, preferring to associate with state-nationalist parties in the European Parliament and avoid the regionalist dimension. The SNP avoided the Bureau of Unrepresented European Nations, and was slow to involve itself with the EFA. PC in contrast was keen to play a positive role as a responsive actor. This may be a consequence of its cultural links to other Celtic countries, the fact that its non-statist view of nationalism was not inconsistent with regionalist traditions and the early development of a positive position on co-operation in Europe inside PC. These influences meant that PC joined the International Congress, with an active role in its executive; helped establish and then run the Bureau; and signed the Bastia agreement in advance of formally joining the EFA in 1983. Of course, PC did not have to square its EFA role with membership in a non-regionalist political group in the European Parliament, which was a constraint on the SNP.

The *formative* actors also responded to European co-operation in distinctive ways. The Breton movement sought to build regionalist co-operation in a weak sense, through the development of the International Congress as a discussion group, and through the lobbying strategy of the Bureau. However, the Bretons did not have the advantage of a strong domestic resource base nor the incentive to fashion an electoral aspect to co-operation. The VU, in contrast, followed a clear electoral strategy, with the programmatic and membership expansion of the European Free Alliance geared towards achieving the electoral success necessary to establish and sustain a regionalist political group. The Breton efforts occurred in the non-electoral context because there were no direct elections, and therefore no pressure or incentive to develop common organisations and co-operation in the electoral sphere. The VU's efforts were propelled and aided by the prospect of direct elections and then by the party's role in the European Parliament itself. It gave the VU access to a range of institutional supports and resources that were not available to previous regionalist actors. The integrative role of the parliament and direct elections therefore had a key role in the success of the EFA, and it is difficult to envisage the organisation's progress and development without this sphere of integration.

While party attitudes to transnational co-operation can be understood through their typification as formative and responsive actors, there is another means to define their responsiveness to transnational pressures. Pridham identified four measures to assess the level of party integration into the transnational party system: the degree of loose links with other parties, the party role in a transnational federation, a role in

contesting European elections and party membership of a political group in the European Parliament.<sup>15</sup> Whilst it may be possible to consider this as offering a continuum of party integration, the empirical validity of the continuum is questionable. The parties in this study are located inconsistently across the continuum in time and behaviour. To take the example of the SNP we find that the party contested European elections and joined the European Progressive Democrat political group, but played no role in any transnational federation and had only weak links to other parties. Therefore, though it is possible to chart party behaviour across these dimensions over time, it does not provide for any substantially meaningful comparison.

### **4. Comparing Options For European Representation**

It will have become evident within the case studies that the parties have different opinions on the issue of representation in European institutions. There were three different approaches to sovereignty and integration: one favouring independence and an intergovernmental European union, one regional autonomy and a federal *Europe of the Regions*, and the third offers a mixture of these two approaches. These involved the conflicting traditions of state-nationalism and integral regionalism.

There are two contexts in which these contrasting options should be explored. First, in the historical sense, to identify attitudes across time. Second, in their contemporary sense, to identify the importance of the *new* European Community that has developed since the mid-1980s. The prospects for independence through intergovernmentalism and a *Europe of the Regions* must be examined in the contemporary phase in particular, to determine their feasibility.

#### **Independence**

If we consider that the principle of independence and the autonomy of nation-states are under attack from European integration and factors related to global development, then it would seem somewhat surprising to find political movements which expected to be able to resist such trends. The proponents of Euro-federalism saw nationalism and national independence as the primary sources of conflict between states in international affairs, which could only be dealt with through supranational integration and the end of nation-states. A second viewpoint held that the nation-states, in addition to generating conflict, were functionally inadequate in

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15. Geoffrey and Pippa Pridham, *Transnational Party Co-operation And European Integration*, p.193.

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dealing with the global and transnational problems of the late twentieth century, and become politically and economically interdependent through the internationalisation of politics and economics and an increasing web of interactions between nations that are independent of the state.

This ideological and historical argument - that nation-states are obsolete and dying through functional inadequacies and interdependence - was used by a number of political organisations to justify *regionalism* and attack the pursuit of independence and preservation of national sovereignty. Examples of these can be found in a number of the cases in this study, but most obviously in the case of Scotland, where the nationalist party responded to European integration by Europeanising independence and state-nationalism rather than abandoning it in favour of regionalism. Opponents of the SNP sought to resist the Europeanisation of independence by referring to the supranational dimension of the Community and the desire to move on from the classic nation-state:

“The whole logic of the European Community, even before the leap forward it made with the Single European Act, was away from the simplistic concept of sovereign nation-statehood. It is now firmly directed towards pooled sovereignty....the grain of European thinking is not to create new nations but to weld together those that are already there.”<sup>16</sup>

However, this criticism does not seem to point to anything that the SNP has not accepted. As the party modernised independence and accepted the notion of pooled sovereignty then it did not espouse the classic nation-state position. Rather it proposed a wider, intergovernmental Europe of sovereign equality between national states, a very British position rather than one that sought to resist European co-operation. It has been argued that predictions of the demise of the nation-state have been based upon “a zero-sum assumption about power and sovereignty: that a growth in the power of transnational organisations must be accompanied by a decrease in the power of nation-states.”<sup>17</sup> The SNP, given its changing position on the division of powers between the Scottish and the European levels of authority, would not seem to conform to any zero-sum view of sovereignty, a characteristic shared by the other parties in this study.

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16. George Robertson MP, Labour spokesman on Foreign Affairs, *The Scotsman*, 16th September 1991, p.9.

17. Samuel Huntington, “Transnational Organisations in World Politics”, *World Politics*, Vol.25, No.3, April 1973, p.363.

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In the absence of a zero-sum view of sovereignty, through a willingness to be flexible about the doctrine in its international sphere, the SNP merely reflected the position of small states in Europe and the efficacy of pooled sovereignty and co-operation in certain areas. The extent of such co-operation has its limits as will be demonstrated below, but what the party's attitude illustrated was a tendency to de-emphasise economic sovereignty at the national level, in favour of operating within a centralised and intergovernmental European economy, whilst reasserting political sovereignty and the efficacy of Scottish representation as a state actor in European and global politics. The SNP appeared to have accepted the development of "perforated sovereignties",<sup>18</sup> and the need for increased levels of economic and political co-operation.

The possibility of the existence of a Scottish state within an intergovernmental European Community was clear, even though in very different circumstances from the "classic nation-state" position. However, the process of actually becoming a nation-state within the European Community was more problematic. Being independent in the EC was possible, but becoming independent in the EC was less easy. Opponents of the SNP often made a second-level argument against *Independence in Europe* idea, ignoring the efficacy of an independent Scotland within the EC in favour of arguing that the dynamics of European politics and the absence of provisions within the Treaty of Rome would make it extremely difficult for a stateless nation to declare independence from an EC member state and immediately gain the same status as existing members. As the EC lacked any procedure for dealing with this potential development then much of the discussion on the subject was characterised by legally informed speculation. What was clear was that the mechanics of independence within a state and within the EC were difficult, even if the post-independence environment was less troubled due to market integration and currency union. Despite confident assertions on this issue the SNP was unable to provide any real solution.

### *The Europe of the Regions*

The *Europe of the Regions* position, and the tradition of international federalism, has provided the regionalist political family with a degree of political cohesion through acting as a common goal and ethos. Along with the desire for cultural autonomy and political and economic decentralisation, it is the nearest thing to an ideology that

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18. Ivo Duchacek, *The Territorial Dimension of Politics: Within, Among and Across Nations*, p.xiii.



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exists within regionalism. This ethos developed throughout the twentieth century in the works of politicians and academics such as Maurice Duhamel, Yann Fouère, Guy Héraud and Denis de Rougement.<sup>19</sup> It consistently sought to identify a pan-European solution for stateless nations and European union. The concept, with its intention to establish a universal political order in Europe through institutionalising overlapping authorities and multiple loyalties between the EC, states and autonomous regions, has been regarded as a neo-Mediaeval strategy to overcome the twin problems of continental centralisation and rigid state divisions.<sup>20</sup>

However, much of the concept was designed in a very different set of circumstances from the contemporary phase of European integration. Whilst the writers above were essentially proponents of integral federalism during periods of internal state expansion and centralisation, their position achieved a new relevance in the period of decentralisation that developed in many countries in the 1970s and 1980s. This new context had several consequences. First, the growth of decentralist trends in Western Europe enabled regionalists to claim that history was on their side, with Fouere's *Third Europe* coming to fruition. Second, regionalists were able to point to the new process of European integration and link it to these decentralisations, calling for regional institutions to play a representative role in the European Community.

Whilst this new context was a welcome one for regionalists, bringing decentralisation and partial goal fulfilment, as well as new opportunities to argue for regional representation through positive linkage, it also had the potential to generate developments that could act to undermine the regionalist parties themselves through programmatic fulfilment and the emergence of competing regional representatives. In this changing context it was clear that the *Europe of the Regions* idea could no longer be considered as a uniform concept or one exclusively helpful to primary regionalism. In its original sense it identified the ethnic basis to regional communities, which required domestic and international representation. The ethnic dimension was the extension of the logic of self-determination to the subnational level - to enjoy autonomous co-existence with other ethnic groups, communities and regions in larger entities. Rather than seek a separate state, the anti-etatiste regionalists sought to transform the existing multinational state through decentralisation and transcend the state system in international society to replace it with a regionalised European federation.

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19. Duhamel, *Op. cit.*; Fouère, *Op. cit.*; Guy Héraud, *Les principes du fédéralisme et la fédération européenne*; Denis de Rougement, *The Meaning of Europe, The Idea of Europe*.

20. See Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: a Study of Order in World Politics*, pp.254-5.

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This original *ethnic* conceptualisation of the *Europe of the Regions* has been joined by new interpretations and uses of the concept, which have altered its meaning. Whilst regionalists had a monopoly of the idea in the 1960s and 1970s, the period since then saw other actors adopt the theme. Just as political parties in Western Europe adopted regionalist themes and programmes since the 1960s, some adopted Euro-regionalist themes and rhetoric during the 1980s and 1990s.

The rise of regionalism from the 1960s brought changes to the political programmes of a number of European parties. The Belgian party system was progressively regionalised with each traditional party family - the Christian Democrats, Liberals and Socialists - dividing into linguistic wings.<sup>21</sup> This produced a Flemish and Wallon variant of each party, with some differences also evident in Brussels. This fragmentation was repeated with the formation of new parties such as *Agalev* and *Ecolo* as separate Flemish and Wallon environmental parties. As the parties regionalised they also developed regional or regionalist themes: the Flemish Christian Democrats (CVP) were able to deepen their role as the main Flemish defence party, which had been in evidence in the late 19th century and during the twentieth century; the *Parti Socialiste* in Wallonie also developed as a regional defence party, especially as it absorbed federalist elements following the demise of the *Rassemblement Wallon*. The French *Parti Socialiste* also developed a regionalist theme, though in the programmatic rather than the organisational sense, and integrated aspects of decentralisation into its programme over time. The Socialist tradition also attracted regionalist support, with Breton activists joining socialist campaigns in 1965 and 1969, and co-operation between the left and regionalists in the 1970s.<sup>22</sup>

The Labour Party, and the Conservatives to a lesser extent, were also programmatically regionalised by the rise of the nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales. The rise of electoral nationalism in the latter 1960s brought political responses from both parties, through the Conservative leader's commitment to devolution in 1968, and to Labour's renewed commitment to devolution from 1974.<sup>23</sup> These parties responded to the national question in the UK in very different ways, with Labour acting as the territorial defence party committed to devolution for

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21. The Christian Democrats divided into Flemish and Wallon wings in 1965, with the Flemish PVV breaking away from the national Liberals in 1969, followed by the Socialist division in 1978.

22. See Michael Keating, *State and Regional Nationalism*; Elenore Kofman, "Regional Autonomy and the One and Indivisible French Republic", *Environment and Planning: Government and Policy*, Vol.3, No.4, 1985, pp.11-25.

23. See Michael Keating and David Bleiman, *Labour and Scottish Nationalism*; and James Mitchell, *Conservatives and the Union*.

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Scotland and Wales, and latterly supportive of regional government in England, whilst the Conservatives returned to their role as defenders of the constitutional status quo, advocating the defence and development of the Union during and after the 1992 general election.<sup>24</sup>

From the 1960s a number of parties responded to regionalism by altering their organisations and programmes. Some, such as the French *Parti Socialiste* and British Labour Party, colonised aspects of regionalism for their own ends: both as a defence against electoral competitors and as a means to develop a more attractive programme. In the 1980s this process of colonisation entered a new phase, playing upon the development of regional institutions in Europe, the perceived growth of decentralist trends in the European Community and the electoral needs of the traditional parties. This brought a number of parties to stress the need for a regional dimension to Europe and adopt the idea of a *Europe of the Regions*.

Whilst orthodox regionalists continued to use the *Europe of the Regions* concept as part of their core programme they were joined by such as the Belgian *Parti Reformateur Liberal* which called for a *Europe of the Regions* in 1984 and the Belgian *Parti Socialiste* which called for direct regional representation in the European Community.<sup>25</sup> The regionalist dimension to the Belgian Francophone Liberals was a consequence of the influx of centrist activists from *Rassemblement Wallon* in 1976, after the Wallon regionalists turned decisively to the left.<sup>26</sup>

In the United Kingdom all parties made efforts to develop the European regional dimension, some responded explicitly to the SNP's *Independence in Europe* programme. The Labour Party was influenced by the decentralisation and integration processes in Europe, the need to counter the domestic centralisation of local government and the desire to promote a European dimension to regional autonomy. Part of this response was functionally-driven, through the perception that the European Community's entrance into the regional policy domain required the establishment of regional government in the UK to promote the efficient management of European funding programmes and economic development. The other part was more politically-inspired: Labour attempted to look more European than the governing Conservatives and Europeanised elements of the autonomy question to protect devolution from the SNP.

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24. *Scotland in the Union: A Partnership for Good*, (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1993), Cm 2225.

25. Paul-Henri Claeys, Nicole Loeb-Mayer and Guido Van Den Berghe, "Belgium", in Juliet Lodge (ed), *Direct Elections to the European Parliament 1984*, p.65.

26. John Fitzmaurice, *Politics in Belgium*, p.164.

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This process saw Labour adopt a pseudo-regionalist position, which fell short of supporting a *Europe of the Regions*. Though some Labour members promoted this solution in the context of Scottish devolution,<sup>27</sup> Labour did not commit itself to the idea. It proposed that a Scottish Parliament would be represented in the European Community through an *Information Office*, similar to that of the German *Lander*, whilst developing a role in scrutinising EC Directives and appointing its own Minister of European Affairs.<sup>28</sup> Labour also pursued such Euro-regionalist themes through its involvement in the Constitutional Convention that met to design a cross-party programme for devolution from 1989-91.<sup>29</sup>

Whilst Labour, who were pro-autonomy, made use of elements of Euro-regionalism, the Conservatives, who opposed autonomy, expressed support for their own interpretation of a *Europe of the Regions*. The Conservatives effectively sought to Europeanise the union between Scotland and England, through developing a Unionist interpretation of the notion of *subsidiarity*. The Conservatives were keen to stress the economic aspect to Europe, and the prospect for existing Scottish representation in the EC, through the Scottish Office and UK Government, as the best means to boost the prospects of the Scottish economy within the single market. The Government created a Scottish information and lobbying office in Brussels, and sought to ensure Scottish representation in the proposed Committee of the Regions designated by the Maastricht Treaty.

The Conservatives in Scotland also attempted a rather novel definitional approach to a *Europe of the Regions*, that departed substantially from the original. Traditionally, it has been an argument for decentralisation and devolution, but in the Conservative interpretation it became an argument for the status quo. As the Secretary of State for Scotland pointed out:

“A Europe of the Regions does not mean all European regions having a standardised constitutional structure, nor does it mean fragmenting Member States such as the UK.”<sup>30</sup>

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27. See David Martin, *Increased Scottish Representation in an Enlarged Democratic Europe of the Nations and Regions*; and “Scotland’s Place at the EC’s Table”, *European Affairs*, No.4, 1990.

28. The Labour Party in Scotland, *It’s Time to Get Scotland Moving Again* General Election Manifesto 1992.

29. Scottish Constitutional Convention: *Towards Scotland’s Parliament: A Report to the Scottish People by the Scottish Constitutional Convention*.

30. Speech by Ian Lang MP, Secretary of State for Scotland, to the International Forum of the Scottish Council (Development and Industry), Gleneagles, 1st November 1991.

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This type of regionalist development on the right was an indication of a growing *bourgeois regionalism*,<sup>31</sup> with right parties using their role in regional government and administration to boost regional economic performance in the context of the single market. It was evident in the UK, through the activities of the Conservatives in the Scottish and Welsh Offices, and in the behaviour of certain German *Länder*, in their efforts to promote the economic dimension to their regions and the interests of the regional business community.

The right was following a tradition of colonisation developed by the left since the 1960s with regard to regionalism and regionalist issues. The *new* European Community gave this process a new lease of life as left parties adopted a form of Euro-regionalism in response to the single market and the reform of the structural funds. Whilst European politics at the local level experienced something of a *new urban left* phenomenon in the 1970s to 1980s, the period since the Single European Act saw the development of a *new regional left*. This phenomenon was a consequence of the regional impact of the single market the Commission's partnership initiative on the structural funds, and the new efficacy of regional economic intervention. This generated a new public sector regionalism, seeking European financial support for economic modernisation and to avoid fiscal crisis

Both bourgeois regionalism and the new public sector regionalism were examples of province-building, a regional growth orientation found in the provincial governments of federal Canada,<sup>32</sup> with regional economic and political elites seeking enhanced autonomy in certain policy spheres to achieve regional economic development and service regional interests and preferences.

### **5. Party Attitudes to Integration**

#### *Deepening*

The parties in this study also had to respond to the process of integration itself, not merely the opportunities it presented. The process of *deepening* within the European Community was debated and carried out along the two contrasting sets of constitutional preferences identified in this study - the federalists, who favoured supranationalism and the progressive removal of nation-states, and the intergovernmentalists who sought to use European institutions to rebuild and sustain

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31. Christopher Harvie, "English Regionalism: The Dog that never Barked", in Bernard Crick (ed), *National Identities*, p.105.

32. See Garth Stevenson, *Unfulfilled Union: Canadian Federalism and National Unity*, p.103.

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the nation-state. The concepts of widening and deepening have often been seen as opposites, though the Community has been capable of combining both processes at once. The Hague summit of the Council of Ministers in 1969, for example, found the six member states seeking to achieve the completion of the customs union that had been proposed in the Treaty of Rome, the *deepening* of the Community through EMU, and also the widening through the intention to proceed with the accession of four new member states - Britain, Denmark, Ireland and Norway.<sup>33</sup> This convergence between widening and deepening was also achieved in the mid-1980s as discussions of the Single European Act coincided with the Mediterranean enlargement. Following this enlargement the Community decided to postpone any further widening until the completion of the single market, and the process of EMU provided a similar blockage of sorts in the mid-1990s.

Though the Single European Act (SEA) saw some reconciliation in the conflict between supranationalists and intergovernmentalists, the period since, with discussion on the renewal of deepening through EMU, brought new problems for the Community. The post-SEA debate on deepening was characterised by attempts to reconcile these two different sets of interests within the EC through the enunciation of the principle of *subsidiarity*. This concept had its origins in Catholic social doctrine in the 1930s and played a minor role in both the Tindemanns Report on European Union in 1976 and the European Parliament's Draft Treaty on European Union in 1984. The concept appeared in four different guises in the late 1980s and early 1990s:

1. As a neutral principle to help determine the extent of Community competences in new and existing policy domains;
2. As mechanism for the firm limitation of EC competences to protect national sovereignty;
3. As a principle to assist in the creation and entrenchment of a federal European union;
4. A principle with which to advance and defend subnational autonomy and interests.<sup>34</sup>

Though the battle for Europe was dominated by the intergovernmental/federal conflict between views two and three above, the fourth group of interests also sought to develop and exploit the subsidiarity issue. This was a consequence of the

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33. Helen Wallace, *Widening or Deepening: The European Community and the New European Agenda*, p.1.

34. See Andrew Adonis, "Subsidiarity: Myth, Reality and the Community's Future", *IEA Inquiry*, no.19, December 1990, p.5.

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fact that the extension of EC powers and policies through the Single European Act had considerable impact upon the autonomy and policy domains of regional government in the absence of any substantive regional involvement in EC decisionmaking. This led regional authorities to seek an autonomous role in European institutions and the development of *subsidiarity* in order to protect regional competences from the EC and national governments.

The defensive use of subsidiarity by regional governments was brought about by the processes of political and administrative centralisation that followed the negotiation and implementation of the Single European Act (SEA). This centralisation was especially evident in the case of the German *Länder* governments. Though the SEA had been negotiated with *Länder* consultation, it led to the European Community gaining powers in areas of *Länder* competence and the absence of any countervailing power and influence amongst the *Länder* in compensation. The SEA also gave the government of the Federal Republic enhanced powers over the *Länder* through their role in the Council of Ministers, a superior role which altered the domestic balance between central and regional government. The *Länder's* response was twofold: first, to call for formal representation of regional institutions within EC decisionmaking, second, to use subsidiarity as a defence mechanism to help entrench regional competences against EC and national encroachment.

Though aspects of the market integration process gave the right of consultation to regional authorities, and involvement in EC policy networks and implementation through such as the partnership principle in the structural funds,<sup>35</sup> the regions gained no formal role in EC decisionmaking. In 1988 the European Commission had established a Consultative Council of Regional and Local Authorities, but the regional government lobby found this inadequate. Regional authorities were more ambitious in their demands for European representation and influence and presented various proposals for enhanced status in preparation for the Intergovernmental Conferences on EMU and political union in 1990. The *Länder* government proposed the establishment of a Regional Council within the EC in the short-term and the inclusion of *subsidiarity* in the post-conference Treaty changes.<sup>36</sup> The Assembly of European Regions (AER), the lobbying organisation for regional government in the EC, also sought to develop regional representation on national delegations to the

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35. European Commission, *Guide to the Reform of the Community's Structural Funds* (Luxembourg: European Communities, 1989), p.9.

36. "The Europe of the Regions - Involvement by the states in inter-regional co-operation and further development of the rights and opportunities for political action of the regions in Europe", Resolution of the Heads of Government of the Federal States, 7th June 1990.

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Council of Ministers during discussions on policy domains which were the exclusive competence of regional authorities.<sup>37</sup> Similar to the *Länder*, the AER proposed the establishment of a formal Regional Council to replace the Consultative Council. Like the *Länder*, this was intended as a short-term measure that could easily be included in the amended Treaty of Rome without requiring substantial institutional changes. The AER envisaged that this Council would act as the forerunner for a *Europe of the Regions*, and would be transformed in the longer term into a Regional Chamber of Parliament with its own constitution.<sup>38</sup>

The pressure for regional representation was rewarded in the Intergovernmental Conferences with the commitment to establish the Committee of the Regions in the Maastricht Treaty.<sup>39</sup> However, the new institution was a minimalist one that protected the superior role of national governments within the EC and Council of Ministers. The new Committee had a consultative role not dissimilar to the previous committee and was modelled on the Economic and Social Committee. In contrast to the regionalist view, there was no commitment to develop regional representation beyond the committee level towards a Regional Chamber. This left the AER's longer term proposals for a *Europe of the Regions* on the shelf.

The Assembly of European Regions also proposed that the Intergovernmental Conferences debate the issue of subsidiarity, and include a specific clause dealing with the concept into the Treaty of Rome. The AER's suggested clause stressed the need for subsidiarity to assist the subnational dimension:

“The Community shall only exert the authority vested in it by this Treaty if and insofar as the action of the Community is necessary to effectively achieve the aims stated in this Treaty and if the actions taken by the individual member states and, in particular, by the *Länder*, Regions and Autonomous Communities as territorial authorities existing immediately below the level of the central states are insufficient.”<sup>40</sup>

However, as a number of authors pointed out, finding a means to apply subsidiarity within the EC was problematic.<sup>41</sup> Rather than existing as a legal principle which

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37. Assembly of European Regions, “Resolution of the Assembly of European Regions on the Institutional Participation of the Regional Level in the Decisionmaking Process of the European Community”, Strasbourg, 6th December 1990, p.2.

38. *Ibid.*, p.3.

39. Article 198a, “Treaty on European Union”, Conference of the Governments of the Member States, 7th February, 1992.

40. Assembly of European Regions, *Op. cit.*, p.2.

41. Adonis, *ibid.*; Andrew Tyrie, “Subsidiarity: What Should the Government Do?”, *IEA Inquiry*, No.19, December 1990; and James Mitchell, “Shibboleths and Slogans: Sovereignty, Subsidiarity



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could be tested and applied as a means to determine and review the allocation of powers between European institutions, national governments and regional authorities, the principle was viewed as a political slogan in the battle over the institutional development of the Community.<sup>42</sup>

The intergovernmentalists, such as the British Government, sought to use the principle of subsidiarity as a constraint upon the growth of Community power and a protection for national sovereignty. The federalists on the other hand, saw the concept as a useful tool in the fulfilment of eventual European union. Proponents of political union viewed subsidiarity as the kind of test that would lead to enhanced EC powers, rather than the entrenchment of national sovereignty. This process was seen to require institutional changes within the EC and the extension of the powers of the European Parliament to balance the new role of the Commission and Council.<sup>43</sup>

The regionalist parties also adopted the notion of subsidiarity, though mostly in rhetorical terms. Nationalists in Scotland and Wales used it to attack the centralised nature of the UK political system, a weapon deployed against the Conservative Government in particular:

“The British Government has led the calls within Europe for subsidiarity.....for them, however, subsidiarity starts in Brussels and stops in London. They cannot or will not see the hypocrisy in demanding self-determination for the people of Britain but at the same time refusing it to the people of Scotland.”<sup>44</sup>

The regionalist parties, in contrast, were more prepared to take subsidiarity at face value, and called for its use as an instrument for the federal distribution of powers within Europe and nation-states.

The parties responded to the issue of *deepening* in different ways. In general the regionalists took a highly favourable position whilst the SNP and PC were more circumspect. For the regionalists, the process of deepening had to involve regional and popular participation, and also decentralisation and democratisation. These aspects required the undermining of the role of member states in EC

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and the Constitutional Debate”, in Lindsay Paterson and David McCrone (eds), *Scottish Government Yearbook 1992*.

42. See all authors dealing with subsidiarity, *Ibid*.

43. This viewpoint was evident in the European Parliament’s own assessment of subsidiarity: see clauses five and six, Giscard D’Estaing, “Interim Report on the principle of Subsidiarity”, Committee of Institutional Affairs, European Parliament, PE 139.293/fin, 22nd June, 1990.

44. Scottish National Party, *Scotland: A European Nation*, p.20; see also Plaid Cymru, *Plaid Cymru and Maastricht*, p.1.

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decisionmaking, to be replaced by regional participation and the strengthening of the European Parliament to become a genuine legislature. The response of the nationalists to this element of deepening was more complex, and also somewhat contradictory. During their period of opposition to the EC in the 1970s both the SNP and PC made much of the view that the Community was undemocratic and centralised. However, at the same time they argued against the democratisation of the European Parliament.

Though both parties came to accept the process of direct elections, and the electoral opportunities that they generated, there was a more limited response to the prospect of the development of the parliament in the contemporary period. The SNP attitude, for example, was shaped by intergovernmentalism and the need to preserve the role of the state as the primary actor within the Community. Any increase in powers for the parliament would undermine intergovernmentalism, so the party took a rather negative view of the extension of the parliament's powers and activities:<sup>45</sup>

"The SNP will support moves to make the Commission more accountable to both the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, and to increase the powers of the European Parliament to enable it to initiate legislation and have more control of EC revenue. Nonetheless, we view talk of European political union under the centralised control of the European Parliament as unwise, and we are opposed to any moves that might lead to a centralised European super state."<sup>46</sup>

The PC attitude changed as the party became more regionalist in the 1980s and showed a more positive disposition to the parliament, and to the Senate of the regions, though much of this seems to have revolved around the redistribution of powers within the EC to the benefit of the regional Senate.<sup>47</sup> The party supported increased powers for the parliament, and the institution of a common electoral system for the 1994 European elections. Both the parliament and the regional chamber were to have legislative initiation and scrutiny functions, with each legislature gradually taking over the functions of the European Commission and Council of Ministers.<sup>48</sup>

The economic aspect of deepening also brought differential responses from the parties. The SNP viewed the Single European Act as a limited step towards market integration, and sought to downplay the adoption of majority voting through

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45. Interview with George Leslie, SNP representative to EFA, *Op. cit.*

46. George Leslie, discussion paper to SNP National Assembly December 1990, p.2.

47. "Wales and Europe"; resolution 13, Plaid Cymru national conference, 1990.

48. *Ibid.*

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asserting that the EC remained an intergovernmental and state-dominated institution, with any qualified majority voting aiding the small member states through ensuring that their political agreement remained necessary.<sup>49</sup> The agenda of economic and monetary union generated by the Delors Report and the Maastricht Treaty elevated the process of deepening and brought some response from the SNP. The party took a favourable attitude to the notion of a single currency and an independent European Central Bank, but sought to retain the confederal shape of the Community.<sup>50</sup>

Whilst willing to consider economic integration, and accept the institution of a single currency and an independent European Central Bank, the party was determined to resist political integration. However, in accepting the agenda of economic integration the SNP markedly altered its notion of sovereignty. The convergence requirements for EMU would seriously circumscribe the economic policy autonomy of any Scottish parliament and government, though in giving assent to Maastricht the SNP was willing to accept a restricted domestic policy role in economic and monetary affairs.

Plaid Cymru's response to economic integration was very limited. The party took notice of integration in this sphere but did not take a view on it. PC saw such integration as inevitable and out of Welsh control, it reacted to the agenda of formal integration as if it were informal integration that was not being transmitted by public authorities.<sup>51</sup> PC seem to have taken Jacques Delors' comment about 80% of social and economic decisions being made at the EC level very seriously, and assumed that the EC would become the dominant authority in these policy domains.<sup>52</sup> The party's response was to seek side-payments through the European Regional Development Fund to compensate for integration and to call for the European Central Bank to be democratically accountable to the European Parliament and Senate of the Regions.<sup>53</sup>

The response of the Bretons to deepening was limited. Moderate regionalists in the POBL made little of contemporary economic and political integration though the UDB was more active. The UDB adopted a political response to both elements of deepening through calling for regional representation in the EC but took a negative view of economic integration. Both the single market and economic and monetary

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49. Jim Sillars, *Independence in Europe*, p.16.

50. See agenda and report of SNP special national conference, 23rd March 1991, Glasgow.

51. These concepts were employed by William Wallace, *The Transformation of Western Europe*, p.54.

52. Phil Williams, *Constitutional Options in Europe*, p.4.

53. Plaid Cymru, *Plaid Cymru and Maastricht*, p.3.

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union were seen to cause economic inequalities that would work to the detriment of Brittany and other peripheral regions.<sup>54</sup>

### *Widening*

Whilst nationalists and regionalists had to respond to the deepening of the European Community, they also responded to its *widening*. The expected expansion of the EC in the mid-1990s through the accession of some of the EFTA countries, and then the Visegrad countries of Eastern Europe towards 2000, brought a new context for the alternative projects of *Independence in Europe* and a *Europe of the Regions*. New actors, with different institutional preferences for Europe, would offer new perspectives and challenges to both intergovernmentalism and federalism.

Identifying the changes that widening would make to the structures and behaviour of the European Community is complex. It is possible that the countries joining the EC would seek to preserve and entrench its intergovernmental features and resist the process of deepening in order to retain their autonomy: the military neutrality of the EFTA countries is one example. This expectation was encouraged by such as the British government, seeking to speed up the process of EC enlargement in order to ensure that the deepening agenda would be defeated. However, expansion might require institutional reforms within the EC and the Council of Ministers, and the range of new actors may act to undermine some of the intergovernmental aspects of the Community. It may be problematic to retain the Luxembourg compromise and national veto in the context of a sixteen or nineteen member EC, so that the need for compromises and the avoidance of policy conflicts may lead to more qualified majority voting than existed previously. So, widening may not close off the deepening agenda, it may actually create the problems that can only be resolved through abandoning aspects of intergovernmentalism. This could cause problems for the SNP, as EC expansion may undermine its strategy for independence through intergovernmentalism, and produce a more centralised decisionmaking process that made Scotland subject to the will of other states in the EC.

Whilst *widening* presented problems for state-nationalists, it also created difficulties for regionalists. Whereas the regionalists would welcome both widening and deepening, with expansion reducing the dominance of the large states, there was little evidence that new members would contribute significantly to the development of a *Europe of the Regions*. The potential new member states were a mixed group of

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54. *Le Peuple Breton*, July/August 1992, p.12.

## *Comparing Party Attitudes*

centralised and federalist countries, with national minorities in some cases. Amongst the EFTA countries Sweden and Norway lack national minorities beyond the Lappish peoples, whilst Finland has a non-territorial Swedish population which has its own established political party. These three countries are all unitary states, and lack substantial regional authorities and institutions. The other EFTA country intent on accession, Austria, is a federal state on the German model, but lacked any substantial minority population. So the majority of the EFTA contingent can contribute very little to the decentralist element within the EC in terms of regionalisation or regionalism.

The East European countries were also predominantly centralised and unitary. The secession of the Slovak Republic from Czechoslovakia diminished the decentralist aspect to the Visegrad Group, though the regional distinctions within the Czech Republic may offer grounds for some regionalism. Both Hungary and Poland on the other hand were centralised and unitary. It would take substantial reforms to alter the local/regional structures of these states - when more important political and economic reforms hold priority - and it is unlikely to occur in the near future. There are a number of national minorities within these states, though this is a source of stress within and between the Visegrad countries rather than something that may lead to regionalisation or regionalism. The post-secession conflicts between the Czechs and Slovaks, and the position of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia are examples of this phenomenon.

Therefore future enlargements would seem to alter the balance of the Community membership away from decentralisation towards more unitary states, and limit the potential for widening to advance the cause of a *Europe of the Regions*. This is not to say that the EC itself will not play a role in encouraging regionalisation in the new member states through the necessity for regional government to administer the structural funds, and have a *reinforcement* effect through its desire for *partnership* with democratically-elected local and regional governments.<sup>55</sup>

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55. European Commission, *Guide to the Reform of the Community's Structural Funds* (Luxembourg: European Communities, 1989), p.9.

## 8

# Conclusion

The experience and behaviour of nationalist and regionalist parties since the 1920s has provided evidence of the internationalisation of the autonomy issue. Such internationalisation has taken place through responses to the processes of state-building and European integration that have developed since the Versailles settlement, but have also been a result of the strategic and philosophical choices of the parties. The nationalist and regionalist parties have been reactive to such developments, but have sought to develop their own positions and responses beyond short-term reactivism. This has been evident in efforts to achieve party political co-operation between regions and generate transnational associations. This latter development has occurred in spite of the electoral and organisational barriers to representation that have confronted the autonomy parties.

European union has proved an enduring *political opportunity structure* for the autonomy parties since the 1920s. Throughout the century the development of European integration produced a situation in which the autonomy parties were unable to formulate their goals and attitudes without substantial reference to the European agenda. Each party has responded to this challenge on a different timescale, but the end result by the late 1980s is that the goals of autonomy parties and the issue of autonomy *per se*, have become substantially *Europeanised*. Such Europeanisation of goals has occurred amongst both regionalists and nationalists, and their response has involved some political accommodation to interdependence, not a resurgence of autarchy. The parties reaction to internationalisation has not been isolationist, but has involved attempts to gain political representation in European organisations. Also, curiously, these parties, which seek to mobilise on the issues of self-determination and identity, have shown little concern for the identitive aspects to European integration.

Europe has also affected the behaviour of autonomy parties. The European level has engendered transnational regionalist co-operation and also elevated the efficacy of the European electoral sphere. The nationalist parties in particular have been prominent in raising the stakes in European elections, and promoting them as electoral opportunities equal to national elections.

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The changing international environment has also altered party attitudes to sovereignty. Though some of the cases have shown a long-term preference for limited political sovereignty, the cases as a whole show some convergence in their move away from the classic notion of national sovereignty, clearly evident in the case of the SNP, but also in attitudes to economic sovereignty. The political and economic boundaries of the nation-state or regional government, and the distinctions between high and low politics issues, have been altered to take account of national and supranational interdependence. Though the parties have different strategies for dealing with interdependence each has been prepared to see more policy domains assigned to the European level from the arena of high politics. The reactions to Maastricht and economic and monetary union are an example of this development.

Europe has also had a convergent effect on the agendas of nationalist and regionalist parties. Regionalist parties have deployed statist arguments and examples in support of regional autonomy, comparing their regions to other nation-states rather than regions. On the nationalist side PC adopted regionalist themes and rhetoric to promote Welsh self-government. In Scotland such themes were adopted by devolutionists rather than by the SNP, but did have an impact on the home rule movement. All the other cases have been prepared to employ arguments across the nationalist/regionalist divide. The flexibility of PC over its final political goals has facilitated regionalist penetration of the nationalist camp. The party has been willing to adopt a continental attitude to sovereignty. The SNP, in contrast, has retained a rather British attitude to national sovereignty to protect independence from political opponents and from partisans of alternative constitutional positions in Scotland. The SNP has only shown an interest in the creation of a European *Gesellschaft*, whilst the regionalists have shown a preference for a *Gemeinschaft*.

The autonomy parties have also shown a limited consistency with integration theory in their behaviour to European integration. The neo-functionalist prediction that parties would gradually transfer their loyalties to the level of European institutions has some resonance. The Breton parties and the *Volksunie* have shown a long-term affective affiliation to the notion of European union, and to a lesser extent, to European institutions. The intermeshing of international federalism and domestic regional autonomy was some evidence of this development, though it is a shared loyalty rather than one that was merely transferred from one level of political life to another.

The loyalty of the regionalists to European union contrasts with the more pragmatic

## *Conclusion*

attitudes of the nationalists, and the SNP in particular. Amongst these parties the socio-economic agenda of European integration and the prospects for autonomy appear of primary importance, through the perceived efficacy of the European Community as an external support system and trading umbrella. However, in general all of the parties have been drawn into the European policy domain and political system, a process which has affected their goals and attitudes.

The impact of European integration upon nationalist and regionalist parties has been both substantial and enduring, and the future development of the European Union will continue to present the issues of sovereignty and integration in a challenging way. In this changing context, the distinct responses of nationalist and regionalist parties to the integration process will continue to play a role in their quest for self-determination.



# **Appendix**

## **Fieldwork Information**

The research for this thesis involved fieldwork in all five of the areas studied, financed by a research award from the Economic and Social Research council.

1. Wales: The research for Wales was carried out in Autumn/Winter 1991, with several visits to Wales for interview and documentary research. Material was selected from the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth, and from the University of Wales libraries at Cardiff and Aberystwyth. The staff of the Plaid Cymru office in Cardiff were helpful in providing material, and the party's former Vice-Chair, Phil Williams, was particularly helpful in providing an interview and material.

2. Flanders: the research on Flanders was carried out as a student at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (KUL) from February to June 1992, with a number of interviews conducted amongst VU members of the Belgian parliament. Materials were selected from the Archief en Documentatiecentrum voor het Vlaamse-nationalisme (ADV N) in Antwerp, the libraries of KUL and the Bibliotheque Royale Albert I in Brussels. The author would like to thank Luc Lornoy of KUL for supplying updates on developments in the Volksunie since 1992.

3. Brittany: research was carried out from July to August 1992, through access to the library of Université de Rennes II, the archives of Ile-et-Vilaine departement and the municipal library of Rennes.

4. Scotland: the material on Scotland was collected more gradually over a longer time period. The SNP staff in Edinburgh were helpful in providing access to materials. Other material came through research in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh. The author also attended the SNP conference in September 1992 in Perth, and the National Council meeting in Stirling in December 1992.

5. The European Free Alliance: this material was furnished during the author's period in Leuven. The EFA secretariat gave the author access to the organisation's files and were readily available for interview and information. The EFA General-Secretary, Herman Verheirstraeten and the assistant General-Secretary, Neil Fergusson, were most helpful in providing assistance. The author also attended the general assembly of the European Free Alliance in May 1992 in Brussels.

Additional material was selected from the British Library Newspaper Library, Edinburgh University Library and the British Library of Economics and Political Science at London School of Economics.

## **Interviews**

Interviews were conducted in three of the four cases, and notes of these interviews are available on request. In addition to formal interviews the author was fortunate to have a number of informal discussions with political actors across the cases that were of use in providing background information. These will be listed beneath the interviews.

### 1. Formal Interviews:

Gerolf Annemans, Brussels, May 1992: Vlaams Blok member of the Belgian lower house.

Herman Candries, Brussels, June 1992: VU member of the Belgian lower house.

Hugo Coveliers, Antwerp, April 1992: VU senate member, joined the VLD in late 1992.

Winnie Ewing, Brussels, February 1992: SNP MEP from 1974, MEP for the Highlands and Islands from 1979.

Neil Fergusson, Brussels, March 1992: assistant to Winnie Ewing MEP in the European Parliament from 1980-.

Willy Kuijpers, Leuven, February 1992: VU senate member, former MEP from 1984-9.

George Leslie, Glasgow, November 1992: SNP Vice-Chair, EFA delegate.

Isobel Lindsay, Glasgow, November 1992: former SNP Vice-Chair.

Robert McIntyre, Stirling January 1993: former SNP MP for Motherwell, party Chairman from 1946.

Nelly Maes, Brussels, June 1992: VU member in the Belgian Senate.

David Martin, Edinburgh, December 1990: Labour MEP and Vice-President of the European Parliament.

Hugo Schiltz, Deurne, April 1992: VU senate member for Antwerp, former VU President and Government Minister 1988-91.

Bart Staes, Brussels, April 1992: Political assistant to VU MEP Jaak Vandemeulebroucke.

Dafydd Elis Thomas, London, December 1991: Former President of Plaid Cymru 1983-92 and MP for 18 years until retiring from parliament in 1992.

Paul Van Grembergen, Brussels, April 1992: VU Fraction leader in the Belgian lower chamber.

Herman Verheirstraeten, Brussels, March 1992: Secretary-General of the Rainbow Group, General-Secretary of the European Free Alliance.

Phil Williams, Aberystwyth, November 1991. Former PC Vice-Chair and EFA delegate. Interviewed over two days.

### 2. Informal Interviews

Informal discussions were also held with Jaak Vandemeulebroucke MEP, Bert Anciaux and Bart Somers of the VU, Jose Luis Linazasoro and Christian Guyon'varch of the European Free Alliance, Allan Macartney and David Stevenson of the SNP.

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### 3. Additional Party Materials

Additional material on selected political parties was gained through access to party conference agendas, minutes and discussion documents in the case of Plaid Cymru and the Scottish National Party. This was gathered from private sources and library collections in Scotland and Wales. Further information on such sources and material is dealt with in the fieldwork appendix.

### 4. Newspapers

#### (a) Party Newspapers

##### Brittany

*An Emsaver*

*L'Avenir de la Bretagne*

*Le Peuple Breton.*

##### Flanders

*De Volksunie.*

*Wij-Vlaams Nationaal Weekblad.*

##### Scotland

*The Scots Independent.*

##### Wales

*The Welsh Nation.*

*The Welsh Nationalist*

#### (b) Newspapers and Magazines

##### Brittany/France

*Le Monde*

*Ouest France*

## ***Bibliography***

### **Flanders**

*De Morgen*

*Knack*

*La Libre Belgique*

*Le Soir.*

*De Standaard.*

### **Scotland**

*The Glasgow Herald.* (Latterly renamed *The Herald*)

*Radical Scotland*

*Scotland on Sunday*

*The Scotsman.*

### **United Kingdom**

*New Statesman and Society*

### **Wales**

*The Western Mail*

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