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How nationalism evolves: explaining the establishment of new varieties of nationalism within the national movements of Quebec and Catalonia (1976–2005)

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The national movements of sub-state national societies are divided into two or three competing political orientations (independentists, autonomists, and federalists), which vary over time. This article compares the process that led to the founding of the ADQ (autonomism) in Quebec, with the process that culminated in the transformation and de facto re-founding of ERC (independentism) in Catalonia during the period 1976–2005. Using the cases of two nationalist parties in two different national movements that have successfully established new political orientations, I analyze the political origins of this form of temporal variation. My outcome variable is the “tipping point” at which these nationalist political parties get established. This “tipping point” was reached through a temporal sequence that evolved in four phases. In each of these phases, a key variable was involved: the existence of a preexistent ideology, the occurrence of a central state constitutional moment, an impulse from the sphere of sociological nationalism, and the consolidation of a new leadership nucleus.

Keywords: nationalism; nationalist movements; autonomy; independence; political parties; Quebec; Catalonia

Evolution within nationalist movements

National movements¹ are organized endeavors to achieve all the attributes of a fully-fledged “nation.” In the national movements of sub-state national societies,² there is a recurring empirical pattern. Despite the diversity of particular histories, geographic characteristics, economies, demographics, political institutions, political cultures, etc., one observes that the political tendencies (i.e. parties) making up national movements tend to bifurcate or, at times, trifurcate, into two or three basic political orientations: independence,³ autonomy,⁴ and, oftentimes, federalism.⁵ Obviously, these differing orientations have a variable impact on the stability and on the continuity of state structures and institutions. Moreover, these internal currents within national movements tend to vary over time, experiencing moments of foundation, growth, development, and decay. At times, new political orientations within national movements are founded in the sphere of parliamentary politics. Previous scholars who have sought to explore the origins of variation in nationalist movements have typically focused on across-case variation, not within-case temporal variation. In Europe, for example, the typical comparison has been between the Basque national movement and the Catalan national movement, with the goal of explaining why one national movement overall has been more independentist and radical, while the other has been autonomist or federalist, eschewing for the most part

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the use of violence (Díez Medrano; Hroch, *Social*). Therefore, temporal variation within national movements is an important and yet under-theorized area in the study of nations and nationalism. By focusing on within-case temporal variation, we can examine how the different tendencies within a national movement have evolved through time. In particular, my approach enables me to focus on how new varieties of nationalism within national movements are created.

Temporal variation within national movements can be illustrated by referring to two contemporary exemplars. The Catalan national movement has historically had two dominant currents: federalist and autonomist. Similarly, the Québécois national movement, ever since the coming to power of the Parti québécois (PQ) in 1976, has had in recent history two principal currents: independentism and federalism. Yet, in the course of the period 1976–2005, both of these national movements evolved and diversified, and both produced a new institutionalized political current within the movement, espoused by nationalist political parties. These are indeed nationalist parties, but with different orientations: Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) is independentist and the Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ) is an autonomist party. Figures 1 and 2 depict graphically the temporal evolution of the Québécois and Catalan national movements during the period 1976–2005.

Thus, new varieties of nationalism have been founded in these two societies, and formal institutions (i.e. political parties) have been created that espouse the new nationalist tendencies. Therefore, in this article I provide responses to a number of analytically significant questions: when and how do new political orientations within the institutional component of a national movement get successfully established? When and how do new varieties of nationalism become institutionalized? How do these nationalist orientations move from the substratum of “sociological nationalism” to the institutionalized sphere of parliamentary politics and electoral competition?

Temporal variation and existing theories of nationalism

The principal works of the last decades on nationalism all take a developmentalist perspective because they trace the long-term political, economic, social, and cultural transformations that led, over centuries, to the gradual emergence of nations, or of nationness. The works of Ernest Gellner, Eric Hobsbawm, Anthony Smith, Benedict Anderson, Michael

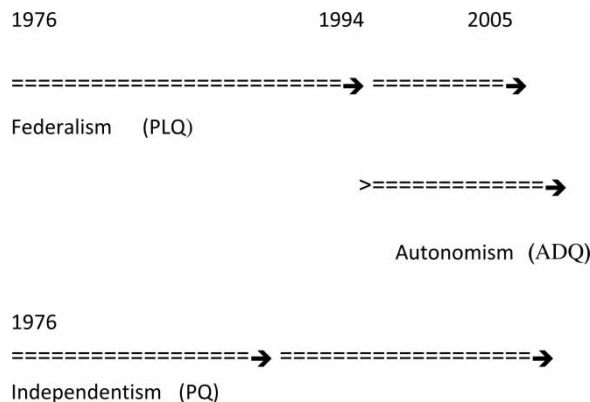


Figure 1. Within-case temporal variation in Quebec, 1976–2005.

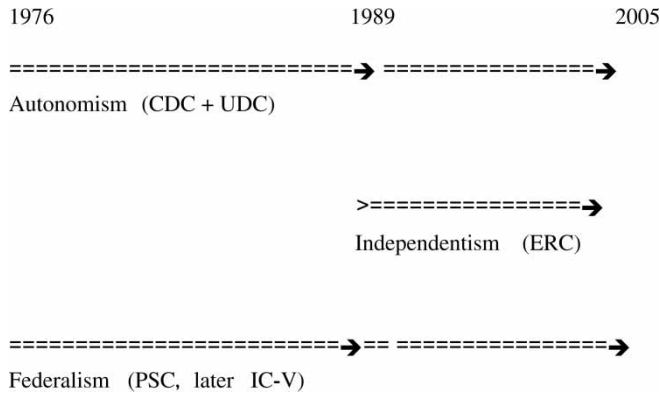


Figure 2. Within-case temporal variation in Catalonia, 1976–2005.

Hechter, and Tom Nairn are from the long-term developmentalist perspective, and represent attempts to develop grand theories of nationalism, especially in the works of Gellner, Anderson, and Hobsbawm (Gellner; Hechter, *Internal*; Hobsbawm). In contrast, we lack theoretically sophisticated eventful analyses of nationness and nationalism (Brubaker 19). Although there are many studies of particular nationalisms focused on much shorter time spans than the centuries covered by the developmentalist literature, those performed by political scientists have generally tended to abstract from events in their search for generalized structural or cultural explanations. Brubaker laments the inexistence of

sustained analytical discussions of nationness as an event, as something that suddenly crystallizes rather than gradually develops, as a contingent, conjuncturely fluctuating, and precarious frame of vision and basis for individual and collective action, rather than as a relatively stable product of deep developmental trends in economy, polity, or culture. (19)

This article is in part a response to Brubaker’s plea for a “theoretically sophisticated eventful perspective on nationness and nationalism,” although the level of analysis I strive for here is at the meso level, between Brubaker’s “eventful perspective” that focuses on the contingent, conjuncturely fluctuating nature of nationness and the grand-theoretical, long-term developmentalist perspective of Gellner, Anderson, Hobsbawm, et al.

Theories of nationalism have also tended to overemphasize structure over agency. This perspective is unsatisfying. First, it relies on a deterministic view of causation, which even in the natural sciences is no longer the reigning paradigm. It misses the element of contingency in political life, and the interdependency of human actions within and across spatial contexts. “The interdependence of human activity across time and space presents a problem for deterministic, linear, or atemporal explanations of political and social phenomena” (Beissinger 453). Second, socioeconomic patterns are still important to political outcomes, but yet the political and social arena may to some degree follow its own pattern and rhythm of change. Thus, for example, one of the writers on nations and nationalism whose work is parallel to my interests in this article – Juan Díez Medrano – has produced an analysis of the origins of Basque and Catalan nationalism with strong materialistic theses, in which a “political logic” seems to follow irremediably out of the dictates of a “structural logic.”⁶

My approach in this article will concentrate on the temporal evolution of nationalist movements, and their political development. The internal currents within national movements vary over time, and the political factors that shape their temporal evolution have

been under-investigated and under-theorized. The perspective on nationalism offered here reminds us that nationalism is embedded in cultural contexts, social networks, and inter-subjective relations of reciprocity. I will show that understanding the social and political dimension of nationalism is essential in order to account for temporal variation within nationalist movements.

Establishing the comparison

I am interested in stateless nations' national movements, located within or belonging to states with a high level of socioeconomic development, with long-standing liberal democratic regimes (minimum duration of 25 years), where the minority nation/majority nation relationship has lasted for at least one century, and where the principal cause for the differential between majority and minority nations is language, culture, history, and institutions, as opposed to race or religion. These are the scope conditions of my project (Mahoney and Goertz). The universe of cases encompassed by my scope conditions is the following: Scotland, Corsica, Quebec, Flanders, Wales, the Basque Country, Catalonia, Galicia, and Puerto Rico.

Of the universe of cases encompassed by my scope conditions, I have chosen to study the national movements of Quebec and Catalonia because these two stateless nations share similar sociocultural, political, and economic backgrounds.⁷ Specifically, they share the following important similarities: (1) these nations are examples of stateless nationhood; (2) they promote a form of peripheral nationalism; (3) all of the parties I am studying in these two cases are nationalist in the sense that they affirm and defend the existence of their nation as a foundational commitment; (4) the three varieties of nationalism are represented in the political party systems of these two societies; (5) within the political party systems of these two nations, the identity axis often predominates over the left–right axis; (6) Quebec and Catalonia are comparable in socioeconomic terms and levels of development; (7) Quebec and Catalonia are comparable in terms of their relative economic importance and demographic weight within their respective states (Canada and Spain); and (8) both the Québécois and Catalan national movements promote at present a *civic* form of nationalism, renounce the use of violence to promote their goals, and emphasize the importance of the democratic process.

Both societies emerged out of a period of quiescence in their national movements in the last third of the twentieth century. In 1976, the PQ won its first elections in Quebec, initiating a new political age, following the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. Also, in 1976 the national movement in Catalonia began a period of democratic normalcy, after decades of forced quiescence. In sum, both societies were in the same stage of development of their national movements during the period 1976–2005.

Moreover, during this period, both the Catalan and Québécois national movements experienced the foundation and growth of new⁸ political orientations within the institutional component of the national movements, espoused by nationalist political parties. We will be comparing the process that led to the founding of the ADQ (advocating autonomist nationalism) in Quebec in 1994, with the process that culminated in the transformation and *de facto* re-founding of ERC (advocating independentist nationalism) in Catalonia during the period 1986–1989.⁹ Using the cases of two nationalist parties in two different national movements that have successfully established new political orientations (of opposing sign), we will explore the political origins of this form of temporal variation within national movements. This research design will make it easier to distill out the similarities shared in the process through which they were established as

parliamentary political parties espousing a new nationalist orientation. In this article I combine *within-case* analysis with *across-case* analysis, to maximize inferential leverage.¹⁰ Yet, with respect to variation, my primary focus will be to analyze temporal variation *within* these national movements.

These two cases share a number of key explanatory factors that help to explain a common outcome: the establishment of a novel political orientation within the national movement.

Explaining the establishment of new varieties of nationalism

At the outset, we should note that in any national movement we have to distinguish between sociological nationalism and institutionalized nationalism. “Sociological nationalism” refers to the presence within any given society of nationalists that are organized in the sphere of civil society. These are groups of nationalists that form associations, cultural groups, pressure groups, and consciousness-raising political action groups.

Only formally constituted political parties are able to channel the collective national consciousness cultivated by the constituent elements of sociological nationalism into a clearly formulated political program, which, in turn, sets the political agenda, and determines which varieties of nationalism are available for consumption by nationalists.

Therefore, our attention will be centered on the evolution through time of the *political and institutional component* of the national movements at issue here, but we will be mindful of the role played by sociological nationalism and the possible influence of the latter on the former.

Explaining within-case temporal variation

My outcome variable is the “tipping point” at which these nationalist political parties get established. This “tipping point” is of analytical significance because it represents the point at which a novel political orientation within the national movement is successfully established within the sphere of formal institutional politics.¹¹ From that point on, the supply side of nationalism has been diversified and expanded. After the “tipping point” has been reached, the new formations pass through a period of maintenance and growth, during which the political and constitutional orientation tends to mature, and reaches an ideological plateau that gives it an aura of legitimacy within the national movement.

I argue that four factors explain the process through which the “tipping point” was reached. This result is obtained through the sequential interaction of these four factors, which can be described schematically as preexistent ideology; central state constitutional moment; impulse from civil society; and formation of leadership nucleus.

The pre-embryonic period: preexistent ideology

Preexistent ideological carriers facilitate the task of institutionalizing a new political orientation within a national movement. These previous carriers serve as the intellectual developers of the political and constitutional orientation incorporated by the contemporary parties and their leadership. Thus, it is essential to be attentive to the ideological history of the new political and constitutional orientation.

The embryonic period: central state constitutional moment

The immediate catalyst that sets in motion the process that leads to the founding of a new political and constitutional orientation within a national movement is the occurrence of a significant constitutional transformative event in the central state (i.e. Canada or Spain). Such constitutional transformative moments tend to frame the *embryonic period* of the formation of a new political orientation. A constitutional transformative event is a higher order constitutional event, which impacts the relationship between the central state – largely controlled by the majority nation – and the minority nation embedded within the same state (Ackerman). It is of a higher order than ordinary legislative activity. Such “constitutional moments” are relatively rare, and they represent a critical event that crystallizes the nature of the relationship between the central state and the embedded minority nation. Constitutional moments are critical events because constitutions in divided societies often “constitute the very *demos* which governs itself under and through the constitutional regime” (Choudhry). The very process of debating and negotiating a constitutional moment is critical because such moments “help to create the political community on whose existence the constitutional order which results from that process depends” (Choudhry 6). These critical constitutional transformative events include: the adoption of a new constitution, the adoption or proposal of significant constitutional amendments, the adoption or proposal of a new organic statute for the government of the embedded minority nation, etc. Note that these critical constitutional transformative events may be either positive or negative in their final outcome. That is, the event could have led to the actual enactment of a constitutional amendment, organic statute, etc., or the event could have been the proposal of such an amendment, etc., even if it was later rejected. What matters is that the event set in motion the public policy discussion and critical reevaluation of the relationship between majority and minority nations, both coexisting in a dialogical relationship within the same state.

Constitutional moments are interpreted by the minority nationalists as an instance of majority nation nationalism, and, thus, these constitutional events impact the intersubjective relations of reciprocity between minority nationalists and majority nation nationalism. Intersubjective relations of reciprocity between sub-state nationalists and majority nation nationalism are thus important for understanding the “trigger” event that serves as the immediate catalyst for the emergence and growth of new nationalist political currents. Nationality claims are infused with a high degree of intersubjectivity. As Max Weber has observed (Weber 922): “if the concept of ‘nation’ can in any way be defined unambiguously, it certainly cannot be stated in terms of empirical qualities common to those who count as members of the nation.” The source of nationhood, for Weber, as Michael Hechter comments, “is not to be found in the objective differentiae of language and religious practice that might happen to separate the members of two different groups, but in the intersubjective awareness that the salient intergroup differences, whatever they might be, are sufficient to demarcate two nations” (Hechter 14).

These constitutional transformative events, originating at the central state level, tend to have a significant impact on the political party system of the embedded minority nation. The *embryonic period* of the formation of a new political orientation within the institutional component of a national movement is thus framed by a central state constitutional moment.

The impulse: the contribution from civil society

During the process that leads to the founding of a new political and constitutional orientation within a national movement, the organizations, entities, and individuals that

represent sociological nationalism make a critical contribution. An impulse for the formation and founding (or de facto re-founding) of these parties is given by elements coming from civil society. Thus, we need to be attentive to the role played by associations, extra-parliamentary political action groups or parties, organizations formed by the intelligentsia, and cultural and language affirmation groups, etc. Such organizations and entities serve as the breeding ground for cadres and leadership, as the providers of organizational skeletons, and also as the cultivators of the ideological precedents and programs that facilitate the establishment of a new political orientation in the sphere of parliamentary politics and electoral competition.

The formation and founding of the new nationalist political orientation: consolidation of leadership

Once the trigger event of a central state constitutional moment has occurred and the impulse for the founding of a novel political orientation has been given by elements coming from civil society, a new nucleus of leadership needs to consolidate, to steer the support being generated by sociological nationalism in the direction of founding a political party, which will be the carrier of the new political orientation. The nucleus of new leadership is also of critical importance because their political skill will determine whether they will be able to take advantage of the political opportunities presented by the central state constitutional event that set in motion this entire process. Whether the new nucleus of leadership can frame the central state constitutional moment in terms that are favorable to their plans is essential. Their skill in harnessing the contribution made by elements of civil society is also critical. The political skill of the newly formed nucleus of leadership is also important because it will determine whether or not they will be able to avoid sectarianism, and instead adopt a program that will bring together as many nationalist forces as possible.

The sequential interaction of these four factors determines whether or not the process reaches the “tipping point” at which these nationalist political parties get founded, or de facto re-founded.

The pre-embryonic period: preexistent ideology

Preexistent ideology in Catalonia

Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) was founded in 1931. ERC won the municipal elections of 12 April 1931 and from that point onwards became the hegemonic party during the Second Republic (1931–1936) (Ivern i Salvà 76). ERC was the party that led the governments that were democratically elected during the entire period of the Second Republic and its two principal leaders were the two presidents of the governments formed: first, Francesc Macià, and, after his death in late 1933, Lluís Companys, until the defeat of the Republic in the Civil War (Molas 88).

During the Second Republic ERC had a program that had been approved at the Conferència d’Esquerres in March 1931, and called for the formation of a “Catalan State” that would then form a federation with the other peoples of the Iberian Peninsula. Thus, the structure of the state would be that of an Iberian Federal State or a Hispanic Federal State, all of which were terms that the party’s program used indistinctly. This federal state would be structured through a pact between the Catalan State and the other constituent states of the federation (Ivern 393). This program was that of a party in opposition to the system, but once the party found itself in government, and the hegemonic force in the Second Republic, its actual trajectory was more moderate (Rubiralta i Casas 213).

It has been said often that Catalan independentism is a relatively new constitutional and political orientation that was born during the period of the democratic transition (1975–1982). Once the Spanish Constitution was enacted in 1978 and the Catalan Statute of Autonomy was approved in 1979, several independentist organizations were born, including Terra Lliure and Comitès de Solidaritat amb els Patriotes Catalans, etc. Before that, one can also point to the existence of organizations such as the Front Nacional de Catalunya (founded in 1940) and the Partit Socialista d'Alliberament Nacional (PSAN, founded in 1968). But, in general, political Catalanism from the nineteenth century to the democratic transition of 1975–1982 was not a movement of secession but of the reform of the Spanish state (federalist or autonomist). It is difficult to find evidence of an unambiguous independentist tendency within the national movement before the war of 1936–1939, in spite of the existence of individual radical pronouncements or the appearance of Estat Català (Bassa et al. 19). The military coup of 18 July 1936, the social conflict and the war of 1936–1939 represented a rupture. The physical annihilation of intellectuals, politicians, public opinion leaders, and militants of popular and Catalanist organizations was widespread. The repression of linguistic and cultural rights during the dictatorship of General Franco, and the massive immigration from southern Spain during the 1960s promoted by the regime, further fed the rupture with the past. In fact during the Franco years, it was the Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (PSUC) and the Partido Comunista de España (PCE) that were the protagonists in the resistance. Most notable is the appearance of a party that combined a clear independentist orientation with socialism. This was the PSAN that had emerged from the Front Nacional de Catalunya. The PSAN incorporated a new generation, which had not experienced the war. Yet the PSAN was not able to energize a mass national movement around the independentist banner. Plagued by internal divisions, the PSAN gave birth to the PSAN-Provisional in 1974. But the creation of a clear independentist option would be the task of another generation, those who were politically incorporated during the transition to democracy without having been part of the anti-Franco struggle. The embryonic period of the independentist current in Catalonia was thus between 1975 and 1982 (Bassa et al. 22).

Preexistent ideology in Quebec

Before the 1960s most of the political parties in Quebec were autonomist, or autonomist-federalist, in their political and constitutional orientation. They opposed, with more or less intensity, the Canadian federal government's appropriation of the domains of competence that belonged to the provinces.

The two major parties of the province (Union nationale and Parti libéral du Québec) had contrasting political projects at the end of the 1950s. The Union nationale (UN) was committed to the defense of the autonomy of the province, just like the Parti libéral du Québec (PLQ) had been before it. Even independentists such as René Lévesque, the founder of the PQ, have recognized the UN's credentials as a conservative nationalist party, which was steadfast in its quest to obtain more autonomy for the province (Cardinal, Lemieux, and Sauvageau 253). This is best exemplified by the UN's struggle to give the provincial government the power to tax, and to share this power with the federal government (Cardinal, Lemieux, and Sauvageau 256). But the UN was a strictly provincial party, without an equivalent at the federal level, and it was in power from 1936 to 1939 and from 1944 to 1960. In contrast, the PLQ had an alliance with the Liberal Party of Canada until 1964. The success of the UN, particularly from 1944 to 1956, is due in part to its strategy of denouncing the association of the PLQ with the federal Liberal Party that governed Canada (Bernier, Pinard, and Lemieux 23).

In that sense, the UN was the more autonomist party, more dependent on its nationalist allies in the interior of Quebec. In contrast, the PLQ was more federalist, and its principal ally was the federal government in Ottawa, which had been Liberal since 1935 (Bernier, Pinard, and Lemieux 6).

Maurice Duplessis had founded the UN and had given it, by the force of his remarkable personality, its sense of identity (Cardinal, Lemieux, and Sauvageau 20). Duplessis was convinced of the wisdom of the autonomist route. In the 1940s he said that “the autonomy of the province is the soul of the people . . . For this cause, it is necessary to form a sacred union [i.e. national solidarity]” (ADQ 6; Cardinal, Lemieux, and Sauvageau 254). Duplessis was never an independentist. He had always believed instead that within the Canadian federation it would be possible to live in peace with the other provinces provided the provincial rights guaranteed by the Constitution were respected.

The death of Duplessis in 1959 explains in part the defeat of the UN in 1960. The PLQ won the provincial election of 1960, and with this new government a new political era was inaugurated. There appeared the notion of the *État du Québec*, as well as the political will to construct an apparatus of government aiming to reduce the difference between the powers accorded to the provincial government and those of the central one (Bernier, Pinard, and Lemieux 7). Slowly, during the 1960s within the most advanced nationalist circles, the quest for autonomy was substituted by the quest for sovereignty or independence (Lemieux 8).

By 1976, a major realignment had taken place in Quebec’s political party system, with the independentist PQ replacing the UN as the PLQ’s chief rival (Lemieux 11). In fact, in the elections of 1970 and 1973 the PQ had already replaced the formerly dominant UN as the main alternative to the federalist nationalism of the PLQ (Rocher, Rouillard, and Lecours 192; Tanguay 254). The scholarly consensus is that “since the early 1970s, party competition in Quebec has pitted the left-leaning, technocratic, *étatiste* and nationalist *Parti québécois* against the centre-right, free-market and federalist Québec Liberal Party” (Tanguay 255). Therefore, since the 1970s the Québécois national movement has historically had two dominant currents: independentism and federalism, which replaced the former bifurcation between autonomism and federalism.

Clearly, autonomist nationalism is a tendency within the national movement of Quebec that has existed at various points in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, through the 1960s. By the early 1970s, this variety of nationalism had exhausted itself, and disappeared from the sphere of parliamentary politics. But the task of building the contemporary institutional embodiment of this political and constitutional orientation would be left to a younger generation in the 1990s. How did the present-day embodiment of autonomist nationalism re-establish itself in the 1990s? The embryonic period of the contemporary institutional expression of the autonomist political orientation would be from 1982 to 1992, as explained below.

The embryonic period: central state constitutional moments

Central state constitutional moment in Spain and Catalonia

The Spanish Constitution was approved on 8 December 1978 with the opposition of Catalan independentism (Bassa 26). The Catalan independentists were organized in the *Comitè Català contra la Constitució Espanyola*, which was the first step in the articulation of a militant independentism (Vilaregut 71). The independentists argued that the new Constitution imposed a framework that was inimical to the collective rights of the Catalan people, denying their right to self-determination.

The Comitè Català contra la Constitució Espanyola was promoted by the PSAN-Provisional, which was the first post-Franco effort to give ideological cohesion to the independentist sentiment in view of the new juridical superstructure established by the constitutional moment of 1978–1979 (Renyer 58; Vilaregut 71). The committee mobilized people throughout the principate in opposition to the new Spanish Constitution of 1978, and was the medium through which new cadres of independentists were formed. This group was the “embryo of a process of confluence of revolutionary independentism” (Renyer 58) and was focused on the opposition to the new Spanish Constitution, which was thought to be contrary to the national interests of Catalonia, since it placed obstacles to the free exercise of its right to self-determination. Moreover, in the eyes of the nationalists, it was seen as a Constitution embodying continuity with the Francoist institutions, the monarchy, the apparatus of state security, the army, etc., all of which maintained their pattern of repression against the independentist movement (Renyer 58).¹² The committee disappeared once the Carta Magna was enacted, but it served to give shape to a radical independentism, which crystallized in the creation in the spring of 1979 of the Independentistes dels Països Catalans (IPC), born out of the fusion of the PSAN-Provisional and the Organització Socialista d’Alliberament Nacional de la Catalunya Nord. In fact, after the enactment of the Constitution, with the participation of autonomist and federalist political parties in Catalonia, the independentist extra-parliamentary political organizations were orphaned, and many of these organizations disappeared or were debilitated. The independentist political space was increasingly filled by independentist organizations that emerged out of the substratum of sociological nationalism, such as Terra Lliure.

The new Catalan statute of autonomy was approved on 15 October 1979, and it was also opposed by some sectors within the independentist movement, considering it another instance of the domination of the Spanish state. The political space was now open to the creation of new organizations that channeled the independentist sentiment generated in reaction to the constitutional moment of 1978–1979. Framed by this central state constitutional moment, the embryonic period of 1975–1982 nurtured the nascent independentist tendency. The embryonic period of 1975–1982 was also marked by the enactment of the “Ley Orgánica de Armonización del Proceso Autonómico” (LOAPA) in 1982, which was successfully challenged as unconstitutional by the Catalan and Basque governments. The LOAPA was a highly unpopular statute among the sub-state nationalists, because it had a homogenizing and uniformizing effect, failing to recognize the specificity of the historic sub-state nationalities. The full growth potential of independentist nationalism was therefore attained after 1982.

Central state constitutional moment in Canada and Quebec

The embryonic period in the case of Quebec lasted from 1982 to 1992, during which three remarkable central state constitutional moments occurred: the final “patriation” of the Canadian Constitution and the adoption of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, the negotiation and ultimate failure of the Meech Lake Constitutional Accord during 1987–1990, and the proposal and ultimate failure of the Charlottetown Accord in 1992.

The “patriation” of the Canadian Constitution in 1982

In 1981–1982, Canadian Prime Minister Trudeau brilliantly maneuvered to bring home Canada’s Constitution from Britain – a “patriation” representing a final act of severance. In April 1982, Queen Elizabeth proclaimed the new Canadian Constitution in Ottawa.

In the eyes of many francophones, the Constitution Act of 1982 represented the imposition by the Trudeau government of its own particular vision and conception of Canada. Seen from the viewpoint of Québécois nationalists, Pierre Elliott Trudeau became the greatest champion of Canadian nationalism in the twentieth century. Building the Canadian nation has always been one of the main tasks of the proponents of a strong federal government in Canada, and the central state's contribution to nation building goes back to Confederation (Laforest, *Trudeau* 131). As noted by Philip Resnick, the invention of a Canadian national tradition by the federal state has progressed in stages. First there was the international recognition that the Canadian state received through membership in the League of Nations, the Commonwealth, and the United Nations. Second, there were the nation-building activities undertaken by crown corporations, such as the Canadian National Railways, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, etc. Third, there is the sense of national solidarity engendered by the social activism of the state – old age pensions, unemployment insurance, and family allowances. Fourth, there are the symbolic validations of post-1945 Canadian nationalism: the Canadian Citizenship Act of 1947, the Canada Council of 1957, the adoption of the new Canadian flag in 1965, and the patriation of the Canadian Constitution in 1982 (Laforest, *Trudeau* 132). As Resnick stresses, the symbols of nationhood and the sense of identity of English Canada are associated with the Canadian state. “From mounted police to railway projects to armed forces to national broadcasting, social programs, or the flag, the route for English Canadians has entailed use of that state” (Laforest, *Trudeau* 133).

The Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Constitution Act, 1982 can therefore be seen in light of this progression, through which the central state and its political institutions have given form to the Canadian nation. “The fundamental objective of the authors of the 1982 constitution seems to have been to promote throughout Canada (including Quebec) a political culture capable of reinforcing in each citizen the feeling of belonging to a single Canadian nation” (Laforest, *Trudeau* 133; McRoberts, *Misconceiving* 172).

The Constitution Act of 1982 may have provoked a reaction among Quebeckers, reinforcing the independentist current within the national movement (McRoberts, *Misconceiving* 174). Second, the national unity strategy of the Trudeau government incurred the “opposition of not just sovereigntists but also a good share of federalist opinion in Quebec. Indeed, *Quebec federalists were to remain badly divided for years to come*” (McRoberts, *Misconceiving* 174, emphasis added). In short, the Constitution Act was badly out of step with majority opinion in Quebec, given that it was based on an idea of Canada that most Quebec francophones did not share. It set in motion a political reaction in the province that was compounded by the further responses to the next two constitutional moments during the period 1982–1992. The end result, as we will see, is that a crisis was provoked within the federalist nationalist camp, which ultimately led to the birth of the contemporary institutional embodiment of autonomist nationalism, the ADQ.

The Meech Lake Accord process of 1987–1990.

Brian Mulroney of the Progressive-Conservative Party swept the federal election of 1984 with a promise to try to bring Quebec back into the Canadian constitutional fold. But the initiative was actually taken by Premier Robert Bourassa of the federalist PLQ, who had won the provincial election of 1985. The Bourassa government in Quebec released a five-point plan, outlining the conditions under which the Constitution Act would be acceptable to Quebec. Mulroney eventually identified the basis for a consensus, and their discussions resulted in the Meech Lake Accord of 30 April 1987, a set of

constitutional revisions incorporating all of Quebec's five proposals and adding a sixth (McRoberts, *Misconceiving* 192).

The Accord was well received in Quebec, given that in the eyes of many francophones it did away with the systematic refusal to meet Quebec's demands that had been the hallmark of constitutional negotiations during the 14 years of the Trudeau era. It was ratified by the Quebec National Assembly on 23 June 1987, and then it was subject to a three-year process of ratification in the federal parliament and in all the provincial legislatures. Each of the 10 provincial legislative assemblies was required to endorse the unanimous agreement that had given birth to the Accord. (Laforest, *Trudeau* 108).

In the end, the Accord was not adopted, and on 23 June 1990, the Meech Lake Accord passed away. That same evening, the premier of Quebec, Robert Bourassa, gave a speech under a solemn ambiance at the National Assembly in which he declared: "No matter what anyone says or does, Quebec has always been, is now and will always be a distinct society, free and capable of taking responsibility for its destiny and development" (Tanguay 262). This disappointing end for the Accord also initiated a period of crisis in the political party system in the province, and, in particular, within the federalist PLQ and those who composed its most nationalist wing, which ultimately led to the formation of the contemporary institutional carrier of autonomist nationalism in the province, namely the ADQ. The failure of Meech Lake thus led to the radicalization of the nationalist wing of the PLQ. Guy Laforest was the president of the ADQ from October 2002 to September 2004, and he believes "the birth of the ADQ in 1994 must be understood as one of the consequences of the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in June 1990" (Laforest, *Pour* 307).

The post-Meech period and the Charlottetown Accord process of 1992

After the failure of the Meech Lake Accord process during the period 1987–1990, support for Quebec sovereignty reached unprecedented heights immediately after the failure of the Accord. By November 1990, it had reached 64% among Quebec residents (McRoberts, *Misconceiving* 204). In some public opinion surveys, 7 out of 10 respondents pronounced themselves in favor of sovereigntist positions (Lemieux 173). After this defeat, the federalist PLQ found itself without a constitutional program. In order to develop new positions, the party created an internal committee popularly known as the Allaire Committee, presided by Jean Allaire, a corporate law attorney from Laval who was a well-respected militant of long standing in the PLQ.

The Allaire Committee's report was published at the end of January 1991, and it proposed a "minimal" federalism, wherein the competences of the federal government would be reduced to defense and security, customs and tariffs, currency and the debt held in common, etc. (Gagnon and Latouche 485). The Allaire report constituted a radical shift from the Quebec Liberal Party's 1980 Beige Paper, which was led at the time of the latter by Claude Ryan, a renowned federalist journalist and public intellectual. Reflecting the nationalist animus of the PLQ at that time, the Congress of the PLQ of March 1991 adopted the Allaire report with minor modifications. Two-thirds of the delegates at the Congress voted to adopt the Allaire report as the official position of the PLQ (Béliveau 48; McRoberts, *Misconceiving* 206).

In 1992, the Mulroney government initiated a new round of constitutional negotiations between itself, provincial governments, territorial leaders, and leaders of the four main aboriginal groups (McRoberts, *Misconceiving* 207). An agreement was reached on 7 July 1992 between the federal government, nine provincial governments (excluding Quebec), two territories, and four aboriginal groups.

By August 1992, Premier Bourassa had agreed to return to the constitutional negotiating table, and he participated in the negotiations between federal officials, the provincial first ministers, and autochthonous leaders, at Charlottetown. On 26 August 1992 all the parties subscribed to what became known as the Charlottetown Accord. By that time, Bourassa was able to convince most of the PLQ – with the important exceptions of Jean Allaire and Mario Dumont (leader of the PLQ's youth wing, Commission-Jeunesse) – to accept the Charlottetown Accord as an acceptable reform of the Canadian Constitution. All the Liberal MPs except one followed Bourassa (Tanguay 229). A referendum on the package of reforms known as the Charlottetown Accord was set for October 1992. The two most notable leaders of the nationalist and autonomist wing of the PLQ, Allaire and Dumont, and many members of the youth wing of the Liberal Party, formed *Le Réseau des Libéraux pour le Non* and supported the “No” vote in the referendum now proposed for October on whether to approve the reform of the Canadian Constitution based on the set of reforms contained in the Charlottetown Accord. This solidified Allaire's and Dumont's position as dissidents within their own party, and further advanced the consolidation of a nationalist/autonomist nucleus of dissent within the federalist PLQ. The referendum was held on 26 October 1992, with an 83% participation rate in Quebec. Of these, 56.6% voted for the “No” and 43.4% for the “Yes.” Outside Quebec, 54.3% voted against the Accord and 45.7% voted “Yes.” In the eyes of many francophone Quebecers, the Charlottetown Accord represented a step backward from the original Meech Lake proposal (Laforest and Gibbins).

As explained previously, although the PLQ has throughout remained the most federalist party within the political party system of Quebec in its political orientation, it has had periods when it has been strongly autonomist in orientation, such as in the period immediately following the failure of the Meech Lake agreement in 1990 (Lemieux 201). The clearest expression of this latent autonomist nationalism within the PLQ in the early 1990s was the Allaire report and its formula for a radical devolution of powers to Quebec. For the nationalist/autonomist nucleus within the PLQ, their position within the party had become untenable, especially after they supported the “No” side in the campaign leading up to the 26 October 1992 referendum. In a sense, the autonomist nationalist political orientation had its embryonic period within the federalist PLQ between 1982 and 1992. But by 1992 its possibilities within the PLQ itself had been exhausted and another institutional carrier had to be found for the expression of the contemporary embodiment of autonomist nationalism.

The impulse: the contribution from sociological nationalism

The contribution from sociological nationalism in Catalonia

An important impulse for the re-founding of ERC as an independentist party was given by elements coming from the sphere of sociological nationalism.

ERC in the early 1980s was not an independentist political party (Alquezar, Marín, and Morales 186). It was at that time still far from embodying an independentist orientation, and was still immersed in the indefiniteness and ambiguity of this early period (Rubiralta i Casas 184). This historic indefiniteness, which dates from its foundation in 1931, may have helped to account for its success (due to its transversality) in the 1930s, but by the 1980s its studied ambiguity no longer seemed appropriate. In the early 1980s, the independentist political space in Catalonia was occupied by three blocs, which could well be regarded as constitutive elements of “sociological nationalism” (Alquezar, Marín, and Morales 186–87).

The first bloc was radical independentism. This sector believed that in light of the new constitutional superstructure existing between Spain and Catalonia it was necessary to insist on a rupturist strategy. This sector was given organizational momentum by the Comitès de Solidaritat amb els Patriotes Catalans (CSPC), by the actions of Terra Lliure, and by the creation of the Moviment en Defensa de la Terra (MDT). The second bloc was formed by Nacionalistes d'Esquerra, a group formed in 1980 with the intention of participating in the electoral process.

The third bloc was civic independentism, i.e. organizations and entities of civil society that were proponents and supporters of independentism. The most prominent of these organizations was La Crida a la Solidaritat en Defensa de la Llengua, la Cultura i la Nació Catalanes ("La Crida"), which was a cultural and linguistic pressure group. It was a social movement that aimed to strengthen the level of national consciousness in Catalan society, through direct action campaigns and mass public acts. The first secretariat of the newborn Crida emerged after 1981, with Àngel Colom as its coordinator (Monné and Selga 32). Subsequent adhesions to the manifesto of the Crida exceeded 10,000 and dramatized the importance of associationism in Catalan society in the early 1980s. Among the organizations that supported the Crida were Òmnium Cultural, Xarxa Cultural, Orfeó Català, etc. (Monné 19).

By the end of 1986, the Crida began a campaign to attract adherents based on the message of independence for Catalonia. From its inception to 1986, when he left it to join ERC, the Crida's principal and most charismatic leader was Àngel Colom. ERC's transformation began in October, 1986 when Colom joined that historic party, "*giving an impulse to the process of independentist refounding of ERC*, supported by its historic president, Heribert Barrera" (Rubiralta i Casas 224). The idea was to crystallize the independentists' long-sought objective of attaining parliamentary representation, which had been denied them during the transition period (1975–1981). ERC's new independentism put an end to its historic indefiniteness and ambiguity, and was consolidated in 1989. The new ERC of Àngel Colom was going to consolidate its independentist project by benefiting from the sociological independentism that had been generated during the decade of the 1980s, thanks to the activism of many organizations (Vilaregut 113). Thus commenced a process of unloading of militants from the various small organizations of popular, civic, and militant independentism onto ERC. In June 1993, the Crida announced its self-dissolution, and a considerable portion of its militancy joined ERC (Rubiralta i Casas 204).

The contribution from sociological nationalism in Quebec

As in the case of ERC in Catalonia, an impulse for the formation and founding of the party that came to be known as the ADQ was given by elements coming from the sphere of sociological nationalism.

On 26 November 1992 the Executive of the PLQ decided to expel Mario Dumont from the party. In the wake of Dumont's expulsion, shortly thereafter Jean Allaire and some of his supporters resigned from the party (Béliveau 89).

Jean Allaire has pointed out that at the root of the decision to found the ADQ was the outreach they did to elements from civil society and the feedback they received. In January 1993, Allaire and Dumont took the initiative to bring people together from all the regions of Quebec and from all the political tendencies in a group to reflect on the future of Quebec. This became known as the Groupe Réflexion Quebec. It served as a civil society forum, helping to generate new ideas about the political options facing the province.

In the fall of 1993 the Groupe Réflexion Québec published its document entitled “Un Québec Responsable,” widely and cheaply diffused by the journal *Agora*. The document’s introductory page, authored by Allaire and Dumont, explained that the group was

neither a political party nor an embryo of a political party ... After confirming the impossibility of pursuing unimpeded reflection within the political parties, we decided to organize a group of reflection independent of the organized political parties. The organization of the group was undertaken at the end of 1992 and the beginning of 1993 ... The conditions for admission into the group included not being an active member of a political party ... (Groupe 3)

According to Guy Laforest, who became a member of the ADQ in February 2000 and was its president from October 2002 to September 2004, the foundation of the ADQ was closely related to the [work realized and the] report released by the Groupe Réflexion Québec.

The founding of the new nationalist political orientation

Consolidation of the nucleus of leadership in Catalonia

By 1987 it was clear that there was a demand for an independentist political party in Catalonia, but the growth of sociological independentism up to this time had not yet succeeded in establishing its own party with a presence in the Catalan parliament. Thus, independentists started considering whether ERC, the party closest to their ideals, and one with distinguished historical credentials, could be somehow transformed and effectively re-founded (Bassa 100).

ERC’s pact with CiU (the autonomist nationalist coalition) in 1980 initiated a period of years in which ERC was essentially in its shadow (Lucas 99). This period ended in 1987 when a new team of leaders came to dominate the party and rejected the policy of collaboration with CiU.

In 1984, Josep Lluís Carod Rovira was active in the small extra-parliamentary party known as Nacionalistes d’Esquerra, which he had helped found in 1980. The party participated in the elections of that year, obtaining very meager results (Sanchis). Subsequently, in 1986, Carod was able to meet with Heribert Barrera, the secretary general of ERC at that point and one of the historic figures of the party. Barrera and Carod both agreed that the only way to bring together all the people who were left leaning and independentist was to do so through ERC.

Subsequently, Carod met several times with Àngel Colom, the Coordinator of the Crida, to discuss their plans for re-founding ERC (Lucas 115). Both agreed that ERC was a rudderless, weakened party, without its own political personality, and having the leadership with the highest median age of any in the parliament. Despite this general outlook, the two of them decided it was worth trying to resuscitate ERC, giving it a new political and generational profile. Barrera had announced that he would no longer be the secretary general. At the XV Congress held in 1987, Joan Hortalà was elected secretary general, with a promise to incorporate Carod and Colom and the leadership that had promoted the Crida Nacional a ERC. A month later, Carod and Colom officially joined ERC. Colom set out to develop a style of tireless activism, similar to what he had done at the Crida. He set himself the mission of rebuilding ERC, taking on the task of attracting as many people as possible into it. Slowly people started adhering to their proposed plan. The new adherents came from three sectors. First, militants from the Nacionalistes d’Esquerra that came with Carod. Second, an important group coming with Colom from La Crida a la Solidaritat (Lucas 119). Finally, independent militants, who saw this

proposed plan as an opportunity to rejuvenate and energize a sagging and fragmented independentist movement (Sanchis 93). In the Catalan parliamentary election of 1988, ERC improved its position slightly, passing from five to six MPs. Both Àngel Colom and Carod Rovira became MPs. This new parliamentary group openly broke with CiU, accusing it of “defending the most conservative mechanisms of the country” (Lucas 126).

In 1989 the party celebrated its XVI Congress in Lleida, one of the most important in its recent history. Àngel Colom won the post of secretary general by a narrow margin, and remained in the post until he left ERC in October 1996. During the period of Colom’s leadership, from 1989 onwards ERC developed a monothematic and unswerving independentist discourse. The party shifted its focus to the identity/national axis. The social and political economy axes were non-existent in ERC’s discourse during the period of Colom’s leadership (Sanchis 95). However, even Carod Rovira has recognized that Colom’s unswerving independentism helped ERC to re-create and re-found its image, playing a renovating role. It also helped to advance the independentist message among the citizenry, disassociating it from violence (Sanchis 98). After the Congress in Lleida in 1989, with the party’s new independentist message, the door was open for all sectors of independentism to enter the party. In the months following the Lleida Congress, the party received a wave of affiliations. Slowly, there was a movement of incorporation of many elements coming from the independentist ranks (Alquezar, Marín, and Morales 190).

After the election of Àngel Colom as its secretary general in 1989 at Lleida, the renovated and re-founded ERC experienced an unparalleled generational change, a rapid growth in its militant ranks, and a profound transformation in the profile of its leadership. For example, a study conducted by the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona of the militants who attended the XIX Congress of ERC in 1993 showed that a third of the militants were between 25 and 34 years of age, and another third between 35 and 50 – quite a different profile when compared to the pre-1989 gentrified party. The median age of the leaders with posts in the party was 37.3. In 1993, the data showed that 66.8% of the attendees had entered the party since 1989. Only 15% of the attendees had been in the party before the *Crida Nacional a ERC*. Among those who stated they had a post of high responsibility, more than half had joined the party after 1989, attracted by the new independentist orientation. It was also determined that 70% of the attendees had come to ERC from other independentist (extra-parliamentary) parties and organizations. Only 7.8% had come from CiU. Thus, from 1989 on, ERC had become the political formation agglutinating the independentists (Lucas 137). The new leadership quickly gave concrete institutional shape to its new orientation, obtaining approval in the Catalan parliament of a resolution asserting the right to self-determination (Lucas 140).

It can be said that ERC had grown and strengthened itself from the membership and the militancy of previously existing independentist organizations, i.e. from sociological nationalism. ERC had become the dominant expression of moderate independentism (Bassa 156). The entry into ERC of independentists from all ranks is dramatized by an analysis of ERC’s MPs who were active during the 4th (1992), 5th (1995), and 6th (2000) legislatures of the Catalan parliament. Of a total of 21 MPs active during this period, only two had entered ERC before 1987, while the majority had entered the party between 1987 and 1992. Four of them had been active in independentist organizations before joining ERC. Seven of them had been active in the *Crida* or civic independentism. Five of them had been active in *Nacionalistes d’Esquerra*. In total, 13 of the 21 MPs had come from extra-parliamentary independentist organizations. None came from the orbit of CiU (Alquezar, Marín, and Morales 192).

Consolidation of a nucleus of leadership in Quebec

As in the case of Catalonia, the consolidation of a nucleus of leadership was an important factor accounting for the emergence of a new nationalist tendency in Quebec.

When the participants in the Groupe Réflexion Québec met in early 1993, the participants were interested in elaborating a new project for Quebec, capable of bringing together many people from diverse strands of society. A “third way” seemed to be in the making, but it wasn’t clear yet that this process would culminate in the formation of a new party. Once the Report of the Group had been published, it dissolved itself. One option was simply leaving it at that, and having each one return to his or her duties. Another option was to turn it into a foundation for a movement or a pressure group to express its opinions about topics of current interest, without taking any concrete, practical action. A third option was to turn it into the foundation for a new political party, responding to the demand that was felt among the population for a “third way” option (Allaire 53). On 2 October 1993, it was decided to turn the network of reflection into Groupe Action Québec, with a mandate to take the group’s report to the population to discuss and publicize the result. An intensive tour of the entire province was undertaken, in which more than 30 meetings were held and more than 2000 individuals were consulted (Allaire 55).

On 13 December 1993, Allaire announced the formation of a new political party, the Action démocratique du Québec. A declaration of principles was adopted at Trois-Rivières on 12 December 1993 by an assembly of 165 delegates. On 18 January 1994, the Director General of Elections in Quebec authorized the formation of the ADQ. The ADQ held its first Congress on 5–6 March 1994. Allaire was selected as *chef* of the party and Dumont as president. Shortly thereafter Allaire announced that he would not be able to continue because of a cardiac condition, and Dumont replaced him.

In the 1994 provincial election, the new party received 6.5% of the vote, and Dumont became a member of the National Assembly. The PQ won that election with a comfortable majority in the National Assembly, and PQ Premier Jacques Parizeau set the course for holding a second referendum on sovereignty in 1995. The new party formed part of the coalition for the “Yes” (the pro-independence option) in the referendum on sovereignty held on 30 October 1995, forming a triple alliance with the independentist formations, the PQ and the Bloc Québécois on 9 June 1994 (Béliveau ch. 10). After the defeat of the pro-independence proposal by a narrow margin in the 1995 referendum, the ADQ decided that at that time the Québécois people did not want a radical rupture with Canada and deplored the constitutional obsession in Québécois politics. The party opted for a 10-year moratorium on the age-old constitutional dilemma between independentists and federalists (ADQ 11). For the ADQ, the classic independence–federalism dichotomy was in need of revision and rethinking. The ADQ argued that, more than ever, the province needed a strong autonomist voice and an institutional carrier for the autonomist nationalist political orientation. During 2000 and 2001 the party undertook a programmatic consolidation, developing a more coherent set of values and principles. In the provincial elections of 14 April 2003 the party obtained 18% of the vote, but obtained only five members of the National Assembly as a result of the distortion caused by the electoral system, which penalizes third parties. In the provincial elections of 26 March 2007 – to the surprise of many political observers – the ADQ became the second most voted party in the province, beating the PQ and becoming the official opposition to the PLQ minority government of Prime Minister Jean Charest. It obtained 30.80% of the vote and 41 seats in the Quebec National Assembly. However, in the provincial elections of 8 December 2008 it lost these gains, and received only 16% of the vote. In 2009, Mario

Dumont resigned as *chef*, and the party has had difficulty in reorganizing itself after these setbacks, but it has been the carrier of autonomist nationalism in the province over a decade, and it has represented the elusive third way, according to former ADQ president Guy Laforest, in between the politics of identity of the PQ and the politics of interest of the PLQ (Laforest, *Pour* 321).

Conclusion: how nationalism evolves

In the early 1980s in Catalonia, only autonomist nationalism and federalist nationalism were represented in the sphere of parliamentary politics. Similarly, in the 1980s only independentist nationalism and federalist nationalism existed within the Québécois national movement.

The “tipping point,” that is, the juncture at which a new political orientation was successfully established in the arena of electoral competition and parliamentary politics, was reached in 1989 in Catalonia and in 1994 in Quebec. I have traced the process through which this “tipping point” was reached. It was a temporal sequence that evolved in four phases, which can be conceptualized as: the pre-embryonic period phase, the embryonic period phase (in Catalonia from 1975 to 1981 and in Quebec from 1982 to 1992), the impulse phase, and the formation and founding phase. These four phases encompassed four interlinked factors: the existence of a preexistent ideology, the occurrence of a central state constitutional moment, an impulse from the sphere of sociological nationalism, and the consolidation of a new leadership nucleus. Independentist nationalism in Catalonia and autonomist nationalism in Quebec have now acquired an aura of legitimacy within their respective national movements.

My findings point us toward a renewed appreciation of the relevance of political and social factors in understanding how a novel nationalist political orientation is successfully established in the parliamentary sphere. Several of the findings we have derived from our study of the Québécois and Catalan national movements point us toward broader conclusions, applicable to several other cases of stateless nationhood, encompassed by my scope conditions. I will briefly discuss below some examples of the broader applicability of the comparative perspective offered here.

I have shown that the embryonic period of the formation of a new nationalist political orientation is framed by a central state constitutional moment, which itself is interpreted by the minority nationalists as an instance of majority nation nationalism. Such constitutional moments impact the intersubjective relations of reciprocity between minority nationalists and majority nation nationalism. State-wide solidarity and unity may be promoted by a culture of reciprocity and accommodation between sub-state nationalists and the majority nation. Thus, intersubjective relations of reciprocity between sub-state nationalists and majority nation nationalism are essential for understanding the “trigger” event that serves as the immediate catalyst for the founding and growth of new nationalist orientations (led by nationalist parties) in sub-state national societies.

Sovereign states are themselves engaged in a process of majority nation building aimed at producing a common national identity across the entire territory of the state, to be shared by all citizens. Constitutional moments are critical periods given that

constitutions have played a central role in this process [of majority nation-building], both in the regulative sense of creating institutions with state-wide authority to permit the creation and enforcement of these policies, and in the constitutive sense of projecting an image of political community meant to be internalized by citizens.(Choudhry 30)

In the Basque Country at present, for example, the political parties that oppose the Basque nationalists of the Partido Nacionalista Vasco, Aralar, and Eusko Alkartasuna call themselves “constitutionalists” to signal their defense of the constitutive project represented by the 1978 Constitution of Spain. In Catalonia, since 2006 a new constitutional moment has configured itself, as the sub-state nationalist parties have been uneasily awaiting the decision by Spain’s Constitutional Court on the constitutionality of the new Catalan Statute of Autonomy. As Artur Mas (CiU) declared, the Spanish Constitution has become a “wall against which the national aspirations of Catalonia smash themselves.”¹³ My analysis highlights the influence of central state constitutional transformative events on minority nations’ national movements, underscoring the dynamic and fluid nature of nationalism, and its contingent and non-deterministic nature.

We have also seen that immediately following the embryonic period, another process came into play to give shape to the new political current. A critical contribution was made by social networks of nationalists that serve as a breeding ground for cadres and leadership, and also as the incubators of the ideological precedents that facilitate the establishment of a new political orientation in the sphere of parliamentary politics.

Social networks of nationalists include associations, cultural groups, pressure groups, and consciousness-raising political action groups. The associations they form may include: cultural and linguistic affirmation groups (such as *Òmnium Cultural*, *Plataforma per la Llengua*, *Correllengua*, the *Société Saint Jean Baptiste* or the *Mouvement National des Québécois*), cultural institutions (*Ateneu Barcelonés*, or *Palau de la Música Catalana*), etc. The ferment created by this rich associationism generally serves as a bulwark of nationalism, although at times some of these associations may adopt adversarial positions vis-à-vis mainstream nationalist organizations, or they may be co-opted. Social networks of nationalists also form small, extraparliamentary political parties (such as *Nacionalistes d’Esquerra* or *Entesa dels Nacionalistes d’Esquerra*), which generally remain outside the mainstream political process.

These groups tend to be as concerned about the ethno-symbolism of nationhood as they may be about politics or their right to self-determination, yet they play a critical role in how nationalism evolves, as we have seen here, and in several other cases of sub-state nationhood. In Scotland, for example, the Scottish National Party (SNP) emerged out of the fusion of elements coming from the sphere of sociological nationalism. The Scots National League (SNL), which was founded in 1919, was the first organization calling for complete independence; this merged with the Scottish Home Rule Association (SHRA) in 1928 to form the National Party of Scotland, which was the immediate forerunner of the contemporary SNP (De Winter and Türsan 106). Also, *Plaid Cymru* in Wales was not able to develop fully as a modern independentist party with parliamentary ambitions until 1962, when several of its members founded the Welsh Language Society to engage in direct action on cultural and language issues. The support provided by this linguistic action group in turn allowed *Plaid Cymru* to establish itself as a modern and mature regionalist party, rather than a cultural movement, and to compete more successfully in the British electoral system (De Winter and Türsan 126).

My findings also indicate that following the contribution made by social networks of nationalists, eventually a new nucleus of leadership coalesced, which steered the process of founding the new nationalist political currents. A collective study of 12 ethnoregionalist parties (including the *Südtiroler Volkspartei* and the *Volksumie*) also concluded that leadership was an important factor accounting for the emergence and growth of such parties (more than party organization), especially during the first phase of these parties’ development (De Winter and Türsan 13, 222).

Constitutional moments, social networks of nationalists, and leadership nuclei are the key to explaining how a novel nationalist political orientation emerges and is successfully established in the parliamentary sphere. Temporal variation within national movements, therefore, can be explained if we avoid deterministic accounts of nationalism, and instead recognize that nationalism follows a political logic and is embedded in cultural contexts, social networks, and intersubjective relations of reciprocity.

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Notes

1. Here, I use Miroslav Hroch's terminology. "National movements" tend to pursue three aims: (1) the development of a national culture, based on the native language; (2) the achievement of civil rights and political self-administration (autonomy or independence); and (3) the creation of a complete social structure from the ethnic group. "National movements" are composed of those political parties, intellectuals, artists, associations, organizations in civil society, and individual nationalist militants that support the goals of the national movement (Hroch, *Social*; idem, "Nationalist").
2. In general, "sub-state national societies" are historically settled, territorially concentrated, and previously self-governing societies with distinctive sociolinguistic traits whose territory has become incorporated into a larger state. In some cases the incorporation of such societies has been through imperial domination and colonization, military conquest, or the cession of the territory by an imperial metropolis, but in other cases reflects a voluntary pact of association (Kymlicka). These are also known as "stateless nations," "internal nations," or "national minorities." I prefer to use the term "stateless nation," given that, as Michael Keating writes, the term "national minority" more often refers to a "people within a state whose primary reference point is a nation situated elsewhere" (Keating x; Brubaker). Some stateless nations are in control of the administrative apparatus of a sub-state government (e.g. provincial government) but lack the accoutrements of sovereign statehood. Examples of stateless nationhood include: Scotland, Quebec, and the Basque Country.
3. Independence is the realization of full political sovereignty for a nation. For stateless nations, it is the attainment of separate statehood, independent from the majority nation with which they have coexisted within the same state for some time. Also, proposals for sovereignty-association and associated statehood are variants of the independence option.
4. I maintain that autonomy proposals are political arrangements that generally renounce independence – at least for the medium- to short term – but which seek to promote the self-government, self-administration, and cultural identity of a territorial unit populated by a polity with national characteristics. The cases of autonomy vary widely and no single description will be applicable to all such situations. Contemporary instances of actually-existing autonomy relationships include: Åland Islands/Finland, Alto Adige/Italy, Faroe Islands/Denmark, Greenland/Denmark, Puerto Rico/USA. Most cases of actually-existing autonomy arrangements can be clearly distinguished from classic *federations*. Classic federations, where all the constituent units have substantially equal powers, may not be sufficiently sensitive to the particular cultural, economic, institutional, and linguistic needs of a sub-state national society, which requires a greater degree of self-government (Ghai 8). Generally speaking, moreover, "autonomy is always a fragmented order, whereas a constituent ... [unit of a federation] is always part of a whole ... The ties in a ... [federation] are always stronger than those in an autonomy" (Suksi 25).

5. Federalists seek to have their nation remain (or become) a constituent unit of classic *federations*, which constitute a particular species within the genus of “federal political systems,” wherein neither the federal nor the constituent units’ governments (cantons, provinces, *Länder*, etc.) are constitutionally subordinate to the other, i.e. each has sovereign powers derived directly from the constitution rather than any other level of government, each is given the power to relate directly to its citizens in the exercise of its legislative, executive and taxing competences, and each is elected directly by its citizens.
6. Díez Medrano’s book focuses on patterns of development in order to discuss the origins of Basque nationalism (independentist) and Catalan nationalism (autonomist or federalist) before 1936, and he shows that the contrast between these two national movements is largely the result of the different development patterns experienced in the Basque lands and in Catalonia and the distinctive social structures produced by these patterns (Díez Medrano 10). He found that “combined development and specialization in capital-goods production in the Basque Country and endogenous development and specialization in consumer-goods production in Catalonia . . . facilitated the development of very different social structures, very different attitudes towards capitalism and membership in the Spanish state, and, consequently, very different political structures [and institutions] and degrees of support for particular nationalist political organizations” (Díez Medrano 16).
7. The comparability of Quebec and Catalonia has been noted previously (Pares and Tremblay 9).
8. Please note that these insurgent orientations are “new” in the sense that they may have been present in sociological nationalism and in small extra-parliamentary groups or parties, but did not have a significant presence in the arena of parliamentary politics and electoral competition.
9. The de facto re-founding of ERC during the period 1986–1989 is functionally equivalent to the “founding” of a new party, as in the case of the ADQ in 1994.
10. Case study methods may encompass both within-case analysis of single cases and comparisons of a small number of cases, given that “there is a growing consensus that the strongest means of drawing inferences from case studies is the use of a combination of within-case analysis and cross-case comparisons within a single study . . . (although single-case studies can also play a role in theory development)” (George and Bennett 18).
11. Previous scholars who have investigated regionalist and “ethnoregionalist” parties agree with me that this “tipping point” is analytically important and they have therefore focused on asking “why and how ethnic sentiments were converted into organizational structures” (De Winter and Türsan 8).
12. Even today, many Catalan nationalists still reject the Spanish Constitution of 1978. For example, Alfons López Tena, the president of the Cercle d’Estudis Sobiranistes, recently stated in response to the question of why he rejects the Spanish Constitution: “Because it is Spanish. It says very clearly that there is only one sovereign nation: the Spanish one . . . The Constitution created a unitary state, uninational, and monolingual: it is based on only one sovereign nation” (*Avui* 24 Mar. 2009, 8).
13. *Avui* 27 Dec. 2009, 7.

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