TALKING WITH NATIONALISTS AND PATRIOTS:
AN EXAMINATION OF ETHNIC AND CIVIC APPROACHES TO NATIONALISM
AND THEIR OUTCOMES IN QUEBEC AND FLANDERS

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Glen M.E. Duerr

May 21, 2012,

Akron, OH, USA
Mes amis, c’est raté, mais pas de beaucoup. Puis c’est réussi, c’est réussi sur un plan. Si vous voulez, on va cesser de parler des francophones du Québec, voulez-vous? On va parler de nous à soixante percent......C’est vrai, c’est vrai qu’on a été battus, au fond, par quoi? Par l’argent puis des votes ethniques, essentiellement.

My friends, we have lost, but not by a lot. It was successful in one sense. Let’s stop talking about the francophones of Québec. Let’s talk about us, the sixty percent of us (who have voted in favour of independence)...... It’s true, it’s true we have been defeated, but basically by what? Essentially, by money and ethnic votes.

-Jacques Parizeau, leader of the ‘oui’ (yes) campaign on October 30, 1995 after the defeat of Québec’s second referendum on its proposed secession from Canada

My new life in Canada, after moving from England at the age of fifteen, was less than a month old when Jacques Parizeau spoke those infamous words blaming the defeat of the 1995 Quebec independence referendum on “money and ethnic votes.” They had been spoken in the aftermath, when Parizeau was significantly irritated, of Canada’s most pivotal moment when Québec came within one percent, or a mere 53,000 votes, from obtaining a successful referendum vote (Doran 1996, 99). These words sparked a change in Canada, Québécois nationalism, and also me.
In the ensuing years, Québec’s separatist political parties—Bloc Québécois (BQ) at the federal level and the Parti Québécois (PQ) at the provincial level—began distancing themselves from Parizeau’s comments. Supporters of Quebec independence tried to make the case that they should pursue more inclusive, civic-based policy platforms instead of following exclusivist, ethnic-based nationalist platforms, which fervently attempt to protect national identity in the cause of self-determination. Yet opponents of Quebec independence argue that nothing has really changed and that the PQ and BQ retain a veneer of ethnic nationalism. These opponents include the Montreal Gazette journalist, Don MacPherson (1997; 2002) who is one of the most outspoken, but the list also includes the scholar Danielle Juteau (2004, 90) and the scholar-politician Michael Ignatieff (1993). The ethnic/civic nationalist debate remains highly contested in the Canadian province of Quebec.

Likewise, according to my initial research and a brief trip through Belgium in 2007, I found that there was a similar contestation regarding ethnic and civic forms of nationalism in that country. In the Dutch speaking north of the country—Flanders—there are two nationalist parties: Vlaams Belang (VB) and Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie (N-VA). VB has been more successful historically, but are labeled as supporters of ethnic nationalism even though the leadership disputes this claim. Scholars such as Janet Laible (2001) and Mario Martinello (1995), among others, argue that VB purports an ethnic form of nationalism. N-VA is a newer party and has had some recent electoral success. N-VA has made bolder claims about their adoption of civic nationalism, but this is contested especially in the Francophone Walloon south of the country. At the start of
this study, N-VA was a relatively new party and no scholars had yet undertaken a rigorous investigation of their nationalist platforms.

### 1.1 The Argument in Brief

These two situations provoke three comparative questions. First, whether any of the three nationalist parties have actually transitioned from ethnic-based to civic-based nationalist platforms? Second, if they have transitioned to civic-based nationalist policies, why have some of the nationalist parties begun this transition whilst others have not? Finally, with these attempted changes to nationalist policy platforms, why are Quebec and Flanders not yet independent? In this dissertation, I have a lot of evidence to answer the first question of whether any of the nationalist parties have transitioned from ethnic-to-civic based policy platforms. I also have some evidence to explain the second question, why some nationalist parties have attempted to transition to civic-based policy platforms. I have a hypothesis and some tentative explanations, but further work will be required at a later date, or by other scholars to provide a full answer to this question. Finally, I also have a lot of data on the third question, which will help to explain why neither Quebec nor Flanders is independent.

In order to delve into the first question, it is necessary to stop and briefly define ethnic and civic forms of nationalism. The central element of my definitions is related to the idea of openness to immigrants and minority groups in a society. Ethnic nationalism is evident when policy platforms are solely aimed at providing for, and benefitting, the majority ethnic, religious, and/or linguistic group in the society. Membership in an ethnic nation is based on blood (belonging to a given ethnic group) and is sometimes
supplemented by secondary characteristics such as language and/or religion. Ethnicity is based, in part, on a biological basis for community, but it is also socially constructed through boundaries with other groups (Hancock 2010, 33-34). Membership in an ethnic nation requires an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dynamic, in which other ethnic groups exist and can be differentiated from one’s own ethnic group. Public policy based on civic nationalism eliminates biases towards minority ethnic, religious, and/or linguistic groups, and all people in a society are given the same rights and freedoms. (A fuller definition is shown in Figure 1.1 below.)

My questions are important because in both cases there are significant challenges to national unity. The policy platforms and strategies of the nationalist parties are useful in determining how these parties are reaching out to all of the members of the electorate with the goal of attaining de jure independence. All nationalist parties studied in this dissertation seek to gain their independence through democratic, peaceful means. Their successes and/or failures serve as lessons to other nationalist movements and to governments dealing with nationalist movements. This study builds on the literature on nationalism, secession, and political parties, which could have a longstanding impact on other cases and political parties across democratic countries.

On five fundamental policy questions (see Figure 1.1 below)—language, culture, immigration, political autonomy, and economics—the various nationalist parties in Quebec and Flanders claim that they have softened their public positions. Of course, in any real-world case, there will be aspects of both civic and ethnic nationalism, but a holistic view utilizing five different areas of policy will better highlight the first question
of this dissertation: whether any of the nationalist political parties in Quebec and Flanders have transitioned from ethnic-to-civic based policy platforms?

Figure 1.1 Shift from Ethnic-to-Civic Based Party Platforms

As a hypothesis to the second question: why have some nationalist political parties transitioned from ethnic-to-civic-based policy platforms, I argue that three factors (see Figure 1.2 below)—all of which are possible only in a stable democracy—have led to the transition in political strategy. First, the fact that separatist parties exist, and are supported by a portion of the population, is important. All separatist parties studied here have received regular and significant electoral support from the population amounting to at least 10 percent. These parties are mainstays in national and regional politics in their respective countries, and will continue to influence and affect all citizens of the state, not just in the specific region. These parties will remain active in politics and lobby for the
ability to gain independence. They are not leaving the political sphere. However, their success can influence how they act (and which policies these parties adopt) in the political sphere. Changes to society affect them as does the existence of other parties.

**Figure 1.2 Why Nationalist Parties adopt Ethnic or Civic Based Policy Platforms**

As noted in Figure 1.2, the second reason for a shift towards more civic-based nationalist policy platforms occurs when the demography of a given region changes. If there is no change, or only a token immigrant presence, it is unlikely that a nationalist party will change. After all, there is no incentive to reach out to immigrants because they do not affect the outcome of elections. However, in regions that have seen large influxes of immigration (approximately 15 percent), the ethnic makeup of the society has changed. Political parties have a basic choice at this point: change towards more civic-based policy platforms in order to reach out to the new people in the region, or ignore the
new people and concentrate fully on the ethnic base. The latter path shows a continuation of ethnic-based policy platforms.

The third and final factor is based on the Median Voter theory. In Figure 1.2, I have dubbed this section, the Downs/Kitschelt Median Voter theory because it is a combination of the works of Anthony Downs (1957) and Herbert Kitschelt (1995). Anthony Downs essentially argues that political parties will moderate their platforms in order to maximize their votes. Herbert Kitschelt, on the other hand, argues that when there is political “room” on the extremes, parties will form to take this portion of the electorate and they will not moderate their platforms especially when they are able to get their message to voters and affect the political discourse in the region. As a result of this Downs/Kitschelt Median Voter theory, I have designated four possible options for nationalist parties when their respective societies have changed demographically.

Option one is available when a given state allows any region to hold a referendum for its independence. Given enough electoral support in regional parliamentary elections, a nationalist party is able to host a referendum and hypothetically secede from its existing state with 50 percent plus one of the referendum vote. A referendum is important because it provides a tangible way in which the nationalist party can fulfill its objective of secession. However, when a referendum fails and demography changes, there is a need to change policy platforms as well. In order to win more votes and have another chance to become independent, the nationalist party must try to adopt more civic-based policy platforms.

Option two on Figure 1.2 also shows situations where a given party changes to more civic-based policy platforms even when a referendum is not constitutional. Where
a referendum is not constitutional, there is no incentive to transition to civic-based nationalism alone. However, when another nationalist party already occupies the electoral extreme, the Kitschelt amendment to the Downs model is noteworthy because this newer party will attempt to vote maximize. If a more extreme nationalist political party already exists on the far-right of the political spectrum, then it provides an incentive for a more moderate nationalist party to transition to/adopt civic-based policy platforms and try to move to the political center.

Options three and four give reasons why nationalist political parties will retain ethnic-based policy platforms even when the demography of their region has changed. Option three aligns with Herbert Kitschelt’s prediction that extreme parties will remain extreme when there is political room and no reason to change, especially when there is no mechanism to secede or dissolve the state. Option four notes that with the lack of a referendum option, a government may protect the short term integrity of the state, but they make sure that more extreme parties retain their ethnic-based policy platforms and more moderate parties will transition to civic-based platforms in the political center.

Despite the questions of whether and why nationalist parties have transitioned to civic-based platforms or not, all of the parties have failed in achieving their maximalist separatist goals. The third main question of the dissertation, therefore, is why. The commitment of the separatists cannot be questioned. The money, time, and effort that have gone into the movements have been staggering. They have even challenged the state in four major ways: 1) they have attempted to secede through a referendum if constitutional, 2) they have attempted to gain so much autonomy so as to obtain de facto independence, 3) they have challenged the legal constitutionality of the state, and 4) they
have put forth bills in parliament in an attempt to dissolve the state. Nevertheless, none of the parties has obtained an independent state of their own. Why not?

I hypothesize that there are some significant institutional constraints on the ability of Quebec and Flanders to become independent of Canada and Belgium respectively. Gaining independence is very difficult and is only feasible through either electoral successes in Quebec, or sustained blockages of the state in Flanders. The PQ must first win a majority in the National Assembly of Quebec. At that point, they must successfully pass a bill, which will allow them to hold a referendum in one year. They then need to formulate a fair question—which can be rejected by the Supreme Court of Canada. After that, a majority of Quebecers must vote in favor of the referendum. (Obviously the resources of the Canadian government are much more extensive than those of the sovereignty movement, but supporters of an independent Quebec still have a viable way to exit Canada.) In Flanders, however, there is no real history of referendum. Therefore, the only foreseeable ways to gain independence are: 1) for Flemish nationalists to win a majority in the Flemish Parliament and declare independence, 2) for Flemish nationalists to block the Belgian federal government for an unknown period of time until the dissolution of the state becomes a reality, or 3) continue to blame Walloons until Walloon nationalism grows and a nationalist party advances the idea of independence as well. In both case studies, there are real institutional obstacles to achieving independence.

Given these institutional constraints, there are a number of ways that the respective nationalist parties could respond. In all likelihood, nationalist parties will attempt to agitate for a way out of their existing union in order to become independent.
They will attempt to offer the people of Quebec and Flanders an option that is different from Canada and Belgium. Moreover, all nationalist parties will attempt to gain greater autonomy from their national states as well. In this way they are attempting to prove that they will be able to manage their own affairs in a way that is considered better than the national government. The nationalists of Quebec and Flanders have set the goal of promoting the idea of secession as a viable option, and they continue to work against the interests of the status quo in each of their respective states.

1.2 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is structured in such a way so as to find out the extent of nationalist party secessionist agitation in Quebec and Flanders, and to find out why neither region is independent. Chapter Two starts with an examination of numerous sets of literatures so as to place the subject matter in a wider context. This includes several debates in the field of nationalism including the historic nature of nationalism, ethnic and civic forms of nationalism, secession, the comparative politics of secession, and the secessionist movements in Quebec and Flanders. Chapter Three goes through a discussion of the methods used to answer the main questions. This chapter explains how interviews, surveys, and archival data all helped to draw wider conclusions. Through triangulating with these different forms of data, the study attempts to rigorously answer the three main research questions. Chapters Four through Six examine the three major nationalist parties in Quebec and Flanders. Chapter Four examines Quebec nationalism and how the PQ and BQ work together at the provincial and federal levels of governments respectively. This chapter examines whether and why the Quebec
nationalist movement has adopted civic-based policy platforms. Chapter Five provides an introduction to Flemish nationalism and the competition for nationalist votes. Specifically, this chapter investigates whether and why VB has retained a largely ethnic-based form of nationalism or transitioned to civic-based platforms. Chapter Six examines the other nationalist party in Flanders, N-VA. N-VA has different set of policy platforms than VB, but the chapter also investigates whether and why these platforms are more civic or ethnic based. In chapters Seven and Eight, I answer the third question: why are Quebec and Flanders not yet independent? Chapter Seven examines why Flanders and Quebec are not independent states even though nationalism plays a strong role in the political system of both regions. Using a combination of institutional, ideational, and interest-based impediments, this chapter examines the difficulties faced on the part of nationalist parties. Chapter Eight then examines systematically how the cases of Quebec and Flanders compare to other cases. This chapter examines a comparison of Belgium to the dissolution of Czechoslovakia, and a comparison of Quebec secession to cases with similar parliamentary features. Finally, Chapter Nine presents final conclusions on the study and presents policy recommendation for supporters of independence and national unity alike. This chapter concludes by assessing whether Quebec or Flanders will likely gain their independence and what factors are most important.

With the structure in place, I will set forth an attempt to answer my main research questions: 1) whether the nationalist parties studied have transitioned to civic-based platforms? 2) Why have some nationalist parties attempted to transition from ethnic-to-civic-based party platforms whilst others have not? And 3) why have both cases been unsuccessful so far? Essentially, I answer the first two questions on transitions to civic-
based policy platforms in Chapters Four through Six. I then answer the third question on independence in Chapters Seven and Eight.
CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As noted in the introduction, this dissertation examines three main questions, whether and why the PQ and N-VA have begun to transition from ethnic- to civic-based policy platforms whereas VB has not, and why none of them have achieved independence thus far. The first question examines five policy platforms—language, culture, immigration, political autonomy, and economics—which present important reasons for a transition from ethnic to civic based nationalism. Given the nature of these questions and their intricacies, there are several different sets of literature that are useful to understanding these questions.

A literature review is important to this study because it introduces many works that help to shape this study, and provides a theoretical and informational background to this dissertation. As such I will define and describe several debates in the field of nationalism and explain where each pertains to my study. The literature on nationalism is vast and has grown substantially in the last thirty years. Nationalism can be broken down into several different areas including a brief overview of nationalism, whether nations or nationalism came first, sub-nationalisms and secession, and debates over different forms of nationalism (especially ethnic and civic nationalisms). There is also an extensive literature on secession, which is philosophical in nature. The philosophical reasons for
secession are not relevant to this study, but some descriptions of how secessions occur are. I also examine the literature on secession in Quebec and Flanders respectively. Given the fact that there has not been a case of secession in the developed world since 1921, I also examine the comparative politics of secession to show that while cases of secession are extremely rare in advanced democratic and economically wealthy states, secession is still a possible outcome. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of important works and theories outside the fields of nationalism and secession that I utilize to explain what is happening in the cases of Quebec and Flanders. (I primarily discuss the Downs median voter theory and the role of political parties in Western Europe.)

2.2 A Brief Overview of the Field of Nationalism

Before discussing some of the more nuanced debates in the literature on nationalism and secession, there is a context that should be introduced. Nationalism, as an academic study, was popularized in the first half of the Twentieth Century through two major works, *Essays on Nationalism* by Carlton Hayes (1926), and *The Idea of Nationalism* by Hans Kohn (1944). The popularity of nationalism as an academic study flourished in the latter half of the twentieth century with some of the most notable volumes including: Karl Deutsch’s (1966) *Nationalism and Social Communication* and Elie Kedourie’s (1960) *Nationalism*.

The field of nationalism became quite popular in the 1980s and a number of scholars emerged to tackle an array of questions. Works such as John Breuilly’s (1982) *Nationalism and the State*, Benedict Anderson’s (1983) *Imagined Communities*, Ernest Gellner’s (1983) *Nations and Nationalism*, Eric Hobsbawm’s (1990) *Nations and
Nationalism Since 1780, and Anthony Smith’s (1986) Ethnic Origins of Nations, are considered the most well-known works of the era. Many of these authors contributed to the debate between primordialists and constructivists developed (as noted in much greater detail below) and there was also a new focus on cases in the developing world such as Partha Chatterjee’s (1986, 1993) works on colonialism and post-colonialism. Other works such as Michael Billig’s book (1995) on “banal” nationalism—which examined the everyday usage of symbols of nationalism—helped to further expand the field of nationalism into other fields.

In the 1990s through the present a multitude of works have been presented with studies examining numerous different facets of nationalism in all parts of the world. A succinct review of all works is not possible here but a review of the most recent books on nationalism can be found at The Nationalism Project (www.nationalismproject.org).

2.3 Did Nations Create Nationalism or Did Nationalism Create Nations?

A related set of literature that will help to highlight the distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism is the primordial/constructivist debate in the field. This set of literature can be related to the existence of separate ethnic and civic forms of nationalism, and many of the foremost authors of nationalism have something important to add to the five policy areas studied throughout this dissertation. Gaining an understanding of the differences between primordialists and constructivists helps to show primarily where the areas of language, culture, and economics fit into the debate, and secondarily, where immigration and political autonomy fit in as well.
The central premise of the debate between primordialists and constructivists is the nature of the state. For primordialists, the unit of the nation is the natural way in which human beings group themselves. In this sense, the nation came first as a natural concept. A group of people came from a shared blood line. Nationalism came later for the purposes of waging war and clearly distinguishing a group against others. The constructivist camp, however, argues that the nation is a human invention and was developed through concerted policies that sought to unify disparate peoples into a larger grouping. Nationalism was used to create the nation as a distinct entity from other nations.

The primordialist camp includes scholars who argue that nations are a very old phenomenon and predate the modern notion of nationalism. Anthony D. Smith, for example, fits into the primordial camp in that nationhood has a strong a priori element; nations have a very strong ethnic component even in modern states. Smith is the most prominent member of the primordial camp, but other scholars have also made noteworthy contributions. Smith (1986) argues that ethnic identity is mythic and symbolic in its origins and this is manifested in modern times through nationalism. Ethnic nations are ancient and while there is a process, an “ethnie” (essentially an ethnic core) is formed with shared roots and heroes. Hans Kohn, for example, notes that nations have historical components that are important including: language, culture, common descent, customs and traditions (Kohn 1944). Similarly John Armstrong notes that because groups have historical boundaries; groups tend to define themselves by exclusion (Armstrong 1982, 5). Adrian Hastings also argues that nations existed centuries ago using the illustration of England as an example to counter the constructivist group; England existed from before
the Norman conquest of 1066 and maintained its identity after the conquest and has done so successfully to the present (Hastings 1997).

On the other hand, there is another group, the constructivists, who believe that nationalism is a modern phenomenon, which in many respects created modern nations. Benedict Anderson, for example, fits into the constructivist camp because he argues that nations are “imagined communities” (Anderson 1991, 6). Membership in a nation is based on non-blood factors such as language. Nations are modern and have been created to fulfill the economic goals of states. Likewise, Ernest Gellner argues that nations are modern but disagrees with Anderson as to why. Gellner argues that economic factors, the need to standardize a modern economy provided a very strong reason for the creation of nations; in essence, the transition to an Age of nationalism occurred after the transition to an industrial society (Gellner 1983, 39). Eric Hobsbawm (1990) argues that traditions are created by political elites in order to justify their control of the state. In an earlier work, Hobsbawm (1962) argues that the dual pillars of middle class expansion and literacy were the main vehicles to the creation of nationalist movements. Given his discussion of class, there is a Marxist element to Hobsbawm’s work because, as he argues, are a vehicle for the subjugation of people.

In the works of Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm, all of them reference the importance of language to a nation. Anderson defines a nation as “an imagined political community (that is) both inherently limited and sovereign (Anderson 1991, 6). For Anderson, language predates the state. Through the proliferation of the printed word, people were able to connect on a level beyond family or town, but to everyone else who speaks the same language. Print-capitalism is an important component in imagining the
nation because it helped to promote a unified vernacular language amongst the people and downplayed regionalisms and colloquialisms. People are able to know what is going on with other people in their nation at the same time. Without print-capitalism, it would be impossible to know and track fellow citizens (Anderson 1991, 37). Nationhood, in essence, created a boundary for the language. For Gellner, the advance of industrialism is important because it is followed by an improvement in the education system and language, which leads to the creation of a high culture in the polity. This unified high culture amongst a people in turn led to statehood. Once the state has been created, the sense of nation is enforced through education, language, and high culture. For Hobsbawm, nationalism is a top-down process whereby the elites of a nation learn, operate, and write in a given language, which then disseminates down to the rest of the population (Hobsbawm 1962, 136). As a result of this dissemination, the political and national units should be congruent (Hobsbawm 1990, 10). Paul Brass also critiques the primordialist camp by arguing that nations are a modern phenomenon that are promoted by elites for the purpose of gaining economic and political advantages. Essentially, nationalism is part of creating a modern state with centralized control over its territory (Brass 1991, 8).

This set of literature is relevant to my dissertation because the basis of an ethnic nation is Smith’s notion of an “ethnie.” However, nationalist party platforms can be broadened with a discussion of language, culture, and education as noted by the works of Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm. These constructivist factors mean that immigrants can become part of a nation even if their blood is different. The
primordialist/constructivist debate plays significantly to the distinction between ethnic
and civic nationalism.

2.4 Ethnic Nationalism

Before examining the literature on transitions to civic nationalism, it is important
to briefly examine ethnic nationalism. There are numerous works that examine the
violent elements of ethnic nationalism typically including the former Yugoslavia
including: Gagnon (1994) who specifically examined the case of Serbia, Denitch (1996)
who examined the former Yugoslavia as a whole, and Danforth (1997) who investigated
the specific case of Macedonia and its relationship to diaspora populations. There are
few explanations of ethnic nationalism in a mostly peaceful context, especially as related
to the situation and norms of Western Europe and Canada.

Khazanov’s (1997) article on ethnic nationalism in the Russian federation is an
exception. This is not to say that the case of Russia has been wholly non-violent, but
there has not been an official state campaign to enact violence on non-Russians in Russia.
In the Soviet era, nationalism was essentially suppressed until communism fell because
ideology trumped nationalism and the state maintained this status quo (Khazanov 1997,
121). Khazanov argues that three main factors were responsible for the changes: ethnic
nationalism bridges the gap between old and new elites, the redistribution of power in
society, and the economics of scarcity (Khazanov 1997, 128-130). In short, the rise of
ethnic nationalism is, at least offered rhetorically, as a way of creating a secure base of
income for the elites and masses of a given ethnic group.
2.5 Ethnic versus Civic Nationalism?

2.5.1 Civic Nationalism

To contrast the discussion of ethnic nationalism, various authors have made a distinction and discussed the rise of a civic form of nationalism. Probably the earliest account of this distinction is Ernest Renan’s (1882) classic lecture “Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?” (What is a nation?) at Sorbonne, which describes the emergence of civic nationalism in France as a counter to ethnic nationalism in Germany in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. Renan argues that civic nationalism in England, France and Italy encompasses many different peoples who support the same civic ethos instead of a narrow delineation based on blood (Renan 1882, 6). This move to civic nationalism was the result of a shift in policies by the government, such that civic-based conceptions of nationalism became a way of providing stability in the state because the most states in the world include different ethnic groups, and are at least somewhat heterogeneous. Moreover, in stable democracies with heterogeneous populations, compromises must be made in order to govern smoothly without sparking large scale protests from minority groups.

Raymond Breton (1988) adds to this argument. He notes that the transition from ethnic- to civic nationalism is ultimately a long road and requires much time and work to change the thinking of the layperson, because they must become more accepting of people who are different. Discussing the case of Québec, he argues that the province is in the process of transitioning to civic nationalism, but faces many difficult questions with regards to its ideology and stance vis-à-vis other groups (Breton 1988, 100).
in English Canada became much more civic-based because Canada’s continuation as a state depended on compromise in order to preserve national unity.

Anthony D. Smith (1991) builds on the basic delineation by Renan and argues that there are two major components of the nation: civic-territorial and ethnic-genealogical, but does not separate them out as two distinct and potentially differing types of nationalism (Smith 1991, 15). This distinction is a focus of Ignatieff’s (1993) work and he fully delineates ethnic from civic nationalism as separate forms of nationalism. Civic nationalism encompasses all people who abide by the political creed of the nation regardless of their race, color, creed, language, gender or ethnicity (Ignatieff 1993, xiii). Ethnic nationalism, on the other hand, asserts that nationhood is inherited not chosen (Ignatieff 1993, xv). This distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism is put most succinctly by Liah Greenfeld. The “criteria of membership in the national collectivity” is “civic, that is, identical with citizenship” or ethnic if it is not (Greenfeld 1992, 11). Furthermore, “the ethnicity of a community presupposes the uniformity and antiquity of its origins” (Greenfeld 1992, 13). Finally, this delineation between ethnic and civic is built upon in a similar way by Lehning (1998). Lehning describes this civic/ethnic difference as demos versus ethnos wherein demos encompasses the notion of citizenship and ethnos encompasses the notion of ethnic homogeneity (Lehning 1998, 8-9). The joint (and similar) definitions of Ignatieff, Greenfeld, and Lehning provide evidence that civic nationalism is distinct from ethnic nationalism even if there is at least some interaction between the two terms.
2.5.2 Critiques of Civic Nationalism

One contribution of this study is the reinvestigation of the ethnic/civic dichotomy in the literature. Since the mid-to-late 1990s, many scholars have rejected the ethnic/civic dichotomy. Previous arguments highlighted by Kohn’s (1944) “Western liberal civic nationalism” versus “non-Western illiberal ethnic nationalism” are a major reason why many scholars have rejected the civic/ethnic dichotomy, because of its implicit connection to geographic location. I agree with this critique that the territory based dichotomy is too simple (although it was probably quite reasonable to make the case in Kohn’s time). Rogers Brubaker, for example, defines ethnic and civic nationalism in his critique of this dichotomous definition. Brubaker defines civic nationalism as “characterized by liberal, voluntarist, universalist, and inclusive” whereas ethnic nationalism is defined as “illiberal, ascriptive, particularist, and exclusive” (Brubaker 1999, 56). Brubaker correctly notes the flawed connection to geographical location when he argues that this ethnic/civic distinction sometimes leads to the dubious distinction of civic nationalism in Western Europe versus ethnic nationalism in Eastern Europe (Brubaker 1999, 56).

Other critiques of civic nationalism follow a similar line of argumentation. Donald Ipperciel (2007) argues that there is an intrinsic link between constitutional democracy and civic nationalism. However, Ipperciel wrestles with the notion that the state has an ethnic component since the very nature of the state creates boundaries delineating it from other states (Ipperciel 2007, 395-6). Kuzio (2002) also rejects Kohn’s delineation noted above and argues that civic nationalism in the West only exists in good times. Kuzio argues that in times of crisis such as “high immigration, foreign wars, 

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1 Historically, most scholars called this “Eastern” nationalism.
secessionism, and terrorism,” the “civic element of the state is overshadowed by ethnic particularist factors” (Kuzio 2002). Moreover, Anthony D. Smith (1996) argues that even in the industrialized world, there are periodic resurgences of ethnic nationalism in times of crisis. As evidenced by all three rebuttals of Kohn’s dichotomy, a given political party may seem like it is opting for civic nationalism, but there are real limits.

Finally, there is also a set of scholars simply refute the existence of civic nationalism. Their works present a challenge to the mere existence of civic nationalism as an area of scholarship and whether transitions to civic-based platforms are even possible. To highlight the point, Walker Connor (1994) argues that an ethnic component is inseparable from the concept of nationalism, and thus he coined the term “ethnonationalism” to argue that the terms patriotism and nationalism should not be conflated. Xenos (1996) argues that civic nationalism is an oxymoron. Nationalism, by its very nature, requires ethnicity. Likewise, Yack (1996) argues that the very conceptualization of civic nationalism is the bastion of liberal scholars from the developed world. Ethnic nationalism is, however, very different globally because the ethnic group is much more of an important factor in the state. Weinstock (1996) adds to this argument by critiquing the instability of civic nationalism. He notes that after periods of instability, the tendency is to revert back to ethnic nationalism. Finally, Nielsen (1997) argues that nationalism is actually cultural and not ethnic or civic. Using a case study of Québec, Nielsen argues that it is actually the culture of Québec that perpetuates nationalism and not an ethnic or civic base.

In this dissertation I acknowledge that many disagreements exist. In many Western states, the makeup of the various populations is changing based on decades of
immigration. Therefore, it is sensible to reexamine this ethnic/civic dichotomy because the notion of citizenship has changed through changes to public policy. Beland and Lecours argue that nationalism is intrinsically linked to public policy and analyses should showcase this (Beland and Lecours 2005, 265). Civic nationalism is possible if membership is available through citizenship and, in theory civic nationalism exists throughout the developed world, especially in peaceful heterogeneous societies. The use of widespread civic-based platforms, especially in the five key policy areas identified, is a sensible contribution to the literature.

2.6 Secession

The literature on secessionism is also relevant to this dissertation because the subject matter is more narrowly focused on the specific objective of secession rather than just the broadly defined phenomenon of nationalism. Much of the literature on secession, however, focuses on the question of the legitimacy of secession rather than the act of secession. Therefore, I will provide more of a brief overview of some major reasons for secession before describing some models that help to predict secession.

Regardless of whether one feels that the act of secession is legitimate or not, secessions have happened historically and will continue to happen into the future. In July 2011, for example, South Sudan seceded from Sudan and became the 193rd member of the United Nations. In 2006, Montenegro seceded from Serbia, and in 2002, East Timor seceded from Indonesia. Lee Buchheit argues that there is no definitive way to predict secession, and secession is only really seen as legitimate in hindsight (Buchheit 1978, 45). Only after the fact is there a sense that Sudan, Serbia, and Indonesia were not
properly accommodating to their South Sudanese, Montenegrin, and East Timorese populations respectively.

One of the top scholars on the legitimacy of secession, Margaret Moore, argues that the right to secession should ultimately be based on a case-by-case decision (Moore 2001, 2). Likewise, Allen Buchanan argues that regions should have the right to secede, but only in situations where rights are violated (Buchanan 1991). Christian Scherrer argues that when regions are different, in terms of religion, economics, social norms, and ethnicity, secession should be an option if the situation warrants it (Scherrer 2003, 157). Scherrer also goes on to note, however, that economics alone should not be a reason for secession especially when a region has substantial autonomy (Scherrer 2003, 156).

Michael Ignatieff goes one step further and argues that if a region enjoys substantial autonomy already, why then do you need an independent state? (Ignatieff 1993, 10). What is clear from these analyses is that secession is not an absolute right. However, what is “right” does not actually matter. Secession has been granted carefully on a case-by-case basis throughout history. This debate is important because many politicians in Belgium and Canada believe that the secessionist movements in their respective cases should not be allowed to create an independent Flanders or Quebec because they have the democratic ability to mold and shape their current states, and they each have significant local autonomy.

In addition to the debate over the legitimacy of secession, there are some scholars that have tried to produce a predictive model of how secession occurs. Donald Horowitz (1985) outlines the most cited typology of secession. His typology includes a quadrant with boxes for advanced and “backward” regions in advanced and “backward” countries.
Although his work is focused on the developing world, he argues that “backward” regions in “backward” states are the most likely to secede because they have the least to lose (Horowitz 1985, 243). To utilize this typology, one would expect that poorer regions are most likely to secede. However, perhaps his omission of secessionism in the developed world is testament to the fact that it is so rare and that popular majorities are difficult to come by in advanced democracies. Stéphane Dion (1996) presents another typology to predict secession. Dion examines why secession is so difficult in well-established democracies using a case study of Québec. His four part typology presents a cross-tabulation of two points: confidence inspired (high/low) by secession, and fear inspired (high/low) by the union. Essentially, if there is a correct mix of confidence in the seceding region and enough fear of the union, then secession is most likely to result. Confidence is the view that the group can perform better on its own. Fear is the view that the cultural, political and/or political situation will deteriorate (Dion 1996, 271). Dion’s typology presents some important factors (fear and confidence) but largely ignores institutional impediments to secession. As a result, his study does not transfer well to Belgium where there is a very limited history of holding a referendum. And, moreover, institutional blockages exist as to whether Flanders has the ability to secede unilaterally.

2.7 Quebec’s Secessionist Movement

The next set of literature is on specific cases that focus on the various separatist regions, and the nationalist parties that represent secession in those regions. There are many studies on Quebec nationalism, so I focus on some of the most recent. In Québec, Robert Young (1995) investigates the unfulfilled scenario of Québec seceding in 1995.
Even though Quebec did not secede in 1995, Young’s hypothetical scenario tells us much about the process of seceding and what the secession of Quebec probably would have looked like. Brian Tanguay (2006) investigates the performance of the Bloc Québécois at the 2000 Canadian federal election. Given their poor performance, Tanguay argues that 2000 represented another setback on the road to sovereignty (Tanguay 2006, 96). The most interesting finding of the study on the 2000 election was the failure of the BQ to make inroads into “soft nationalists” (Tanguay 2006, 109). This study illustrates the difficulty of transitioning to civic-based platforms because it takes time to obtain more widespread support.

Lori Young and Eric Belanger (2008) examine the role of the BQ in the House of Commons and argue that the BQ has not engaged in obstructionist policies and works for Quebec issues in Canada (Young and Belanger 2008, 488). The BQ is a rarity in the world in that the party served as the official opposition of Canada from 1993 to 1997. However, since 2000, the BQ has been unable to mobilize increased support for independence (Young and Belanger 2008, 515). Despite the situation at the federal level with the BQ’s inability to attract support and their subsequent poor showing at the 2011 federal election, the PQ has a better opportunity at the provincial level, which is the most important level of government because it allows the PQ to gain power and hold a referendum. Eric Belanger (2009) examines the aftermath of the 2008 provincial election in Quebec arguing while the Liberal party (PLQ) was very savvy in calling an early election to maintain power through the economic crisis, the door is now open for the PQ to advance in the next provincial election (Belanger 2009, 98).
My dissertation adds to these works by examining several specific policy platforms of the PQ and BQ. The goal of an independent Quebec cannot be obtained without higher levels of popular support. As a result, the PQ realizes that it must reach out to voters in Quebec with policy platforms that are appealing. In the areas of language, culture, immigration, political autonomy and economics, the platforms of the PQ must be appealing to more voters in order to achieve their maximalist goal. With changing demography, members of the PQ have argued that they must work hard to win votes amongst immigrants. This is the main contribution of this dissertation that adds to the works listed above.

2.8 Flanders’ Secessionist Movement

In Belgium, Liesbet Hooghe (1991) examines the transition from a unitary state to a federal state. The Flemish nationalists are largely responsible for this change given their desire for more and greater autonomy from the center. De Winter\(^2\) (1997) examines the history of Flemish nationalist parties. Protectionism has long been a key aspect of Flemish nationalism, but internal debates within the movement also led to divisions in the movement (De Winter 1997, 34). This suggests that some party leaders had a real pragmatic desire to gain more widespread support but worried that Flemish identity would be compromised as a result. Since a referendum is not possible in Belgium, there is little incentive to for ethnic nationalists to transition to civic nationalism.

Several articles concur with this idea that Flemish nationalists have a responsibility to protect Flemish identity if there is no incentive to transition to civic-based platforms in order to obtain independence. Several articles show that those who

\(^2\) Not to be confused with Filip De Winter, the leader of Vlaams Belang.
identify exclusively with the Flemish sub-nation have negative attitudes towards foreigners (Billiet et al. 2003; Maddens et al. 2000; De Witte and Klandermans 2000). In a similar article, Billiet et al. (2006) show that cultural protection is extremely important for Flemish nationalists, which has in part led to a growing cleavage between Flanders and Wallonia that threatens the existence of the Belgian state. The issue of political identity based on language, O’Neill argues, is one that threatens the breakup of Belgium because the recent state reforms have created linguistic communalism (O’Neill 2000, 114). These articles show evidence for the retention of ethnic-based platforms in Flanders especially given the time of writing, whereby VB was quite popular.

My dissertation adds an important addendum to the literature on Flemish nationalism because the rise of N-VA happened so recently. My work examines the concerted effort of a party with platforms that try to showcase a civic form of nationalism. Moreover, my work also examines how competing nationalisms have also helped to advance the cause of Flemish independence. This updates the literature and builds on Kitschelt’s premise that ethnic nationalists will retain the extreme portion of the political spectrum if they are successful with a set of ethnic policy platforms.

2.9 The Comparative Politics of Secession

As noted in the introduction, secession is extremely rare in the developed world, let alone peaceful secession. For example, the last case of secession in the developed world—the Republic of Ireland (then the Irish Free State) leaving the United Kingdom in 1921 (and de jure independence was only complete in 1931 with the Statute of Westminster)—was a case of violent secession. The last case of peaceful secession was
Norway’s dissolution of their personal union with Sweden in 1905. And, that case was only peaceful after the Swedish parliament decided not to mobilize their military to keep Norway in the union (Young 1995, 138-9). The dissolution of Sweden-Norway was, in many respects, due to rising Norwegian discontent over Sweden’s ability dictate foreign policy (Young 1995, 131) and impediments to Norway’s lucrative shipping trade (Larsen 1950, 485; Derry 1973, 148). The convergence of these two contemporary issues in addition to the historical grievance that Norway was given to Sweden against the popular will of the people in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars (Barton 2003, 14). As a result, Norway increasingly asserted itself and caused parliamentary issues in the Swedish Riksdag to raise the issue of independence (Duerr 2009, 37). The matter of independence was put to a referendum in June 1905 and was given overwhelming (99 percent) support by the electorate. After a prolonged negotiation, Norway was granted independence (Larsen 1950, 484).

The main problem with a comparison to the Norway-Sweden case is that it occurred over a century ago. There are, however, some other more modern cases that are relevant to the discussion of Quebec and Flanders as well. These include: Czechoslovakia in 1993, the Baltic States (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia) in 1991, Former Yugoslav Republic (FYR) of Macedonia in 1991, and Montenegro in 2006. I will focus on two of these cases: the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1993 and the secession of Montenegro from their union with Serbia in 2006. Both cases are examples in which the existing states in Europe broke up through a democratic process. Neither case, at the time of their breakup, could be considered an advanced industrial country, but both outcomes were decided peacefully through democratic means.
The relatively peaceful case of Montenegro is particularly interesting given the high level of violence in the Balkans throughout the 1990s. After the respective secessions of Slovenia, Croatia, FYR Macedonia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, a rump Yugoslavia was left over. In 2003, Yugoslavia changed its name to become the Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The new agreement stipulated that Montenegro would have the opportunity to secede after a referendum vote in 2006 (Darmanovic 2007). The resulting referendum required a supermajority of 55 percent, which the Montenegrins successfully obtained with 55.5 percent of the vote (Darmanovic 2007, 152). Despite prevailing fears of violence, international monitoring and the promise of potential accession to the EU proved to uphold the peaceful referendum vote and the independence of Montenegro.

The case of Czechoslovakia has numerous parallels to Belgium (as explained in Chapter 8). After the Velvet Revolution of 1989 when Czechoslovakia implemented democratic and economic reforms, the country seemed poised to advance very quickly (Leff 1997). However, internal disputes between Czechs and Slovaks over the amount of autonomy in the federal state caused constitutional problems. The Czechs wanted a closer union, whilst the Slovaks favored a more confederal model (Leff 1997, 138-9; Innes 2001, 177). After a prolonged constitutional deadlock, the decision was ultimately made to dissolve the state and for each country to approach EU and NATO membership separately (Duerr 2009, 44).

All three examples—Norway-Sweden, Czechoslovakia, and Serbia-Montenegro—provide evidence of successful secessions. The situations were different in each case but the success of the respective nationalist movements and the failures of the
national states means that similar outcomes are at least possible in both of my case studies.

2.10 Important Works in my Argument

This next section discusses works outside the fields of nationalism and secession that proved to be useful in developing my theory, and my argument. On the second question, why has neither region become independent, I did not have a working theory going into the research. Only after I completed most of the interviews and spent time in the literature did I find a suitable argument that best explained my answer to this question. Some of the literature provides institutional reasons why regions such as Flanders and Quebec have not seceded. However, given Dion’s (1996) earlier typology, the role of fear and confidence also proved to be important explanations for failure in which the idea of secession was not supported by enough of the electorate. Finally, powerful economic and other interests in Canada and Belgium also serve to retard the respective nationalist movements. Given the confluence of these three factors, I decided to employ a work from outside the literature on nationalism and secession to give my argument some theoretical leverage.

I theorize that institutions, interests, and ideas all play an integral role in the keeping the respective unions together. However, I also note that these same factors could be overcome as there are institutional, interest-based, and ideational reasons why independence remains possible. The original work that prompted this idea is Peter Hall’s (1997) chapter examining political economy through these different lenses.\(^3\) In chapter 7,

\(^3\) I would like to thank Mark Cassell for this idea.
I provide an explanation of Hall’s main arguments regarding institutions, interests, and ideas.

Also on the second question, John Kingdon’s (2005) work serves as an explanation for how independence movements can succeed. Essentially, he asks why certain pieces of legislation are passed at certain times. His answer is that when different political and policy realms (known as streams) converge, the possibility to pass legislation occurs when a window of opportunity opens (Kingdon 2005). Policy entrepreneurs can then push through pieces of legislation even if it is controversial or could dramatically change the system (Kingdon 2005, 181). For example, 9/11 served as an excellent window of opportunity for the Global War on Terror. A referendum or government crisis serves as a policy window opening, in which a change can occur and provide independence to Quebec or Flanders. In the meantime, independence movements must work hard to counter institutional, ideational, and interest-based impediments to independence and their leaders must work hard to open a Kingdonesque policy window that will allow them the opportunity to become independent (either a referendum or a government formation crisis). Once the window of opportunity opens, the nationalists must take advantage of their opportunity, or the policy window closes for years. The examples of referendums in Quebec in 1980 and 1995, and government formation crises in Flanders in 1988-89, 2007, and 2010-11, all serve as examples of failed opportunities to go through a window of opportunity. (Obviously, the chances of becoming independent are much easier in a referendum than in a government crisis because the nationalist party does not have the institutional constraint of being blocked by the states and can work for the desired outcome.) Nationalist parties must work hard
to open windows of opportunity and this could theoretically be done through a shift in nationalist policy platforms.

I have already noted the importance of the Downsian median voter theory and Kitschelt’s amendment to it. However, in this section, I further explore these works to show how they work in the argument. When examining the desire to shift from ethnic to civic-based nationalist policy platforms, the median voter theory is ultimately useful in understanding the motivation behind the transitions. Anthony Downs (1957) who built on Duncan Black’s (1948) original model from “On the Rationale of Group-Decision making,” basically argues that in order to win an election (or in the case of Quebec, a referendum), a political party can win if they appeal to the moderate median voters. Black’s article is mainly theoretical in nature but pertains to preferences in voting. Essentially, when compared to one another, different preferences would move towards equilibrium (Black 1948, 34). Downs built on Black’s work by applying the preferences of decision makers to voters. Each voter estimates the utility gained from voting for party A or party B (Downs 1957, 138). As a result, different parties are able to lobby for the support of these voters and, if there is “room,” new parties fill the void (Downs 1957, 145). In essence, parties are rational and self-maximizing. They will support policies that are attractive to the largest number of voters.

These two articles form the basis of the Median Voter theory. Parties will compete for votes and move to moderate their platforms in order to maximize the number of votes received. In light of this dissertation, one would expect that all nationalist parties would, in some way, moderate their platforms in order to be more appetizing for the largest number of voters.
One of the problems with the median voter theory is that when moderate left-wing and moderate right-wing parties move to the center to maximize their votes, they leave political room on the extremes that can and has been exploited. Herbert Kitschelt argues that in these situations, far-right political parties can, and do, find “winning formulas” (Kitschelt 1997, vii). When coupling support for the free market and its relationship to an ethnic base, far-right parties have been successful (Kitschelt, 1997, viii). Similarly, Hans-Georg Betz (1994) notes that politics has become more volatile in Western Europe since the 1980s because of growing disenchantment with the political establishment (Betz 1994, 2). One output is that far-right parties in Western Europe have gained some salience amongst voters. This marks a significant change from other far-right parties in Western Europe that historically failed to maintain salience from the post-World War Two era to the end of the Cold War (Betz 1999, 1).

Nationalist parties have been created as part of a desire to protect a given culture from being lost to a larger polity. Michael Hechter argues that when direct rule is imposed in a heterogeneous society, the resources of local elites are decreased, which, in turn, causes them to mobilize against central authorities (Hechter 2000). Some form of indirect rule, such as a federal model (but not a consociational model or through changing the electoral system), can work to decrease secessionist nationalism (Hechter 2000, 136-149). However, there are even limits to the idea of moderation, of appealing to the median voter. Walker Connor (1993) argues that ethnonationalism has an irrational element, that people have a feeling of nationhood, of being ancestrally related (Connor 1993, 373). As Connor notes, “people do not voluntarily die for things that are rational” (Connor 1993, 386). Connor also acknowledges that the state can play a role in
obfuscating ethnonationalism. After all, the children of immigrants can be taught a history that emphasizes common values and citizenship.

The literature on the Downs Median voter theory is important to this dissertation because it helps to explain why some parties attempt to moderate their platforms. However, the Kitschelt amendment to this theory is relevant to this discussion because it explain why some parties retain their ethnic attachment. Of course, as noted by Hechter, support for some nationalist parties can be undercut by greater autonomy. The lesson of Connor, however, is that sometimes nationalist parties appeal to an irrational sense that is difficult to undercut regardless of what the government in power does to appease the people of a given region.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter lays the foundation for the chapters to come. In order to study the policy platforms of nationalist parties, there has to be an effective focus on the ethnic and/or civic nature of their goals. The works of Smith are useful for ethnic nationalists because they take ethnic identity as the basis for national attachment. On the other hand, the works of Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm are especially useful in examining the potential shift to civic nationalism given the ability of people to change their allegiance from one state to another. Chapters 4 through 6 evaluate this tension between ethnic and civic forms of nationalism.

The literature on Quebecois and Flemish nationalism is also important because it illustrates what has been tried by nationalists historically and how these political parties are attempting to reach a wider audience and win more votes in federal and regional
elections. Chapters 4 through 8 take into account the unique circumstances of each situation, and how nationalists are agitating for independence.
CHAPTER 3
Methodology

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Introduction to Methods of Data Collection

In this chapter I examine my main methods of data collection. I start with a discussion of my case selection. Ultimately, I decided on the cases of Quebec and Flanders, but there are several other prominent cases of nationalist parties that fit my criteria in the developed world. I then discuss each of my three main methods of data collection: interviews, surveys, and archival data. Each of the three methods helps to highlight how I undertook my research. Finally, I also note ways in which I observed the different nationalist parties through parades, meetings, and events.

3.1.2 Case Selection

This dissertation focuses on secessionist movements. While there are hundreds of viable secessionist movements throughout the world, my focus is on the developed world, which eliminates cases like the Karen in Burma or Casamance in Senegal, for example. My focus is also on achieving independence through democratic, non-violent means. Therefore, my focus is also on secessionist movements that have developed viable and
peaceful political parties. The universe of cases for my selection, then, is geographically limited to North America and Western Europe.

There were five main criteria that I examined as part of my case selections. I searched for cases that include: 1) contemporary, nationalist movements in peaceful, advanced, and democratic states, 2) movements with a viable nationalist political party that regularly win seats in the national and regional legislatures, 3) movements that support outright independence, not just autonomy, 4) geographic difference between my cases to control for biased results because of membership in the EU, and 5) a different number of subnational units.

First, I limited my study to cases of contemporary nationalism in the developed world. Of particular importance were democratic countries with advanced industrial economies such that the interests of a given group of nationalists have been represented by a political party, with a history in the political system, and a history of demands from the national state. I also limited my cases to peaceful movements that have only had very occasional episodes of violence. This provided me with an extensive list of cases including: Quebec, Flanders, Scotland, Wales, Catalonia, Galicia, Padania, Corsica, and Brittany.

Second, I limited my cases to nationalist movements represented by political parties that regularly win seats in the national and regional legislatures. This step eliminated several cases such as Brittany, Corsica, Galicia. Although, it is worth noting that the Galician Nationalist Bloc is beginning to become more popular.

The next choice was to eliminate nationalist political parties that tend towards more autonomy rather than outright independence. As a result of this decision, I
eliminated Wales and Padania as possible cases. Although, Plaid Cymru (Wales) and Lega Nord (northern Italy) have, at various times, supported independence, both now advocate for greater autonomy within the United Kingdom and Italy respectively.

Fourth, I wanted to control for geography. If both of my cases were members of the EU, then the outcome of this study may have been skewed because of this variable. If the EU has an institutional mechanism against granting independence, then secession and/or state dissolution may never happen. Given that my choices after a process of winnowing by the first three criteria consisted of Quebec, Flanders, Scotland, and Catalonia, only one case exists outside of Europe. Therefore, I selected Quebec as one of my cases.

Finally, I also wanted to distinguish between cases with differing numbers of subnational units. Essentially, I wanted to avoid picking cases with very similar situations. For example, France has 22 subnational units (departments), Spain has 17 (autonomous communities), Canada has 10 (provinces), the United Kingdom has four (constituent parts), and Belgium has three (regions). The former three cases are similar because they have many subnational units, whilst the latter two are similar because they have only a few subnational units.

The final choice therefore came down to Scotland, Catalonia, or Flanders. Since Quebec is just one of 10 provinces in Canada, I wanted to control for subnational units. This eliminated Catalonia because it is just one of 17 autonomous regions in Spain (and is similar to Canada). As a choice between Scotland and Flanders, I chose Flanders because it is one of three regions in Belgium (but one of the two major regions).
Scotland is one of four constituent countries of the United Kingdom. I selected the case with the least number of subnational units, which eliminated Scotland.

After carefully considering all of the above noted cases of independence movements in the developed world, I chose to isolate two case studies: Quebec and Flanders, using my five outlined criteria. In choosing two cases studies, this dissertation is able to draw comparisons and generalizations about secession and the role of nationalist party platforms (King, Keohane and Verba 1994, 10; Flick 2007, 40).

3.1.3 Methods of Data Collection

The subject of nationalism is very difficult to measure objectively, so I utilized different qualitative methods of collecting data so as to find answers to my somewhat nebulous questions (King, Keohane and Verba 1994, 4). In order to study each case in depth, three major and diverse methods of data collection were utilized: interviews, surveys, and archival research. (In the cases of VB and PQ, I also utilized the role of an observer to understand some of the nationalist platforms, and to understand how the respective parties work.) These three methods of data collection were chosen because they most effectively answered my three main questions: whether any of the three nationalist parties have transitioned to civic-based policy platforms? Second, why have some nationalist parties started to transition from ethnic- to civic-based secessionist platforms while VB in Flanders has not? And, third, why have none of the parties achieved their goal of an independent state? The interviews allowed me to ask experts and practitioners in the field as to why the PQ and N-VA began to transition to civic-based platforms whereas VB has not. The interview process also helped me to assess
why none of the parties believe they have succeeded in their maximalist goal, to achieve independence. Finally, the interviews also allowed me to directly compare the two cases in a logical and measured way through semi-structured life-world interviews, which allow the interviewee to tell their story from their point of view (Kvale 2007, 10-11). The survey data was useful because the questions asked in the surveys provided statistical information on support for independence. Moreover, these questions on independence, at least in Québec, have been asked over time, which allows for some longitudinal analysis of the second question. Finally, archival research allows for policy platforms to be investigated so as to best show where and when the transition towards civic-based platforms occurred. Archival information comes in the form of historical information on areas of policy, nationalist policy platforms, press releases, advertisements, and party memos.

By using three different methods of data collection, the research was triangulated so as to provide additional strength and credibility to the findings (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 146). In essence, the triangulation of data is important because the weaknesses in one method can be counterbalanced by the other two methods (Yin 2003). In this dissertation, interviews have the weakness of bias. Sometimes interviewees will not remember all of the facts correctly. In sum, interviewees have human limitations. Survey data provides statistical evidence of a snapshot in time, but may not reflect nuances that may affect electoral outcomes. Perhaps people will not turn out to vote. Perhaps people will vote for a nationalist party simply because they want more autonomy. Finally, archival data shows party platforms and information, but it can be
changed, glossed over, or ignored. Despite these weaknesses, an overall assessment using all three methods helps to bridge the shortcomings of each method.

Triangulation is generally considered a process that significantly helps to clarify meaning, and to verify the repeatability of an observation or interpretation (Stake 2008, 133). Essentially, by taking more than one view of a problem, a more nuanced view can be ascertained (Gibbs 2007, 94).

3.2 Types of Data

3.2.1 Interviews

For this study, my main focus is on the platforms of nationalist parties in Quebec and Flanders. The most important people to talk with therefore are political elites who help to set policy platforms, discuss the issues with party members, and run for political office. Obtaining the perspectives of elite politicians and their staffers provides depth to my study (Flick 2007, 2). For this reason, I chose to conduct numerous interviews with elite political leaders as a main source of empirical data, which included elected officials in Flanders and Quebec, and some of their staff members (for a full list of interviewees, please see Appendix B). Interviews are an important source of information and much can be gleaned from talking to some of the foremost experts and practitioners on a given subject (Gorden 1992; Fontana and Frey 2008). Essentially, I chose to conduct interviews because they provide rich, in-depth experiential accounts about the interviewees (Hancock 2005, 68; Fontana and Frey 2008, 120; Angrosino 2007, 43), most of whom were prominent members of their respective nationalist parties who shared their thoughts on nationalist policy platforms and their reasons for not yet seceding.
I conducted formal interviews with, among others, high level members of all three parties (VB, N-VA and PQ/BQ) including current party presidents, current and former members of the House of Commons (Canada), National Assembly (Quebec), European Parliament, Chamber of Representatives (Belgium), Flemish Parliament (Flanders) and the provincial parliaments of Antwerp and Leuven (Flanders). In total, I conducted 27 subject interviews with elite political leaders in Quebec and Flanders (10 from PQ/BQ, 11 from VB, 5 from N-VA, and 1 from the Christian Democrats (CD&V)). Given the nature of elite interviews, I made sure to research the biographical background of each interviewee and conducted significant research on the social setting (Kvale 2007, 70).

All but one of the 27 interviews was conducted face-to-face. This one interview was conducted over the phone from Montreal to Quebec City when the interviewee had to uphold a commitment at her home in Quebec City, at the last minute. Additionally, I conducted numerous informant style interviews with scholars of Quebecois and Flemish politics, as well as local journalists.

There were two types of interviews that were conducted for this dissertation, both of which followed a semi-structured format, which allowed me some flexibility to adjust some questions (after the protocol questions were asked) for the nuances and idiosyncrasies of talking with different people with different points of view. All interviews were conducted in the classic way; one face-to-face meeting with one interviewee, and a set of questions, which led to a more or less open dialogue (Flick 2007, 78). Some of the interviews were informant style interviews with prominent scholars and journalists, which provided me with more nuanced (and typically neutral) information on my cases. More formal, subject interviews were also conducted with
former and current politicians as well as party officials from the various separatist political parties. As part of a semi-structured interview process, in which a repeatable set of protocol questions was asked to the interviewees; I have listed the protocol questions later in this chapter to show that the procedures are public and repeatable (King, Keohane and Verba 1994, 8; Fontana and Frey 2008, 124). To start each interview, I built a rapport with the interviewee either through some pre-interview discussion and/or through general questions about their background to start the interview (Fontana and Frey 2008, 132). Although it is impossible to have a fully neutral role regarding my questions, responses and interactions with the interviewees, I simply tried to let them speak about their views (Fontana and Frey 2008, 124).

The sampling scheme I used to schedule my interviews was mainly targeted sampling because these political elites and party officials are directly involved with setting and/or promoting policy platforms. I contacted the vast majority of my interviewees through email or through a contact in Quebec and Flanders. Some people were reluctant to talk to me, but numerous people came forward and were willing to be part of the research. Once I began to make contacts in both regions, I then used a snowball sampling scheme as they directed me to more people once we had finished our interview (Miles and Huberman 1994, 28 cited in Flick 2007, 28). In part, snowball sampling helped to ensure that I would also interview people with relevant experience and that their answers would add credibility to my findings (Flick 2007, 80). These interviews were supplemented by numerous informant interviews with scholars and journalists. Additionally, I spent time in different universities and presented my work (or
lectured on a subject related to my work) in Flanders, which also helped me to gain greater access to some well-known academics.

Once completed, the interviews were analyzed using discourse analysis. When answering my first questions, whether a party has transitioned from ethnic to civic policy platforms, I analyzed the data in two steps. I took both inductive and deductive approaches to coding (Gibbs 2008, 4-5). For my first question, I utilized a deductive approach to coding by separating the data into five categories based on policy areas: language, culture, immigration, political autonomy, and economics. For the rest of the study, however, I did not come into the study with preexisting conceptions. I therefore had to utilize an inductive approach to analyzing the data because my conclusions were uncertain (King, Keohane, and Verba 1994, 8). Utilizing a method outlined by Pamela Maykut and Richard Morehouse, I divided the data onto index cards and grouped them where patterns emerged (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 126-131). Second, the interviews were more formally coded using the three stage method, which starts with open coding and moves to axial coding and then to in vivo coding; essentially it is a process whereby the coding becomes more and more specific and rigorous (Strauss 1987, ch.3; Gibbs 2008, 50). The coding accomplished two tasks: a) the coding delineated between the terms that define ethnic nationalism and terms that define civic nationalism, and b) the coding highlights why the PQ and N-VA have begun to make the transition from ethnic-to civic-based platforms examining the specific policy areas.

Anselm Strauss argues that coding must satisfy five aspects, that coding, 1) follows and leads to generative questions, 2) fractures the data, 3) is pivotal to discovering new categories, 4) moves towards the integration of the entire analysis, and
5) yields the desired conceptual density (Strauss 1987, 55). During the process of coding, I tried to satisfy these five demands.

Coding, in this way, revealed which policy platforms are most important and how they have affected the separatist movements. This answer helped to uncover who exactly is most likely to now support independence and whether the party will receive enough support to achieve its maximalist goal, independence. Part of the process of coding also involved finding someone else to code the interviews to make sure that my claims were repeatable. A colleague of mine, to whom I am very grateful, helped with this process. I gave her two of my interviews, she read over them, and then affirmed my methods of categorization. She then coded both interviews and we compared the results. I tabulated the results through a comparison of our coded statements.

This process is known as intercoder reliability and helps to affirm the validity of the coding procedures. Intercoder reliability improves the credibility of the study and provides an important check against bias (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 146-7). Overall, our inter-reliability rating was 83 percent. After comparing the results of our coding, we discussed the differences, and came to some joint conclusions on coding categorizations, and the length of the coded statements. The length of our coded statements was the main point of differentiation in the process. Otherwise, our coded statements were very similar.

In coding I spent time to take into account the different meanings of terms (Stake 2008, 128). In Québec, for example, the term “nation” has a different meaning to Standard English meanings of the word. This distinction between French and English (in Quebec) and French and Dutch (in Flanders) meanings are an important part of the data.
and was explored in detail so as to pull out the nuances of English versus French and French versus Dutch language meanings. Some phrases, however, were more ambiguous and required coding across several of the themes. Some of the phrases encompassed two or more of the categories. For example, some statements intertwined institutional and interest-based reasons for not seceding. Other statements discussed immigration and culture as reasons why people do not vote for a party.

For my second question, why neither Quebec nor Flanders is independent, I did not have an expected answer entering the research. I therefore chose a more inductive way of coding. With the aid of my memos and my field notes, themes and categories emerged (as noted in Chapter 2): institutions, interests, and ideas. All of these factors provide strong reasons as to why the respective independence movements have failed. However, it also became clear that each one of the factors could also contribute to the success of one of these movements if the institutional, interest-based, or ideational situation changed especially in line with John Kingdon’s (2005) model of why certain ideas become reality. Therefore, I was able to code why each movement has thus far failed into two categories: help independence, and hinder independence.

I continued to conduct as many interviews as possible during the field research; however, I knew that I was reaching a saturation point after approximately five interviews with each party. In the parliamentary system, there are a few important nuances that differentiate it from the presidential system. First, party discipline is much more important in the parliamentary system, which essentially meant that most interviewees began to follow the traditional party line to a point, and I got to the point where I had interviewed as many people as needed for my study (Kvale 2007, 43-44).
After interviewing five people, I continued to interview more people, but I did begin to get a lot of consistent answers. In total, I interviewed eleven political elites from VB, ten from the PQ and BQ, and five from N-VA.

After conducting the interviews, I then proceeded with the task of accurately transcribing the interviews (Gibbs 2008, 10). One of the biggest challenges of transcribing the interviews was to make sure that everything was accurate. For the vast majority of the interviewees, English is either their second, third, or fourth language, so there was an added challenge of listening carefully and recalling what was said in each interview. For this part of the transcribing process, I relied on my field notes and memos that were made directly after the interviews, usually on the train in Brussels or a hotel room in Laval or Montreal. Additionally, some interviewees brought interpreters or other aides to help them with phrasing or to obtain their own record of what was said. This helped with the transcription process as the interviewees were helped with some aspects of wording or phrasing.

Moreover, I also encountered some difficulties with noise on my recording devices. Some of the interviews were conducted in coffee shops or other public settings, which caused some added difficulties with background noise on my recording devices. Only one interview was conducted using a conference call, but there were no problems with transcribing this interview in particular. Overall, I did not have too many problems and I was able to transcribe the interviews fully and completely with attention paid to the tone and intent of the interview. (My field notes aided me in this capacity.)

After completing and transcribing the interviews, I then utilized discourse analysis as a means of obtaining my results (for an in-depth discussion of discourse
analysis, see Gee 2005). Discourse analysis is a method used to find meaning from the text, in this case, the answers to my interview questions. In Quebec and Flanders, many words and/or phrases took on specific meanings to supporters of independence. These meanings were situational and different from those described by opponents of independence (Gee 2005, 94). By utilizing discourse analysis, I was able to better understand the culture in the respective nationalist movements. Throughout my chapters on Flanders and Quebec, I explain the different meanings of terms to supporters and opponents of independence. Often words and phrases are contested, which is extremely important to note when studying independence movements. After all, “all meaning is local” (Gee 2005, 76).

Obviously, when asking the same questions to people of different political viewpoints, the given answers diverged in some important ways. In order to draw comparisons, specific words/phrases/sentences from the interviews were thematically coded so as to show what themes were most important. It was important to find meaning in the phrasing and the words used (Stake 2008, 128). The coded subject interviews were the main source of data from this method of research.

As evidenced by the title of my dissertation, “Talking with Nationalists and Patriots,” this dissertation automatically places importance on the interviews. Part of this work is to tell the story of nationalists and patriots who argue for independence from their existing states. Storytelling, Robert Stake argues, can be an important part of a case study (Stake 2008, 136-140). Obviously, I had to select what was said, but I began each discussion of a new policy area with a quote or a story that highlighted the importance of
the particular policy area to the nationalist movement from my research in Quebec and Flanders.

All of the interviews were conducted in a protocol format with questions stemming directly from the two central questions of this dissertation. By utilizing a semi-structured format, I was able to make sure that my interviews could be coded thematically because I stuck to a basic protocol in each interview (Kvale 2007, 57). I made sure to avoid leading questions so that the interviewee would not automatically try to answer each question with a response of civic nationalism (Kvale 2007). Please see below for a list of my protocol questions, which I paraphrased in each interview. (For a full list of interview questions, please see Appendix A.)

1. Generic Background Information:
How did you become interested in politics? And, how did you become interested in independence?

2. Background Information:
Please tell me about your experiences running for office/entering the NATIONALIST PARTY organization.

3. Policies of Nationalist Parties:
How do you approach the average voter on the street with the platforms of NATIONALIST PARTY? How do you convince them to vote for your party?

4. Obtaining independence:
In your opinion, why has NATIONALIST PARTY not succeeded in obtaining independence yet?

5. More votes/Failure to secede:
In order to become independent, your party needs to win more seats in X chamber. How do you win more votes from Y other parties?

Throughout the process, I spent a lot of time journaling different experiences in Quebec and Flanders so as to provide a record of my ethnographic experience. This involved writing down my thoughts and also memos to myself asking questions about my research and thinking about themes (Gibbs 2008, 26-32). This allowed me to pick up on recurring themes in my research (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 132). Moreover, following each interview, I asked a lot of questions and tried to link different ideas. In this way, patterns began to emerge as the research continued (Maykut and Morehouse 1994, 133) and I realized when I hit a saturation point with my data collection.

### 3.2.2 Surveys

Survey data was collected largely over the internet and from media sources. But in some cases, I was conducting an informant interview with an academic when they provided me with some of their own (or a colleague’s) work. Sometimes, during the course of my subject interviews, I also asked some political leaders to provide evidence of the polls they were referencing and they gave me some polling information.

All of these surveys provided both historical and recent polling information, which helped to answer both major questions. At relevant times during this dissertation, I inserted polling data to utilize statistical data to answer the given question in the most rigorous way. Unfortunately, some of the procedures for polling questions were changed in 2005, which meant that any attempt to systematically use the data over time was potentially problematic. Moreover, survey questions on the subject of independence are
better at answering the second question, why none of the parties have succeeded in obtaining independence, rather than the first question on why approaches to nationalism diverge. In Quebec especially, there are numerous polls that have asked a question on support for independence. Therefore, I chose to utilize surveys in an ad hoc way where answers were needed.

Polling is an effective way to capture statistically the level of support for independence. Polling numbers supplement and highlight important nuances to election results. For instance, in Flanders especially, support for outright independence is quite low even though N-VA and VB get approximately 40 percent of the popular vote between them. Likewise, in Quebec, depending on how the questions are asked, support for independence often falls quite dramatically.

Not all polls, however, capture enough information so it was important to find diverse sources for this data. In some regions there are a multitude of polls for any given question. Other regions like Belgium, however, have no real history of accurate and reliable polling (Geer 2004, 514). I accessed as many of the polls as possible through electronic sources in order to show who supports independence. The use of polling data better highlights the second question as to why none of the parties have seceded but also helped to answer the question as to why the PQ/BQ in Québec and N-VA in Flanders have begun to transition to civic-based platforms since different segments of the population are targeted in the demographic information.

The major sources for the survey data are: Leger Marketing, Ipsos-Reid, CROP, EKOS, Harris-Decima, Nanos Research and Public Opinions, which have all asked important secession related questions in Canada, and ISPO/PIOP and La Libre Belge
have done so in Belgium. During the course of the research, I identify and acknowledge any potential biases from these sources of survey data. How the questions are asked can influence the answers (Kvale and Brinkmann 2008, 172).

3.2.3 Archival Research

In both regions, I conducted local archival research to supplement the other methods of data collection. Essentially I found five different types of historical documents including: 1) historical information on each area of policy, 2) the historical platforms of the respective parties from most (if not all) past elections, 3) press releases regarding platforms and/or platform changes, 4) advertisements used by the respective parties, and 5) internal party memoranda describing the reasons for the changes to various platforms.

The first three types of historical documents, historical information on policy areas, policy platforms, and press releases, were for the most part accessible over the internet and in archives in Québec and Flanders. The respective websites of all parties have their basic platforms listed and online archives usually show their platforms during previous elections.

As part of my research, I visited a number of universities in Canada such as McGill University, University of Ottawa, and York University, which have regional newspaper archives that helped to find press releases. In Belgium, the libraries at the Catholic University of Leuven (Katholiek Universiteit Leuven) and the Free University of Brussels (Vrij Universiteit Brussel) were both useful in obtaining archival information.
The latter two types of historical documents, advertisements and internal party memoranda, were more difficult to access. I was able to find some advertisements over the internet, but they tend to be only the most recent. In Flanders, VB provided me with a book, spanning from 1977-1997, showing all of their party advertisements (Vlaams Blok: 20 Jaar Rebel). From the PQ and N-VA, I was able to gather a significant number of advertisements. The most important aspect of my research on advertisements was to see when—especially in the cases of the BQ/PQ and N-VA—these parties started using people of color. This is perhaps the most obvious outward sign of transition from ethnic-to-civic-based platforms. Finally, internal party memoranda’s were extremely helpful but were much more difficult to find. VB was always very open with their platforms and party advertisements. I was also fortunate to exchange emails with the leader of VB, Filip De Winter, who answered some of my questions regarding their immigration policy and why and when it changed and why certain platforms were enacted. On the whole, gaining access to internal party memoranda was quite difficult.

Finally, some basic historical information about each case was accessed through archives as a supplement to my research. At times during the interview process, some interviewees would cite an important historical event. Where these events came up in the interviews and the rest of the research, archival research was helpful to glean further answers, and to find more in-depth explanations as to the reasons.

3.3 Observation

While observation is not an official method of collection that I pursued in my research, I found out a lot of information through attending different political party events
and functions. Over time, I got to know a number of high profile members of all parties and, in this way, gained valuable information. Moreover, this method of observation supplements my research well because according to Michael Angrosino, ethnography as an area of study is a combination of interviews, observations, and archival research (Angrosino 2007, 53).

Throughout the research process, VB and PQ were very gracious to allow me to study their parties and to attend different rallies and events. In this way, I was able to gain greater insights into the parties, their members, and how they function. Although, this study was not an intensive ethnographic study, I was able to glean more information about the party through some observation of the attendees and members of the respective parties in different party functions and gatherings.

In total, I spent six weeks in Belgium, living in the city of Leuven and also spending significant time in Brussels where I conducted a lot of interviews and research. (I also stayed in a hotel next to the European district of Brussels for about a week.) Additionally, I traveled to the majority of major cities in Flanders including Antwerp, Ghent, and Bruges as well as numerous communes around Brussels. I spent a lot of time walking the streets of all of these cities observing the people, immersing myself in the culture, and studying the relationship between groups of different ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, in my field notes, I asked a lot of questions about ethnicity, immigration, and policy platforms. In everyday situations like at the train station or grocery store, I was able to observe people and think about the situational context, about how VB targets immigrants for example in their policy platforms. These situations provoked a lot of questions in my field notes.
Belgium is, in many ways, in a similar situation as the United Kingdom (UK). I was born in the UK and grew up about forty-five minutes outside of London (to the south-east). The UK and Belgium, historically, were quite homogenous, at least compared to their respective current situations in the 21st Century. Both societies are, in significant ways, unsure of how to deal with a changing ethnic and religious population. Additionally, both societies were not built on immigration the way that Canada and the United States were. In significant ways, North America has been built on the premise of strength through diversity. As a result, I was able to draw on my upbringing in the UK to ask pertinent questions about Belgium.

My study in Quebec was a little different. I lived in Canada for over a decade (from 1995 to 2006) and completed my bachelors and masters degrees in southwestern Ontario. I have also been to Quebec on many occasions. For my research, I spent three weeks in Quebec, mainly in Montreal, but also in Gatineau, Laval, and Sherbrooke. (I spent a number of days in Ottawa as well, just across the Ontario/Quebec border.) Again, I was able to ask questions about the changing nature of Quebec society and diversity in Canada.

In both regions, my role as an observer allowed me to meet and engage in many informal conversations with high ranking officials in all parties. And while I was not able to interview everyone I had originally planned to given time constraints (and the 2010 federal election in Belgium), this role allowed me to gain insights that I otherwise would not have had. It was during these times that I got to spend a few minutes talking to some of the most prominent members of VB, N-VA, and the PQ/BQ. Additionally, at
party functions, I was also able to talk with everyday members of the party to see what they thought and to see how closely they followed the direction of the leadership.

In Flanders, I participated in two events with VB: a party Congress (rally/presentation/forum) in Antwerp, which was followed by an information session, and a celebration of May 1st day for the worker in Vilvoorde, which was followed by an informal barbecue. (The May 1st event coincides with the international day for the worker, which is celebrated across the world.) Before I conducted any in depth form of observation, I made sure to build a strong rapport with well-liked members of the VB community (Angrosino 2007, 32). This allowed me to gain trust and access amongst people in the party. (I also managed to avoid people who were recently ostracized from the party, which could have impeded my access to the rest of the party members.)

In Quebec, I participated in the Fete Nationale parade in downtown Montreal marching alongside the leadership of the PQ and BQ. I was able to talk with the leaders—Pauline Marois and Gilles Duceppe—of both parties and ask a few informal questions (as well as former Premier Bernard Landry). Additionally, I spent a lot of time in party offices and headquarters in Quebec and Flanders, and I was able to meet the employees of these parties, people who worked behind the scenes. Finally, some interviews were conducted in the homes of some political leaders, which allowed me to access a small window of their lives, to meet their families, and to see first-hand, some of important points that they were making. I always accepted offers of hospitality as a way of conducting further ethnographic research whilst being sure to reciprocate where possible and share information about myself (Angrosino 2007, 45).
My role as an observer allowed me to ask more in-depth questions throughout the process and to glean answers to some questions through informal conversations with members of parliament, local leaders, party employees, and rank and file members. In this way, I was able to obtain a broad understanding of how political messages were received and disseminated from the top of the party to the bottom.

Additionally, in the case of VB, I was able to see whether the existing labels including: far-right, xenophobic, ethnic nationalist, and racist, were legitimate or not. My first-hand observations gave me a much better way to answer, at least in part, this important question. Although I cannot speak Dutch fluently, my role in observation was to walk around and watch what other participants were doing in this type of setting. In this setting, I was able to observe people without reservations. I heard speeches given to the rank and file members of the party, and I was able to observe reactions to different points.

3.4 Conclusion

With diverse methods of data collection, I was best able to answer my two key questions: whether, and then, why some parties have begun to transition from ethnic-to-civic based nationalist party platforms? And, why neither movement in Flanders or Quebec has of yet led to independence? The triangulation of data is important and is supplemented by some observation in the field.

Given my research methods, the results of my study are rigorous because I spent significant time in both regions, immersed myself in the cultures, and talked with some of the most influential people in both independence movements. Even though not all
interviews were conducted in a formal setting and that the number of interviews was limited, I spent a great deal of time talking to some of the foremost nationalists and patriots, as well as rank-and-file members of the respective parties who do a lot of the day-to-day work. I acknowledge the time limitations, and the limitation that I was not able to interview everyone that I wanted. Nonetheless, my study integrates different methods of data collection and allows for a rigorous comparison of secessionist political parties in Flanders and Quebec to which I now turn my attention. I start this part of the dissertation with an investigation of the PQ/BQ in Quebec.
CHAPTER 4
Parti/Bloc Quebecois in Quebec

On June 24, 2010, I met Daniel Turp, a former Member of Parliament for the Bloc Quebecois (BQ) and former Minister in the National Assembly for the Parti Quebecois (PQ). Our meeting point was directly in front of the Hôtel de Ville (City Hall) in the old part of Montreal, looking up at the balcony where General Charles De Gaulle gave his famous—Vive le Quebec libre (long live a free Quebec)—speech in 1967. In many ways, De Gaulle’s declaration cemented the movement for Quebec independence and increased the energy, life, and vigor of the people within the movement. For supporters of an independent Quebec, De Gaulle’s speech is still considered one of the most important events of the sovereignty movement.

The terminology used to describe the movement for Quebec’s independence is of interest in this case study because it differs from the terminology used in English Canada. For supporters of Quebec’s independence, the term “sovereignty” is used as a way of talking about realizing the goal of creating an independent Quebec. Sovereignty is not anti-Canada, according to sovereigntists, it is pro-Quebec, a realization of independence for a region with a distinct identity, history, and culture, that thinks and acts differently from the rest of Canada. For opponents of Quebec’s independence, the movement is described as “separatist.” The people in the movement are anti-Canada, opposed to
federalism, opposed to Canadian institutions, and even opposed to the Canadian model of multiculturalism.

The day I met with Daniel Turp, June 24, is an important day on the calendar of Quebec. This provincial statutory holiday is now called Fête Nationale, but used to be called St. Jean Baptiste. (Although, it is worth noting that for many advertised events Fête Nationale is still called St. Jean Baptiste day.) The contested meaning of this holiday is useful to the discussion of ethnic and civic nationalism in Quebec. St. Jean Baptiste is a holiday for all Catholic French-Canadians across Canada (and is even celebrated by some people in the United States); Fête Nationale, on the other hand, is a paid statutory holiday for all people living in Quebec, inclusive of non-Catholics, Anglophones, and immigrants in the province. Many people celebrate the holiday by visiting family, attending parades, and lighting fireworks. Sovereigntists argue that it is a way of showcasing civic nationalism because the holiday is designed for all people in Quebec, not just French-Canadian Catholics.

After lunch and an interview, I walked with Daniel Turp through the streets of Montreal to the start of the Fête Nationale parade along Rue Sherbrooke. When we arrived at the parade, the streets were awash with multitudes of blue and white Quebec flags. Some people in the crowd even waved the flag of Les Patriotes, a group of Quebec nationalists who rebelled against British rule in 1837 and 1838 (discussed later). For supporters of Quebec independence, the flag of Les Patriotes is symbolic of their struggle for independence in a time of subjugation and oppression; for supporters of a united Canada, this flag is symbolic of terrorism, treason, and disobedience.
Prior to the start of the parade, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with many prominent members of the sovereignty movement including former Quebec Premier, Bernard Landry, (then) current BQ leader Gilles Duceppe, and current PQ leader, Pauline Marois. All of them seemed very optimistic that Quebec would soon become an independent country and that Quebec’s failure to become independent was only subject to money, and the opportunity to hold another referendum.

Standing alongside Gilles Duceppe, Pauline Marois, and Bernard Landry, was another important person in the sovereignty movement. Her name is Vivian Barbot and she is the current interim President of the BQ (and former MP for the BQ from the riding of Papineau). Barbot was born in Haiti and is an immigrant to Quebec, yet she has a prominent position in the province and is an integral part of the sovereignty movement. Moreover, Barbot is every bit as optimistic about independence as any of the other leaders in the sovereignty movement. Her presence alongside the leaders of the sovereignty movement provides at least some evidence of a greater emphasis on outreach to immigrants, and greater attempts towards inclusivity since the end of the 1995 referendum.

Barbot is not alone. The PQ, and especially the BQ, have a number of high profile persons from immigrant and minority groups, people who are some of their most prominent Members of Parliament (MP’s) and Members of the National Assembly (MNA’s). Nonetheless, even with the inclusion of Barbot and several others, the sovereignty movement has faced some embarrassing moments regarding comments made about ethnicity and the party’s overall relations with certain minority groups.
4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 An Introduction to the Parti Quebecois and the Bloc Quebecois

This chapter examines the experience of the PQ and BQ in their attempt to transition from ethnic to civic nationalism. I start this chapter with some further discussion of the PQ and its relationship with minority groups and immigrants. This discussion is useful because it sets the tone for a more in-depth discussion of this attempted transition towards more civic-based nationalist policy platforms. The rest of this chapter then examines the history of the PQ and BQ, why these parties have attempted to transition to civic-based policy platforms, their stances on the five policy areas—language, culture, immigration, political autonomy, and economics—and then concludes with a synopsis of how the sovereignty movement is doing in the process of transitioning to more civic-based nationalist policy platforms.

At the outset of this dissertation, I quoted Jacques Parizeau when he blamed the defeat of the 1995 referendum on money and ethnic votes (reported as money and the ethnic vote in the rest of Canada). However, this is not the only time that a prominent member of the sovereignty movement has made a controversial statement regarding ethnicity. Former PQ leader, Andre Boisclair made a comment about “les yeux brides” (essentially, a pejorative statement about “slanting eyes”), which was largely seen as a condescending statement about people from East Asia. Similarly, former PQ Premier, Lucien Bouchard, once made a very controversial statement regarding birth rates, “we’re one of the white races that has the fewest children.” There have also been a number of occasions in which lesser known political figures from the sovereignty movement have said something that is less than inclusive. Moreover, some people in the sovereignty
movement still simply hold a position of exclusivity, meaning that Quebec independence
is for people whose ancestry dates back to France. Periodically, it seems, racist
remarks—or at least what can be construed as racial remarks—come from people in
leadership positions and at different levels in the movement. Quebecois nationalism
does, however, come from a homogenous tradition whereby the population was
historically French speaking, ethnically homogenous, and Catholic.

Despite this tradition of more ethnic-based nationalism, the vast majority of
people in Quebec, and people within the sovereignist movement, now work extremely
hard to convince voters, especially immigrant voters, that they have a place in an
independent Quebec. Over the course of many interviews, the vast majority of political
leaders described a Quebec nationalism that is inclusive and welcoming. Many leaders
did admit that there were problems in the past and that there are still people in the
independence movement who support ethnic nationalism. As a whole, however, the
leadership is now leaning towards civic nationalism and they have asked rank and file
members of the party to follow their lead.

In some respects there is evidence of a small shift towards civic nationalism.
Some policy platforms have changed and people of different backgrounds are given
prominent places in advertisements. However, more work needs to be done if the term
civic nationalist is to be applied to the PQ. There is far too much animosity towards the
Anglophone population (even if there is some historical justification) and more
candidates from a range of backgrounds need to be brought into the party. Pointing to
three or four candidates is not enough to be described as civic nationalists.
4.1.2 An Introduction to Quebec in Canada

The politics of Quebec independence has long been of interest to me. My family moved to Canada on the eve of one of its most important moments, the 1995 referendum, which served as a plebiscite deciding the constitutional future of Quebec. Most memorable to me was sitting in French class in an Ontarian high school writing letters, randomly, to people in Quebec urging them to vote “no” and to vote to stay within a united Canada. Who knows what happened to these letters, but the no vote won out by less than one percent. It was in this classroom setting that I began to learn more about Canada and the problems it had with the issue of national unity especially regarding the province of Quebec.

Canada, from the time of Confederation, has had a democratic system mirrored after the parliamentary system in the United Kingdom. Canada has a bicameral legislature with a lower house, House of Commons, and an upper house, Senate. Only the House of Commons is elected using the “first past the post” (also known as plurality) system. The House of Commons currently has 308 electoral districts known as “ridings,” which are based on population. Larger provinces like Ontario and Quebec, therefore, have the largest number of seats in the House of Commons. The Senate, on the other hand, is divided loosely by the four major regions of Canada: Ontario, Quebec, the Maritimes (and also Newfoundland), and the West. (Senators are appointed to the upper house by the Prime Minister upon retirement of other Senators.)

Quebec, one of Canada’s ten provinces, is a unique region in North America. French is the predominant language of the province, despite the fact that Quebec has been
cut off from France for over 250 years. Quebec has a rich history that is caught between two worlds; one world connected to its French ancestry, and one world that is also connected to Anglophone North America in terms of economics and pop culture. This has produced a nuanced and fascinating culture in Quebec. On the one hand, Quebec is closely tied and affiliated with France, and the French media. Quebec is also tied to francophone culture globally, participating in francophone forums such as La Francophonie. On the other hand, however, Quebec is a part of North America including NAFTA and has strong ties with English Canada, the United States and with Anglophone culture more generally. A significant number of Quebecers, for example, drive pickup trucks and watch American football, something I have never seen in France.

Quebec has a population of just over 8 million people. The province has become, sovereignists argue, a region that would resemble some of the most progressive countries in Scandinavia and Western Europe. Sovereignists argue that an independent Quebec would have an exceptionally high standard of living once it was allowed to dictate its own policies. Opponents of secession argue that Quebec would be significantly poorer and isolated from the rest of North America.

Quebec sovereignists have publicly asserted a platform for independence for decades, and privately since the end of the Seven Years War. They argue that Canada has not given, and will not give, Quebec enough political autonomy. Therefore, there is still an uneasy relationship in Quebec, which continues to foster some political animosity.

This chapter examines how the sovereignty movement has tried to deal with recent demographic changes to the province, especially given the high number of immigrants coming into the province. As a result, Quebec is no longer a largely
homogenous Catholic population that traces its ancestry back to France. Modern day
Quebecers are people from all over the world, and from a variety of different religious,
cultural, and ethnic backgrounds. My underlying assertion in this dissertation is that the
PQ’s original policy of more ethnic-based nationalism changed, at least among party
elites, to assert a more civic-based nationalism in the late 1990s (although, I do not fully
classify them as civic nationalists). Since the late 1990s, the sovereignty movement has
made a much greater effort to reach immigrant and minority groups as the ethnic makeup
of Quebec continued to change. Even now, some policy platforms retain ethnic-based
elements, but these platforms are designed to protect the basic core of Quebec
independence; without them, there is really no cogent argument for independence. One
way that sovereigntists have attempted to do this is that they have broadened Quebec’s
ethnie to include, based on language, an “imagined community” made up of a variety of
different people who communicate in French. An historic overreliance on Smith’s ethnie
has transitioned to Anderson, Gellner, and Hobsbawm’s reliance on language as a major
part of creating membership in their society.

4.2 History: Je me souviens (I remember)

Before turning to an in-depth policy discussion of the PQ and BQ, a brief survey
of Quebec history is useful in order to uncover some of the historic grievances and to
assess why the modern day sovereignty movement is supported by nearly half of the
electorate in the province. This history helps to explain the narrative of transition from
ethnic to more civic-based nationalist policies and to show how Canada changed from bi-
national country to a heterogeneous, multicultural one.
The history of Canada and the history of Quebec divide into three categories: French colonial rule, British colonial rule pre-Confederation, and post-Confederation.

Quebec has a colonial history, in which the French settled territory amongst First Nations tribes, mainly Algonquin, Iroquoian, and Inuit. In Quebec, two notable people helped to set up colonial posts, Jacques Cartier in 1534 and later Samuel de Champlain in 1603. Cartier set-up the first colony, originally called New France, along the St. Lawrence River near Quebec City. From humble beginnings, New France became a major colony extending from Newfoundland, through modern day Quebec, Michigan and Ohio, and down to Louisiana. New France was governed by French colonial institutions beginning in 1671 (Catt and Murphy 2002, 63) and was split into five different colonies, one of which was called Canada (modern-day Quebec).

In 1759, however, during the Seven Years War, Great Britain won a famous battle against France in the Battle of the Plains of Abraham, and this marked the end of French colonial rule. This battle remains a significant part of Quebec’s historical memory (Ross 2007, 134). The British victory was institutionalized upon formal ratification in 1763 when New France was formally transferred to Great Britain after the Treaty of Paris, and 65,000 French colonists became part of the British colony (Jacobs 1980, 7). Under British rule, New France was then renamed the Province of Quebec and the territory was reorganized. All of the territory captured was called, The Province of Quebec, when the British Royal Proclamation was issued. The outcome of this change was catastrophic for French-Canadians. French speakers in Canada were stripped of any important role in the economy (Coleman 1984, 25).

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4 The term “First Nations” is the preferred parlance used to describe natives or Indians in Canada.
5 The treaty of Paris concluded the larger Seven Years War of which the Battle of the Plains of Abraham was just one battle.
There were a number of noteworthy constitutional changes that occurred prior to the Confederation of Canada in 1867. The Quebec Act of 1774 was the next important change. This legislation ensured that the people of the region could retain their Catholic faith and the French civil code. Obviously there was some assimilation given that the power resided with English speaking people from a British ancestral heritage. The Constitutional Act of 1791 further changed the political landscape of Quebec. The Constitutional Act divided the larger British colony into provinces—Upper Canada (Ontario) and Lower Canada (Quebec)—which were given some autonomy. Both provinces had a governor and a legislative assembly (Taras 2002, 119). This created a consolidated territorial boundary for the province of Quebec with a francophone majority population (Ryerson 1984, 62).

Over time, the people of Quebec grew increasingly opposed to what they saw as British colonialism, such that some groups started to revolt. A group of French nationalists in particular (called Les Patriotes) staged a revolt in Montreal in 1837 to protest their subjugation and lack of rights as Francophones in a British colony. Les Patriotes were also opposed to immigration into Quebec so that they could at least retain their ethnic majority in Quebec (Behiels 1985, 3). Despite their attempt to gain greater freedoms, Les Patriotes were roundly defeated by the British and increased oppression ensued along with decreased Francophone influence in politics (Taras 2002, 119). As a result of the uprising involving Les Patriotes, Lord Durham was dispatched from the United Kingdom to Canada to investigate the revolts. In order to carry out Lord Durham’s recommendations and to assimilate French Canadians, an Act of Union in 1840 merged the two colonies of Upper and Lower Canada into the United Province of
Canada. The subsequent parliament in Upper and Lower Canada was institutionalized in English (Weaver 1992, 19). This caused some problems with the Francophone population. Louis Hippolyte Lafontaine, for example, was sternly rebuked in 1842 when he tried to speak French in the Assembly (Richler 1992, 9). Following Lafontaine’s rebuttal, however, French was tolerated in the Assembly, although it was not fully sanctioned until 1848 (Richler 1992, 10).

Confederation in 1867 was the next major event in the history of Quebec. As part of the United Province of Canada, Upper and Lower Canada entered the new Canadian Confederation along with two Maritime Provinces, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (at later points in history, six other provinces joined Confederation along with what became three territories). At this time, Canada was still a dominion of the United Kingdom (this ended with the Statute of Westminster of 1931, which essentially gave all dominions of the British Empire full de jure independence in international legal proceedings). Upon entering Confederation, Lower Canada was renamed Quebec again, which, in many ways, served as a reminder of humiliation and defeat dating back to the Plains of Abraham (Taras 2002, 119).

The territory of Quebec in the new Canadian Confederation was slowly expanded northwards as agreements were made with various First Nations groups. These declarations occurred in 1870, 1898, and 1912 completing the current territory of Quebec as it stands today. These changes are still an important part of the contestation of Quebec in the present sovereignty/secession debate.

Throughout much of its history, Quebec was a poor, religious, undereducated, and mainly rural province, and it was also perceived as such (O’Sullivan-See 1986, 134).
The Quiet Revolution, in the 1960s, however, changed all of this. Quebec began a transition turning the province into an urban, secular and well educated one (Ignatieff 1993, 182). The changes in the province at this time were intertwined with the growth of some new groups that demanded greater rights and autonomy. Some of these groups resorted to violence, but the vast majority of them were non-violent. One group of violent nationalists, the Front du Liberation du Quebec (FLQ), conducted their first terrorist acts in 1963, which culminated famously in 1970 with the FLQ/October crisis (when two prominent diplomats, James Cross and Pierre Laporte were kidnapped, and one of them was killed). The Canadian Prime Minister at the time, Pierre Trudeau, responded by invoking the War Measures Act whereby he could openly arrest and detain members of the nationalist movement, the only time this has happened during a time of peace. This time period remains of great importance to the historical memory of Quebec; Canadian tanks and military personnel were dispatched to the streets of Montreal to control the violence and hundreds of people were arrested, much to the displeasure of Quebec sovereigntists (Saywell 1977, 30).

In contrast, however, some groups that were non-violent, joined together to form a new political party out of a merger between the Mouvement Souverainete-Association and Ralliement national in 1968 (O’Sullivan-See 1986, 144). This new party, the PQ, was the first political party to openly support independence in Quebec at the provincial level. (Likewise, in 1990, another party—the BQ—was formed to serve as a voice for Quebec at the federal level.)

In 1982, Canada signed a new constitution known as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as part of the plan to forge a distinct Canadian identity. In 1981, when all ten
provincial premiers met to discuss the constitution, Quebec was left out of the final
decision in what became known famously as “the night of long knives” (Weaver 1992,
59), the night of Quebec’s greatest betrayal in the minds of sovereigntists. The new
Canadian Constitution was ratified without the signature of Quebec. (Ratification of the
Charter only required the signatures of nine out of ten provinces.) For many Quebecers,
especially sovereigntists, this constitution remains a symbol of oppression by English
Canada; to the Canadian government it represents an impasse over national identity
versus French-Canadian identity in Quebec (Kaplan 1994). Later attempts to resolve the
constitutional issue at Meech Lake in 1987 and Charlottetown in 1992 resulted in failure
and only served to deepen the division between Quebec and the rest of Canada.

4.3 Parti Quebecois and Bloc Quebecois: Becoming more civic?

4.3.1 Introduction

Since Parizeau’s embarrassing comments in 1995, the political elites of the PQ
and BQ have attempted to move their respective parties towards civic nationalism.
However, it should be noted that there is still a need to keep some ethnic supporters of
independence happy. In the academic literature and in the media, there is strong
argument that the sovereignty movement retains a significant ethnic aspect to its
platforms. The Montreal Gazette, Quebec’s largest English language newspaper, quite
often describes the sovereignty movement in ethnic terms. Moreover, scholar Dale
Thomson argues that the nationalist movement in Quebec retains a very strong ethnic
component and that Francophone Quebecers are “still seeking a positive social identity
and, with it, a secure future” (Thomson 1995, 82). Thomson also notes, however, that
use of the term Quebecois in place of Canadien or French Canadian indicates “a readiness to extend the group identity to encompass Quebec residents of other ethnic origins” (Thomson 1995, 81). Even supporters of sovereignty, Jocelyne Couture, Kai Nielsen, and Michel Seymour have tried to break the ethnic/civic dichotomy in the nationalist literature, by describing Quebec’s nationalism as language based (Couture, Nielsen, and Seymour 2001). But is this assertion fair? What is the real evidence regarding the transition to more ethnic or more civic-based nationalist policy platforms? To answer this question, I traveled around Quebec asking political elites about their views with regards to inclusion in Quebec, to find an answer to my question on civic and ethnic based platforms. I then supplemented my findings with polling data and archival information in the form of advertisements, party statements/platforms, and internal party information.

By way of starting my journey in Quebec, there are a few idiosyncrasies of the Quebec case that need to be explained. The first idiosyncrasy is the parties involved. While the PQ and BQ are technically different parties, they essentially work together for the same goal of sovereignty, just at different levels of government (the PQ at the provincial level and the BQ at the federal level). Moreover, it is worth noting that the BQ exists to provide a presence for the sovereigntist movement at the federal level, which, in many ways, supplements the work of the PQ at the provincial level.

A second idiosyncrasy of this case is that the PQ had a lot of electoral success early in its history. After just eight years of existence, the PQ won a majority in Quebec and formed the provincial government. PQ Party leader, Rene Levesque, became Premier of Quebec (Premier Ministre du Quebec, which translates to First Minister of
Quebec). Additionally, some sovereigntists go one step further and call the Premier of Quebec, the Prime Minister of Quebec. During Levesque’s tenure as Premier, he called the first referendum on independence in 1980. The yes vote, however, only managed to obtain just over 40 percent of the vote.

A third idiosyncrasy is that the PQ has been so stable, much more so than its Flemish counterparts; at no time has the PQ disbanded or been forced to change names. While some of the PQ’s platforms have shifted through the years, the party tends to maintain a center-left position on the political spectrum. Political ideology, in this case center-left, does not mean much for this study given the greater emphasis on independence. Clarifying their political stance does help to explain some positions regarding their economic and social policy areas, though.

The whole point of examining whether Quebec’s sovereigntists are adopting more civic-based policy platforms rests on the idea that a shift in strategy can result in independence. According to a CROP poll taken in 2010, 58 percent of Quebecers believe that independence is “outmoded” (Chung, Toronto Star, May 19, 2010). The major problem with this poll, however, is that the electoral reality is different. According to a March 2011 opinion poll, the PQ was leading the Liberal party of Quebec by a 10-point margin, 37 to 27 percent (Leger Marketing 2011). Recent polling (May 2012) has now changed and shows the PQ in a statistical dead-heat with the PLQ, but it does show that the PQ could possibly gain a majority in the National Assembly with a slight shift in voting intentions, and, with a majority, hold another referendum on independence. The sovereignty movement, therefore, remains relevant and an investigation of policy platforms is integral to understanding their approach to nationalism.
4.3.2 Why Attempt a Transition to Civic Nationalism?

The attempted transition to civic nationalism by the sovereignty movement is, in many respects, based on an electoral calculation. The issue of civic nationalism has been debated within the party at length and members of the sovereignty movement argue, overwhelmingly, that their movement is based on civic nationalism, and not ethnic nationalism. They argue that everyone living within the borders of Quebec can be a member of the society and that there is no distinction between French-Canadians and any other group. All people living in Quebec are simply Quebecois. For example:

Because everything that we are going to create is never going to be ethnic based. As a French-Canadian, my ancestors were French-Canadians. We decided to put away this French-Canadian thing to be Quebecois. We are asking everyone to put away and to join this idea of living together—Interview with Jonathan Valois on January 7, 2010.

Without a broader appeal to citizens across Quebec, the sovereignty movement could lose voter support quite dramatically, especially since the percentage of Quebecois de souche is decreasing. Given increasing diversity in Quebec, the sovereignty movement has made a concerted effort to appeal to immigrants and non-Francophones (including Anglophones and First Nations peoples) in Quebec. The electoral reality is such that without extra support, it is very unlikely that the PQ will form a government in the National Assembly in the future. And without a majority in the National Assembly, it is extremely unlikely that the PQ will be able to call for a referendum on the proposed independence of Quebec. So, publicly, the sovereignty movement makes statements asserting the openness of their political parties.

On their website, the BQ has the following quote:
Le projet souverainiste dont est porteur le Bloc Québécois est démocratique, inclusif et respectueux des droits de la minorité anglophone de même que des nations autochtones (Bloc Quebecois: Declaration of Principles 2011)

(The sovereignty project purported by the Bloc Quebecois is democratic, inclusive and respects the rights of the Anglophone minority as well as the First Nations)

One of the major reasons why the sovereignty movement has so vocally described its purported transition to civic nationalism was the aftermath of the 1995 referendum. When Jacques Parizeau blamed the referendum defeat on “money and ethnic votes,” a large number of people began to realize that sensitivity to ethnicity was a non-negotiable prerequisite when appealing to voters in a modern and diverse Quebec.

So, the sovereigntist movement decided that we need to do something, we need to rebuild bridges and we need to make it clear what we stand for. And on this [Gilles] Duceppe took a leading role. Duceppe is Montreal born and bred. And I think it explains a lot because he is very comfortable with diversity, he’s lived it; he was a union negotiator for people in the hotel industry where you have a lot of new immigrants coming in cleaning the rooms and the kitchens, and he proved that he was very at ease with this, and proved that he knew a lot about diversity. And, he decided that he should formally put in place, the ideological construct of the sovereignty movement taking into account that diversity—Interview with Richard Marceau on January 6, 2010.

Gilles Duceppe became the leader of the BQ in May 1997 and stayed in that position until after the defeat of the BQ in the 2011 federal election. As noted above, Duceppe was an important person in the transition to civic nationalism. Agency is important in any movement, but so too are the documents that formally change the political platforms of the party. One such document was a formal declaration that civic nationalism would become the official policy of the party after an extensive debate and vote by party members. This was confirmed in my interviews. (The document is available on the website of the BQ and was adopted in January 2000.)
Yes, we had a document in 1999, which created this debate—Interview with Pierre Paquette on January 8, 2010

This document was then ratified at the 2000 party meeting:

But in 2000, our Congress adopted this vision of a civic-nation more than an ethnic nation, and it was a very important debate. But the vote was about 98% in favor of this decision—Interview with Pierre Paquette on January 8, 2010

The formal change to civic nationalism was made in 2000 and basically makes the argument that anyone living in Quebec who is a Quebecois. For example:

Glen Duerr: In your mind who is a Quebecker?
Practically, it is people who are living in Quebec. That’s it—Interview with Martin LeMay on June 23, 2010.

Of course, many members of the sovereignty movement go one step further and argue that one should be French-speaking as well, but this simply depends on who you ask. The formal document advancing civic nationalism is inclusive of immigrants to Quebec, many of whom speak French. It can also be inclusive of Anglophones, sovereigntists argue, provided that they are bilingual.

So formally the change was made in the year 2000 with a civic-based nationalism, and the cement was the French language, which was the common public language in Quebec—Interview with Richard Marceau on January 6, 2010

Political leaders in the sovereignty movement are careful in how they describe the transition to civic nationalism. They are careful not to conceive of nationalism in ethnic terms before 2000. Of course, many people inside and outside of Quebec still argue that Quebecois nationalism is still at its core ethnic (an in-depth assessment of this debate is made later in this chapter). Critics of the sovereignty movement also argue that numerous statements made by party leaders have not been inclusive and there is not
nearly enough diversity in the party to properly describe the movement as civic.

Nonetheless, the statements made by Pierre Paquette and Richard Marceau above show that the sovereignty movement at least conceived of changing to civic nationalism and adopted this language in its formal policy platforms.

Given the debate over this transition to civic nationalism, political leaders in Quebec also point to the diversity of the party as evidence of a switch to civic nationalism. While evidence of widespread diversity is not irrefutable (as I will argue later), including people from different backgrounds in the upper echelons of the movement shows an attempt to match the words of the policy platforms with actions.

So historically nobody can blame the PQ of not being to [sic] immigration, we are the party with the highest number of candidates coming from immigration so we made more than our effort to integrate people and I’m very confident on that, that the kind of action in the end it will pay for PQ. And having well-spoken people like Maka Kotto, who is a very articulated people [sic], they have found their place in Quebec. So, of course, there is always more to do with immigration, but I think the only thing is to get them a good living, that their children can go to school—Interview with Guy LaChappelle on June 23, 2010

Members of the sovereignty movement also note that they are trying to build more and better links with immigrant groups in Quebec. This is done because it reflects the changes to Quebec’s demography and it also reflects an electoral reality that without support from all people in Quebec, it would be very difficult to win a future election. For example:

First, I would say that we have one of our deputies, which is responsible for the cultural communities. So a deputy of Montreal from the PQ, [who is named] Maka Kotto. He is himself an immigrant. Louise Beaudoin, she is responsible for immigration and there [are] Lisette Lapointe, Martin Lemay, [and] Nicolas Gerard [as well]. We are visiting all of the cultural communities, we share the lists and [we are] trying to build discussion, [and] trying to establish some links between us [sovereigntists and immigrants]—Interview with Carole Poirier on June 21, 2010
There is, then, an outreach effort on the part of the sovereigntists to build better relationships with different groups across the province of Quebec. Again, this does not mean that the sovereignty movement fully embodies civic nationalism. However, this does show that the sovereignty movement has attempted to transition to civic nationalism.

I argue that the transition to civic-based policy platforms was done for two reasons. First, Quebec sovereigntists have the ability to hold a referendum. And, second, because demography in the province has changed. I argue (as shown in Diagram Two in Chapter One) that such a combination of factors requires an attempted shift towards more civic-based nationalist policy platforms because, without such changes, the sovereignty movement would simply fade away because support would drop as indicative of the Downs Median Voter theory. The PQ and BQ would be relegated to the political extreme. In order to win an election in Quebec, a given party must appeal to the average voter in the center of the political spectrum. Since Quebec has become much more multiethnic and the average voter in Quebec chooses to live in a diverse society, the average voter accepts the premise of inclusion. Therefore, without widespread voter appeal that is inclusive, it is not possible to win a majority of the seats in the National Assembly.

As shown in the following sections, the transition to civic nationalism is far from complete. However, the sovereignty movement has made some inroads into different immigrant communities throughout Quebec. There are signs of a transition to civic nationalism and some signs that the PQ remains relevant to politics in the province. The PQ has not won an election since 1998, but they have not disappeared either, something
that has happened to other parties in Canada and Quebec. An investigation of specific policy platforms will help to assess the reasons why Quebec sovereigntists have tried to transition to civic nationalism. I will provide additional assessments of the reasons why the PQ has attempted to transition to civic nationalism at the end of each discussion.

4.4 Policy Areas: Whether the PQ has transitioned to Civic Nationalism?

Throughout the interview process, the interviewees talked about the five different areas of policy. Some interviewees talked about some areas of policy more than others, but the spread is fairly even across all five areas of policy. Table 4.1 shows the frequency of the codes.

Table 4.1: PQ and BQ Coding for Policy Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Area</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Autonomy</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Political autonomy was more widely discussed than culture, but the swing between areas of policy was minimal. Quebec sovereigntists have targeted a range of different areas of policy in order to make the claim that they are advancing civic nationalism, and to achieve their maximalist goal by appealing to a broad spectrum of the
population. This has had limited success given recent election results, so an in-depth investigation into areas of policy is useful.

4.4.1 Language

Quebec is a society in which language, in every sense of the word, is of enormous importance (Fraser 2001, 215).

Language has become one of the most important, and contentious, areas of policy in Quebec. As noted in the literature review, the works of Anderson (1983), Gellner (1983), and Hobsbawm (1990) highlight the importance of language. The sense of nationhood in Quebec is enhanced by a shared vernacular that is transmitted through print-capitalism (Anderson 1991, 37). Given the predominance of English in Canada, the widespread usage of French in Quebec distinguishes this province from the rest. Gellner’s work has more controversial implications for Quebec given his links between language and education (Gellner 1983). Essentially, he argues that language is integral to nationhood because one has to communicate with others. And, if the education system is unilingual, then the case for saying that Quebec is its own nation is more apparent.

Language was a prominent theme in the interviews and the promotion of French is a major platform in the PQ’s language policy. The reasons for this linguistic separation were spelled out to me during an interview in Montreal. Just beyond the shadow of Stade Olympique—the famous site of the 1976 Olympic games—I met with Carole Poirier in her riding office for Hochelaga-Maisonneuve. She describes the language situation in Quebec in a geographic sense. The French language makes up just a mere 2 percent of the Americas and has slowly, gradually decreased in size, she argues. It is for this reason, Poirier notes, along with the predominance of English language media, that French must
be protected. Protections for the French language, the literature shows, would also enforce a sense of nationhood from the top-down. The average Quebecker would live and communicate in French and be part of a uniform society, which would enforce the idea of belonging to a separate nation (Hobsbawm 1990).

The desire to protect the French language is a sentiment shared by many members of the sovereignty movement. (Now former) President of the PQ Jonathan Valois, for example, described the plight of the French language in metaphorical terms, the French language is a small cove in the English North American Ocean.

In Quebec, there are several important pieces of legislation that have served to protect the French language in the province. Under former PLQ Premier, Robert Bourassa, Bill 22 came into law in 1974. This law basically served to make French the sole official language in Quebec, especially concerning a number of key areas of public life such as education and business. Bill 101, which was passed by the first PQ government, came into force in 1977. Bill 101 expanded a number of key provisions in Bill 22 making French the language of communication for people in Quebec, despite a significant Anglophone population, especially around Montreal. One important way that French became the official language of the province was to make sure that all children specifically from Francophone and/or Allophone parents (inclusive of the children of immigrants who came to Quebec), would be educated in French and not English. Prior to Bill 101, 90 percent of immigrant children went to English schools (O’Sullivan-See 1986, 143). As a result of this application to education, and for the imposition of French on Anglophones in Montreal when dealing with the government, Bill 101/Loi 101 remains one of the most contentious pieces of legislation in the province. Bill 101 is most
controversial because, as Gellner argues, language is a key component of nationalism. The use of a distinct language throughout the whole territory helps create a sense of high culture, which is central to the notion of nationhood (Gellner 1983).

Initially, Bill 101 was not fully enforced throughout Quebec and many francophone Quebecers were reluctant to impose linguistic uniformity on Anglophones. After the defeat of the 1980 referendum, however, the temporary provisions in Bill 101 became a permanent fixture in Quebec (Dufour 1990, 94). This meant that there were more pressures on school-age children to attend Francophone schools. Anglophone children could only go to Anglophone schools if both parents attended Anglophone schools (some exceptions are made if a parent is an Anglophone, but was born outside of Canada).

Bill 101 became the centerpiece of the PQ’s language policy and, as the party envisioned, helped to foster a greater sense of an “imagined community” throughout the territory given the ability to imagine a nation of people united through a common language (Anderson 1983). The imposition of Bill 101 affected numerous areas of life. Education policy was the most controversial, but the preeminence of the French language carried over into the courts, government, labor relations, and business.

When looking at packaged foods in Canada, one notices obvious ways in which the Canadian government attempts to promote bilingualism (English and French). In all government documents, and on food labels, Canada is bilingual. However, very few people outside of Quebec or Francophone backgrounds speak French fluently. This is another reason for animosity on the part of sovereigntists.
In Quebec, there has been a reaction to the language issue. Since January 1, 1993, street signs have only been in French (Richler 1992, 7). The famous red Stop/Arrêt sign is now just Arrêt in Quebec. Canada as a whole, however, is officially a bilingual English and French speaking country. As part of the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms, English and French have equal status in government institutions and federal courts. With the enactment of French only laws in Quebec, the bilingual nature of Canada has different applications in Quebec. This is especially interesting in private businesses.

Tim Horton’s, for example, is one of Canada’s most enduring symbols. The nationwide establishment is renowned for its donuts and coffee. In Quebec, this symbol of “Canadiana” bumps up against Bill 178—Quebec’s controversial sign law that requires businesses to make their signs in French. In a small Tim Horton’s, adjacent to the campus of Concordia University in Montreal, I proceeded to order from the menu. The menu was mainly in French, although there was a much smaller translation underneath in English. And while I ordered in French, the server discussed the nuances of my order in English. Bill 178 was designed to protect French, but a business is trying to make a profit and this can best be accomplished by accommodating customers in whatever language they speak (assuming it is cost effective to provide employees who speak different languages). Therefore, any given language will be spoken if there is a market for it, and public policy does not absolutely prohibit its usage.

From these examples, we are able to see how language laws in Quebec extend to public institutions, education, and private businesses. The Supreme Court of Canada has

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6 In 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that an aspect of Bill 101—requiring businesses to only use French—was unconstitutional. Bill 178 was an attempt to bolster this provision.
ruled that some of these provisions are unconstitutional given Canada’s official bilingualism. However, in the opinion of sovereigntists, these stringent policies are required because French makes up just 2 percent of the North America population and could be lost if adequate measures are not taken. Extending more language protections is a key part of the PQ’s current platforms.

Language in Quebec did not necessarily have to be an issue though. After the British defeat of the French at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759, it was the gradual decision of the British to allow the 60,000 French inhabitants to retain their language and religion (Adams 2003, 107). Assimilation was a real option for the British and linguistic assimilation was commonly practiced in the colonial world. By 1867, however, with the creation of the Confederation of Canada, language equality remained part of the new constitutional structure. Nonetheless, English occupied a privileged position in Canada, and also Quebec. English Canada was richer than French-Canada, and as a result English was the language of commerce and education. French-Canadians had very few upper level jobs (O’Sullivan-See 1986, 135). For sovereigntists, they argue that there is a natural sense of assimilation when business and commerce are conducted in English, as well as government.

Quite simply, language laws in Quebec are complicated and reflect the difficult nature and history of language in Canada. On one hand, English-Canadians in Montreal were more dominant in business circles. This dominance at various times in history has become a lightning rod for language policy (Coleman 1984, 390). On the other hand, education is another important battleground. If the children learn one language, said

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7 French-Canadian is a historical term used to describe someone from a Francophone background who could trace their ancestry back to France. The term “Quebecer” is simply used now and does not imply a given ethnic background.
language is likely to retain some level of dominance in the province. This was an important area of concern that came out in the interviews. For example:

I had three kids and when they came to the house and said, “hi dad, how do you do?” that’s a problem. It should be in French (Interview on June 21, 2010—Richard Nadeau).

The French language is also tied to identity as a separate nation:

…but we not just a province, we are a nation; a French speaking nation, Quebec (Interview on January 7, 2010—Jonathan Valois).

Education, obviously, affects children the most. Bill 101, however, has had at least one important consequence, greater tolerance and understanding in Quebec. Since all children in Quebec have to go to school, classrooms are often filled with children from all backgrounds. These “Children of Bill 101” have now grown up and entered the sovereignty/secession debate as well and this was an important theme that emerged in the interview process. Since many “Quebecois de souche” (Quebecers who trace their ancestry back to France) children have grown up in a multiethnic and multicultural Quebec, French has become a common way of communicating. Built on language, the nature of Quebecois identity has changed; identity is no longer just ethnicity based. For an author like Genevieve Mathieu, for example, a Quebecer is now someone who can use French and lives in the province of Quebec (Mathieu 2001). French has to be learned, preferably in childhood education (if one lives in the province).

Bill 101 made [sure] that the people who are coming in Quebec, their children will have to go to the French school. There was no possibility to go to the English school, they are obliged to go to the French school (Interview on June 21, 2010—Carole Poirier).
With increased security of the French language in place, Quebec sovereigntists have now become more accepting of its “allophone” population—that is, people whose first language include something other than English or French. In this way, sovereigntists are now accepting of every language but English in the province, a key point in the transition to civic nationalism. The PQ is seeking to advance greater accommodation of immigrants and minorities in the province and has set-up a commission tasked to do so (Globe and Mail, Oct 5, 2007). This shows a marked change to the language policy platform. The change is a nuanced one. French still has to be protected from English, but some linguistic allowances can be made for minority groups so that Quebec becomes a modern and cosmopolitan region.

Even though French is protected and reinforced against the dominance of English, the PQ has tried to reach out to Anglophones in Quebec. Moreover, throughout the interviews, the Anglophone population was described as fellow Quebecers by most interviewees. The 1994 election campaign illustrates fairly consist statements on behalf of the PQ towards English speakers in Canada:

The Parti Québécois has always recognized the contribution and historic role of the English-speaking community in the development and evolution of Quebec. This community is also an invaluable asset to a sovereign nation in that, with it, Quebec has access to two great cultures. A sovereign Quebec would therefore adopt measures and policies that will reconcile the legitimate aspirations of both French-speaking and English-speaking groups.

Given all of these policies based on the protection of the French language, many Anglophones living in Quebec (most of whom are concentrated in Montreal) still consider the policies of the Quebec sovereigntist movement to be based on ethnic nationalism because they discriminate against Anglophones in business, government, and
law. In reality, language is the central area of policy behind Quebec’s independence movement and protecting French is a way of promoting sovereignty. For Anglophones, the imposition of French is still worrying given some periodic statements on behalf of PQ political leaders that do not follow the official party line. For example from an editorial piece in the Montreal Gazette on a BQ MP:

Jean-Paul Marchand apparently has not been paying attention. He’s the Bloc Quebecois member of Parliament who this week described English-speaking Quebecers as “a Trojan horse” within the province. Hasn’t he been listening to his own sovereigntist leaders? Hasn’t he heard that we’re all Quebecers now? Francophones and non-Francophones alike, all part of a single Quebec people (well, there are also the 11 aboriginal nations recognized by the sovereigntists, but only some of the time). Didn’t Marchand get the word that since all that unpleasantness in Bosnia, ethnic nationalism, or its local linguistic variety, is out, and “civic” or “territorial” nationalism is in, at least until a sovereign Quebec can get international recognition? (Don MacPherson, Montreal Gazette, April 10, 1997).

In sum, even though there is a real fear of ethnic nationalism, there is evidence of a shift towards civic nationalism on the part of the party leadership with the inclusion of immigrant children in the French language education system, but some problems continue with the Anglophone population. Even though the Anglophone population of Montreal is quite wealthy and students are able to study in Anglophone universities, some further improvements regarding language accommodation need to be made in terms of access to government services and health care. Obviously, a balance needs to be retained with protecting the French language and protecting the Anglophone minority. The vast majority of Anglophones do not want to live in an independent Quebec, in part, because they do not feel that they will be able to live and work in English as they please. Moreover, national identity is a very emotional attachment and when a group wants to
leave and become its own state, there is a sense of animosity on the part of the group that is being left. Essentially, many Anglophones want to stay in Montreal and in Canada.

Overall, I argue that the PQ’s policy platform on language is “mixed” given the desire to include allophones. However, the ongoing problems with the Anglophone population show that evidence for a transition to civic-based nationalism is mixed. As the allophone population increases, this also presents a reason why the PQ has attempted to transition to more civic-based policy platforms.

4.4.2 Culture

In Windsor, Quebec—about half way between Drummondville and Sherbrooke—I met with Etienne-Alexis Boucher, member of the National Assembly for the riding of Johnson. Mr. Boucher is a vehement defender of Quebec’s culture and its movement for independence. Mr. Boucher says “I have heard the other side of the argument, but nothing in my mind will change my stance, I am convinced that Quebec needs to become its own country.” Part of the reason why Mr. Boucher is so attached to the notion of independence is because he feels that Quebec has a very distinct and different culture from the rest of Canada.

The concept of distinctiveness is a difficult one in Quebec. Many people outside the sovereignty movement think that the PQ displays an ethnic form of nationalism because of this distinctiveness. For example, Don MacPherson from the Montreal Gazette wrote in 2007:

In case you haven’t noticed, ethnic nationalism is making a comeback in Quebec. Nearly 12 years later, Quebecers are finally getting over their embarrassment at Jacques Parizeau’s referendum-night speech opposing “money and ethnic votes” and “us” within earshot of the New York Times. The new name for ethnic
nationalism is “le nationalisme identitaire”—identity nationalism. But it’s the same old insecure, defensive nationalism of protecting “us” against the exaggerated threat of “them.” (MacPherson, Montreal Gazette, April 5, 2007).

MacPherson asserts in this piece that ethnic nationalism is returning to Quebec. However, there is an implicit assumption that Quebec did transition to a more civic form of nationalism for a while after the 1995 referendum. Culturally, Quebec has undergone a lot of changes recently. Moreover, the PQ has really tried to bolster the French language and base its cultural policy off of language. In many respects, there is an attempt to create a Gellnerian notion of high culture that will, in line with Hobsbawm’s work, transcend to the masses and create a Quebec based on the French language (Gellner 1983; Hobsbawm 1990).

Quebec was, for many decades prior to the 1960s, a very religious and very rural society. Quebecois identity meant three things in that time: a person was French speaking, Roman Catholic, and could trace his/her ancestry back to France. The Quiet Revolution of the 1960s, however, dramatically changed the province into a very secular and very urban population. Quebec is now one of the most postmodern regions in North America where religious beliefs and policies traditionally related to religion—are much lower than anywhere else on the continent (Adams 2003, 82). Quebec is seen as much more “liberal” than most other regions of North America and has been a frontrunner in tolerating “flexible families” and greater “sexual permissiveness” (Adams 2003, 82). The identity of the Quebecois is much more complex now as a result of the Quiet Revolution. However, put succinctly, the sovereignty movement boils down to three basic tenets that were described consistently throughout the interviews: secularism,
equality of men and women, and the French language. All of these points are an attempt to set the cultural norms of Quebec.

With the Quiet Revolution in the 1960s, Quebec became a very secular province. The sovereignty movement seeks to retain this tradition, but faces some challenges from immigrants that are religious and would like to see more religiosity in society. The sovereignty movement also wants to protect women’s rights, or at least equality between men and women. Again, this platform is in place to decrease the tendencies of some religious immigrants to advantage men, or to marginalize women. Finally, by speaking a common language, members of the sovereignty movement argue that everyone has the same ability to communicate and shape culture in Quebec. With these three platforms, the sovereignty movement argues that there is a distinct identity for Quebec.

And, there is some evidence to support this; although, it is not indicative of two entirely different societies. In some ways, the culture of Quebec may well be shifting away from Canada in terms of political culture. According to an EKOS poll comparing political attitudes in Quebec and the Rest of Canada (ROC), Quebecers diverged from ROC on some important issues. While 91 percent of Canadians have a strong attachment to Canada, only 54 percent of Quebecers have a similar attachment to the country (EKOS 2006). Another issue, support for Canada’s military action in Afghanistan is significantly lower in Quebec (22 percent) than the ROC (40 percent) given three choices: support, oppose or neither (EKOS 2006). The PQ and BQ have been quick to exploit these points as well as others including the environment and alternative energy (especially in opposition to exploiting the tar sands of Alberta).
Numerous overtures have been made by the Canadian government to limit these differences in culture in order to keep Quebec within the Canadian federation. During former Prime Minister, Jean Chretien’s second term, he sought to pacify some of Quebec’s historic demands. Legislation was passed in the House of Commons to recognize Quebec as a distinct society, and Quebec (along with four other regions) was given a veto over constitutional amendments (Tanguay 2006, 99). The demand for cultural autonomy, however, was not fully satisfied according to sovereigntists. One of the biggest complaints during the interview process was that legislation was never adequately reinforced by action.

Furthermore, current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, described Quebec as a nation within a united Canada. While this initiative was initially opposed by the BQ, (now former) leader Gilles Duceppe quickly changed his mind and accepted the overture. Initially this overture was seen as a very good thing, however, most sovereigntists still do not believe that enough action has been taken on the part of the federal government to satisfy their demands for cultural recognition. Privately, a number of elite political leaders have argued that more power for the National Assembly in the form of a federacy model (where one part of a federation has special rights), and overt protections for the French language in Quebec would satisfy the demands for greater cultural protection and dissuade voters from independence. The federacy model would recognize Quebec as distinct amongst all of Canada’s provinces and provide the province with more autonomy. Overt language rights in Quebec, they argue, would show a commitment to the future of the French language in Canada.
Regarding the policy area of culture, the interview process revealed one central theme: the vast majority of the sovereigntists argue that they at least have a fondness for Canada. But they simply say that Canada is just a different country, a beautiful country that will be a great neighbor. Most sovereigntists still express the importance of retaining very strong economic links with the rest of Canada, but they want independence. For example:

I think it’s a question of culture, some people in Quebec, yes they are first Quebecers but they define themselves as Canadians, they still think that the vision that they have of Canada that is a country of two founding people (Interview on June 25, 2010—Etienne-Alexis Boucher).

Culture is a key ingredient to independence. But that culture must retain a level of homogeneity, not in terms of ethnicity, but in terms of accommodation:

One of things we need to do is that we need immigrants, but they need to accommodate themselves and integrate themselves to Quebec society (Interview on January 6, 2010—Richard Marceau).

This statement is very similar to some made by members of N-VA and, to some extent, VB. Quebec sovereigntists argue that this line is not akin to assimilation but the inter-culturalist model (described in the next section) has some similarities to outright assimilation. The sovereignty movement needs to better verbalize the difference between assimilation and inter-culturalism because a case can be made for this line of reasoning. Inter-culturalism works, for example, if the majority population is willing to adopt certain aspects of immigrant communities like cuisine. For example, in the United States many Americans have adopted a positive disposition towards Mexican cuisine and the same has happened for South Asian cuisine in the United Kingdom, and Middle Eastern cuisine in Belgium.
Finally, for Quebec sovereigntists, protecting French language and culture is a way of insuring that the current way of life will remain into the future.

[we want] to be sure that the French language and culture will exist in 100/200 years from now as much as English (Interview on June 21, 2010—Richard Nadeau).

Regarding the policy area of culture, the sovereignty movement has made some progress towards more civic-based policy platforms, but as noted by the above quotations, there are some potential problems. If a person must integrate into a culture, then is the culture civic? Moreover, if language is French and culture is Quebecois, is it acceptable if a Francophone from Africa or Haiti or an Allophone from elsewhere in the world has an impact on the language and culture? The political elites in the sovereignty movement are trying to become much more inclusive, but an ethnic veneer remains as noted by the above quotes, which were repeated in various ways by many other elites. It is for these reasons that I list the sovereignty movement as “mostly ethnic” on the platform of culture. In order to build a distinct Quebec, the sovereignty movement is forcing a certain set of norms on immigrants. Quebec sovereigntists talk about reaching out to immigrants, but have not made a clear case that immigrants can shape and mold the culture as well.

4.4.3 Immigration

In the warmth of the BQ’s office building in the east side of wintry Montreal, I met with Pierre Paquette, the former heir apparent to Gilles Duceppe as BQ leader (Paquette unexpectedly lost his seat in the 2011 federal election). Paquette explained to me how a document in 1999 created a debate within the party to officially adopt a stance
of civic-based nationalist policies. Then in 2000, as noted earlier, 98 percent of party members adopted the mantra of civic-based nationalist policy platforms, of which Paquette had been one of the main drivers.

Immigration has long been a staple in Canadian society; in fact, the whole country is built on immigrants from different parts of the world. However, it should be noted that prior to World War Two, Canadian immigration policies heavily favored people from Western Europe, and even then there was a preference for British Protestant immigrants, not Irish or French Catholics. Typically, immigration policy is described as racially based prior to 1947 especially when highlighting the well-known Chinese Head Tax of 1885 and the comprehensive discrimination against Chinese that remained from 1923 through 1947. After World War Two had concluded and life was slowly returning to normal, a new immigration policy in 1947 opened the country to immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, including large Italian and Ukrainian communities. The Immigration Act of 1976 changed immigration policy once again to be more inclusive of people from non-European backgrounds and Canada became much more open to everyone. As a result of these changes to immigration policy, Canada has now become one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world especially in its major cities.

This history of immigration is important to the politics of Quebec as well. Essentially, some newer immigrant groups from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean have warmer feelings towards independence because they make up the group previously described, the Children of Bill 101 (their children received a French language education in schools; O’Sullivan-See 1986, 148) and they were not exposed to the early policies that were more closely aligned to ethnic nationalism. Older immigrant groups such as
Jewish, Italian, and Greek immigrants tend to look less favorably on the PQ and BQ because their interaction with the sovereignty movement was defined much more in ethnic terms.

Because of immigration, modern Canada—and by proxy, Quebec—is very ethnically and culturally diverse. Many Canadians and Quebecers love that their country is rich in diversity and this is reflected in national immigration policy, which usually accepts between 200,000 and 250,000 per year (immigration is a federal issue but the provincial governments have programs for new immigrants). But Canada and the PQ diverge in terms of approach to diversity. For Canada, the model of multiculturalism is best where each individual can retain their cultural heritage within Canada. For the PQ, however, the party rejects this “Canadian” model of multiculturalism. The PQ says that they do not reject diversity; rather, they view the process of building Quebec as a shared project for all people. The policy of the PQ is one of “inter-culturalism” and not multiculturalism. The main difference is that in a multicultural Canada, people can retain their heritage in a very distinct way such that people are often referred to in hyphenated terms. For example, people from different groups are referred to as Italian-Canadians, Greek-Canadians, Ukrainian-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians, and so on depending on a person’s ancestral background. Inter-culturalism, however, is like assimilation in one sense because people are expected to lose their ethnic label. However, inter-culturalism is different from assimilation because people from all over the world are expected to influence and shape the culture of Quebec given their heritage. Inter-culturalism, sovereigntists argue, is a project in which all people living in Quebec assimilate on three core ideals and build the society from there. For example:
Quebec is not a multicultural country, not with the multiculturalism application as in Canada. Quebec doesn’t want a multiculturalism application, we want the integration model and this is a very different view (Interview on June 21, 2010—Carole Poirier).

Political elites in Quebec argue that the inter-culturalism model is better than the Canadian style multiculturalism model because it does not distinguish based on ethnic features:

In Quebec, we are asking too much from people to give their first identity, instead of where they are from or their ancestors, so Italian, Greek or something like that to take the Quebec identity. But Canada is not saying that they are saying that you can still be Italian, Greek, Israeli, you can be Canadian and you can be both and I don’t care. But we say that you can be in your part of life, you are always going to be Italian in your part of life, it is okay, but don’t ask the government to recognize in a public way, or in public spending, those positions because we are civic based. Because everything that we are going to create is never going to be ethnic based. As a French-Canadian, my ancestors were French-Canadians. We decided to put away this French-Canadian thing to be Quebecois. We are asking everyone to put away and to join this idea of living together. The will of living together and the possibility of living together and that’s intercultural, it is not multiculturalism. If we have to live together then maybe it is better that we speak the same language to communicate and build something together (Interview on January 7, 2010—Jonathan Valois).

This argument is very similar to the case made by N-VA. Immigrants to the society need to learn the language, but also to accept a Quebec identity. They are able to help mold and shape the culture, but they cannot maintain longstanding ties to their ancestral home. Members of the PQ argue that their language at home and their religion are free for them to choose. The problem, however, is that this shows the limitations of a shift towards civic-based nationalism. Newcomers are free, but only in a very limited sense.

The distinction then between inter-culturalism and multiculturalism has led to a vociferous debate on reasonable accommodation of visible minorities. Forefront in the
debate is the small town of Herouxville, which passed a controversial “code of conduct” enforcing secularism in the backdrop of an increasingly religious immigrant community. How should Quebec deal with immigrants and religious minorities? This debate over reasonable accommodation has remained at the forefront of politics in the province.

The debate over reasonable accommodation was especially important in my interview, in downtown Montreal, with (now former) PQ President Jonathan Valois. Valois unabashedly advocates a civic form of nationalism but admits that his party has a different strategy towards immigrants than the Canadian government. The option of multiculturalism, he says, is rejected in Quebec. The model of multiculturalism, Valois argues, does not integrate citizens into a society; rather, it excludes people from taking part in the everyday life of the government and civil society. This is the main reason why the sovereignty movement has adopted the intercultural strategy rather than the multicultural one.

There are, however, three main problems with the interculturalism argument especially as described as better than multiculturalism. First, while multiculturalism has struggled globally, it has been successful in Canada. Major cities like Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, and Calgary, welcome people from all over the world where they live in relative peace. Second, immigrants often want to retain some form of reverence for their homeland. It is usually the second or third generation that for practical purposes overwhelmingly assimilates to the new country. Nonetheless, some form of attachment to an ethnic heritage may remain, even several generations later. Finally, interculturalism could be a good model if everyone in the province shifted their identity and everyone in
the province could affect culture. This is the only way that interculturalism would be different from assimilation.

The debate surrounding reasonable accommodation and the changing nature of Quebec is not a new issue, however. After the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s most sovereigntists were quite alarmed with the influx of immigrants into Montreal. New communities of Portuguese, Italians, Greeks and Jews were entering the city (Handler 1988, 175). Many sovereigntists worried that this population would eventually Anglicize Montreal and ruin any hope of an independent Quebec (Handler 1988, 175).

As of the 2006 Canadian census, the demographic makeup of Montreal is such that 26 percent of people living in the city are immigrants, the province of Quebec overall is just under 9 percent (Canada 2006 census). Montreal is very diverse just like other large Canadian cities such as Toronto and Vancouver. Reaching out to these new immigrants remains an especially important task for the sovereigntists. Without greater support in these immigrant and minority communities, it may be more difficult to succeed electorally. One real problem that the sovereignty movement has faced is that many immigrants have strong feelings for Canada because they chose to immigrate to Canada for a better life and the country, in many cases, has provided a better life for them and their families. Many immigrants are opposed to Quebec independence because they invested significant resources into becoming Canadian citizens (Handler 1988, 178). Immigrant support for the PQ and other sovereigntist parties has therefore historically been minimal. This theme was reinforced in the interviews. For example:

The sovereignty movement has made a lot of effort of reaching to new immigrants and the children of new immigrants. But not always with the greatest of success (Interview on January 6, 2010—Richard Marceau).
Another example:

There is a ‘bill 101 generation,’ that came out from bill 101. There’s a 2nd generation and most immigrants, their children speak French so they are, I think with that we can make a good progress with them and to convince them [of the independence project] (Interview on June 23, 2010—Guy LaChapelle).

Another example, quoted below, shows that many Quebecers basically ignored early immigrants and, as a result, gave the mantle to Anglophones historically to welcome immigrants into Quebec:

Because we asked the majority, the Anglophones, to welcome the immigrants in our place. That’s a big hurt, that’s a lost opportunity for everyone, for the Anglophones, for the immigrants, for the kids (Interview on January 7, 2010—Genevieve Mathieu).

Another important demographic is Anglophones. Historically, 11 percent of Quebec’s population is from the English language minority group, although they could be English, Scottish, Irish or American Loyalist immigrants (Handler 1988, 179). In Montreal, this means that Anglophones account for more than one quarter of the population, but this is also a demographic that is leaving Quebec quite rapidly (Cote and Johnson 1995, 59). First, Anglophones do not have the same confidence in Francophone institutions. Second, young Anglophones are already moving out of the province to find jobs elsewhere. And third, if Quebec were to become independent, many Anglophones have said that they would leave (Cote and Johnson 1995, 59-61). All of this is potentially quite contentious for the sovereigntist movement.

In some ways, the Quebec government has tried to ensure the demographic survival of the Francophone population by actively pursuing Francophone immigrants from former French colonies in West Africa and from Caribbean states and remaining

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8 An American colonist is someone who remained loyal to the Kingdom of Great Britain.
French colonial entities, notably Haiti, Guadeloupe and Martinique (Kymlicka 1998, 118). The government of Quebec has no power over immigration policy (other than to set-up programs welcoming immigrants), but if Francophones are coming to Canada, then Quebec is a very attractive place to settle. And, moreover, the Francophone population will remain much larger than the Anglophone population.

As part of their overall strategy, the PQ wants to take more autonomy away from the federal government if they are elected. One area of policy that the PQ wants control over is immigration policy such that the provincial government can control who resides in the province (basically, competence in the French language). More power in this area of policy will help ensure the Francophone nature of Quebec because Francophone immigrants can be targeted. Current PQ leader, Pauline Marois, has called for Quebec to control its own immigration so as to integrate people into a “francophone state” (National Post, Aug. 15, 2007).

By devolving power from the federal government to the provincial government, the PQ would be able to base acceptance into the province of Quebec by language. This would be unconstitutional in Canada, but Quebec has not signed the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Moreover, by creating a “Francophone” province, the PQ argues that it would be more likely to win future elections and then a future referendum. The biggest thing for the PQ would be to be more accepting to ethnicity in the party.

Dealing with immigrants is an obvious way to determine whether a given party or movement is more civic or ethnic based. Perhaps the most obvious change to the sovereigntist’s strategy has been the use of people of color in PQ advertisements. Obviously, advertising is not the only factor as anyone can use multicultural advertising,
but some people of color in the sovereignty movement occupy high positions in the party, which does show a change in policy. When the face of the party is of color and the orders from the party leadership support diversity, this change shows that an active attempt to show that there has been a transition to civic-based nationalist policies. The transition is still flawed in many respects, but there is at least some movement to reach out to immigrants.

The PQ is almost always stressing diversity in its advertising campaigns. People of color have also run and won in elections for the PQ and BQ. Former BQ leader and PQ Premier of Quebec, Lucien Bouchard, notes that “(immigrants) are an essential part of our life together and population. And immigrants are no longer content to fade into the background; they want to be recognized for who they are. They want to be part of our collective identity” (Bouchard 2001, 184). Indeed, more can be done to attract immigrants, but the PQ and BQ have made sure to put people from immigrant and minority groups in the forefront of their campaigns. A basic overture has been made to people who are not “Québécois de souche” and this gives something of a signal of the transition towards civic-based nationalism at least on the part of party leadership.

The caveat to these changes is that it may simply be a form of “window dressing.” The window dressing may be evidence that the party has not transitioned to civic nationalism and only displays a smattering of different faces to paint a veneer of change. People of different backgrounds have a role in the party, in advertising and in elected positions, but more needs to be done. And, more people of diverse backgrounds need to be able to reach the upper echelons of the party structure in order for the claim of civic nationalism to be complete. As a result of these changes, I have categorized the PQ as
“mostly civic” on immigration. Attracting immigrant voters is, according to PQ and BQ sovereigntists, a major strategy for the PQ to win a future provincial election, and to hold another referendum.

4.4.4 Political Autonomy

In late June 2010, I met with (now former) BQ MP Richard Nadeau in Gatineau. What made this interview particularly interesting is that this MP represents his party in the Canadian capital of Ottawa, which happens to be across a bridge from his riding in Gatineau, Quebec. For Nadeau, quite simply, the best way to protect Quebec’s language, culture, and identity is to become independent. Greater political autonomy is not enough.

For one prominent Quebecker, however, Quebec’s push for sovereignty represents “smallness of thought.” The son of a former Canadian Prime Minister and current MP, Justin Trudeau, stated in 2006 that Quebecers should look forward to the future rather than being wrapped up in the idea of independence (Toronto Star, Oct 26, 2006). For many Canadians, Quebec already has a great deal of autonomy within the Canadian federal model and does not need a special status in the country, and especially not independence.

Despite this comment, polling on support for independence remains at around 40 percent. And, the head of Leger polling argues that unless Canada reforms, then the PQ will have a strong chance to secede through a referendum. Mr. Leger argues that it will be almost impossible to reform the country once in the middle of another national unity debate (Hamilton, National Post, Dec. 27, 2010).
In order to see why the debate over Quebec’s status in Canada is so controversial, some investigation of the past is important. After all, many Quebecers have long sought a special and privileged status in Canada. In some way, shape, or form, most Quebecers have wanted asymmetric federalism, a recognition that Quebec has a distinct place in Canada that will endure forever. Obviously, Quebecers cannot be guaranteed such protections because demography changes over time, but there is a real desire on the part of Quebecers to protect their linguistic heritage given the overwhelming use of English elsewhere in North America.

Providing Quebec with greater political autonomy is a difficult issue. Given the failure of the Charter, and the subsequent failures of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords to rectify the Charter, more autonomy is at a standstill. In many ways, 1982 and the signing of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms without Quebec’s signature, for supporters of sovereignty, served as a rebuttal of federalism in Quebec, taking away the notion of shared governance for French-Canadians (Keating 2001, 50). In Quebec, the Canadian Constitution is still seen as a source of deep division between the province and the rest of the country. Through the proposed Meech Lake Accord of 1987, former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney attempted to get Quebec to endorse the 1982 Constitution Act. Ramsey Cook (cited in Keating 2001) argues that Mulroney foolishly reopened the constitutional debate seeking special status for Quebec as a “distinct society within Canada” (Keating 2001, 50).

One of the main reasons why Cook considers Mulroney’s act to be foolish is that there is a real problem trying to convince the ROC that Quebec is special and deserves some form of distinct status. This was evidenced with the Charlottetown Accord, in
in this referendum. 54 percent of Canadians voted against Charlottetown including almost 57 percent of Quebecers. In total, only four provinces plus the Northwest Territories voted in favor. In essence, Quebecers are skeptical of the Canadian Constitution, and the ROC is skeptical of giving Quebec special privileges in their Constitution. The issue therefore remains paralyzed.

Despite the sentiment of immobility surrounding the issue of Quebec’s distinct status, a number of political elites have tried to remedy the problem. In 1963, Prime Minister Lester Pearson described Quebec as “more than a province because it is the heartland of a people: in a very real sense it is a nation within a nation” (McRoberts 1997, 40 cited in Guibernau 2006, 52). Likewise, Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper, described Quebec as a “nation” within Canada, in 2006. Nonetheless, providing more political autonomy for Quebec remains a problem.

In my interviews, some members of the PQ argued that they could do more when their party returns to power especially in the areas of culture and communication. Moreover, sovereigntists argue, it is possible to create some form of separate Quebec citizenship and a separate Quebec Constitution. The Canadian government can stop both, but this event could spark a backlash from Quebec voters. This is evidenced in several quotes listed below. For example:

We are going to go and have some power on culture and communication and the Prime Minister said [to] his ministers in the newspaper, we won’t make any more with Canada (Interview on June 21, 2010—Carole Poirier).

This means that the PQ wants to gain greater powers away from Canada in the areas of culture and communication. The specific goal here is to show that the government of Quebec can and should control more powers.
So I think that it [political autonomy] is linked a little bit to Canadian identity and also with the thought that Canada will one day understand that they have to give more autonomy to Quebec in all areas, it is not only language, it is also culture, it is also social affairs, and the economic institutions (Interview on June 24, 2010—Daniel Turp).

Because of this impasse over autonomy, independence is the only way forward:

More autonomy is needed and wanted and because it will not be provided, there is a need for independence (Interview on June 24, 2010—Daniel Turp).

New areas of the policy for the Quebec government will lead towards independence:

For example, we don’t have a constitution. We will create a Quebec citizenship, we will reinforce the charter of French language, we will initiate if necessary some constitutional amendments to see if the federal government and parliament want and will accept the idea that Quebec will be more autonomous in several areas (Interview on June 24, 2010—Daniel Turp).

Historically, sovereigntists argue, Canada is a bi-national state and its Constitution should reflect the dual nature of the state:

There is no constitution change, nobody will be open to create Canada as a bi-national country as it should be from a Quebec perspective (Interview on June 23, 2010—Martin LeMay).

Political autonomy has to do with images, flags, and feelings. In my interview with Daniel Turp in a coffee shop in the old part of Montreal, he described driving to Ottawa each day from Quebec, looking up at the Houses of Parliament and seeing Canada’s flag, not Quebec’s. When traveling across borders in different parts of the world, especially by foot or car, it is most obvious that one is leaving one country for another. Flags often demarcate one territory from another. When crossing state lines in the United States, new signs and/or flags often greet the person entering a new state.
Outwards signs upon entering Quebec, however, tend to be sparse. From Ottawa, Ontario, to Gatineau, Quebec, for example, there are no flags on any of the main bridges. This seems like a significant issue given the importance of symbols to statehood and distinctiveness. It is true that Quebec is not a country, but when traveling from state to state in the United States, there is at least a demarcation of territory with state flags and some form of welcome sign.

At this point, it is extremely unlikely that any politician in Quebec from either the federalist or sovereigntist camps will bring up the issue of Constitutional reform. As a result, sovereigntists are not pushing for much more autonomy; they simply want to become independent. Privately, however, a number of important people in the sovereignty movement admitted that an energetic pro-unity Canadian politician who is willing to adequately listen and respond to the demands of Quebec sovereigntists, could answer the question of national unity once and for all (at least concerning Quebec). For some, the aforementioned federacy model could be quite compelling (where Quebec would have the most political autonomy in Canada in exchange for remaining in the union) because Quebec would have special recognition and would be a place where the French language is institutionally protected. Hypothetically, a confederal model where all provinces get more autonomy could work but there is a desire for recognizing the special status of Quebec, which is why the federacy model would be more appealing than the confederacy model. Most other provinces do not push for more autonomy but dislike the notion that Quebec would be special. As noted in a previous section, this discussion is difficult, but so is the status quo for supporters of Canada and supporters of sovereignty alike.
In order to increase voter confidence in sovereignty, some sovereigntist leaders advocate greater political autonomy in order to demonstrate their competence as a way of showing why Quebec should be independent. In essence, the PQ wants to prove that Quebec can be governed as an independent state. Because demands for political autonomy are limited, there is evidence of civic nationalism because the sovereignty movement is not trying to gain special rights for Quebecois de souche. However, some political elites are targeting more areas of policy in order to make a case for independence. This, in some ways, evidences ethnic-based nationalism because there is a desire on the part of the PQ to increase their areas of governance and impose the changes on immigrant and minority groups. Moreover, the demands on the part of the PQ and BQ are for more autonomy, perhaps in a model that elevates the status of Quebec over all other provinces. This is further evidence of ethnic nationalism on the part of Quebecers because Quebecois de souche would be the main beneficiaries of a federacy model. For this reason, I have categorized the PQ as “mostly ethnic” on political autonomy.

4.4.5 Economics

On the campus of Concordia University, I met with Guy LaChapelle, an intellectual force in the sovereignty movement, and author of a number of books. LaChapelle is different from a number of sovereigntists in that he is very supportive of a sovereignty-association with Canada. Effectively, his goal is to sever political links but to retain concrete economic ties such as the use of the Canadian dollar and continued trade with Canada. LaChapelle argues that the diversification of the Quebec economy is
proof that Quebec can be its own country and with Bombardier and Hydro Quebec, the
province has two very strong sources of revenue.

The economic history of Quebec, however, is quite different from the positive
economic outlook LaChapelle shared with me for the future. Historically speaking,
Quebec (at least in per capita terms) has been much poorer than the ROC and the
interview process revealed a significant amount of historical animosity regarding the
treatment of French-Canadians in Quebec. Milner and Milner, for example, argue that
Les Quebecois were historically an oppressed majority with unemployment rates 20 to 50
percent higher than the rest of Canada (Milner and Milner 1973, 53).

The Canadian government has, however, tried to shrink the gap between rich and
poor throughout the country. As a result, the government makes equalization payments
to poorer provinces to retain a relatively equal standard of living in all of Canada’s
provinces. In Canada, this distinction is described as “have” and “have not” provinces.
In 2010-2011, the value of equalization payments in Canada was set at CDN$14.4
billion. Of this pool of money, Quebec received the highest amount of economic
redistribution from the federal government. However, it is worth noting that when one
controls for population, Quebec is middle income in Canada. However, by the
calculation for redistribution, only the top two or three provinces do not get federal
money (these are described as “have” provinces). Quebec is a “have not” province, but
one that is industrialized (Young 1995, 10).

All supporters of the sovereignty movement, however, vehemently defend the
ability of Quebec to make it as a viable country even though they received CDN $8.5

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billion in equal payments in 2010.\textsuperscript{10} When faced with my questions stating this information, supporters of sovereignty respond in this way: they can live without this money. After all, the money they receive back from the federal government is paid from Quebec taxpayers, both in the form of 5 percent General Sales Tax (GST) and through federal income and corporate taxes.

Another related area of economic policy for the sovereignty movement concerns the issue of economic viability. There is a lot to fear in Quebec regarding the financial state of the province and this fear is not insignificant. After the adoption of Bill 101, for example, three major financial corporations moved their headquarters from Montreal to Toronto (O’Sullivan-See 1986, 153) including Sun Life, Royal Bank, and the Bank of Montreal. Moreover, it was around this time that Toronto replaced Montreal as the hub of Canada’s financial institutions. Montreal is still a wealthy city, but it is no longer the center of Canada’s wealth, and unemployment in Quebec is typically the highest in Canada with the exception of the four Maritime Provinces (Statistics Canada 2011).

One of the most persistent themes to come out of the interview process was that Quebec has a viable economy and can be a viable independent state. Fear has long played an important role in Quebec’s decisions on independence. However, some sovereigntists argue that Quebec can succeed economically as an independent country. In the following quotation, Mr. Boucher remembers the difference between the 1980 and 1995 referenda. In 1980, there was a fear of money leaving in Quebec in secured Brinks trucks (a company that securely transfers money from location to location). In 1995, the same advertisement was not used. Mr. Boucher argues that people were more

\textsuperscript{10} Ibid
comfortable with the idea that Quebec would be financially viable as an independent state.

It was in 1980, the Brinks money carriers. They showed banks for putting all the money on brinks trucks and leaving Quebec for the referendum. Look capital is leaving Quebec! Money is leaving Quebec because of the referendum; they didn’t use a trick like that in ‘95 (Interview on June 25, 2010—Etienne-Alexis Boucher).

Most political elites argue that Quebec can make it as an independent country and would spend its money in a way that is more suitable to the desires of Quebecers. In the below quote, MNA Etienne-Alexis Boucher is arguing that Quebec would spend its money on local Quebec industries rather than promoting the car industry. An independent Quebec, he argues, would be more responsive to the needs of Quebecers.

And in Canada, we have the federal government who have [sic] injected $9 or $10 billion in the car industry, it’s not the same kind of money as yours [the United States], you have $767 billion crazy thing. But for us, $10 billion is quite a lot of money and for the forest industry who knew the same difficulties they get maybe $250 million all over the world. And here in Quebec we have a very important forest industry. Just here you see the downtown warehousing, it’s an American company and downtown, they make some paper and we try to tell people, hey, if we were independent, do you think we would spend $9 billion? Because we estimate that all of the money that was injected in the car industry, we estimate that $1.5/2 billion of this money was from Quebec. It’s part of the money that federal have so we can say to people, imagine what we would have done with this $2 billion, instead of giving it to the car industry? Here in Quebec we can give it to our forest industry, so the choices that are made by federal politicians are not views of the majority of the Canadian and the majority of Canadians are not from Quebec (Interview on June 25, 2010—Etienne-Alexis Boucher).

Another example of the idea that Quebec should have more say over the way its economic resources are used comes from (now former) BQ floor leader, Pierre Paquette, who argues that money would be spent on the desires of Quebecers such as promoting a cleaner environment rather than on resources like oil from Alberta:

Now there is a very interesting debate about the environment because in Quebec we don’t exploit the oil, we have a lot of hydroelectricity so we try to show to the
people how Quebec, a sovereign Quebec, will be able to reduce dependence from oil (Interview on January 8, 2010—Pierre Paquette).

Furthermore, some political elites argue that the economic future of Quebec is extremely positive given the success of some sectors of the economy:

The economy has diversified a lot in the last 20 years. You have Bombardier, Hydro Quebec as a state enterprise. I think Quebec is known worldwide as case study in how nationalization works and makes it profitable for a situation (Interview on June 23, 2010—Guy LaChapelle).

Moreover, with the advancement of free trade, several sovereigntists in Quebec claim that the province is on solid footing because Quebec companies have access to the market of the United States.

Well the economy, the inside market, was very important at the time, so the inside market of Canada was very important to business, but with the free trade with the US and now North America that is growing and with pan-American free trade, the inside Canadian market is not as important (Interview on January 7, 2010—Jonathan Valois).

The question of NAFTA is an important one if Quebec were to become independent. There is no clear answer as to whether Quebec would be grandfathered into NAFTA or whether they would have to go through the accession process (Grabell 1995; Duffy 1997). Most sovereigntists assume that would be part of NAFTA but there is no consensus. Nonetheless, the concept of free trade has been important to the sovereignty movement in recent years. For example:

The idea for Parizeau, who is a free trader by nature, he wanted to change the east-west focus that Canada had given to commercial activity in Quebec within Canada to a more north-south. A more natural flow of Quebec and economic exchanges. And so that’s why the sovereignty movement and those in favor of free trade with the US were also in favor of open markets because it thought that political borders need not be the same as economic borders and that’s also in the late 90s and early 2000s that I started to push for, and had the support of the party,
and both Parizeau and Landry agreed with me, the idea of economic union with the US (Interview on January 6, 2010—Richard Marceau).

Therefore, in an independent Quebec with strong industries, some Quebec political elites reject the transfer payments and want full control over taxation:

We want our own resources, we don’t want transfer payments from the federal government, we want to manage our own financial resources (Interview on June 23, 2010—Martin LeMay).

The PQ and BQ have put forth a number of policy statements and works that argue for the viability of the province. This is a key sticking point in the debate surrounding the future of Quebec. The vast majority of sovereigntists argue that economics is not a concern, but genuine fears remain on the part of the electorate, especially some of the people on the fence regarding independence.

In terms of the economy, the sovereignty movement has for the most part transitioned to more civic-based nationalist policy platforms, and I categorize the PQ as “mostly civic” on economics. No sovereigntist leader has come out in the media and basically said that the redistribution monies from Canada should stop, but the economy of Quebec has been opened to the world and to increased trade. All people, nationalists argue, can succeed economically in the province so long as they speak French.

4.5 Ethnic or Civic?

In its early years, the PQ used to sell monographs advocating various reasons for supporting the party. The second monograph written by former leader, Camille Laurin, in the late 1960s, lays out his reasons for supporting sovereignty. Laurin starts his argument by discussing the collective personality of Quebecois, framed very much in
ethnic terms in need of protection against cultural dilution from English-Canada and the United States (Laurin n.d.). Since immigration to Canada, at least from non-European sources was quite new at that time, very few politicians anywhere were reaching out to immigrants in the hopes of creating a civic society.

There were times, however, that the PQ seemed more civic minded. Rene Levesque, for example, after winning the 1981 provincial election thanked the English and ethnic communities in English for their support. Levesque thanked his immigrant and minority group supporters, “who joined in the mainstream of Quebec support, which has given us this second mandate” (Fraser 2001, 277).

Regardless of the past, it is clear from this chapter that both PQ and BQ have made overtures to become more inclusive of immigrants and minority groups. The truth of the matter, however, is that only a small percentage of immigrants vote for sovereigntist parties and many minority groups do not like the idea of sovereignty. Some minority groups like the Anglophones may be moving away from Quebec, but immigrants will continue to move to Quebec. Given that the percentage of Quebec’s immigrant population is 9 percent and rising, the low level of support for sovereignty is one that nationalists want to improve. The inclusion of ethnic minorities in their party, advertisements, and platforms is a way, sovereigntists argue, of reaching out to immigrants. It is evidence that people of different backgrounds can get elected in Quebec, even sovereigntist parties.

Party statements essentially began to change in 2000 with much more emphasis on globalization. Quebecois identity was defined in a different, non-ethnic way in terms of shared French language in Quebec. The BQ, with Pierre Paquette and Philippe
Gagnon, led the way in this endeavor and the PQ followed soon after. Election platforms in 2004, 2006, and 2008 kept with the same theme of civic-based nationalist platforms through understanding Quebec’s place in a modern and globalized world. This theme has been at least in part recognized by the English language media in Montreal. Don MacPherson, one of the fiercest critics of Quebec nationalism notes that the party leadership has transitioned to civic-based nationalism even if many supporters have not followed. For example:

Ghislain Lebel is old-school. The Bloc Quebecois Member of Parliament for the South Shore riding of Chambly takes his nationalism neat, its ethnically based fire undiluted by talk of an inclusive, “civic” Quebec nation. He unabashedly identifies himself not in “civic” terms as a Quebecker but rather with an ethnic description, as a French Canadian……but public expressions of ethnic nationalism now are frowned upon by sovereigntist leaders, even if their movement remains dedicated to creating a national state dominated by French Canadians, places their interests ahead of those of others and still draws its support overwhelmingly from them (Don MacPherson, *Montreal Gazette*, August 14, 2002).

The transition towards more civic-based nationalist policy platforms then is contested by the vast majority of Anglophones in Quebec. There is an acceptance on the part of Anglophones that the leadership of the sovereignty movement has officially adopted platforms of civic nationalism. However, there is deep skepticism on the part of Anglophones and fear that the rank and file members of the PQ and BQ are still supporters of an ethnically homogenous Quebec. The leaders purport Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities whilst the followers want Anthony Smith’s ethnie. Unless the PQ and BQ are able to draw in more significant numbers of Anglophones and Allophones, then the move towards civic-based nationalism can only be considered limited.
Nonetheless, even in line with Anglophone acceptance, the leadership of the sovereignty movement given an examination of the platforms from the perspective of Francophone Quebecers—language, culture, immigration, political autonomy and economics—evidences a move away from ethnic-based policies and towards a more inclusive civic-based nationalism. In the interview process, civic statements outnumbered ethnic references by a ratio of almost 3:1 as shown in Table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2: PQ and BQ Ethnic versus Civic Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement type</th>
<th>Number of statements</th>
<th>Percentage as a whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>25.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>74.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is some concrete evidence then—from the candidates that they field and promote their advertising, and public and private statements—that the PQ and BQ have adopted policies based much more on civic nationalism than in the past. Nonetheless, there are periodic sound bites that show a more ethnic side—for example Parizeau in 1995, Bouchard in 1995, and Boisclair in 2007—which showcase some form of underlying ethnic protectionism. This presents an ongoing challenge for the sovereigntist movement, to stop ethnic based language on the part of their elites.

A second challenge on the ethnic/civic divide is simply where the policy platforms of the PQ stand on the “intercultural” argument. This debate is somewhat of a judgment call between ethnic and civic. The interculturalist argument rejects
multiculturalism; the creation of different pockets of people into ethnic groups within a given country, and argues that we should all be moving in a common direction based on the people residing within the territory, not blood, ancestry or any other a priori characteristics. Table 4.3 helps to show where and how the sovereignty movement has attempted its transition to more civic-based nationalist policy platforms.

Table 4.3: PQ and BQ Ethnic/Civic Policy Platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy area</th>
<th>Ethnic/Civic</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Immigrants are free to come and reside in Quebec; all non-Anglo children must learn French; animosity towards Anglophones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Mostly ethnic</td>
<td>Cultural nationalism is strongly tied to Quebecois de souche; things are changing with a more diverse population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>Mostly civic</td>
<td>Immigrants are accepted and encouraged to join the sovereignty movement; some more work needs to be done still</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Autonomy</td>
<td>Mostly ethnic</td>
<td>Mostly ethnic Desire for more autonomy to protect the culture and language; autonomy for all people in Quebec, but unfair to rest of Canadian provinces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Mostly civic</td>
<td>The desire is to control finances in Quebec; no-one rejects transfer payments, but some say they would be fine without</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Judging the nature of Quebecois nationalism is certainly complex. Some judgment calls were made in the above table. But between the interviews, the BQ’s pledge to transition to civic-based nationalist platforms in 2000, and the increasing number of immigrants and minorities running for sovereigntist parties, there is evidence that the sovereigntists have become more inclusive. This does not make life easier or
more palatable for Anglophone residents of Montreal. Moreover, proponents of multiculturalism also reject the sovereigntist’s vision of inter-culturalism instead. But given these two important caveats, it is clear that the sovereigntists have made a move towards civic-based nationalist policy platforms. The transition is far from complete, but most immigrants are being included in the sovereignty movement. The task remains more difficult when discussing minority groups like Anglophones in Quebec.
CHAPTER 5

Vlaams Belang in Flanders

On Thursday, April 22, 2010, at 12:30 p.m., I was scheduled to meet with Bruno Valkeniers, the floor leader of VB in the federal Chamber of Representatives. Unfortunately for me, he could not make it. In his absence, I was met by VB staffer, Jan Lievens, who informed me that the federal government had just fallen with the resignation of the Prime Minister, Yves Leterme—a mere forty five minutes ago—over the issue of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde (BHV). Political crisis had just erupted in Belgium, again.

Later that evening, I found out why Valkeniers was absent. His party pulled a highly controversial and politically adventurous stunt in the Chamber. Led by Valkeniers, members of VB from both the Chamber and the Senate gathered to sing the national anthem of Flanders underneath a banner reading: “1100 days of Belgian chaos, time for independence.” The political structure of Belgium just does not work, one prominent VB politician told me, and the party and their supporters want independence for Flanders now.

A little later that week, on April 27, I was scheduled to meet with the Flemish government’s floor leader, Kris Van Dijck from N-VA. But our noon meeting time was postponed to 2 p.m. Urgent business was afoot in Brussels. When Mr. Van Dijck returned, he had news. The federal election had been called early, either scheduled for 6
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or 13 June 2010, a full year ahead of the next scheduled federal election. (The election was finalized for June 13.) This new political crisis was in full swing.

5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the political situation in Belgium and assesses the political platforms of the first of two pro-independence parties in Flanders, VB. First, I explain the current political system in Belgium. Second, I investigate the history of Flanders and Belgium to help explain some of the contemporary problems. Third, I examine VB using five areas of policy to show whether they lean towards ethnic or civic forms of nationalism. Finally, I conclude the chapter with a discussion of VB. After an in-depth analysis of VB’s party platforms, I found that the party follows mostly ethnic nationalist policy platforms. Some nuances exist, but the goal of VB is to protect Flemish people, and defines a Flemish person in narrow terms.

The political fracture between Flemings and Walloons in Belgium is getting progressively worse, and several scholars openly question whether a united Belgian identity still exists (Billiet, Maddens and Frognier 2006), whether Belgium is sustainable (Swenden and Jans 2006), or whether linguistic divisions are so entrenched that the breakup of the state is likely (O’Neill 2000). Additionally, numerous major international news outlets such as the New York Times and the Economist have also asked similar questions. The Flemish newspaper, De Morgan, recently ran a headline saying “Over and Out” in reference to this possibility (Economist, Time to Dissolve Belgium?). And all of this was said before the collapse of the government over BHV.
Flemish support for independence has risen in recent years as evidenced by the rise of nationalist parties, VB and N-VA. (Some argue that Lijst Dedecker [LDD] supports independence as well, but their public messages are mixed.) This support for independence is supplemented by at least a few pro-Flemish representatives in almost every other party in Flanders including, CD&V, Open Vld, and Sp.a. In Flanders, polling on the question of support for independence is quite high (around 40 percent according to some dichotomous polls), but this polling is subjective at best. It is clear, though, that voters are supporting parties like VB and N-VA, and this is evidenced by their success in recent elections. For example, N-VA obtained 29 percent of the vote and VB 12 percent of the vote in Flanders for a combined 41 percent in the 2010 federal election (Waterfield, *Daily Telegraph*, June 13, 2010). And while polling numbers in support of independence are contested, it is also clear that more Flemish voters want at least more regional powers, if not outright independence.

Flemish nationalism is just one issue in the complicated case of Belgium. Governing Belgium is surprisingly complex especially considering that the country has a population of just 10.6 million people. At the federal level, there is a bicameral legislature that is bifurcated in terms of language (Senators and Members of the Chamber are elected based on whether they live in the Flemish or Walloon part of Belgium). At the regional and community levels, government is further complicated. Belgium is divided into three regions—Flanders, Wallonia, and Brussels—and three linguistic communities—Dutch, French, and German—each with its own parliament. Since the Flemish Region and the Dutch Community combine their parliaments, there are five parliaments below the federal level, not to mention the ten additional provincial
parliaments and hundreds of communal councils throughout the country. And, one must also bear in mind, that Belgium elects representatives to the European Parliament as well.

5.2 History

5.2.1 When will the Flemish Lion Roar?

Belgium has long been Europe’s battleground belonging at different times in history to the Burgundian Empire, Hapsburg Empire, Kingdom of Spain, French Empire, Austrian Empire, and the Kingdom of the Netherlands (Stallaerts 2007). Belgium has seen many political changes throughout its history. And this does not even touch on the fact that Germany occupied the country during both World Wars. Despite this complicated history of occupation, Belgium has a long history and was first mentioned as far back as Julius Caesar, who noted that the people of “Belgae” were the fiercest fighters in what is now Western Europe, for resisting the Roman invaders for five years (Stallaerts 2007, xxxi; Mallinson 1970, 41).

Flanders, as a known territory, was first created in 862 when the County of Flanders was made into a feudal fiefdom out of the larger territory of West Francia (Stallaerts 2007, 82). The territorial boundaries in the County of Flanders, however, were very different to the modern boundaries of Flanders. The historic County of Flanders encompassed parts of contemporary western Belgium (the provinces of East and West Flanders, and parts of Antwerp and Hainault), France (part of the Nord and Pas-de-Calais departments), and the Netherlands (a small portion of southern Zeeland).

Many members of the modern Flemish nationalist movement look back on this history and commemorate a famous battle that took place in the early fourteenth century.
The battle of Kortrijk in 1302 is a symbol of Flemish nationalism, in which a Flemish uprising concluded with the defeat of the French. The uprising, lasting from 1300 to 1302, was one in which the Flemish resisted the French and finally beat them on July 11, 1302, a day that still carries real significance for Flemish nationalists and is celebrated as a “national” holiday (Lyon 1971, 16; Clough 1930, 9).

Belgium is a relatively small country in Western Europe that was melded together in 1830. Ironically Dutch speakers in Flanders aligned with their fellow Catholics who were Francophones in opposition to Dutch Protestants in the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the state to which they belonged since 1815. This created a compromise between the French speaking bourgeoisie in Wallonia and conservative Catholics in Flanders whose goal was to leave the Dutch state (Lecours 2006, 190). In Belgium, the Dutch were ultimately seen as foreigners and usurpers of their sovereignty (Mallinson 1963, 149). However, despite the unity shown in 1830, language has become a major cleavage in Belgian society. So much so that members of the nationalist movement in Flanders are agitating to replace the black, yellow, and red flag of Belgium with the yellow and black flag of Flanders.

5.2.2 State Reforms and BHV

Almost from the outset of independence from the Netherlands, the Flemish independence movement began to grow. There were numerous complaints on the part of the lower socioeconomic class in Flanders about the dominance of the French language in all aspects of life: legal, political, economic, social, and cultural (Murphy 1988, 197). Moreover, the Flemish people were considered by the French (and Flemish bourgeoisie)
to be backwards, uncivilized, and reliant upon agriculture. Out of these complaints, the Flemish demanded more rights. These complaints culminated most notably with the creation of the language border in 1962, thus creating the modern day region of Flanders (Lyon 1971, 128). Nationalist fervor continued to intensify and most dramatically became a modern issue when riots broke out in 1968 at the Catholic University in Leuven over linguistic fairness in the university system (Murphy 1988, 202).

It was out of these riots that the first Boeynants government (1966-68) eventually fell later in 1968, and triggered a crisis that first revised the Belgian state (Lyon 1971, 129). This was just the first of five state reforms (1970, 1980, 1988/9, 1993, 2001) that turned the country from a unitary state into a federal state with more and greater powers being granted to the regions and communities with each state reform. (A sixth state reform may still occur in the aftermath of the 2010 federal election, and a formal proposal made in October 2011 has now been made public; as of May 2012 the proposal is still being debated.)

The first state reform, in 1970, created three separate cultural communities, which were divided along linguistic lines: Flemish, French, and German (Belgium.be: First and Second reforms). Moreover, the 1970 reform also created four language areas: Dutch, French, German, and the bilingual Dutch-French Brussels-Capital region (Hooghe 1991, 20).¹¹ All regions and cultural communities had very limited powers. In 1980, the second state reform changed the powers of the cultural communities and transitioned them into communities with expanded powers over individuals, as well as culture in the areas of health and social services (Belgium.be: First and Second reforms). Additionally,

¹¹ Dutch is an official language of Belgium. Flemish refers to the culture of Flanders. Flemish—as a language—is merely a dialect of Dutch as spoken by the people of Flanders.
two new autonomous regions were created (as separate from the communities): the Flemish region and the Walloon region (Hooghe 1991, 21). In 1988/1989 after a prolonged government crisis, a third state reform settled the political deadlock. A third region, for Brussels, was created to go alongside Flanders and Wallonia (Hooghe 1991, 23). The Brussels Region was created out of Flanders providing the capital city, Brussels, with its own regional parliament, which included the nineteen main communes in the city. The communities were given more power in the area of education, and the regions were given the portfolios of transport and public works (Belgium.be: Third and Fourth reforms). The fourth state reform in 1993 created a full federal state in Belgium, completing the transition from a unitary state that existed prior to the first state reform in 1970 (Belgium.be: Third and Fourth Reforms). Consistent with the notion of a federal state, commensurate powers were given to Flanders and Wallonia. In 2001, a fifth state reform further modified the state with two separate changes known as the Lambermont and Lombard accords respectively (Belgium.be: Fifth reform). The first change granted more powers to the regions and communities in the areas of agriculture, fisheries, and foreign trade, whilst the second change provided Flemish inhabitants of Brussels with guaranteed representation in the Brussels parliament (even though Flemings are now a very small minority in Brussels).

In many ways, these five state reforms help to set the background as to why the government fell unexpectedly in 2010. The issue of BHV was the main reason why the government fell. For Flemings, the state reforms have been designed to protect Dutch speakers in the city and to recognize the historical role of Flemings; for Walloons, they want more powers and language facilities in French given the higher numbers of
Francophones in Brussels and the surrounding area. BHV consists of the city of Brussels and the surrounding areas, Halle, representing communes to the southwest of Brussels, and Vilvoorde, representing communes to the northeast of the city. BHV is part of a province in the Flemish Region called Flemish Brabant. However, since 1994 (as part of the 1993 state reform), Flemish Brabant has been split into two parts for all federal elections: BHV and Leuven.\textsuperscript{12} This is one of the main sources of animosity on the part of Flemish nationalists because, for them, Brussels should belong to Flanders.

BHV is seen very differently by the two main groups in the society: Flemings and Walloons. For Walloons, the issue of BHV should be resolved based on democratic principles. More French speakers now live in Brussels, so they should get more language and electoral rights in and around the city. For Dutch speakers, BHV should be decided based on the principle of territoriality.\textsuperscript{13} After all, BHV is a major incursion on Flemish territory as delineated by the 1962 language border. BHV is one reason why Flemish nationalists are so animated about independence and about stifling the current government formation. Historically, Brussels was a majority Dutch speaking city in the 19th Century before transitioning into a majority French speaking city in the 20th Century (Hooghe 1991, 16).

\textbf{5.2.3 Institutional Setting}

At this point, it worth pausing to briefly explain how the Belgian electoral system works. It will help to show where the issue of BHV sits in the larger picture of Belgium. The Belgian electoral system requires voting and elects both houses—the Chamber of

\textsuperscript{12} BHV information is based on interviews.
\textsuperscript{13} BHV information is based on interviews.
Representatives and the Senate—on the same day. The system is a semi-open list system of proportional representation with a 5 percent threshold at the constituency level (Pilet 2008, 548).

The Chamber of Representatives has 150 seats; 88 for Flanders and 62 for Wallonia, based loosely on population (CIA Factbook: Belgium). Both language groups have seats from the constituency of BHV. Despite the different allotments of seats in the Chamber to French and Dutch speakers, constitutional reforms can only be conducted with the mutual agreement of both language groups (2/3 from both major language groups).

In the Senate, there are 71 senators who are elected from three basic categories. In the first category, Belgium has two electoral colleges worth 40 seats (25 Flemish and 15 French). A further 21 senators are ‘indirectly’ elected from the regional parliaments (10 Flemish, 10 French, and 1 German). The final 10 senators are co-opted senators designated by the political parties (Pilet 2008, 548).

Perhaps most interesting is that since the 1970s, all national parties split and have become regional parties (Pinxten 2006, 128; Hooghe 1991, 5; Rocher, Rouillard and Lecours 2001, 177). Some small, minor parties run nationally but they typically do not get many votes. This underlines a most serious bifurcation in Belgian society that was repeated to me in the interview process. Several Flemish nationalists from both parties argue that Flanders and Wallonia are so distinct to the point that each region has little to no contact, or knowledge, of the other including their celebrities, local political leaders, and symbols. Only a few combined institutions keep the state together as a functioning whole.
5.2.4 Volksunie (People’s Union)

Flemings have long protested their status in Belgium, as many have long felt like second class citizens (Lyon 1971, 127). In 1954, a group of Flemings created Volksunie, a Flemish federalist party, which ran on the platform of creating greater autonomy for Flanders (Murphy 1988, 201). The party was first created out of a number of small pro-Flemish parties (Rudolph 1982, 270) and, at some points in their history, Volksunie had some electoral success even garnering upwards of 20 percent of the electoral vote in Flanders (not including Brussels or Brabant). Moreover, on two separate occasions, they formed part of the national coalition government. Some, more radical members of Volksunie, wanted more political action on the issue of independence and formed a party called Vlaams Blok, the precursor to VB (Rocher, Rouillard, and Lecours 2001, 178). Vlaams Blok started in 1977 and slowly grew into a significant player in Flemish politics in its own right. Volksunie continued in the political system until 2001 but eventually disbanded because of a lack of support. Out of the remains of Volksunie, N-VA was founded in 2001.

Volksunie ran on a platform of ‘cultural separatism’ in a ‘federation of two,’ in which both Flemish and Walloon culture could be championed (Rudolph 1982, 277). Basically, the party ran on the platform of more autonomy for Flanders. In some ways, this push for greater autonomy was not enough for some Flemish nationalists. Volksunie therefore divided in 1977, in large part, over the issue of federalizing Belgium and the newly formed Vlaams Blok broke away to create a new political option for an independent Flanders (Stallaerts 2007, 68). This is the history behind the modern
division of VB and N-VA and the sense that there are now competing nationalisms in Flanders.

5.3 **Vlaams Belang: Omdat wij de Vlamingen verdedigen** *(Dutch)*  
**Flemish Interest: Because we defend the Fleming** *(English)*

5.3.1 **Introduction**

Amid a cacophony of cheers, and chants of “België Barst (break-up Belgium),” Filip De Winter comes to the stage on April 18, 2010. In front of packed crowd of twelve hundred supporters in a convention center on Vlaamse kaai in Antwerp, he effortlessly espouses the main VB policy platforms, expresses the need for independence, quotes and expresses solidarity with US President Ronald Reagan, and rails against the expansion of Islam in Belgium.

For VB, independence is the number one priority. This is stated in virtually every party publication, broadcast, and statement. Quite simply, all other problems in Flanders can be fixed much more easily, they argue, once Flanders is independent. The initial idea of independence was, however, something of a pipedream when VB formed in 1977 as very few people took the idea seriously. However, over time, independence has become a mainstream platform in Flanders and is a serious topic for debate.

Members of VB have tried to act on their stated priority of obtaining independence. On November 27, 2007, several members of VB put forth a motion in the Belgian Chamber of Representatives to dissolve Belgium into three pieces. Most Flemish parties voted against the measure, although all members of N-VA abstained along with three members of the governing CD&V. This provides some evidence that the idea of Flemish independence is relevant.
5.3.2 Ethnic Nationalism

VB was originally called Vlaams Blok when the party started in 1977 as a fringe, radical party with a number of very extreme platforms. The party was made up of members of the Volksunie who refused to support the Egmont Pact, an agreement, which cemented the federalization of Belgium (Stallaerts 2007, 68; Snyder 1982, 93). Over the years, their base of support has grown steadily; they obtained a significant electoral breakthrough of 12 seats in 1991, which continued to grow through the Belgian regional elections of 2004. However, during this time there were also serious challenges to the party. A judge, during their famous court case in 2004, ruled that the party was racist and had to be disbanded. It was after the official ruling that Vlaams Blok changed its name to Vlaams Belang. (Vlaams Belang means Flemish Interest whereas Vlaams Blok means Flemish Bloc.) The name change in turn led to a number of important changes to party platforms (Erk 2005, 493). The Belgian court effectively mandated a change in platforms such that the new VB complied with Belgium’s anti-racism laws and therefore kept state funding (Stallaerts 2007, 85). VB, the court argued, continually incited discrimination and racial segregation because they advocated deportation as a strategy to decrease the number of people from North Africa and Turkey. This incitement violated Belgian anti-racism laws. Whether or not VB is racist is not the major concern in this dissertation; rather, there categorization as an ethnic nationalist party is.

Statements made by members of VB in my interviews, taken holistically, are quite clearly in the category of ethnic nationalism. This was evident in the coding process given the number of us/them statements made regarding immigrants and the deportation
of immigrants. In my eleven interviews, I coded ethnic statements at almost a 4:1 ratio vis-à-vis civic statements as stated in Table 5.1 below. I only coded a statement when it was clearly in one category or the other. Inclusive statements were coded as civic and exclusive statements were coded as ethnic.

**Table 5.1: VB Ethnic versus Civic Statements**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>79.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20.99%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Likewise, in the academic literature, almost all academics argue that VB is a party that supports ethnic nationalism. For example, Janet Laible argues that members of Vlaams Blok essentially approach politics with the conception of an ethnic nation; membership is based on blood and cannot be acquired from marriage (Laible 2001, 232). Likewise, Marco Martinello argues that the existence of their ‘70 points’ plan to stop immigration provides evidence that VB supports an ethnically pure Flanders that is free of immigrants (Martinello 1995, 133-6). These assessments are not entirely true. Immigrants can become Flemings, according to VB, but they must work very hard to assimilate by learning Dutch and respecting Western cultural norms such as the separation of Church and State and the equality of men and women. One of the main problems during the interview process, however, was trying to find out how the
conditions could be met. There was no real answer to how immigrants could satisfy these requirements.

To a large extent, however, I agree with Laible and Martinello and accordingly I have classified VB in the category of ethnic nationalism. A simple dichotomous division between ethnic and civic oversimplifies some cases though. There are nuances to the policy platforms of VB, and I extrapolate these nuances in each of the different areas of policy.

In the modern era, this type of ethnic nationalism is atypical in Western societies, but it is not without precedent in places like Japan and South Korea. Foreigners are free to live and work, but gaining citizenship is another matter. VB defends their platform to stop immigration and protect Flemish identity. Some voters in Flanders agree as evidenced by the solid level of support VB has received since 1991. Ethnic nationalism is resurgent throughout Western Europe and has become an important force in 21st Century politics. Ethnic nationalism, for supporters, is a way of protecting identity, culture, and way of life, in the face of changing demographics. It is, in many respects, a way of creating Anthony Smith’s sense of a separate ‘ethnie’ that can be considered a nation (Smith 1991).

5.3.3 Why Ethnic Nationalism Remains?

Many members of VB reject the label of ethnic nationalism. They would rather emphasize the need to protect Flanders from cultural erosion and to decrease crime rates. But when immigrants come to Flanders, members of VB want them to assimilate
absolutely into Flemish culture. This desire to protect a “pure” form of Flemish culture is the first reason why VB maintains a platform of ethnic nationalism.

We are a Flemish party and we are fighting for Flemish interests and identity, so if there are immigrants who agree and consider themselves as part of our society, that is a good thing and we agree. We welcome that. But we only work with them as such, as people who have integrated into our society. So we don’t want to reach out to them as Moroccan or Turks or whatever. If these people consider themselves Flemings, well we do too, then we don’t have any reason to do anything special for them—Interview with Philip Claeys on April 9, 2010

VB does not oppose immigration, especially from other parts of Europe as is the obligation under the EU, but opposes “mass immigration.” VB does not oppose immigration, but they advocate immigration from European sources and without any adverse effect on Flemish culture.

Let me say that when it comes to immigration, [when] it comes to numbers and to culture, and the business of culture. For example, we’ve had Italian immigrants, and Spanish immigrants who live in Belgium. After a generation or two, they are completely assimilated. But they do not come from an Islamic background, which is completely opposed to western and European values, then it becomes very difficult—Interview with Jan Lievens on April 22, 2010

There is a fear that Flemish culture is being lost. Many members of VB specifically point to immigrants from the Maghreb who are also described in terms of their religious and cultural backgrounds as well—Islamic. Typically, the religion of the immigrants is listed selectively, whether or not the individual immigrant is religious or not.

Now I think the reason many people vote for us because they see around [their region], the veil, the mosques, [and] the minarets, so people see that. But also in small towns, not just in Brussels. So in Belgium, Islam is getting bigger and bigger, people are very sensitive to that, which is why we will gain again votes also—Interview with Tanguy Veys on April 26, 2010.
And:

For us a big problem is Islam. Islam is standing in the way for many people to adapt. The way [such as] ritual slaughter, genital mutilations, honor killing, [and] all those things. Also, wearing the burqa, those things. That’s the way for these people—Interview with Tanguy Veys on April 26, 2010

Political elites from VB oppose immigration from Muslim states. This is not a form of religious nationalism because most members of VB are secular and not Christian. So, VB seeks to uphold secularism in opposition to Islamic beliefs. The problem, however, is that the majority of immigrants are non-religious. So the issue is not so much religion, it is ethnicity. That ethnicity is also tied to a different religion and different cultural moorings. VB often targets some of the more radical elements of Islam. There are some people who try to speak for Muslims and argue things like sharia law should be the law of Belgium, but they do not represent the vast majority of people in the Maghrebian and Turkish diaspora’s in Belgium.

There is also an economic component to their ethnic nationalism. Given the current situation in Europe where a lot of governments are having difficulties maintaining balanced budgets, VB asserts a need to protect the economy of Flanders from overt strains caused by too much immigration. This is the second reason why VB maintains a policy platform of ethnic nationalism. It is theoretically much easier to pay for a smaller number of ethnic Flemings than a larger, multiethnic society because fewer jobs are required and a smaller social safety net is good enough to provide for the population. For example:

It was made for our own people, not for a million strangers because we are putting in money and when you are retiring then you get it back, or when you are ill, or in that situation, or if you are unemployed. It’s impossible to have the social system when 10,000 or 100,000 immigrants come. They don’t speak the language, they
don’t have houses, they don’t work, no job, and it’s impossible to pay—Interview with Jan Laeremans on April 13, 2010.

In Flanders, VB was originally formed to fill a particular role in the policy process. The goal was to voice a particular opinion on independence, immigration, and safety. Although marginal at first, VB gained in popularity throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s. VB remained popular and thus it made electoral sense to stay on the fringes and continue to garner support. This confirms Kitschelt’s (1995) notion of “room” on the political extremes. VB succeeded by maximizing their base on the extreme(s) of the Flemish political spectrum. There were fewer parties on the right of the spectrum and so VB was able to appeal to a lot of people, and support for the party grew.

The high-point reached at the 2004 regional elections has, however, changed. VB no longer receives 24 percent of the vote, and most recently received 12 percent of the vote at the 2010 federal election. From a vote maximizing point of view, it may make sense to change policy platforms. However, when VB was formed, there was a lot of space between the center-right Christian Democrats and VB. Now, there are several newer parties like N-VA and LDD that have moved into that space. A transition to civic nationalism could be difficult and may erode existing support.

Nonetheless, VB has changed and moderated some policy positions. Some of the positions have been moderated over time. For example:

I think that the VB has changed in all of the years that we have been operating. We have changed. We were much more radical, it’s not the right way to put it, we were much more harsh. We still defend the same principles and the same program, we have the same basic program, but we were in our campaigns and communications [and] we were much more harsh 10-15 years ago. But we changed, we adopted our language so we were in favor of sending back most of the non-European, especially Moroccan, [and] African immigrants. Now that is not what we are saying just put a stop to mass immigration—Interview with Philip Claeys on April 9, 2010
The above quote illustrates the point that VB has made some subtle changes to their policy platforms over the years. Some of the more overtly ethnic nationalist language was toned down, but not changed. Members of VB argue that anyone can become Flemish, though, as noted below.

Because our own point view changed because we said if someone from Morocco or Turkey learns the language, works here, has adapted, his children go to school here, it’s not correct to send them back because if he has become Flemish like the Flemish people, why do you want to send him back?—Interview with Tanguy Veys on April 26, 2010

Despite the overtures to different immigrant populations, especially those of Moroccan or Turkish background, people are expected to change in order to live in the society and be considered a member of said society. This is not civic nationalism, however. Civic nationalism implies a sense that people are free to be who they want even if that deviates from the norms of the society.

VB has made a concerted effort to retain policy platforms that are opposed to mass immigration especially from Morocco and Turkey, which is evidence of ethnic-based nationalism. There is political space on the electoral extreme for VB and party members note that they have a role to play in the political dialogue, even without changing to more moderate, civic-based nationalist positions. In Flanders, there is almost no political room in the center, so there is no incentive to change. The Social democratic, Sp.a., occupy the left, the Christian-Democrats, CD&V, LDD, Groen, Open Vld, and NV-A all fill the space between left and right, and VB is left with the extreme right. Given that there are seven significant parties in the region, it would be very difficult to move elsewhere in the political spectrum.
In Figure 1.2 in Chapter One, there has to be an incentive to adopt civic-based nationalist policy platforms. In Belgium, there is no real mechanism for holding a referendum to gain independence. Therefore, VB continues to appeal to its core electorate on the platforms of independence, resolute protection of a “pure” Flemish culture, opposition to “mass immigration” mainly from Islamic states, and zero tolerance on crime. For example:

I think that our core public, I think [is] between 10 and 15%. I can’t say exactly, but I think it is correct, which is fairly normal for a radical party—Interview with Eric Bucycoye on April 30, 2010

And, as some members of VB argue, there is a role for the party in the wider political dialogue. Given the number of parties in Flanders, VB has to work together with other parties like N-VA in order to achieve the goal of independence. For example:

We support each other [VB and N-VA]. We have different roles. They have their role and we have ours. And there are some people of N-VA who do not like VB and there are some people of VB who do not like people of N-VA, but there are a lot of people of VB who appreciate N-VA and there are a lot of people from N-VA that appreciate VB. So there is a sort of crossover—Interview with Steven Utsi on April 30, 2010

Despite changes to some specific policy platforms, VB remains tied to an ethnic form of nationalism. The party sees for itself an important role to play in the political discourse in Flanders. VB employs policy platforms in line with ethnic-based nationalism, but it is worth examining the five policy areas more closely to understand the nuances of their positions and where they support ethnic nationalism, and where they do not. Like in Chapter 4, some further discussion of why VB has not transitioned to civic nationalism will be made at the end of each section.
5.4 Policy Areas: Whether VB has transitioned to Civic Nationalism?

In the interview process, the following policy areas were discussed at length. Depending on the specialty of the interviewee, some areas of policy were discussed more than others. Table 5.2 shows the number of coded statements for each area of policy below. Economics, political autonomy, and immigration are all major themes.

Table 5.2: VB Coding for Policy Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy area</th>
<th>Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Autonomy</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2 illustrates the frequency that a given area of policy was discussed by the interviewees. This shows that members of VB were more likely to discuss the links between independence and economics. Political autonomy and immigration were significant issues, too. Surprisingly, culture was not discussed with more frequency as I would have expected the protection of culture to be more prevalent in the discourse of VB.
5.4.1 Language

In VB’s party office at the Flemish Parliament in Brussels, I met Tanguy Veys. Veys was recently elected (2010) to the Chamber of Representatives for VB from the province of East Flanders. On the issue of language in Belgium, Veys described for me a history that is fraught with Francophone dominance over the Dutch speaking population who were made to feel like second class citizens in their own country in all aspects of society including education, the court system, and economic advancement.

VB is very firm when it comes to the Dutch language and Flemish culture. On their website this point is made openly:

Vlaams Belang wants a fair and strict immigration policy: Flemish people have the right to protect their own language and culture (www.vlaamsbelang.org/57).

Language, culture, and immigration are all interlinked as noted in the above quote. One reason for the creation of an independent state is the ability to retain a language and culture that is distinctively Flemish. However, the evidence here is on the statement, “their own language and culture,” which implies a very homogenous requirement for entry by speaking the Dutch language and assimilating fully into Flemish culture. This aligns with Smith’s notion of an ethnie as a reason for a nation. Language and an ethnic core are central to VB and this remains a relevant issue in Belgium.

Language has a long and turbulent history in Belgium. In fact, the linguistic division in Belgium can be traced back to at least the third Century when Salian Franks began to settle in the Roman Empire (Snyder 1982, 86; Mallinson 1963, 147; Clough 1930, 3). When the Romans pulled out of the region in the fifth Century, the Franks were able to establish their own customs and native Germanic language (Mallinson 1970, 176-
Dutch, German, and French all coexisted in the region, but the language of government depended on which empire/ruler was in power.

Linguistic divisions were paramount in Belgium especially in official institutions such as the military where Francophones dominated high level positions. In my interviews, several VB members still reference World War I as a major atrocity for Flemings and a major reason for wanting independence from Wallonia. Essentially, many Dutch speakers were ordered to fight and die (without understanding the language) on orders given by French speaking officers (Pinxten 2006, 126). The linkages and sympathy to Flemish World War I soldiers who could not understand their military instructions in French, remains a major motivating factor for Flemish nationalists today.

For example:

…my grandfather, the father of my mother, fought during the First World War. It was the start of the Flemish political movement because in this little area they fought against German invaders as you know. They were all packed together, educated men, and farmers, men with no education, men with little education, that were commanded in French, a language they didn’t understand. So terrible things happened and terrible mistakes happened there. And during the First World War there was a kind of resistance movement in Flanders that was growing. And these educated young men pledged to make sure that after the end of the WW1, linguistic rights, [and] educational rights should be granted to the Flemish people who were already the majority in Belgium, but were ordered in French. It was the language of the upper classes of the elite of the country (Interview on April 14, 2010—Pieter Logghe).

From WWI onwards, linguistic relations did improve slowly. The next major change occurred in 1921 when Belgium adopted the territorial principle basically mandating that where a language is spoken by the population, linguistic rights apply (Murphy 1988, 200). Therefore, on paper, the Dutch language was to be used in Flanders, and French was to be used in Wallonia. This law was further enhanced in 1932
with complete unilingualism in the respective regions (Murphy 1988, 201; Lyon 1971, 129; Hooghe 1991, 12).

Nonetheless, even in the aftermath of World War II, Dutch speakers still faced some disadvantages, even in Flanders. This led to a number of notable showdowns over language including the riots in Leuven, which led to the collapse of Vanden Boeynets’ government (Mallinson 1970, 176), and the issues of Voeren (one of the challenges to the linguistic border) and BHV.

In contemporary Belgium, language rights are in place for Dutch speakers who are a majority in the country. However, immigration is now having an interesting effect on language in Flanders. Several VB members argue, for example, that a majority of immigrants who arrive in Belgium go to Wallonia. According to the National Institute for Statistics (NIS), Wallonia’s foreign born population percentage is double that of Flanders and, as an overall total, has accepted 50,000 more foreign born people into the country than Flanders (NIS 2000). Additionally, the Brussels-Capital region has attracted almost as many immigrants as Flanders despite being one-fifth the size (NIS 2000). This trend essentially amounts to a significant demographic change, in which the Dutch language is slowly becoming more of a minority in Belgium. This is, in some ways, a reason why VB supports independence immediately. They feel a sense that something has to be done right now to protect Flemish identity and the Dutch language in Flanders. For example:

The whole political elite (in Belgium) is largely French speaking. On the top level (in politics and economics), people still need to use French as the lingua franca (Interview on May 12, 2010—Karim Van Overmeiere.)

And, as another example:
They pick migrants who have that language and they come here and they speak French so they have, and that’s one of the issues when we talk about immigration, the French community has an interest to extend migration because it shifts the demographic balance of the country (Interview on April 30, 2010—Erik Bucyuoye).

According to my interviews from some leaders of VB such as Philip Claeys, Pieter Logghe, and Hagen Goyvaerts, there are three clear demands from VB on the issue of language. First, the Dutch language is a major aspect of identity vis-à-vis the French speaking population of Wallonia and must be protected. Second, for VB, the party wants to protect the Dutch language heritage of Brussels and this may require some concessions, but the Dutch roots of the city cannot be conceded entirely. And third, VB wants an independent Flanders to follow three basic rules: speak Dutch, uphold the equality of men and women, and uphold the secular traditions of Flanders. This platform is exactly the same as N-VA in Flanders, and the PQ in Quebec. All three parties exhibit an intense desire to protect language as part of identity. Creating an independent state, they argue, is the best way to protect their language from French speakers moving into the Flemish Region, and from immigrants. This happened in the past, members of VB argue, and it could happen again. For example:

For instance, Brussels, which was a long time ago, a Flemish city, but more and more French people and more people who [sic] felt a kind of stimulating feeling to speak French because it was the language of the elites in Belgium (Interview on April 14, 2010—Pieter Logghe).

Language, as a category, can be difficult to categorize into ethnic or civic nationalism; however, civic openness, as noted in the introduction, depends on how welcome other languages are in the region. There is an obvious need to protect Dutch from French, according to VB, because it is a driving force in the movement. Within Flemish society, however, the use of English is predominant on television. Numerous
languages are spoken on the streets of Flanders by immigrants from all over the world. VB is open or at least agnostic in one sense to European languages and American cultural influences, but strongly opposes the use of Arabic and Turkish. Gellner’s sense of a high culture is retained through maintaining Dutch as a central part of the Flemish ethnie that is different from other nations. For this reason I categorize VB’s policies and statements on language as “mostly ethnic.” This appeals to a certain segment of the voting population and confirms Kitschelt’s conclusion that where political room exists on the extremes, an ethnic nationalist party will fill the gap and stay there.

5.4.2 Culture

The term “French fries” is a misnomer; fries are actually Belgian. In Flanders, a staple of the culture is the “frituur,” a small shop or stand that sells fries along with other hamburgers, fish burgers etc. And the fries must be eaten in true Flemish fashion with mayonnaise. In many ways, the frituur is a constant in Flemish culture.

I had just been introduced to the Flemish staple of the frituur when I met with Philip Claeys, one of VB’s members in the European Parliament (EP), in his office in the Altiero Spinelli building at the EU complex in Brussels. Claeys described the cultural battle in Belgium—between Flemings and Muslim immigrants—as akin to that described in Samuel Huntington’s clash of civilizations (Huntington 1996; Huntington 1993). Claeys argues that Huntington’s work has some small accuracy problems, but his views are very important to VB and shape some of their policy platforms. Protecting Flemish culture is a top priority for him, and his party.

I think Huntington was right even though there were some details in his book. For instance, [Huntington argues that] Greece is not part of the western world,
Greece is orthodox. This is wrong, but generally speaking Huntington was right and he predicted 9/11, which was symbolic in what Huntington was saying. And I think what we are seeing now, we have people in Europe, who live in Europe, who often get money and other stuff from European taxpayers, but they don’t accept our way of living, our European heritage and values and traditions. They want their own traditions and they are radicalizing (Interview on April 9, 2010—Philip Claeys).

The coming/current clash of civilizations, according to VB, is a significant part of their strategic thinking: that the Muslim population is increasing in size in Belgium with the potential to destroy Flemish identity. For VB, Flemish culture needs to be protected against French language incursions and against the growth and influence of Islam.

Culture, in many ways, is one of the most difficult terms to accurately define. Culture itself is highly theoretical, constantly changing, malleable, and very difficult to pin down. Nonetheless, the term culture is used quite frequently in many circles. In the interview process, there were a few themes that emerged regarding the issue of culture. First, protecting Flemish culture from French speakers is important. Culturally, members of VB argue that the Flemish people are much closer to the Anglo-Saxon world whereas the Walloons are much closer to the French cultural/economic position, which advocates a much bigger social safety net and higher taxes to distribute wealth more equitably (thus decreasing the incentive for individuals to work hard and gain wealth). Second, protecting the Dutch heritage of Brussels is important because any further erosion of Dutch speaking areas in the Flemish region constitutes an assault on the culture; it provokes a sense of fear amongst VB members. Finally, minorities and immigrants must assimilate to Flemish and European culture. This is a major reason for VB’s policy of a complete stop to immigration. (And deportation of illegal immigrants who commit crimes.)
To prove that VB protects Flemish culture, the party engaged in an advertising campaign in early 2010 provoking people to ask why voters should consider voting for their party. This advertising campaign involved three billboards, one in French, one in Mandarin, and one in Arabic, asking the question, why VB? Later, using the same billboards, the party answered their question. The answer: Because we protect the Fleming. VB used these three languages to highlight, according to Filip De Winter, “present-day problems” in Flanders. The use of Arabic points to the Islamicization of Belgium, the French billboard points to the Walloon hold on the Belgian federation, and the Mandarin points to jobs losses in Flanders to low-wage countries such as China.¹⁴

At the start of this section, I introduced the frituur as a staple of Flemish culture. However, in the same way that curry has basically become the unofficial dish of the United Kingdom, the Doner Kebab has similarly become an unofficial part of the cuisine in Belgium. Doner Kebab stands/restaurants can be found throughout Flanders. Culture is in flux and the debate over multiculturalism is and will remain a major point of debate in Belgium.

The position of VB is to protect Flemish culture from overt outside influences but only really from “non-Western” sources. There is an element of Flemish culture that is very open to the outside world provided that it is Western and secular. However, there is an overt desire on the part of VB to protect Flanders against Islamic influence. This provides some evidence of ethnic nationalism in reference to Islam, but also some elements of civic nationalism when dealing with secular Westerners. However, given their animosity with Muslims, I have categorized VB’s platforms and statements on culture as “mostly ethnic.” Many individuals/immigrants from Muslim countries are

¹⁴ http://www.vlaamsbelang.org/56/94/
secular and want to simply live and work in countries with good employment opportunities. Moreover, the vast majority of religious Muslims are peace loving; only a very small minority engages in radical behavior, but VB plays on this stereotype. When there is an incident between groups, VB is able to use the incident to their advantage in electoral campaigns.

5.4.3 Immigration

Glen Duerr: How do you see Flemish identity? Can someone become a Fleming? Like a Moroccan or a Turk, can they become Flemish?

Pieter Logghe: [It is] a very difficult question: what identity? Our opponents always smash us in the face with [this idea]. [They say that] VB has only simple views on identity, its only ethnic with VB, they say Moroccans or Turks can never be Flemish. No, Mr. Duerr, it is not that simple, there are also some reasons in that magazine. We are trying to think deeper. Identity for us is never something that is completed. It is diffused. Because your identity has different levels, you belong to different circles, which are overlapping each other. You belong to a family, you belong to a neighborhood, you belong to a community, you have friends, you have your political party, [and] you have your work, all kinds of things. An individual Moroccan, or an individual Turk, even families from there can become Flemish.

Pieter Logghe responds to my question peering over his spectacles as we discuss immigration policy in his office in the Chamber of Representatives in Brussels. Logghe is a member of the Chamber from the province of West Flanders. Moreover, he is a staunch defender of VB’s policy platforms on immigration and rejects any notion of racism or ethnic nationalism. Provided that a person speaks Dutch, believes in a secular state, and the equality of men and women, Logghe argues, that person is welcome in Flanders, whatever their background.

Logghe’s quote most accurately summarizes VB’s position on immigration. The party is not opposed to a few immigrants, but they do not like mass immigration. So, I
formulated another question: what constitutes mass immigration? When I pressed different members of VB to give me a number, a figure of how many immigrants should be allowed into Belgium (since they are not opposed to a few immigrants), several members of VB simply argued that they could not give a number. The problem with this response, however, is that many governments around the world set quotas for immigration; they have the numbers. From my observation of the party, VB is not an overtly racist party, but they set extremely strict limits on immigration, have a track record of antagonism towards Muslim immigrants, and do fall within a limited definition of racism. Moreover, when I attended their rallies, some people in attendance openly wore symbols of white power. To be fair, this group was only a small minority, but the people were open with their symbols.

There is clear evidence of ethnic nationalism then, but to understand the nuances, it is essential to note how VB’s immigration policy has changed (at least somewhat) over time. The party is proud of its tough stance against immigration as a means to protect Flemish identity. The original “70 points plan” was drafted in 1992 to provide an “answer” (deportation) to the problem of immigration (Martinello 1995, 136). Later, this immigration policy changed to ‘aanpassen of terugkeren’ (adapt or go back). So over time, there have been slight shifts in immigration policy.15

VB’s current policy on immigration is simple: stop all immigration now. This policy is intrinsically tied to economic concerns pertaining to the current recession, but the policy is also tied to the protection of culture and Smith’s notion of a separate ethnie. The problem for VB, however, is that they are not part of the government and do not control immigration policy. Since “mass immigration” continues, without some form of

15 Email from Filip De Winter (VB chairman) on May 5, 2010.
assimilation to the Dutch language, secularism, and equality, as Logghe noted above, the fear is that Flemish identity will inevitably change and/or become lost to an alien culture, which is seen as undesirable. According to VB, too many immigrants are causing too many problems in the society. This is linked with crime, strains on the economic system, high levels of unemployment, and antisocial behavior. Moreover, several communities in Brussels are becoming heavily populated by immigrant groups including the communes of Mollenbeek, Scharbeek, Anderlecht, and Etterbeek (communes frequently cited by VB as the most dangerous and crime-ridden). When I asked some elite political leaders of VB how they reach out to immigrants as a means to solve these problems, the answer is simple: they do not reach out to immigrants.

But we don’t really reach out to immigrants. We don’t do what the other parties are trying to do. You see electoral posters in Turkish or Arab. We are never going to do that, never. We have met people from Turkey and Morocco who have taken our nationality and vote VB. These people are around, I think that it is a minority, but they are around, they exist. We are not specifically reaching out to them. We are a Flemish party and we are fighting for Flemish interests and identity, so if there are immigrants who agree and consider themselves as part of our society, that is a good thing and we agree; we welcome that. But we only work with them as such, as people who have integrated into our society, so we don’t want to reach out to them as Moroccans or Turks or whatever. If these people consider themselves Flemings well we do too, then we don’t have any reason to do anything special for them (Interview on April 9, 2010—Philip Claeys).

Politically, VB’s stance of opposing immigration has been politically beneficial for the party. VB’s policy on immigration has remained fairly stable since 1977 although the content of the message as noted above has changed over time. VB, in past elections, used to describe immigration as a threat to Flemish workers, that immigrants were stealing jobs from Flemings. Since 9/11, however, there has been a new emphasis on the growth of what is described as “radical Islam.”¹⁶ As a result of the high number of

¹⁶ Ibid
immigrants from Morocco, Turkey, and other parts of North Africa and the Middle East, there is increased conflict with Islam. One of the big problems for VB is the perceived Islamicization of the culture. In the wake of 9/11 and changing demographics in Europe, the policy platform of a complete stop to immigration is largely driven by fear of being overtaken by immigrants and for the initiation of a Huntington-esque ‘clash of civilizations.’ This policy platform of a complete stop to immigration is one of two platforms that have led to significant electoral success (the other is the suppression of crime, which is most often linked to immigrants) (Swyngedouw 2004, 569).

According to VB, most people of Moroccan or Turkish descent were not integrating and this has caused the problem for VB as they define integration. One of the problems is that because Flanders is a region and VB’s definition of a Fleming is nebulous, there is no concrete way of becoming a Fleming. After all, one can become a Belgian by obtaining citizenship, but one does not have the option of obtaining Flemish citizenship.

It is clear then that there is a great deal of tension between Muslim immigrants and VB. This tension was highlighted by 9/11, but can be traced back to a government policy enacted several decades ago in which the two groups faced increased contact. Following World War II, Belgium instituted a guest worker program to help in the coal industry. Workers were allowed in from various European countries from 1946 through 1974. For Moroccans and Turks, people of both nationalities were allowed to enter Belgium in 1964 (Martinello and Rea 2000). After 1974, stricter limitations on immigration were imposed, but many people were still able to come to Belgium from Morocco and Turkey based on family reunification laws (Martinello and Rea 2000).
Moreover, a significant number of Moroccans and Turks in Belgium married people from their ancestral homeland. All of this has contributed to the growing fear, whether objective or not, on the part of VB that the number of Muslims is increasing. As a result of this demographic shift, VB argues, Flemings are losing their country. Therefore, VB advocates independence as the first step to solving this “problem.”

For VB, the “guest worker” program started by the Belgian government to boost the labor pool was taken literally; these workers were guests who were expected to return home to their country of origin after the work was completed. However, many of these guest workers stayed in Belgium and raised families. Typically, VB views the original guest workers as good, hardworking people who wanted to learn Dutch and to get along in their new society; their only crime was that they did not return home. It is the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th generation people that VB typically has a problem with. People who refuse to integrate into Flemish society, people who have religiously motivated beards and wear religious headscarves. The argument is that religious headscarves were a rare sight just a decade ago. Statistically, if we measure integration by obtaining Belgian citizenship, then there is some—albeit minimal—proof to VB’s claims. In 1995, 9.1 percent of people living in Belgium at the time did not possess citizenship (Jacobs 2000, 118). The number of people who did not have Belgian citizenship at birth, however, is higher at 13 percent (Martinello and Rea 2003; Timmerman and Wets n.d., 3). If integration is tied to obtaining citizenship, then there is some evidence of VB’s claims. But, there is a time issue with this claim: it can take several years to become eligible for Belgian citizenship and some people may be faced with the tricky situation of having to give up their other citizenship. There is then a significant caveat to VB’s claim.
During my time in Flanders, as an ethnographic element to my study, I noticed some integration. There were plenty of interracial couples, a lot of Flemish people frequented ethnic-North African owned businesses, and there was evidence of a cordial atmosphere between people of different ethnic backgrounds. There were also a few times when I noticed some ethnic segregation. Moreover, there have been a few explosive stories in the media, which pit people of different backgrounds against one another.

Most immigrants argue that they are integrating into Belgian society; after all, many have become citizens of the country. As further evidence, a growing number of people from minority backgrounds are supporting another nationalist party (described in Chapter 6). This provides some evidence of integration; although, as noted above, this is a nebulous concept that is difficult to measure accurately.

Immigration is a term that is discussed a lot in the political discourse, but immigration is difficult to define in Belgium. In 2001, Belgian government statistics identified 862,000 foreigners living in Belgium; 60 percent of whom came from EU countries (Mielants 2006, 313). Many of the remaining 40 percent of non-EU foreigners in Belgium came from Morocco (107,000) and Turkey (57,000). The number of foreigners continues to grow due to higher birth rates, chain migration, and asylum, meaning that foreigners makeup around 10 percent of the Belgian population (Mielants 2006, 313). It is important for us to recognize then that immigration comes from a number of places such as East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, but mainly from the EU and North Africa. One of the challenges to the citizenship numbers is that there were changes to the citizenship process in 1985, which led to some 72,000 Moroccans and 47,000 Turks gaining citizenship, which meant that they were no longer listed as foreigners
This change in the ethnic makeup of Flanders can be seen in all of the major cities, most notably Brussels. It also makes it more difficult to talk about the number of immigrants (or people of minority ethnic backgrounds) living in Belgium. For VB some of these Belgian citizens are still considered immigrants or foreigners because they have not assimilated. This, then, is clear evidence of an ethnic nationalist position. The people in question are citizens, but they still do not belong because they have not met some ill-defined standard of assimilation or integration. For example:

And we see an invasion of, for example, French in Grimbergen or foreigners or Muslims from Morocco (Interview on April 13, 2010—Jan Laeremans).

And:

For example, we’ve had Italian immigrants, and Spanish immigrants who live in Belgium. After a generation or two, they are completely assimilated but they do not come from an Islamic background, which is completely opposed to western and European values, then it becomes very difficult (Interview on April 22, 2010—Jan Lievens).

Further clouding the issue of immigration is the related issue of religion. It is estimated that 6 percent of the Belgian population is Muslim. (For VB, this estimate is too low.) This statistic, however, is just an estimate as the Belgian government does not allow religious based questions in the census. According to a 2006 U.S. State Department report, it is estimated that there are 328 mosques in the country; and according to PBS Frontline, there are now 380 mosques. Despite the increasing figures, there is little to suggest that second or third generation Muslims in Western Europe attend the mosque in significant numbers (Soper and Fetzer 2002, 186). It is clear that Islam is

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17 [http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71371.htm; http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/front/map/be.html]
growing because the number of mosques is increasing, but the majority of people from a Muslim background in Belgium appear to be non-practicing.

For VB, immigration and more specifically Muslim immigration, along with the openness of the Belgian system, poses a serious challenge to their desire for independence and goal of protecting a “pure form” of Flemish identity. This platform of a complete stop to immigration is given intellectual footing by a plethora of English language books and authors such as Samuel Huntington, Bruce Bawer, Mark Stein, Christopher Caldwell, Robert Blankley, and Pat Buchanan, who talk about the coming demographic changes in Europe, in which native Europeans will be supplanted by immigrants from different parts of the world. Many of these books were cited by VB leaders, and therefore these books provide a lot of the intellectual basis behind the platforms (even if it was not the intention of the author in the case of Huntington).

For instance:

There is one book by an American journalist Christopher Caldwell, The European Revolution, I must say that I read a lot of American books and it is the book that will remain for me as the most shocking book of the last years. I think there’s a lot of truth in the book. First, demographically we are going down and we are losing people and at the same time, these people are coming into the countries. Its revolutionary I think (Interview on April 14, 2010—Pieter Logghe).

For VB, as noted in the above quote, there is a clear need to protect the ethnic makeup of Flanders. For this major reason, the simple unwillingness to at least reach out to immigrants in Flanders is evidence of ethnic nationalism and further evidence of protecting a pure form of a Flemish ethnie. Even though demography has changed, VB still benefits from being on the electoral fringe. Some people agree with them and argue that their collective Flemish culture is being lost. Kitschelt’s (1995) conclusion on the behavior of more extreme political parties holds, once again.
5.4.4. Political Autonomy

Karim Van Overmeire, for many years, was the intellectual face of VB’s push for Flemish independence. (He has since stepped down and found a new position as a member of N-VA.) The veteran parliamentarian has written several books on the subject and committed much of his life to the cause of independence. In a meeting room in the Flemish Parliament in Brussels, we sat down to discuss the comparative politics of secession and how independence could occur in the case of Flanders. Van Overmeire spent significant time discussing the cases of Czechoslovakia, Serbia-Montenegro, and Norway-Sweden. He talked about the Belgian federation as an artificial, undemocratic state that is always in a state of political crisis.

Behind every political party are a number of political researchers who strategize about elections and policy platforms. One such man for VB who strategizes with Karim Van Overmeire is Steven Utsi. For Utsi, Flemish independence is close, very close in fact. The one remaining necessary element the Flemish movement really needs is the rise of Flemish intellectuals to make a case for independence. For centuries, Utsi argues, Flanders has been without an elite intellectual class that can provide the necessary stimulus for realizing Flemish independence.

Across the political spectrum in Flanders, most politicians want some more powers for Flanders. But there is a marked difference between the desire for more political autonomy and the desire for independence. Supporters of autonomy argue that staying within the state is acceptable provided that the Flemish Region is given certain
special rights. Supporters of independence, however, reject staying within the state. The only autonomy desired is the full autonomy of an independent state.

Alfred Stepan argues that there are three distinct types of federations. Some come together voluntarily, others are forced together, and others, like Belgium, “are created from unitary states in order to hold the polity together” (Stepan 1995, 31-2 cited in McGarry and O’Leary 2005, 286). It is worth noting then that the design of the Belgian federation was intended to keep the country together despite the cleavages in language, culture, and economics. Advocating greater autonomy is difficult because the system is set-up for Flemish/Walloon compromise. VB reject changes to political autonomy and argue that independence will come with the advancement of Flemish elites. For example:

So first we had cultural elites and then there were economic elites, but we have with true political elites have taken a very long time to develop. And another stance that the Flemish Interest party takes is that until now, a true political elite, an independent, autonomously thinking political elite in Flanders still does not exist (Interview on April 30, 2010—Steven Utsi).

Another example:

For me, if you want to become an independent country, you need in the first place a social elite, so people that can really represent your country overall. If you want an independent Flemish state other governments will come over here and ask why and what’s your identity and what do you have to offer, they won’t trust us automatically of course so you can imagine that they when we declare our independence, the EU will not be very pleased. Because our country will actually be split up then and you need an elite that is clever enough to sell your identity and your country and what you are standing for. If you look at the twentieth Century and of course the nineteenth Century where our movement originated, there is no such thing as a Flemish elite (Interview on April 16, 2010—Tomas Verachtert).

For VB, the party quite simply wants independence now because Flemish elites have begun to wake up. With more rigorous books on independence, the political elites from VB believe that they can achieve independence throughout new methods of
agitating for independence. For members of VB, Belgium should come to an end for a number of reasons: the state is artificial, the language border is real, and the country does not work.

None of this, however, is really new news. In 1912, for example, in an open letter to the king, future Minister of State in Belgium, Jules Destree stated, “Sire, there are no Belgians. There are only Flemish and Walloons,” an argument that suggested that no real Belgian identity had emerged in the first eighty years of shared history (Delmartino 1986, 38; Murphy 1988, 199).

A discussion of political autonomy versus independence is, however, muddied by the EU. A major part of VB’s policy on independence is staying in the EU. VB does, however, see independence in Europe just so long as involvement in Europe has its limitations. VB is not Euroskeptical; rather, the party views the EU as an intergovernmental organization rather than a supranational one. This is evidenced in one of a number of criticisms aimed at the EU. VB has denounced the increased supranational institutions and deepening regulatory functions within the bloc, for example (Laible in Karolewski 2010, 136). After all, there is little point to becoming independent if Europe takes all the power. Nonetheless, EU membership is highly beneficial and virtually no VB political leader would try to gain independence if he/she knew that their EU membership could be jeopardized.

There are, therefore, challenges to staying in the EU if Flanders becomes independent. While several VB members advocate declaring independence in the Flemish Parliament once they have a Flemish majority, it is not unfathomable that Flanders could become an international pariah and be left out of the EU given the fact
that if Wallonia retained Belgium’s seat in international organizations, they could veto Flemish independence in the current accession process system. Most high level VB strategists are very aware of this problem, and are not quite sure how to proceed.

VB has a clear goal of obtaining independence. There is no desire to capture more autonomy from the state. However, for VB, there is a concrete distinction between Flemings and Walloons that is ethnic based. They argue that Flemings are harder workers and follow a more market oriented economic model whereas Walloons are lazier and prefer a much larger social welfare system. For these contrasting reasons, I have categorized VB as “mixed/mostly ethnic” on this policy area.

5.4.5 Economics

In VB’s local office in the city of Leuven, I met with Hagen Goyvaerts, a veteran VB member of the Chamber for the small electoral region of Leuven. Goyvaerts is an engineer by training and proceeded to discuss the economy of Flanders in a very rigorous and organized way. He described the ballooning debt, multi-billion euro annual transfers to Wallonia, problems with social security, and the fact that the status quo is empowering Wallonia not to transition towards an Anglo-Saxon economic model.

In the 19th Century, Wallonia used to be the economic engine of Belgium. In fact, many people migrated from Flanders to Wallonia in search of jobs (Martinello and Rea 2000). By the 1960s, however, the Flemish economy overtook the Walloon economy for the first time (Swenden and Jans 2006, 878). Partly as a result of improved economic conditions, the Flemish people now provide a significant amount of the taxes in the Belgian economy. The central problem here, according to VB, is that the Walloons
follow an economic model much more closely aligned to France whereas the Flemish have a much more Anglo-Saxon, a market economy preference for lower taxes, more private enterprise and less government jobs, and less social security benefits (except for pensions).

You see though we are beginning [to be] drawn more and more into a secondary economic position in Europe. I’d say 20 years ago, we were a very strong region, economically speaking, and we’ve lost a lot since then. For the pure and simple reason that all the added value we created, in large part, has been channeled into Wallonia. And (also) into Brussels (Interview on April 30, 2010—Erik Bucyuoey).

Another example:

We ask a lot of economic and financial powers, we want to organize things on a different scale and a different way as the French speaking people in Belgium do (Interview on April 14, 2010—Pieter Logghe).

Evidence of the Flemish/Walloon division on the economy:

Politically and economically, Flanders is very market oriented whereas Wallonia is very socialist, with a very old fashioned, very powerful socialist party (Interview on April 9, 2010—Philip Claeys).

Further evidence:

If you see in Wallonia more than 50 percent of the people are working in the government, in the city council. But in Flanders, 80% of the people are working in the private sector and that’s not (the same number as) in Wallonia (Interview on April 29, 2010—Raf Liedts).

At this point, it is important to stop and point out an important nuance in VB’s economic policy: while the party is considered far-right in many circles, many of their voters are working class people who came over from the socialist party. A central component of VB’s platform on economic issues is somewhat contradictory to what was told to me in the interview process (much more pro-market), VB advocates a platform of
economic nationalism to protect jobs. Moreover, the party celebrates its annual May 1st holiday for the worker in Vilvoorde to express solidarity with these voters.

Given the high level of solidarity with workers, VB still considers the significant transfer payments to Wallonia to be representative of a wider cleavage between the two major parts of Belgium because the money should be redistributed to Flemish workers. A central theme of VB’s economic policy platform is also their vehement opposition to economic redistribution from the richer part of Belgium to the poorer parts, especially when their voters are paying the price. This is a form of economic nationalism that seeks to stop redistribution. It may not be racism, but there is an attempt to squeeze the Walloons into ending the Belgian state. In some countries, it is seen as a duty to prop up and/or support poorer parts of the country. Flanders, however, pays a considerable amount of money to Wallonia and many members of VB have asked, “How much is too much?”

Like Canada, Belgium has a government program to redistribute money from the richer parts of the country to the poorer parts. In Belgium this is known as National Solidarity Intervention (ISN). Brussels and Wallonia are both subject to this redistribution given their poorer financial position vis-à-vis Flanders. Flanders, in terms of fiscal capacity, is above the national average and therefore does not receive ISN transfers. Flemish nationalists target this policy in their policy platforms arguing that Wallonia serves as a major drain on the Flemish economy and is a reason why jobs are lost.

Another big economic issue in Flanders is Social Security. In fact, Social Security is one of the biggest issues in Belgium and the whole of Europe as well. It is an
area of policy that Flemish nationalists want to control rather than leaving the decision making at the federal level. Attempts to regionalize social security have been met with resistance. However, there is some evidence that there are divergent beliefs between Flanders and Wallonia in terms of economic policy. The Flemish have sought to implement a style of social security modeled after the Netherlands and the United Kingdom in which unemployed workers are given incentives to continue looking for work; in Wallonia, unemployment and social benefits are perceived as social rights that do not need incentives (Lecours 2010, 24). This was, in part, one of the biggest reasons for political deadlock in 2007.

Overall, in the literature, VB’s policy on the economy is generally considered protectionist (Rydgren 2002). Kitschelt (1995) affirms this notion arguing that right-wing parties in Europe have done well by emphasizing market liberalism as a key platform (cited in Coffe 2008, 32). This argument, however, has been criticized by Mudde (1999) who argues that extreme parties are supportive of the welfare state but only for their ethnic group. Once again, as related to VB, this is a form of ethnic nationalism. VB has retained a policy of ethnic nationalism by appealing to blue collar workers in Flanders who fear jobs losses.

5.4.6 Ethnic or Civic?

The larger strategy of VB is clearly that of ethnic nationalism as denoted by the guidelines laid out in Chapter 1. On all five major areas of policy, VB has not made a transition to civic nationalism (See Table 5.3 below). Their strategy is one of sticking to hard principles. In the interview process, every member of the party vehemently denied
any hint of an accusation at racism, but ethnic nationalism is evident. One can become a Fleming, but they must adhere to three principles: speaking Dutch, secularism, and the equality of men and women. The problem, however, is that only a limited number of immigrants can become Flemish only in practice but not in theory because they are not blood related.

Table 5.3: VB Ethnic/Civic Policy Platforms

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<tr>
<th>Policy area</th>
<th>Ethnic/Civic</th>
<th>Comments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Mostly ethnic</td>
<td>Protection from French; acceptance of English and other EU languages; but no acceptance of Arabic or Turkish in the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Mostly ethnic</td>
<td>Protective of ethnically pure Flemish culture although acceptance of American and European influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>Acceptance of European immigrants; some acceptance of Moroccan or Turkish immigrants, but this is very limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>Mixed/Mostly</td>
<td>Simply want outright independence; but overt differences between Walloons and Flemings is the main reason</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>ethnic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>Protections against Wallonia; animosity over subsidies and benefits paid to large numbers of Muslim immigrants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moreover, it is worth noting the party does not have any diversity. As evidence of this I collected seventeen party brochures from 2009 and 2010. In these brochures, none of the party advertisements even showed non-white people. And when non-white people were shown, the context was almost always negative. On five occasions, Muslims were shown in a pejorative manner with regards to crime or the perceived Islamicization of the country. There is nothing inherently ethnic with wanting to decrease immigration
for the purposes of economics, but none of the advertisements featured anyone from a
diverse background. This highlights the reason why I have described VB as a form of
ethnic-based nationalism.

The principle of a complete stop to immigration is another reason for categorizing
VB as an ethnic nationalist leaning party. However, I came to this conclusion after an
overall summary of the interviews and through examining public and private statements,
as well as an examination of all advertising campaigns from 1977 to the present. To be
fair, VB has worked hard to shed an image of racism or Nazi collaboration in World War
II. But one does find evidence of white power symbols or neo-Nazis at some of their
events, although these people are typically a small minority. Publicly and privately, party
elites describe their platforms in economic, security, or linguistic terms. Many party
advertisements are blatantly opposed to Islamic immigrants in Flanders. Their
advertising campaigns include statements that narrowly define Flemings. For example,
“eigen volk eerst in een Europese Europe” (Our nation first in a European Europe). A lot
of other advertisements will describe defending Flemish interests, but through their
publications, it seems as if Flemings are only white. To be fair, in every interview, VB’s
members did say that Moroccans and Turks can become Flemings, but not too many and
only as long as they fully assimilate.

In contrast, the majority of people in Belgium welcome immigrants. They see a
need for a young workforce to come in and they see that people want a better life in the
developed world. However, there is some caution with mass immigration and the
creation of ethnic enclaves. For immigrants, it is much easier to adapt to life in a new
country, if one is surrounded by some familiar foods, people, and customs. This has
caused some of the problems with VB and its sympathizers. Most immigrants will argue that they are integrated into society; their coworkers are Flemings, they attend university, they have Flemish friends, and they intermarry.

For many years—basically 1977 through 1991—VB were just a small minority party in Flanders. Seemingly the strategy of ethnic nationalism was not that lucrative politically. After 1991, however, VB grew quite significantly hitting a high point in 2004 with almost 25 percent, and over 1 million votes. In the crowded political landscape of Belgium, this was an extremely good election result. There have then been some major advantages to the strategy of ethnic nationalism. Independence is firmly on the public agenda and people across Belgium are discussing the dissolution of the country. This is due, in significant measure, to the efforts of VB.

Nonetheless, the strategy of ethnic nationalism appears to be waning. VB suffered a significant decrease in votes at the 2010 election slipping to 12.6 percent of the popular vote in Flanders. Many of the lost votes went to N-VA. Even in their stronghold of Antwerp, VB decreased to only 18.6 percent of the vote when they often obtain upwards of 30 percent (Standaard, Antwerpen June 14, 2010). In fact, the appeal of ethnic nationalism has begun to decline at least since the 2004 regional elections. Fewer people, at least according to the 2010 federal election results, are attracted by the policy platforms of VB but the party retains a prominent role in Flemish politics. To examine this change in support from VB to N-VA, I now turn my attention to a study of N-VA.
CHAPTER 6

Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie in Flanders

6.1 Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie: Nodig in Vlaanderen, Nuttig in Europa (Dutch)
New-Flemish Alliance: Necessary in Flanders, Useful in Europe (English)

Descending the stairs from Regentstraat—one of the busiest streets in Brussels—
one enters an almost tranquil street below. Located here is N-VA’s national office. As I
introduce myself and discuss my research with the workers in the office, there is a
frenetic activity to their work; an election has just been called for June 13th 2010.
Nonetheless, despite the up-tempo atmosphere, the office workers are quick to point me
to policy platforms showing the stances of their party on a range of issues, and why they
differ from rival parties such as VB, CD&V, Open Vld, and Sp.a.

Crossing back over Regentstraat, from N-VA’s office back to the Belgian and
Flemish parliaments, I run into a celebrity on the street. Perhaps even the biggest
celebrity in Flanders. He is not a pop star, a sportsman, or an actor. He is Bart De
Wever, chairman of N-VA. Bart De Wever is, by the estimation of many people, the
smartest political mind in Belgium. He has a number of important characteristics in
politics: charisma, intelligence, and a level of experience that belies his youthful looks.
Many Flemish nationalists believe that he is the person that can bring independence to Flanders.

Like VB, N-VA places a firm priority on Flemish independence. There are, however, several noteworthy differences. First, Flemish sovereignty, at least for some members of N-VA, is enough. Sovereignty differs from independence in one key way. Sovereignty simply means that the Flemish parliament will have power over all issues in Flanders (whether or not Belgium exists). Some members of N-VA support Flemish sovereignty especially if all governmental powers are concentrated at either the Flemish or European levels; de jure independence is not necessarily important if Belgium is just a shell. Second, as noted on their website, N-VA describes its form of nationalism as humane and for the twenty-first century (N-VA.be). In this section, I examine whether there is any real truth to this statement. At least in the public sphere, members of N-VA argue that it supports the adoption of a number of civic-based policies. Some evidence of this emerged during the interview process as shown in Table 6.1 below. In total, I interviewed five members of N-VA. These statements are coded based on clearly inclusive or clearly exclusive statements made by members of N-VA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>95.65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6.1 shows that of the interviews conducted with members of N-VA, the members of the party were very civic in their statements. However, these are trained professionals being interviewed in a non-threatening and non-stressful atmosphere. There are other factors to consider when examining their transition towards a more civic-based set of policy platforms, such as their views on individual areas of policy and how they affect immigrants and Walloons in Belgium.

Publicly, N-VA advocates a gradual movement towards independence with increased political autonomy. In the interview process, (evidence is provided later in this chapter) this strategy was described to me as taking more powers for Flanders and giving more away to Europe such that Belgium is left with virtually no powers. Some members of N-VA even support creating some form of confederation, in which the ties to the rest of Belgium are extremely loose. Privately, however, there are a number of elite political leaders who confide that they want de jure independence perhaps just as badly as VB.

N-VA’s platform on independence is best described metaphorically. Bart De Wever argues that independence will be like watching aspirin when it is placed in a glass of water. One cannot see a dramatic change, but slowly the tablet dissolves in the water. Likewise, the Belgian aspirin slowly dissolves until it is gone entirely. N-VA describes the end of the Belgian federal state in a similar manner, one day the Belgian aspirin will have dissolved entirely. As a result of this strategy, N-VA goes out of its way to discuss the desire for independence in structural, not ethnic terms. Bart De Wever—in a press conference on the eve of the 2010 election—described the structural problems of the Belgian state; first as undemocratic and second as inefficient.
6.2 Why attempt to transition to Civic Nationalism?

N-VA is a relatively new political party (formed in 2001), which was able to fill space in the political spectrum when their preceding party, Volksunie, declined. Room existed between the center=center-right CD&V and VB on the right=far-right. Entering the political spectrum between CD&V and VB also meant that N-VA had to initiate policy platforms that were different enough from both parties, but that could attract votes. In many respects, N-VA borrowed key aspects of their rivals’ policy platforms, and then changed the platforms to suit their electoral strategy. From VB, N-VA similarly adopted the platform of independence, albeit, as noted earlier, with the strategy of sovereignty. From CD&V, N-VA adopted similar policies on the key questions in Belgian politics regarding the Flemish relationship with Walloons, immigration, and economics.

Members of N-VA are keen to express the differences between their party and VB. This is the most obvious sense of purporting civic nationalism, by showing a major difference with an ethnic nationalist party. In some interviews, I asked “point-blank” as to whether immigrants from places like Morocco and Turkey could become part of the Flemish society. The answers below were given to open, non-leading questions.

Glen Duerr: With Moroccans and Turks, there’s no problem with them becoming Flemish?
No, not for us, we are civic. But it is a problem for Vlaams Belang—Interview with Jan Peumans on April 23, 2010

And:

When we go to [discuss] Flemish nationalism, I think we have two parties: N-VA and Vlaams Belang. I think the big difference between us both is… it’s quite, how should I say, it’s not quite correct, but they have more white people, no immigrants. It’s not really correct, but they are more right-wing. But we say, no, everyone in Flanders is welcome and everybody can be part of our society—Interview with Kris Van Dijck on April 27, 2010.
In more depth, as a comparison of VB and N-VA:

I think that our program is more realistic than, for example, the program of Vlaams Belang. And I think [for] the elections people see N-VA in comparison [to VB] in a more humane [way]. It’s in the program of Vlaams Belang the problem of immigration and its [a] mistake….Vlaams Belang is mainly ethnic nationalism [and] that is the main difference between N-VA….We don’t blame the Walloon people, but Vlaams Belang says that it’s the Walloon people and immigration and so on—Interview with Jan Peumans on April 23, 2010

And:

It’s also a difference between Vlaams Belang, [which] is a very ethnical [sic] party, the pure blood and we are totally thinking the opposite—Theo Francken on May 13, 2010

On the policy platform of independence, people from all across the political spectrum may support this idea. Independence is not a left-right issue. However, for people who support independence in Flanders, they were forced to choose VB in the past. Some members of N-VA argue that people supported VB simply because they presented the best way to express the desire for independence. VB voters, they argue, may not have actually supported the party, except for the platform of independence.

For some Flemish nationalists who say: “for me the [most important] theme [policy platform] is Flemish independence,” they had no alternative than Vlaams Belang. They had no alternative. So they say: I close my left eye, I vote for them because maybe they can do something. But in comparison to these guys, we, N-VA are growing and we are center-right so there is not really a conflict with some of them and they say we are more civil, [a] more civilized alternative than Vlaams Belang and these are the guys that are asking about N-VA—Interview with Jan Jambon on April 20, 2010

Additionally, N-VA also adopted civic-based policy platforms in order to change the narrative on independence. Given that VB was the only party to support independence, the idea of independence was intertwined with ethnic nationalism. For example:
We have 35,000 [immigrants coming in] each year in Flanders and that’s the difference between us and VB. (They say) Islam is bad, newcomers are bad. I think that ideologically they are just on the wrong side. They have done more bad things for the Flemish cause because when you take your Flemish flag they say he is racist and with Vlaams Belang—Interview with Theo Francken on May 13, 2010

N-VA then melded some of the main platforms of VB and CD&V by softening the stances of VB and strengthening the stances of CD&V. In this way, N-VA advances the idea of independence, which is buttressed by the use of platforms with an appeal to civic nationalism (at least as argued by members of N-VA). However, as noted later, there are some policy platforms that have more restrictive implications and hamper the viability of their claims for civic nationalism.

By filling the gap in the political spectrum, N-VA has been able to gain support from voters that formerly supported CD&V and VB. Policy platforms in the middle ground have worked for N-VA. In the following charts, I provide some statistics from recent electoral results to show how N-VA has become more successful. These charts also show the relative decline of CD&V and VB, using data from the 2007 and 2010 federal elections.
Figure 6.1 Belgian Federal Election Results, Province of Antwerp, 2007

Chart 1: Belgian federal election results, Province of Antwerp, 2007

- CD&V-NVA= 29.28
- VB= 24.07
- Sp.a.= 16.51
- Open Vld= 16.01
- Groen= 6.87
- LDD= 5.42
- Other= 1.84
Figures 6.1 and 6.2 show the election results from the province of Antwerp in the 2007 and 2010 elections respectively. Given the number of parties in Flanders, the results can be difficult to interpret. Therefore, I have constructed Table 6.2 to facilitate the process of understanding the results. I tabulated the results of each party in both elections and calculated their respective increases or decreases. One nuance of the results is that N-VA and CD&V were in a coalition together in 2007, which had ended for the 2010 election. For the purposes of comparison, I halve their results in 2007 in my table. (In fairness, the support for CD&V would probably be higher than 14.64 percent, meaning that N-VA’s overall increase in support is larger than the table suggests.) In Table 6.2, there is evidence of a significant rise on the part of N-VA. The party makes a gain of over 16 percent of the votes from 2007 to 2010. Comparatively, VB decreases by almost 8 percent. There is some evidence, then, that nationalist voters switched
allegiance from VB to N-VA. There is also some evidence that N-VA took votes away from centrist parties like Open Vld. and CD&V. Open Vld. lost almost 5 percent of the votes from 2007. CD&V were in a coalition with N-VA in 2007, but they were by far the stronger member of the coalition as they have long had a place in government (or been the leading party in Flanders). However, with a decrease to under 16 percent of the vote, this marks a significant loss for CD&V. In contrast, N-VA improved by over 16 percent of the vote (and that takes into account a conservative estimate for their share of the vote in 2007). With these differences in policy platforms, N-VA separated itself from the rest of the political parties in Flanders and managed to increase voter share in the 2010 federal election.

Table 6.2: Explanation of Figure 6.1 and Figure 6.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>Increase/Decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N-VA</td>
<td>30.71</td>
<td>14.64* (29.28 with CD&amp;V)</td>
<td>+16.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VB</td>
<td>16.15</td>
<td>24.07</td>
<td>-7.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD&amp;V</td>
<td>15.53</td>
<td>14.64* (29.28 with CD&amp;V)</td>
<td>+0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sp.a.</td>
<td>14.32</td>
<td>16.51</td>
<td>-2.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open Vld</td>
<td>11.03</td>
<td>16.01</td>
<td>-4.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groen</td>
<td>7.69</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>+0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDD</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>-3.13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like Quebec, Flanders has become much more diverse over the course of the last few decades. As a result, politics and culture have both changed in Flanders, which has meant that political parties must respond to the changing nature of society or face losing elections. N-VA has adopted platforms, they argue, that are more closely in line with civic nationalism in order to build on the idea of independence, whilst welcoming new people into the Flemish project. In Figure 1.2 in Chapter One, I argue that there has to be a reason for a transition to civic-based nationalist policy platforms. Since VB already existed on the political extreme in Flanders, it forced N-VA to adopt civic-based policy platforms when they entered the political arena. N-VA has since been successful in winning votes from other parties because of this strategy.

According to the European Election Database, there is strong evidence that indicates that voters from VB and, to some extent, CD&V, LDD, and Open Vld, came to support N-VA as shown in Chart One and Chart Two. In perhaps the clearest example of nationalist support moving from VB to N-VA, the province of Antwerp provides an indication. In 2003 and 2007, VB obtained 24.1 percent of the vote in Antwerp but fell to 16.2 percent in 2010. Conversely, N-VA got 30.7 percent of the vote in Antwerp in 2010, which was even higher than they obtained whilst running together with CD&V in 2007 (European Election Database: Belgium, parliamentary elections 2003, 2007, 2010).

While it is difficult to measure nationalist support because pro-independence N-VA ran with pro-Belgium CD&V until 2010, support for the nationalist cause has remained constant at nearly 40 percent throughout the last decade. Given the rise of N-VA and decline of VB, this is a possible indicator that more pro-independence Flemings
want to integrate immigrants into their society at least in a way that is more favorable to them than VB.

However, the transition to civic nationalism is very much a work in progress. Even though the platforms espoused on the website and by political leaders are civic in nature, there is still plenty of work to be done in order for them to be fully classified as civic nationalist. A rigorous examination of five platforms—language, culture, immigration, political autonomy, and economics—will show where N-VA has transitioned to civic nationalism and where the party has not.

6.3 **Policy Areas: Whether N-VA has transitioned to Civic Nationalism?**

Throughout the interview process, the interviewees described in detail their positions on a range of different policy areas. I coded each discussion of language, culture, immigration, political autonomy, and economics as follows below in Table 6.3. As shown in Table 6.3, there is a heavy emphasis on political autonomy and economics in the platforms of N-VA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Policy areas</strong></th>
<th><strong>Statements</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Autonomy</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Like in Chapters 4 and 5, the frequency of statements shows how often a given issue was discussed by the interviewees. The subject of economics proved to be of major importance. Additionally, a discussion of how Flanders could become independent also increased the frequency of statements in the area of political autonomy because, as discussed in greater detail later, N-VA plans to slowly take powers away from the federal government and give them to the respective regional governments. The other issues—language, culture, and immigration—remain important but N-VA’s policy platforms are less concerned with these issues, which presents some evidence of a move towards civic nationalism. The shift towards civic nationalism, however, is limited and further improvements need to be made if the party platforms can be accurately described in civic, not ethnic terms.

6.3.1 Language

I met with Kris Van Dijck, chairman of N-VA in the Flemish parliament in Brussels, on his party’s floor of the parliamentary offices, which are connected to the Flemish parliament. Van Dijck, a political veteran and mayor of his commune, described the situation in Belgium in this way: we have two democracies in Belgium, one for the Flemish speakers and one for the French speakers.

According to a member of N-VA (see quote below), the ability to punish or reward a politician in your country is an important part of the democratic process. However, given the current political compromise in Belgium, the language border between Flemings and Walloons is steadfast. For example, whilst driving into Leuven (a
city in Flanders) from Wallonia, one reads the direction signs as Louvain all the way, except for the final four miles of the journey when one crosses the language border and Louvain becomes Leuven. The rigidity of the language border is at the same time interesting and also quite annoying for foreigners. Each city in Belgium has a different name in Dutch and French. Brussels (in English) is Brussel in Dutch and Bruxelles in French. Liege is Luik in Dutch. Namur is Namen in Dutch. Antwerp is Anvers in French. Leuven is Louvain in French. This is partly what De Wever was talking about when he said that the Belgian state is inefficient. Likewise, given the electoral system in Belgium, one can only vote for or against politicians from one’s region. So Flemings cannot vote for or against Walloons and vice versa.

Well first of all the party approves what we already say for many years that Belgium is a very small country but nevertheless we have two democracies. When you are in America, people have elections [and] they can vote for Obama in Nevada, New Jersey or Hawaii. You can vote for Obama or not. But in Belgium you have two democracies. We have a democracy in the north. We have our party, we have a Socialist party, liberal party, we have a Christian Democrats party, N-VA; and in the south of Belgium, in Wallonia, we have other parties, we have another socialist, another liberal party and there are hardly contacts between north and south. So also in government, we have ministers who are half Flemish and half French speaking. So when I don’t agree with a minister, I can’t punish a minister. When I agree with a minister, I can’t vote for him if he is from the other side (Interview on April 27, 2010—Kris Van Dijck).

The argument made here is that Belgium is divided structurally and this serves as a problem for Flemish nationalists because they want the ability to reward or punish all ministers in the country. One of the problems with this line of argumentation, however, is that N-VA is now in a position to make a change to the structure of the system. After winning the 2010 federal election in Flanders, N-VA could, in theory, form a coalition government with the Socialist party in Wallonia (and a few others) and re-create national level parties as was the case before the 1970s (Hooghe 1991, 5; Rocher, Rouillard, and
Lecours 2001, 180). With a change in structure, Flemings could reward or punish politicians in Wallonia.

In terms of policy, N-VA, in many ways, places much of the same emphasis on language as VB. One such issue, which is linked to language, is the possible division of Brussels. In the interviews, a higher percentage of political elites from N-VA claimed that they were willing to compromise on Brussels. Privately, however, some members of N-VA made the same staunch arguments as VB regarding the status of their capital city. Quite simply, much of the agitation for Flemish independence is based on language rights for Dutch speakers. Only in some cases is N-VA a little more lenient. However, the main difference between N-VA and VB is that N-VA sees an opportunity with immigrants with regards to language. For example:

It is really my deepest conviction that we have to be for all the newcomers because I see the newcomers especially in Brussels are interested in Flanders, are open to the Flemish society, more than the French speakers, because the French speakers are arrogant, they always speak French, and don’t speak Dutch. Immigrants don’t have that history and those bonds. They don’t know about those things in that family (Interview on May 13, 2010—Theo Francken).

Although many of the immigrants have a preference for French, they do not share the fractured history of Belgium and most are open to learning Dutch, an important factor that N-VA has embraced. Moreover, N-VA does not show the same animosity towards Turkish and Arabic speakers as VB. In fact, people are free to speak whatever language they like at home as long as they utilize government services in Dutch and try to speak the language where possible in public. For example:

Yes, they have to speak Dutch in their public life. At home they do what they want, in their own circles they can do what they want. But we want to include them in the society and it means that they have to learn Dutch (Interview on April 20, 2010—Jan Jambon).
This quote shows that N-VA is a little more lenient than VB in terms of language policy. There is still a deep protection of the Dutch language, but there is a little more openness. N-VA is also very protective of Dutch vis-à-vis the French speaking part of the country. There is then an element of Smith and an element of Anderson in this argument. There is a desire to create a separate ethnie from Wallonia, whilst creating an open “imagined community” inclusive of people from different backgrounds who can speak Dutch.

Political leaders from N-VA are more open to other languages than VB and while they ask that immigrants learn to speak Dutch eventually, they are welcome to remain fluent in other languages. This is evidence of a small shift towards civic nationalism. There are still some strong claims against Francophone incursions in Flanders, but so long as the public language is Dutch, anyone can live in Flanders.

On the policy issue of language, N-VA has mostly transitioned to civic nationalism. There are demands for the protection of Dutch, especially when considering government services. However, there is no imposition of language in private homes, businesses, or places of worship. N-VA also admits that Brussels does not have to speak Dutch in order to be included in Flanders. Bilingualism is acceptable in Brussels, and other languages like English, Turkish, or Arabic, are fine provided that they do not interfere with Flemish institutions.

6.3.2 Culture

Jan Jambon is a leading politician for N-VA and he is the party’s leader from the province of Antwerp in the Chamber. During the political deadlock of 2010-2011,
Jambon was at one point a mediator charged with forming a government alongside Jean-Claude Marcourt of the Parti Socialiste (PS) in Wallonia. Jambon believes that in order to help Wallonia, one must change their reliance on social welfare and transfer payments from Flanders. Both regions will be kept down if the status quo remains. It is the culture of Wallonia that needs to change, Jambon argues, and this will transcend their economic policy as well. In essence, one reason why Flemish nationalism is so popular is because there is a perception that the people of Wallonia free ride on the back of the Flemish economy. N-VA leader Bart De Wever even called Walloon dependence on the Flemish economy “junkie-like” in reference to drug dependence. For N-VA, Walloon politicians are dependent on the Flemish economy and culturally Walloons are markedly different from Flemings.

For N-VA, these cultural differences with the people in Wallonia are concrete, and serve as a major reason for the advancement of sovereignty. Most of their claims are made in light of economics because, they argue, the people of Flanders and Wallonia hold different opinions on the economy. But there is also the sense for N-VA, like VB, that Flanders and Wallonia have two different cultures and are simply two distinct peoples that are living in the same state because of a historical mistake.

Despite some similarities, N-VA does differ from VB in a number of ways. In many ways, N-VA is much more open to outside cultures and their place in Flanders. N-VA members discuss inclusiveness quite often in the interviews. They argue that they are less demanding with immigrants. The policy platforms, however, expects immigrants to learn Dutch and adapt to Flemish culture. Members of N-VA do not demand that they learn Dutch immediately, or speak Dutch in public, but that they speak Dutch when they
deal with the government. Members of VB, in contrast, note that they want to make sure that people adopt and assimilate to Flemish culture. This shows a subtle shift towards civic nationalism, but not enough to be classified entirely as “civic.”

One of the most obvious examples of a greater push towards civic-based policy platforms is who is allowed to run for office in a given political party. For example:

I am working on a campaign for the Flemish government and my co-chief of the cabinet for integration policy. For example, one of my advisors, Sadia Chakouri, she’s Flemish but her parents are from Morocco. She’s a second generation migrant and she is a Berber. Berbers are also a people who are totally suppressed by Arabic people in Morocco and that is a very sorrowful story. And now she is on the list on Antwerp for the N-VA, and [we also have someone who is on] the 2nd place for BHV is also a Berber. Here [Leuven] we have someone on 4th place so we are really open to other people. They are Flemish, they are all Flemish now (Interview on May 13, 2010—Theo Francken).

In Belgium, the system of proportional representation is used for all elections above the communal (local) level. Each party puts together a party list, from which candidates will be elected depending on how many seats are won in a given jurisdiction. (At the federal and regional levels, party lists are made in each of the six different electoral provinces: West-Flanders, East-Flanders, Antwerp, Limburg, Leuven, and BHV.) One concrete piece of evidence that shows N-VA’s move towards civic-based policy platforms is quite simply based on who was included in their party lists. For the 2010 federal election, Zuhal Demir, a lawyer of Moroccan descent, was 4th on the list for the province of Antwerp. In BHV, Linda Mbungu-Dinkueno of Congolese descent was 4th on the list as well. Ms. Demir was elected in 2010 and now sits in the Chamber of Representatives. While a couple of candidates are not proof of a full transition to civic nationalism, this does represent a step towards more civic based policy platforms and an acceptance of people from different backgrounds.
Relatedly, the party advertisements and brochures of N-VA have featured people from different ethnic backgrounds. In an examination of seventeen party brochures from 2009 and 2010, using a simple count I found ten advertisements featuring people of non-white backgrounds. (Many of these advertisements were repeated in other brochures as well.) One important advertising campaign featured two young women (mentioned above) of Congolese and Moroccan backgrounds. Together they were holding a sign reading “Eigen volk Samen!” (Our people together). Additionally, in the November 2009 version of the party magazine, Nieuw-Vlaams Magazine, the back page features an interview with Sadia Choukri, a person of North African background (mentioned by Theo Francken on the previous page). None of this proves anything by itself. But it does present an image of a party that is open to people of color, immigrants, and anyone who chooses to speak Dutch and integrate into Flemish society. N-VA offers a stake in an independent Flanders that is open to people from different backgrounds. This is evidence of progression towards a more civic-based nationalist program.

As noted in the previous chapter, it is obvious that there is a lot of animosity between VB and Muslims. On the policy area of culture, N-VA has moved towards much more civic-based policy platforms. N-VA is much more accepting of its Muslim population. For example:

Together we make one society, whether you are Catholic or Muslim that is your personal choice (Interview on April 27, 2010—Kris Van Dijck).

But like VB, though, N-VA is also concerned with high levels of immigration and a radical shift in culture to the point where they are being overtaken by immigrants from a different society. For example:
There’s no problem, but if you come here not as a person but in masse as a group and you want to be accepted. Accept things as the way they are here and try to be a part of that and you are as welcome as anyone else (Interview on May 6, 2010—Erik Van In).

What is slightly different about this statement and those from VB is that people are welcome. There is a level of protectionism here, but the overall sentiment is one that welcomes people who are moderate and try to learn Dutch and integrate themselves into the society. N-VA’s record on the policy area of culture then is somewhat mixed. More can be done to promote civic-based policy platforms, but there is a significant desire for restraint. After all, there are only six million people in Flanders and there is a fear of losing Flemish culture with too many changes. Smith’s notion of ethnie is still protected albeit with some openness for culture to change (just so long as the changes are not too dramatic).

On the issue of culture, N-VA’s attempted transition to civic nationalism is mixed. There is an openness to people from all over the world. Brussels is a crossroads of the West, the EU and NATO are both located in Brussels, which shows significant tolerance to outside influence. The problem, however, is that N-VA have a policy opposed to mass immigration, which can be seen as a synonym for too much Turkish and/or North African influence. Moreover, there are people of different backgrounds who have run for the party in elections, but there are only a few. This could be seen as mere “window dressing.” Not until people of different backgrounds gain acceptance in the upper echelons of the party, can N-VA be classified as civic.
6.3.3 Immigration

In a restaurant just across from the train station in Leuven, I met with Theo Francken, on the eve of his election to the Chamber of Representatives in 2010. He was first on the party list for Leuven and was elected overwhelmingly. Above everything else, Francken defends the civic nature of N-VA’s platforms. When I pause to compare the case to Quebec, he carefully crafts a list of important people in N-VA who come from minority and immigrant backgrounds, some of whom are mentioned in the previous section.

Obtaining the votes of immigrants is a major part of N-VA’s strategy. Amongst their key platforms is the integration of immigrants and the aim of including them in the society:

N-VA’s aim of Flemish independence is not a goal in itself, but an instrument of prosperity, well-being, and cultural development of all the people living in Flanders. The Flemish state is the framework for a strong sense of belonging, for a community that attaches great importance to values (www.n-va.be/english).

N-VA holds to the same principles of secularism, the equality of men and women, and upholding the Dutch language as the language of government in Flanders, but it expresses no problem with Muslims who are willing to engage and work within the secular society and learn the Dutch language at least for use in public life.

For example:

As long as you accept our way of living, which has grown not in a day or year, but centuries, if you accept that someone else is different, if you can find it in your heart to tolerate other religions and other opinions, then you are as welcome as anyone else (Interview on May 6, 2010—Erik Van In).

And:
Even when you are born in India or South Africa or Brazil, when you come here and learn the language, when you participate and you work here and your children go to school, then you are one of us (Interview on April 27, 2010—Kris Van Dijck).

In sum, as shown in the above two quotes, N-VA has a more relaxed approach to immigration than VB. There is a point (as described in greater detail later) at which the national debt is too high, and most elites in the party argue that immigration should be reduced because the state can no longer support mass immigration for economic reasons because. (They argue that additional costs increase government services such as schooling, health care, and social security.) But the party does not oppose immigration based merely on ethnic differences. This presents a contrast to supporters of ethnic nationalism who argue that membership must be based solely on blood. The arguments made by N-VA are in line with Benedict Anderson. The idea of participating in the economy and developing the common approach of the Dutch language are the most important features in Flemish society.

Leaders within N-VA try to reach out to immigrant groups and to garner increased support. They are also trying to include people from different ancestral backgrounds in their party. For example:

I often have groups from schools in Antwerp, public schools and you see every color. Often a guy says I’m an allochtone, an immigrant. And I say: were you born here in Flanders? And he replies my father was born here and my grandfather came here when he was a very little guy, here to Flanders. He still says I’m an allochtone. And I say, how is it possible in France and America, the 2nd generation is present. The 2nd generation is present! And here with 4th generation [he] still calls himself an immigrant. And we also call him an immigrant. So this is really stupid (Interview on April 20, 2010—Jan Jambon).

It is evident then that N-VA has made a shift towards more civic-based policy platforms in the area of immigration. There are still some restrictions and points of
friction over the number of immigrants allowed into Flanders, but as a whole, their threshold for tolerance is higher than that of VB. I have classified N-VA as “mixed” on my scale given that immigration is open and welcoming of different people. However, when pressed in the interviews, I did not get a definition of “mass immigration” from N-VA, which can be seen as a synonym for preventing too many people of non-European backgrounds from entering Flanders.

6.3.4 Political Autonomy

In the Office of the Speaker of the Flemish Parliament, I met with Jan Peumans. As part of the coalition between N-VA and CD&V\(^1\) at the Flemish regional government level, Peumans became the speaker of the parliament. As we talked about strategy, how Flanders will become independent, he describes federalism, confederalism, and independence. He compares his party to VB and how they differ in approaches. Then, most interestingly, he says that once confederalism is introduced in Belgium, it is effectively the end of the country because there is no point to keeping a Belgian shell that has no powers.

As noted in the beginning of the section on N-VA, the party’s strategy is to gradually accumulate more powers, either for Flanders or for Europe, until Belgium basically no longer exists. After their 2010 federal election victory, N-VA is now seeking to transfer the power for justice, health, and social security to the Flemish level (Wielaard, *Washington Post*, June 13, 2010) as a means to take more powers away from the Belgian government. This was also illustrated in the interviews. For example:

\(^1\)N-VA and CD&V still work together in a coalition at the Flemish regional level. At the federal level, they now run independently of one another.
On the other hand, maybe, as more and more things that the government does are becoming Flemish. Other parts are becoming a European responsibility. So the Belgian level in between, evaporates, disappears slowly. So, sooner or later, if arguments keep going on as they do, that level will disappear completely at least that is what we hope (Interview on May 6, 2010—Erik Van In).

Additionally, some members of N-VA advocate a more heavy handed approach to pressuring the Walloons such that if the federal level remains deadlocked, Flemish politicians will have to take matters into their own hands. For example:

> What we can do is, why can’t we start with Flemish parliament [by] start keeping [sic] our transfers, and take our money back, because of the money, the French want our money and we are the Flemish, and they don’t care about us, they just think we are some peasants and they just want our money from our giant economy (Interview on May 13, 2010—Theo Francken).

As seen in the above quotes, N-VA is advancing its strategy of independence through taking more powers. There is, however, a potential danger for Flanders because unless Belgium dissolves through some form of favorable negotiation with Wallonia, it may not be part of the EU because, in theory, Wallonia as the successor state of Belgium could veto their accession. Flanders, for economic and strategic reasons, must be part of Europe on the one hand, but members of N-VA also want to retain the Dutch language and protections for Flemish culture in Flanders on the other. This involves walking a tightrope.

The evaporation of the Belgian state would not happen overnight. Indeed, N-VA’s strategy is one of gradual movement towards independence. By slowly taking more powers away from the Belgian government, members of N-VA argue, the evaporation strategy can work. There is no evidence that this will happen, but this assertion was made on numerous occasions during the interview process. It is at this point, members of N-VA argue, when most areas of policy are controlled by regional
governments that N-VA can negotiate an end to the Belgian state, in which Flanders stays within Europe.

There are, however, a number of potential pitfalls to the strategy of slowly obtaining greater powers for Flanders especially if Flemish nationalists are not supported by the voters. Moreover, the next state reform, which will likely come before a new government coalition is formed, could always backfire. State reforms are seen as a way to compromise and keep Belgium together.

The strategy of obtaining more autonomy slowly is clever but it is also evidence of exclusionary policy platforms against the Walloon population. In this case, as Stefan Wolff argues, some aspects of Flemish identity diverge from the national identity and while this can be described as civic, this strategy is evidence of the majority’s ethnic identity. Indeed, “civic nationalism has some very strong assimilationist and possibly exclusivist tendencies” (Wolff 2006, 53). Further entrenching the Fleming/Walloon divide in Belgium exacerbates relations with the Walloon population, perhaps unnecessarily, when a more straightforward declaration of independence (as a strategy) would no longer “string along” the Walloons. Walloon politicians, members of N-VA argue, have created significant institutional constraints on outright Flemish independence and this has caused them to seek new ways to find independence such as the evaporation strategy.

There is therefore an ethnic component to the equation when N-VA seeks to slowly erode the powers of Belgium. In some ways this strategy bolsters ethnic identity as separate from Wallonia and may challenge the place of Francophones in an independent Flanders, a notion that runs counter to civic nationalism. Although this
“alka seltzer” strategy may be the most thoughtful way to become independent, it is fraught with potential dangers and overt ethnic differentiations between Flemings and Walloons.

On the issue of political autonomy, I have categorized N-VA as “mostly ethnic.” The reason for this is that the strategy of N-VA not only penalizes and hurts Wallonia, but could be rectified with a stronger central state. Since N-VA currently holds power in parliament, the party could restructure the state and help to impose austerity measures in order to fix the economic problems. Instead, there is a lot of blame. With a clearer platform of independence, the economy of Wallonia will still have to shift, but Walloon politicians would not be under the mirage that Belgium will still continue.

6.3.5 Economics

“Just this once, my friend, we need to say ‘no.’” Eric Van In, the regional chairman for N-VA in West Flanders, states this point emphatically as we sit at a coffee shop overlooking the intersection of two canals in scenic Bruges. Van In is referring to the economic redistribution from Flanders to Wallonia and my question as to whether this money transfer can be sustained. For Van In, the reason for cutting off Wallonia is simple: it will help both Flanders and Wallonia. Flanders will be richer and free to utilize a greater sum of money, and Wallonia will have to look to the market to solve its problems and move away from the heavy burden of government sector jobs.

One reason for N-VA’s desire for independence is economic efficiency. As stated on its website:
Being a smaller state with a strong communal spirit, Flanders is able to confidently take up its place in a globalizing world. It is no coincidence that smaller, well run countries perform best on a scale of prosperity and well-being. The Flemish people should not underestimate [themselves]: with a population of six million we approximately end up in 95th place out of about 193 countries in the world [in terms of population]. Economically speaking, its gross national product puts Flanders in 24th position [out of 193 in the world and, in per capita terms, much richer than most other countries] (www.n-va.be).

The centrality of economics to Flemish independence is essential. Even though Flanders would be a fairly small country, it would be amongst the top 50 countries in the world in terms of GDP (and much higher in per capita terms). N-VA is considered a center-right party, especially on economic issues. For this study, as noted in the previous two chapters, the center-right platform is not really relevant given the emphasis on independence, but this ideological stance does influence the party’s platforms. Attracting jobs to Flanders, keeping taxes low, insuring that social security remains, and balancing the budget are some of the most important economic platforms for Flanders (N-VA.be).

Additionally, as part of their economic strategy, N-VA would like to see transfer payments to Wallonia shrink in size, if not end altogether. This is part of the strategy to decrease the role of the Belgian state and to increase autonomy for Flanders. One issue of particular note is social security, which is different from the US system. In Belgium, social security includes seven components such as: old age and survivor’s pensions, unemployment, insurance for accidents at work, insurance for occupational diseases, family benefits, compulsory insurance for medical care and benefits, and annual vacation. Obviously, the role of social security in Belgium is highly significant and is important to numerous areas of policy. The issue area of social security will therefore be a significant test of whether N-VA’s strategy to allow the Belgian state to evaporate will become a reality or not.
As shown by the following quotes, many N-VA elites want to get rid of the transfer payment system in Belgium, which redistributes wealth from north to south.

These transfers, which are also transfers, are not mentioned so there is much more than you think, so there type of transfer would automatically stop if there is no Belgian government to see the money. What is the point of Flemish taxpayers to give [sic] more money to give more money to the schools when Belgium takes it away? To support an ailing French speaking part of the country? (Interview on May 6, 2010—Erik Van In).

Another example:

Because I am really convinced with today’s model, Wallonia will never get out of its problems, never. Because when you always give a lot of money goes from the north to the south, so they have not one incentive to start with this and take their own, to make their own future (Interview on April 20, 2010—Jan Jambon).

As mentioned earlier, some members of N-VA see the transfer payments to Wallonia as akin to a propping up the Walloons “junkie-like” need for Flemish money.

It’s a bit like, with all due respect, like an addict, we keep on giving money but really there hasn’t been any change (Interview on April 23, 2010—Jan Peumans).

The two quotes mentioned above show a deep satisfaction with the way that money is being spent in Belgium. One problem, however, is that they are all paternalistic in nature. There is a sense that Walloon politicians are inept and do not share the same attitudes on economic issues, which provides a reason why Flanders and Wallonia are different and should be split. The problem is that N-VA, as of the 2010 federal election, could change the structure of the Belgian state to centralize economic issues and implement austerity measures designed to balance the fiscal situation in the country. An overarching paternalism does not help the desired transition to civic nationalism.

On economic policy, N-VA really wants to gain control over Flemish finances because the party vehemently disagrees with the current system of redistribution in
Belgium. The desire to stop helping Wallonia is a difficult one. Some N-VA leaders advocate the gradual reduction of the redistribution payments in order to help Wallonia transition and find new sources of income over time. However, some elite politicians want an immediate end to the transfer payments. For this reason, I have classified N-VA as “mixed” on the ethnic/civic division.

6.3.6 Ethnic or Civic?

Because for us the reformation of the state and the nation, it is more of an economic issue than a linguistic issue. Linguistics in Belgium is from the past (Interview on April 20, 2010—Jan Jambon).

In many respects, N-VA came from the political wilderness to become the most popular party in Flanders and Belgium after the 2010 federal election. This included a stunning victory of 28.2 percent of the vote in Flanders and culminated in the party obtaining 27 members in the Chamber of Representatives. One of the major problems, however, is that despite the great victory N-VA does not have a majority and cannot enact change alone. Coalitions are built into the system of governance in Belgium. However, forming a government with the socialist party in Wallonia has many potential problems. If N-VA fails to live up to the expectations of voters, then they will likely be punished in the next election.

Nonetheless, N-VA is currently riding a wave of voter support. Some of this success is due to the fact that the economic situation in Belgium was quite bad in 2010 and N-VA was able to speak to voters clearly on this issue. Another reason is that by shifting slightly towards more civic based policy platforms, N-VA was able to appeal to nationalist voters who do not want to vote for a more extreme, ethnic nationalist party
like VB. The evidence of their transition is mixed; although N-VA has certainly moved in the direction of civic nationalism. In official party brochures, advertisements, and statements, people from a range of ethnic backgrounds are all together in support of N-VA. At the federal level, some minority candidates were elected and several more were high on the party lists. As shown in Table 6.4 below, N-VA has made a move towards civic-based policy platforms.

Table 6.4: N-VA Ethnic/Civic Policy Platforms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Policy Area</th>
<th>Ethnic/Civic</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Mostly civic</td>
<td>Acceptance of English as well as other languages; some antagonism towards Francophones in Brussels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Openness to people throughout the world; accept outside influences; some limitations to Moroccan and Turkish influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Immigration policy is open to people from everyone; some restrictions that have tacit ties to ethnicity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Autonomy</td>
<td>Mostly ethnic</td>
<td>Desire to slowly extract more powers from Wallonia as a means to obtain independence; could be very painful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>Mixed</td>
<td>Desire to protect the Flemish economy; want to maintain fiscal stability of the region; accept benefits to immigrants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, given a full examination of N-VA policy platforms, some areas are still very antagonistic towards the Walloon population and advantage people of a more narrow Flemish ethnic background. The movement for independence is very much driven by economic factors and is supplemented by linguistic and cultural issues. In comparison to Quebec, the leaders of N-VA have not made the same insensitive remarks
as the leadership of the PQ and BQ. This, in many ways, shows some evidence that statements made by the leadership filter down to the rank and file members such that they see immigrants and minority groups as part of a changing Flanders.

The transition towards an ideology of civic nationalism has certainly worked as a strategy for N-VA during the 2010 federal election. The most obvious evidence is that with the rise of N-VA, we have seen a decline with VB especially in the former VB stronghold of Antwerp. The number of nationalist voters increased slightly with N-VA’s break from CD&V, but many voters moved over from VB. In fact, as shown in Graphs One and Two earlier, VB’s vote percentage fell from 24 percent in 2007 to 16 percent in 2010. Meanwhile, N-VA’s percentage of the vote grew to over 30 percent (European Election Database, 2007 and 2010).

This shift presents evidence, at least in one election in the advanced democratic world, that independence seeking parties can have success by including immigrants into their platforms in order to maximize their votes. Of course, all of this work could be undone by poor decisions or some abnormal shock such as a Belgian 9/11.

N-VA’s victory in the 2010 election was well-crafted. Jan Jambon, during our interview, drew a map for me explaining how N-VA could take votes away from surrounding parties such as VB, LDD, CD&V and Open Vld. For N-VA, on the political spectrum, they were very much between all of these parties and so had to be cognizant about positioning. In 2010, N-VA was able to take away a lot of votes from other parties, especially VB. It seems, from the evidence presented above, as if the people of Flanders during the federal election of 2010 were more willing to embrace the notion of independence if the platforms are more civic-based and have a place for immigrants. As
the percentage of immigrants and people of color continues to rise, then one would expect that civic-based policy platforms would continue to become more popular and more ethnic-based platforms would continue to decrease in popularity.

6.4 Conclusion

In Flanders, political parties hold regular party “congresses” for their supporters so as to keep them informed and motivated about the party. It is an opportunity for party members to gather as a group and to listen to their prominent political leaders speak on important topics in the news. Amongst the two independence minded parties—N-VA and VB—they both end their gatherings in an important and meaningful way. Both parties sing their national anthem, the Flemish Lion. It is a powerful and emotional way to end the gathering and it keeps their sights on their ultimate goal: independence.

Benedict Anderson (1983) describes “imagined communities” as part of envisioning statehood. These imagined communities have meaning because they have shared symbols, anthems, flags, and other ways of creating a shared sense of community, including the singing of their national anthem.

In some ways, the Flemish independence movement benefits from the existence of both VB and N-VA. Now that two parties advocate some form of independence, the idea of independence has become much more palatable to the electorate. And while VB suffered another electoral setback in 2010, some internal party members were still satisfied because their party was contributing—in very important ways—to the independence of Flanders.
Flanders provides an interesting case study because there are examples of both mostly ethnic and mostly civic-based nationalist policy platforms here. For the independence movement, more ethnic-based nationalist platforms were quite popular for a time and reached a high point in 2004. As of 2010, however, there is evidence that N-VA has become a much more popular option for supporters of independence. N-VA has a mixed record with its transition towards civic-based nationalist policy platforms, but the 2010 election results show that some support has moved from VB to N-VA. After the 541-day parliamentary deadlock, N-VA was left out of the governing coalition. Nonetheless, N-VA will need to prove to the electorate that they can obtain greater powers for Flanders in order to increase their current level of support (even if there is an ethnic factor involved). An unsatisfactory state reform (if they are involved in the negotiations and vote for it) may cause significant problems for the party and could lead to the rise of ethnic nationalism once more. A few different outcomes are possible. First, support for N-VA could erode, especially if Belgian state reforms are seen as favorable. Voters will then likely gravitate towards centrist parties like CD&V and Open Vld. Second, in the event of a terrorist attack on Brussels or Antwerp, ethnic nationalism could return. VB may have been defeated, but the party is well organized, professional, and has name recognition in Flanders. It is in this backdrop that N-VA continues to operate. The party risks electoral defeat without results towards their stated goal of independence, and this could be challenging given the organization of the Belgian state. I now turn to the question of why Flanders and Quebec have not yet gained independence.
CHAPTER 7

Failure to Secede: Institutions, Interests, and Ideas

7.1 Introduction

Bye-Bye Belgium (BBB) was a fake news broadcast by RTBF—one of the most prominent television stations in the French speaking part of Belgium, Wallonia—which originally aired on December 13, 2006. The show featured small segments from Bart De Wever, Filip De Winter, and Jean-Marie Dedecker, the heads of the three “V”\textsuperscript{19} parties in Flanders (parties that support independence), to show how the main supporters of Flemish independence had managed to finagle Flanders out of Belgium. Moreover, BBB went on to claim that there was now a border between the two “countries,” that flights out of Brussels were stopped, immigration officials were checking people on the train, and that gridlock ensued on the Brussels loop highway. The broadcast also showed the (now former) Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, being rushed around through the streets of Brussels, a group of Flemish supporters celebrating and waving flags outside of parliament, and a major event in Antwerp to celebrate the newfound independence of Flanders. Flemish independence became a reality, at least for thirty minutes on one TV station in Wallonia. BBB was broadcast with the intent to provoke debate on the potential breakup of Belgium under a scenario in which Flanders suddenly declared independence. However, given the large number of telephone calls from upset viewers

\textsuperscript{19} “V” stands for Vlanderen (Flanders in English)
across Belgium, RTBF was forced to display a banner noting that its broadcast was a hoax, a mere 30 minutes into the show.

In real life, Quebec was very close to independence in late October 1995. When the polls narrowed in mid-October after sovereigntist leader Lucien Bouchard emerged as a hero in Quebec after recovering from a flesh-eating disease, the possibility of independence moved from hypothetical to possible. Canadians, from coast to coast, congregated in Montreal for a “unity rally” (pejoratively known as a “love-in” amongst sovereigntists) for a chance to tell the people of Quebec that Canadians wanted them to remain a part of the country. On referendum night on October 30, the mood was tense. The referendum vote was extremely close. But as the votes continued to be counted, it became clear that Quebec would remain in Canada, with a very narrow majority supporting the cause of Canadian national unity, 50.4 percent (Doran 1996).

In the introduction, three main questions were posed: whether the nationalist parties studied have transitioned to civic-based nationalism? Why do some nationalist political parties approach nationalism differently? And, why have these parties so far failed in their goal to become independent? This chapter will address the second major question listed in the introduction. Why have both movements in Quebec and Flanders thus far failed?

In the developed world, there has not been a case of secession since 1921 when the Irish Republic broke away from the United Kingdom (Dion 1996). There were a few other cases in the early part of the twentieth century—such as Norway from Sweden in 1905, Montenegro (for a brief period) in 1910 and Albania in 1912 from the Ottoman Empire, and Iceland from Denmark (although this case could be seen as
decolonization)—but none since then. Why? After all, secession has been prevalent in much of the world. The number of states grew quite dramatically throughout the twentieth century from 53 in 1917, to 68 in 1945, to 190 by the end of the century (Taylor and Hudson 1972, 26; United Nations: Member States). This number has continued to grow to 193—with East Timor in 2002, Montenegro in 2006, and South Sudan in 2011—in the twenty-first century.

Beyond the obvious answer in the cases of Quebec and Flanders, that neither region has quite enough support for independence, there are important nuances in each case and the quest for independence remains an attractive goal to so many people. After all, the commitment of the sovereigntists/separatists is real. The time, money, and efforts spent on secession are significant because the respective movements represent many people who are and who have been fully committed to the cause of independence.

As a way to investigate why neither region has become independent, I started my interviews by asking every nationalist in Quebec and Flanders this simple question: why has your region failed to become independent? The answers are mixed. Some expressed a sense of inevitability that history is on their side and their region will be independent one day. Others, however, openly questioned the strategies of their own party to fulfill the stated goal of independence. Overall, though, virtually everyone remains optimistic that they can achieve independence and that their cause is just.

As shown in the previous three chapters, nationalist political parties in Quebec and Flanders diverge in their approaches to independence. In Quebec, one main party has represented the cause of independence since 1968 and has adopted a slightly more civic-based nationalist program albeit with overt protections for the French language, in line
with Anderson, Gellner and Hobsbawm. Sometimes the PQ has to “sit in two chairs”—between ethnic and civic nationalism—but there has been movement towards civic nationalism since the late 1990s. In Flanders there are now two major parties that support independence with a special place for the platform of economic protection: VB formed in 1977 and has ethnic-based nationalist policies (in line with Anthony Smith’s conception of a core “ethnie”); whereas, N-VA is much newer and has slightly more civic-based nationalist policies again based around Anderson’s notion of language.

In Quebec, there is a clear path to independence: 1) the PQ must win a majority of seats in the National Assembly, 2) the PQ must put forth a bill in the National Assembly to hold a referendum one year later, 3) the citizens of Quebec must vote in favor of independence in that referendum (with a majority of votes, often described as 50 percent plus one vote in Canadian politics). On four occasions the PQ has won the provincial election and governed the province of Quebec as the majority party; on two occasions, the party has held a referendum on independence. The first referendum, in 1980, only received 40.44 percent support for independence. The second referendum in 1995, however, was much closer. Supporters of independence obtained 49.6 percent of the referendum vote; sovereigntists were very close to their goal in 1995 (Doran 1996).

In contrast, there are a few ways in which Flanders could become independent, but none of the ways involves a referendum. The most unproblematic way to become independent is through the mutual dissolution of the Belgian state after some form of negotiation with Wallonia and/or Brussels. Dissolution, in theory, becomes more likely when there is no Belgian coalition government and all proposed changes are blocked such that government cannot function. This situation arises largely because Flemish
parties no longer agree with Walloon policies and refuse to join in a coalition government. A second scenario for independence is also plausible at least in theory. It is possible for Flemish nationalists to declare independence in the Flemish parliament, but there would have to be a pro-Flemish independence majority in the parliament first. Furthermore, this option also has risks because Flanders could become some form of international pariah with a unilateral declaration of independence. Added to all of this is one further constraint, Flanders has the potential complication of losing its EU membership if Wallonia is the successor state of Belgium. This is because Wallonia could then veto Flanders’ accession bid to the EU. Finally, N-VA’s strategy of obtaining more powers for Flanders whilst Europe takes other powers may provide sovereignty for Flanders but not outright independence. Belgium will still exist and will probably control the policy areas of foreign policy and national defense (assuming a Switzerland type confederal model). This confederal model, however, may not be enough for supporters of outright independence.

As noted in the Chapter 5, Belgium has undergone five important state reforms since 1970. (The outcome of the 2010 election also necessitates a further constitutional reform in order for a new governmental coalition to come together.) The constitutional reforms, which have slowly granted more powers to the regions, have thus far shown that compromise is possible between Flemings and Walloons. However, these reforms have also institutionalized the fact that there are two separate peoples in Belgium living in the same state.

According to Belgian scholar, Liesbet Hooghe, the 1989 constitutional reforms were, perhaps, an ideal time to divide the country (if one was to divide the country). For
the Flemish, independence would allow them to stop transfer payments to Wallonia and to lower taxes; for Walloons, they could pursue more social policies that redistribute wealth more equitably throughout the society (Hooghe 2004, 72). Hooghe asks a pertinent question: why did Belgium remain united in 1989? She answers the question by citing a study by Bolton and Roland (1997) that essentially argues that economic costs and uncertainty of the future were too high. There was fear, on the part of the Flemish, of a major shock to the economy that would cause the domestic market to shrink. On the Walloon side, there was also fear that they would lose their transfer payments from Flanders (Hooghe 2004, 72). Hooghe argues that a compromise was reached, a very Belgian trait. And essentially, the center of the Belgian state was sacrificed in order to avoid the costs of secession. This observation raises another pertinent question: whether the costs of secession are more palatable now?

So far in this introduction I have shown that in both cases, Quebec and Flanders, there have been real challenges to national unity for both of the respective states. However, the territorial boundaries of both Canada and Belgium have not changed in decades.\textsuperscript{20} This poses a central problem as implied in the heading of this chapter: why have they both failed to secede? This chapter starts with an examination of my interview data to show how institutions, interests, and ideas are affecting the outcomes in my two cases. I have coded my data to show how the cases of Flanders and Quebec can be compared in terms of institutions, interests, and ideas, and how each of these areas have either served to help or to hinder the cause of independence. I argue that institutional,

\textsuperscript{20} Belgium’s territory has remained the same since 1831 whereas Canada has grown and taken on more provinces. The most recent of which occurred when Newfoundland and Labrador entered Confederation in 1949.
interest-based, and ideational obstacles to secession are still more entrenched than institutional, interest-based, and ideational facilitators in the system.

7.2 Shared Problems with Secession

In the literature review I examined several works on secession. Two works in particular sought to examine the necessary conditions for secession including Horowitz’s typology of advanced and “backward” regions in advanced and “backward” states. Horowitz essentially argues that “backward” regions in “backward” states are the most likely to secede because they have the least to lose (Horowitz 1985, 247). Unfortunately this typology is most representative of cases in the developing world and is less relevant to cases in the developed world. Stéphane Dion attempts to tackle this question of secession in the developed world using the case of Quebec. Dion argues that a combination of fear inspired by the union and confidence inspired by secession are what ultimately can lead to secession (Dion 1996). However, this assessment assumes that there are no (seemingly permanent) institutional barriers to secession; Dion assumes that regions are able to secede in his study of Quebec, which is not a possibility in other cases like Belgium or Spain because there is no ability to hold a referendum on the part of nationalists in Flanders or Catalonia. Essentially, there is either no history of holding a referendum (as in Belgium) or the Constitution does not allow for secession (as in Spain). In addition, in all cases there are national interests and business interests that oppose the idea of one member unit leaving the central state. Finally, the idea of secession is also contested. Governments across the developed world have at least paid lip-service to the notion of power sharing. They have even adopted federal models in some cases to
provide more powers to the regions. Even if autonomy is minimal, each nationalist group can put together a nationalist political party that wants independence. Voter support for these parties will provide an indicator for the desire for independence. For these reasons, I started to look for other answers as to why my cases of Quebec and Flanders have so far failed to secede.

In a book chapter discussing the comparative political economy of industrialized nations, Peter A. Hall (1997) categorized the literature into three groups: institutions, interests, and ideas. Essentially, he argues that political economists have been concerned with three sets of questions. The first question is: whose interests are being served by the arrangement and how do they distribute power across social groups? The second question is: what are the institutional structures that underpin the market? And the third question is: where do these conceptions come from and why are they influential (Hall 1997, 175)?

In this dissertation I modify Hall’s work but use his three main categories—interests, institutions, and ideas—as part of my argument. I also argue that these three categories help to explain why important independence seeking regions in the industrialized world—such as Flanders and Quebec—have yet to become independent. I also take the additional step of using these three categories to help to explain why each region also has the ability to become independent as well. Some of Hall’s definitions have to be modified in order to better suit a discussion of nationalism, but the overarching themes of institutions, interests, and ideas are a helpful way to think about why Belgium and Canada have thus far resisted separatist elements in Flanders and Quebec respectively.
Institutional arrangements are important. The electoral system after all can really dictate electoral options. Moreover, the constitutional arrangement of the state can also limit some outcomes. Interests are equally important. Whose interests are being served by any given set of economic arrangements? Who is interested in independence? Who gains and who loses? Ideas have an important place too. Does reality change as ideas change (Hall 1997, 175)?

As part of the interview process I attempted to really find out why and how nationalists could succeed in their maximalist goal of independence. I asked questions regarding the nature of the breakup, how they would measure support for independence, and how they would obtain international recognition. After numerous interviews and examining my notes, I then decided to adopt Hall’s three categories as a way of examining why neither region is independent. (Hall’s basic argument is that institutions, interests, and ideas, help to categorize the field of political economy). I take Hall’s categories and theorize that institutions, interests, and ideas all play an integral role in the keeping the respective unions together. However, I also theorize that these three categories all play a role in helping the respective nationalist movements.

As a result of adopting this framework, I coded the responses into the three categories listed: institutions, interests, and ideas. I then went one step further and coded whether each response could serve as a help or a hindrance to the cause of independence for each of the respective parties studied.

Words and/or statements regarding institutions referred to the makeup of the political system, the current electoral set-up, and membership in international organizations. Interests included the media, money from the federal government, ethnic
groups, unions, other political parties, the Roman Catholic Church, and businesses. Ideas referred to the arguments made to the public and how they were received. Are the supporters of Canada and Belgium making better arguments than the supporters of Quebec and Flanders?

In Tables 7.1 through 7.3 below, I have listed the number of statements made by each party. In all three cases, a consistent finding across the interviews was that institutional and interest-based hindrances have made secession very difficult. In terms of ideas, nationalists are succeeding with the content of their arguments; however, nationalist parties are still not obtaining majority votes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Institutions Help</th>
<th>Interests Help</th>
<th>Ideas Help</th>
<th>Institutions Hinder</th>
<th>Interests Hinder</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statements</td>
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<td>30</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>6.3%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
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In Table 7.1 above, political elites from the BQ and PQ noted that while they had a real opportunity to gain independence through a referendum, many institutional and interest-based hindrances remain. Business and political interests in Canada, in particular, are the main reasons why Quebec is not yet independent. The sovereigntists do argue, however, that their cause is still viable and stands a great chance of succeeding if the next provincial government is led by the PQ. Although, it should however be noted that the hindrance of ideas was also mentioned quite regularly in the interviews, but not as much as the way that ideas help the cause of independence.
Table 7.2: Institutions, Interests, and Ideas: Help or Hinder Independence, VB

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<th>Institutions Help</th>
<th>Interests Help</th>
<th>Ideas Help</th>
<th>Institutions Hinder</th>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In Table 7.2 above, political elites from VB discussed institutions much more frequently than interests or ideas. Essentially, they argue that the structure of the Belgian state and electoral system has made independence very difficult without them provoking prolonged political crises. Moreover, members of VB argue that the EU provides an additional constraint against independence. However, like the PQ, they also believe that their ideas are convincing more people that Flemish independence is a good idea and that they can succeed with more time and more cooperation with N-VA.

Table 7.3: Institutions, Interests, and Ideas: Help or Hinder Independence, N-VA

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<tr>
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<th>Institutions Help</th>
<th>Interests Help</th>
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<th>Institutions Hinder</th>
<th>Interests Hinder</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
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<td>9.8%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
<td>22.3%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

In Table 7.3 above, political elites from N-VA similarly noted the hindrance of institutions in Belgium including the EU, electoral system, and set-up of the Belgian
state. Most noted the hindrances to independence as a major reason for their strategy of incremental independence. More so than VB, members of N-VA noted the hindrances to independence.

In the rest of this chapter, I outline institutional, interest-based, and ideational facilitators and obstacles in the system. I also provide quotes as to how party leaders perceive these issues and argue what they are likely to do in response. In each section, I present objective characteristics that serve as either an obstacle or a facilitator for the goal of independence. Within each section, I also quote political leaders from my elite interviews to gain an understanding of how they perceive each of the objective characteristics. Where I do not provide a quote, the discussion is continued in Chapter 8 when examining the comparative politics of secession.

7.2.1 Institutions- Hindrance

Institutionally, there are significant challenges to the independence of Quebec and the independence of Flanders. These include: the structure of the respective parliaments, voting, and the ability to hold a referendum. I will start with Quebec before moving to a discussion of Flanders.

In Quebec, as noted earlier, there are some steps sovereigntists must go through in order to have a chance to become independent. The PQ must win a majority in a given provincial election in order to govern. After that, the party can set a date for a referendum in the National Assembly (because they have a majority). With a clear question, the province can hypothetically secede with 50 percent plus one of the votes in a referendum. Although, according to the Supreme Court of Canada, the question must
be approved by the Canadian government first. This presents another institutional barrier to independence.

There are a few institutional constraints built into the electoral system as well. First, the PQ must govern for at least a year before they can hold a referendum. This poses myriad potential problems with the electorate because inevitably some groups of people will oppose a given piece of legislation and become disillusioned with the pro-independence government. Second, in provincial elections, there are two other viable options for voters: Liberal party and the ADQ. (Quebec solidaire and the Green party of Quebec may become more viable options in the future as well.) Majoritarian governance is therefore difficult to achieve because votes are split across at least three parties. Third, with the passing of the Clarity Act\(^\text{21}\) in 2000, a referendum question must be clear: do you want Quebec to become independent, yes or no? Polling shows that support for independence decreases with a more straight forward question (Leger 2008). The next time a referendum is held the question can make no reference to sovereignty-partnership or sovereignty-association as was the case in the past. Fourth, the federal government has much more money to spend on their ‘no’ campaign than supporters of independence. Money can make a difference and is probably at least partly responsible for the defeat of the 1995 referendum. Finally, a number of important minorities live in Quebec and almost always vote no. There is a significant Anglophone minority that vehemently opposes Quebec independence. Immigrants tend to vote overwhelmingly with the ‘no’ campaign as well; although, as evidenced in the last chapter, many immigrants are now

\(^{21}\) The Clarity Act was passed by Canadian parliament basically stipulating that in order for the PQ to hold another referendum on independence, a clear question must be asked about Quebec’s intentions for independence. Previous referenda, the Clarity Act notes, were not clear and masked the true intentions of sovereigntists to gain independence and not just some form of looser association with Canada.
running for and voting with the sovereignty movement as noted in the quote below.

Given this perceived problem of immigrant groups voting no, it is likely that
sovereignists in Quebec are going to try to focus on immigrant votes in Quebec in order
to overcome the institutional barriers noted above.

We establish a dialogue, a very good dialogue [with immigrant leaders] and after
they can sell that message in their community. The PQ wants that, that, and that.
And it is easier after [that] and I have never been in a community, a cultural
community that was not pleased to have me. No, they are very proud when
somebody from PQ is there (Interview with Carole Poirier [PQ] on June 23,
2010).

In Flanders, there is no real history of referendum so independence will have to be
negotiated, one way or another. This is what makes comparisons to the model of the
dissolution of Czechoslovakia so attractive. However, one institutional constraint is
already clear: the Belgian state will have to eventually legitimate the independence of
Flanders.

Institutionally, the state reforms in Belgium have made the division of powers
very complex. Belgium is set-up as if the two parts are already separate entities. Dutch
speakers in Flanders take part in elections and vote for parties that are different from
French speakers in Wallonia. Moreover, there are at least more than six parties in each
region, which makes for a crowded field. There are two political parties that support
Flemish independence and their division serves as another institutional constraint. Since
it is more difficult to clearly win an election in Belgium, coalition governments are the
norm.

At the federal level, the coalition government—and it is always a coalition
government—has to be made up of some Flemish parties and some Walloon parties per
the constitution. In order to keep power, parties from Flanders and parties from Wallonia
have to cooperate. So institutionally there is a built in mechanism for Flemish/Walloon cooperation. This is a measure that keeps Belgium together. Institutionally, the Flemish people are a majority in Belgium (Flanders has 6 million people, Wallonia has 3.5 million, and Brussels has 1 million), but only have 50 percent of the power at the federal level. Their majority is reduced to a minority when considering constitutional changes.

Despite the serious bifurcation in Belgian society, the Belgian government has not implemented a consociational system as in other cases like Lebanon, Northern Ireland and the Netherlands (see Lijphart 2004 and O’Leary 2005). A consociational system essentially provides a mechanism for power sharing amongst different groups. In Lebanon, for example, the President has to be a Maronite Christian, the Prime Minister has to be a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of parliament has to be a Shiite Muslim, as a way of sharing power between the major religious and ethnic groups in the country. In Belgium, however, this discussion has not really taken place. In a sense, for Flemish nationalists, it would mean that the Belgian state would continue indefinitely because the Flemish would have such a strong stake in the governance of the country.

In order to make a constitutional change—and Flemish independence would likely require a constitutional change—2/3 of the parliament in both language groups would have to vote for it. However, if one of Belgium’s six regional/community parliaments does not like a measure, said parliament can postpone ratification for a period of 90 to 120 days. (Each parliament can utilize this same constitutional mechanism.) Institutionally, the Belgian state reforms have created the opposite problem for nationalists than those that existed in Czechoslovakia. Belgium requires the cooperation of 2/3 of its parliamentarians to make constitutional changes; whereas 30 Slovak deputies
often blocked Czech constitutional reforms, which ultimately led to the dissolution of the state (Leff 1997). Essentially, in the Czechoslovak case, the Czechs wanted to reform the state and the Slovaks wanted independence; in Belgium, the Flemish want to reform the state in order to gain independence meaning that Wallonia can simply refuse further changes. The Flemish and Slovak roles are different. Moreover, the Walloons, unlike the Czechs, are unlikely to call the bluff of Flanders and give them independence.

Another complication for Flanders is Brussels. How can you divide Brussels? Marc Eyskens from the Christian Democrats (CD&V) discusses this question:

The splitting of Belgium, a country so intricate, is impossible. By contrast, the secession of Flanders is more probable, with the difficulties that that entails as much as with regards to Brussels, which Flanders would lose, as regards to the European Union, of which it would not be a member (Quote from Marc Eyskens, CD&V in EUObserver, Sept. 6, 2010).

In this quote, Mark Eyskens is basically saying that the institutions of Belgium have made it almost impossible to dissolve the state without an agreement by both sides. Moreover, Flanders would likely lose Brussels to Wallonia and a lot of potential income as capital of Europe. Finally, Flanders could in theory be left out of the EU because if Wallonia serves as the successor state of Belgium, it could veto the accession of Flanders. Remaining outside of the EU could be economically detrimental to Flanders (although Norway and Switzerland have both done fine outside of the EU).

Quite frankly, it is difficult to know how and where Brussels will fall in the event that Flanders becomes independent. The existence of Brussels and its geographic position in Belgium makes the task of splitting the country very difficult especially if Flemish nationalists want to keep the city as part of their new independent state.
Inside the EU, there are significant institutional constraints against the creation of an independent of Flanders as well. If Flanders is allowed to become independent, this change could well set off a chain of events in other cases such as Scotland, Catalonia, Corsica, even Padania in northern Italy. The uniqueness of the Flemish case could be made—that Flemings are a majority in their state and are not fighting against the central identity of the state—but the simple truth is that the independence of Flanders would still embolden all other secessionist movements throughout the EU. The EU is very unlikely to support the unilateral independence of Flanders without facing other related problems elsewhere. For example:

…There is no great enthusiasm in Europe, at least for a European government to see Flanders become an independent state. That is because our European representatives in the European Council are, most of them, of a Belgian signature. They are not there because they are Flemish regionalists. They are there because elected on a Belgian platform (Interview on May 6, 2010 with Erik Van In).

The EU is not favorable to secession because membership in the EU belongs to states and representatives that favor the status quo existence of the current members. Nationalists like Van In above imply that the EU sets the standards for recognition based on existing membership in the organization.

Finally, international recognition presents an institutional constraint against the independence of Quebec and Flanders. Without international recognition, both regions could become the next Kosovo. Some states recognize Kosovo but many, as of yet, do not. Kosovo remains in international limbo, which is a possibility in both Flanders and Quebec.

It is likely that Flemish nationalists will continue to try to advance Flemish interests with Belgian institutions, in an attempt to modify Belgian institutions to serve
the interests of Flemish nationalism. The EU remains a sticking point, but, throughout the advancement of a more supranational Europe, the organization could become less concerned with states and more concerned with policies for generic European people.

7.2.2 Institutions- Help

Despite all of these institutional constraints, there are some factors that work in the favor of Quebec and Flanders. Sovereigntist parties from both regions are unobstructed at the federal level, simply because they operate like any other party even though their end goal is independence. Second, the plurality system of Quebec works in the favor of sovereigntists especially when compared to the case of Scotland. The Scottish Parliament uses a system close to pure proportional representation, which means that the Scottish National Party needs at least 45 percent of the vote in order to have a majority government and thus hold a referendum (the SNP did, however, win a majority in 2011). The PQ can win a majority in the National Assembly with approximately 40 percent of the vote (and perhaps even with as low as 37 percent of the vote).

Another factor is governmental powers. Political elites in Quebec perceive this as an opportunity to make a better case for independence. If Quebecers desire greater powers and the government of the province proves that it can manage these policy areas, the PQ can make a greater and more sophisticated case for independence. If the PQ wins the next provincial election, it is likely that it will try to obtain more powers from the

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22 Scotland has a plurality and proportional representation system but votes essentially equal seats in parliament.
federal government and prove through responsible institutions, that it is capable of running an independent country. For example:

We want to do things to advance Quebec’s claims for more autonomy so we in last resort want independence. There will be a constitution and there will be citizenship whether Quebec is sovereign or not. We will draft a constitution and we will have it adopted by the Assembly to see what Quebecers want to see in the constitution (Interview on Daniel Turp on June 24, 2010).

In Belgium, Flemish nationalists have some ability to block the formation of a new government. If a government is not formed, then Flemish nationalists argue that there comes a hypothetical point when Belgium should be dissolved. A Belgian government needs to include at least two parties from both Flanders and Wallonia. If Flemish nationalists win enough of the votes during an election, then they can obstruct the formation of a new government and provoke events, which stop Belgium from working. It is at this point that Belgium could theoretically dissolve:

There has been no real Belgian government for several months so there is permanent Belgian political crisis and I think we should unite our forces and you know try to reach our goal [independence] (Interview with Karim Van Overmeiere [VB] on May 12, 2010).

One advantage to the current system in Belgium is that the regions and communities have substantial autonomy from the Belgian state. Therefore, the Flemish government is able to play a role internationally and to exercise some level of autonomy in international affairs. For example:

The Flemish parliament and the Belgian parliament, they are all at the same level. We have possibilities to make treaties with other countries. And compared with other parliaments we have a lot of competences and we have the possibility to make treaties with other countries, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Netherlands, Sweden, it is possible (Interview on April 23, 2010 with Jan Peumans [N-VA]).

In this way, institutions can work in the favor of nationalist parties because given significant autonomy in Flanders, the Flemish government is able to in essence prepare
its population for a time when, according to Flemish nationalists, they will have their own state. However, there are limitations as to the extent that treaties can be signed with foreign governments. There is some room especially when permission is granted by the national government such as Quebec’s (under the auspices of Canada) involvement in La Francophonie, or negotiations between the Flemish Parliament and the Netherlands over access to the Scheldt River. The devolution of power in this way, serves as institutional help to the nationalist cause.

7.2.3 Interests- Hindrance

In every political situation, there are many interests involved, particularly economic interests. Money can be made or lost with political decisions, a group of people (or lobby group) may have an interest in certain legislation, the interests of one may conflict with the interests of another, and powerful organizations may want to retain the status quo. For Quebecois and Flemish nationalists, there are many people that support their respective causes. However, there are powerful interests opposing them as well. This point is described well below.

Ludwig Caluwe is a parliamentarian from the governing CD&V party in the Flemish Parliament. He listened to my discussion of Flemish nationalism, highlighting the important points from VB and N-VA, before delivering a dose of reality. Brussels, Caluwe says, is the main sticking point. “It is no longer Dutch speaking and we would lose it.” Moreover, “300,000 people from Flanders work in Brussels. What happens to their pensions and their social security?” As noted in chapters 5 and 6, few Flemish
nationalists are willing to give up Brussels, but there are some interests that work against independence because of the stubborn desire to keep Brussels.

Other powerful interests that oppose Flemish independence include: the king, almost everyone in Wallonia, many big corporations, pro-Belgian political parties with powerful union ties, and perhaps the Roman Catholic Church have an interest in retaining the status quo in the Belgian state. If Flanders and Wallonia were to go their separate ways, a lot of powerful groups would suffer. According to Flemish nationalists, the king would rightly have no kingdom, Walloons would lose their substantial transfer payments from Flanders, and the political status quo would be broken. For example, the royal family and political elites:

And [when] you see politicians, you see an establishment of politicians who are feeling close to the king and the royal family. The royal family every year gives a knighthood and they become a baron or a count and they are trying to buy the support of captains of industry of well-known people in the cultural or even in the sports world. And in that way they are trying to draw these people to them and all of a sudden they feel important, they feel flattered and they think, well let’s keep Belgium together (Interview with Philip Claeys from VB on April 9, 2010).

And unions:

Sometimes they say the unions are also anti-Flemish and the Catholic Church but it depends who you are speaking to (Interview with Tanguy Veys from VB on April 26, 2010).

And political parties and the Catholic Church:

But of course, from a historical point of view, the Christian Democrats have always been close to the church. And the church as an institution has always been linked to the Belgian establishment and they will not let it loose (Interview with Tomas Verachtert from VB on April 16, 2010).

In Belgium then, there are powerful interests in favor of retaining the Belgian state. The promotion of a high culture is an important facet of Ernest Gellner’s argument
about the creation of a nation. The existing positions (king, unions, Roman Catholic Church) of power reinforce a sense of Gellnerian high culture in Belgium. However, with the growth of the Flemish economy and increased support amongst Flemish nationalists, this notion of high culture is being challenged.

The perception of Flemish nationalists shows that they are trying to overcome the entrenched interests of the existing state. Flemish nationalists continue to undercut some of these interests and their main priority will likely be to instill confidence in people that Flanders will be able to provide jobs and social security, even in the event of independence.

In Quebec, there are numerous Canadian interests that oppose independence. The unity rally (“love-in”) in Montreal prior to the 1995 referendum offers at least some evidence of a genuine Canadian interest to keep Quebec within Confederation. The unity rally provided a sense amongst Canadians that they want to retain Quebec within the union. There are also numerous groups who oppose Quebec’s independence throughout Canada including business groups, and pro-Canada political parties and organizations. All three major political parties (Conservatives, Liberals, and New Democrats) in Canada spend a lot of time trying to appease Quebecers with resources and political representation.

It is clear from both lists that similar interests opposing the independence of Flanders and Quebec exist in Belgium and Canada, with the exception of the monarchy. (Although one could make a case that membership in the British Commonwealth and a Governor General is akin to having some form of monarchy in Quebec.) A further interest of both Canada and Belgium is the issue of territory. If Quebec were to secede
from Canada, the Maritime Provinces would be cut off from the rest of the country. Obviously, this is a suboptimal outcome for residents of the Maritime Provinces. Moreover, the vast majority of First Nations people in the north of Quebec want to remain part of Canada and thus also largely reject the independence of Quebec. In Belgium, the issue of Brussels is controversial. Brussels is a largely French speaking city—although some argue that it is a city of immigrants and Eurocrats—within a Dutch speaking territory. In the event of an independent Flanders, where does the city of Brussels end up? There are incentives for each federal government to retain their territory. These interests work against the nationalist cause.

From a financial standpoint, there is a major difference between Quebec and Flanders. Although Quebec contributes the second largest amount to national GDP, it has a per capita GDP of under $40,000, which is the fourth lowest in Canada.23 By way of comparison, Alberta’s GDP is over $80,000 given the Tar Sands, and Ontario is over $45,000. Only the four Maritime Provinces are lower than Quebec. Canada is still rich by comparative standards. Canada is the 12th richest country in per capita income according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF 2010). However, Quebec would be ranked 21st if taken as separate.

As a result, Quebec receives a significant amount of money each year from the federal government, which will amount to $7.8 billion in fiscal year, 2011-2012 (Department of Finance, Canada: Equalization payments). By way of comparison, the total budget expenditures for 2011-2012 are projected at $276 billion, with a budget deficit of almost $30 billion (Government of Canada, 2011 Budget). Overall, the

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23 Based on a calculation of GDP per province (http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/econ50-eng.htm) divided by population (http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo02a-eng.htm).
redistribution monies paid to Quebec is just under 3 percent of the annual budget (using the numbers for the 2011-2012 fiscal year).

Quebec is considered a “have not” province (one that requires equalization payments to maintain an even Canadian standard of living) and is in the opposite economic position of Flanders in Belgium. Therefore, there is a significant economic interest for Quebec to stay within Canada because the province receives money if its standard of living (measured by GDP) falls below the Canadian average. In Belgium, there are significant transfer payments in the opposite direction, from Flanders to Wallonia, every year. Depending on the year, this has ranged from €5-12 billion. Therefore, there is also a significant economic interest to keeping Flanders in Belgium on the part of Wallonia. Flemish nationalists perceive this problem in the following ways:

You see now that Flanders could be one of the richest regions in Europe, we could be like Bavaria or something but now our welfare is being taken away from us, more and more, because of all the money that is going to Wallonia (Interview with Philip Claeys [VB] on April 9, 2010).

And:

Because they [Walloons] fear a lot about [losing] the transfer of money from Flanders to Wallonia and that’s also the reason why the reformation of the state doesn’t progress (Interview with Jan Jambon [N-VA] on April 20, 2010).

Another economic interest is the national debt. The national debt in Canada and Belgium stifles independence for Quebec and Flanders. After all, how do you amicably split the debt between divorcees? The debt can be split, but the split will be problematic. During the interview process, many Flemish nationalists noted that they would take at least 60 percent of the debt; some agreed to take all of it in return for independence. For example:
I should say that we should take those debts because as long as Flanders stays in the Belgian federation the debt is always growing (Interview with Kris Van Dijck [N-VA] on April 27, 2010).

And:

The discussion of the debt, you have a number of criteria, you can do it on population number. You have 10 million in Belgium, we have 6 million, they have 4. Okay separation on the 60% of the debt is for Flanders and I think economically we can support it. And for the rest of the debt, it goes to Wallonia and Brussels, if they can support it, I have my doubts…..you can do it on who is [the] originator of the debt, which is a historically discussion, which is not so easy to fill up. You may not forget that the day we go for Flemish independence, we will be confronted with an international consul and there is some experience on how to split up a debt for a country. So there in most cases, I don’t even know a case where the historical originator of the debt is an argument to split up the debt. We go out, our point of view is that should be the reference for our split up scenario (Interview with Hagen Goyvaerts [VB] on April 28, 2010).

In Quebec, the issue of debt is much more of a contentious issue. What is fair? After all, Quebec alone did not create the debt, but the province has received considerable amounts of money from the federal government. In the event of Quebec’s independence, in-depth negotiation will be required to resolve this issue.

Overall, economic concerns are a major issue in Quebec. Many multinational corporations, except those that are anchored in Quebec like Alcan and Bombardier, would leave the province and go elsewhere in Canada or to the United States (Cote and Johnson 1995, 62). Cote and Johnson argue that it is also possible that Canadian Pacific, Canadian National, Bell Canada and BCE, Standard Life, Imasco, Royal Bank, Air Canada, and Pratt & Whitney, could all leave. From there, if these corporations were to leave and some definitely would, population losses would mirror business losses (Cote and Johnson 1995, 63). According to the arguments made by Cote and Johnson, there is an ongoing economic incentive for Quebec to stay in Canada.
In Quebec, it is likely that sovereigntists will continue trying to argue for the viability of Quebec. It is also likely that if the PQ gets back into power, a PQ government would try to bolster public industries like Hydro Quebec in order to make the case that Quebec interests would not be harmed in the event of independence.

There are major interests opposing secession in both cases. Some of the opposition is emotional (national unity) whilst another aspect of the opposition in economic (the economies of Canada and Belgium will suffer). Many people in positions of power continue to reject the idea of Quebec and Flemish independence and these voices will continue to challenge the notion of independence.

7.2.4 Interests- Help

There are, however, some interests that work in favor of the nationalists such as support from a significant portion of the people and some business leaders. In Quebec and Flanders, the first major interest in favor of independence is that there is steady voter support and funding for independence. There is a significant portion of the population that has an interest in independence; for both movements, this financial and electoral support has remained for decades.

There are also policy issue areas that showcase different interests in the respective regions, which distinguish them from the rest of the country. These differences help the cause of independence. In Quebec, an EKOS poll shows that the population of the province is more likely to oppose the combat mission in Afghanistan (but support the mission from a peacekeeping standpoint) and to support environmental policies that are quite dramatic (EKOS 2006). In Flanders, there are economic interests that support the
Anglo-Saxon model of business as opposed to more French continental style of economic policies in Wallonia. This is a major cleavage in the society. For example:

Because I am really convinced with today’s model, Wallonia will never get out of its problems, never. Because when you always give a lot of money, [which] goes from the north to the south, so they have not one incentive to start with this and take their own, to make their own future……and the liberals there, they are making the same analysis, so that is my ultimate belief, you have to change the parliament in Wallonia. There will be money from Flanders but we need to change the system to make their economy stronger (Interview with Jan Jambon from N-VA on April 20, 2010).

And:

That’s the difference between us [and Wallonia], but we say: give more competences and make a system of solidarity. But they have to be transparent, and now it is not the case, we give money, money, money and nothing is changing (Interview with Jan Peumans from N-VA on April 23, 2010).

Amongst Flemish nationalists there is a belief that Flanders and Wallonia have divergent interests. They argue that Flanders is being held back by Wallonia and that significant transfer payments are being made to Wallonia without a say in how the money is being spent. In many respects, there is an economic interest that is driving Flemish independence.

In both cases there is also an interest for identity assurance. If Quebec and Flanders remain within Canada and Belgium respectively, there is an ongoing fear that they will lose out, become watered down, or never appear on the world stage. With ongoing support for the movements in Quebec and Flanders, the identity of the Quebecois and the Flemish will live on as long as these movements continue.

Related to this point is that both movements are part of a “big tent.” N-VA, VB, and to some extent, LDD, all support independence. Moreover, a number of politicians from other parties in Flanders also support independence. Even though N-VA and VB
are the driving forces behind independence, their differences in more ethnic and more civic platforms has done a lot to assist in promoting the interest of Flemish independence. Support for Flemish nationalist parties, as shown in Table 7.4, shows the interests in favor of independence in the last two elections in Flanders as part of the “big tent” in favor of independence.

Table 7.4: Support for Pro-Independence Parties in Flanders, 2009-2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>N-VA</th>
<th>VB</th>
<th>LDD</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010%</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>43.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009%</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>15.3</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Because N-VA plays a more civic role as compared to VB, voters in Flanders have more choices in which party they vote for, and the credibility of Flemish independence is bolstered because there are two major parties advocating this policy solution. This situation relates well to the Downs (1957) median voter model. Essentially, Downs argues that parties like N-VA—that are vote maximizing—will move to the center in order to capture a larger swath of the electorate. However, in some ways N-VA has had to move to the center because VB has captured votes to the extreme. Herbert Kitschelt (1995) amends Downs’s theory by arguing that extremist parties will remain on the extreme especially if they have stability in the political spectrum through guaranteed votes on the political extreme.
In Quebec, the PQ (and BQ) supports independence but they are also joined by Quebec solidaire and potentially some supporters from ADQ and disaffected Liberal Party voters. Quebec sovereigntists do not yet have a real sense of policy diffusion. Sovereigntist voters in Quebec essentially only have one choice for independence. Moreover, the move towards civic nationalism affected the PQ during the 2007 provincial election when the ADQ leapfrogged over them into second place. The PQ then faces a dilemma between keeping ethnic voters happy, but also broadening the base with civic voters. This is a reason why the PQ discusses language so much. They are attempting to utilize Benedict Anderson’s idea of language as a backdrop for identity along with Ernest Gellner’s use of language through education, but also trying to retain support amongst members of Smith’s notion of “ethnie.”

There are, therefore, strong political movements with an interest and an investment in secession. This is a major reason why all of these nationalist parties will continue in the near future. The question is whether these interests reach a tipping point such that independence can be realized. In Quebec, as noted in the section on institutions, there is a way to become independent. Those with an interest in an independent Quebec could have the opportunity to convince voters that they should leave Canada. In Flanders, the nationalists do not have the same opportunity. However, these interests noted above remain. Therefore, Flemish nationalists are likely to enact changes to government structure and to insist that their interests are met by the government of Belgium. This is a major reason why it has taken so long to form a coalition government in the country after the 2010 federal election.
7.2.5 Ideas- Hindrance

Pieter Logghe, prior to our interview, took me on a tour of the Belgian parliament. As a supporter of Flemish independence, the location is quite interesting. Parliament faces the royal palace across the royal park. For Flemish nationalists, they must come to work in a building that is so geographically close to the markers of the Belgian state that they are trying to overcome. (The same is true for members of the House of Commons from the BQ.) Whilst touring various statues in the Belgian Parliament, Logghe stops at one in particular and pauses, almost reminiscing. He stops at the statue of William of Orange, the former Dutch king when Belgium belonged to the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Logghe says, “This is our real king.” Of the sixteen interviews with nationalists in Flanders, only two specifically noted that Flanders should be reunified with the Netherlands. They belong to a group known as “orangists.” The orangist view is held by a minority of Flemish nationalists and has no real political traction, but it retains some support amongst Flemish voters and political elites.

Related to this discussion is autonomy in Canada. For some people in Quebec, more autonomy within Canada quite simply is easier and a better option than independence. There are no costs involved with retaining significant autonomy within the existing country, and there are a number of safeguards that come with being in a union. In some ways, this is the crux of Dion’s argument that the fear of secession is too high and confidence in the union is also high enough that it retards the ability for Quebec to become independent (Dion 1996). The costs of Quebec independence are unknown and a typically federalist argument often invokes fear of the unknown (as explored earlier): Can Quebec survive in the world? The PQ and BQ have been adamant with
voters that Quebec will survive as an independent state. Their supporters obviously fall in line with this sentiment otherwise they would not support independence, but no-one has a real sense of proof that this would be the case.

The advertising campaigns and party programs of the PQ, VB, and N-VA almost always assert a strong connection with independence. Part of their advertising is promoting the idea of independence in the minds of voters. However, this can backfire when independence is not given a privileged place in the party’s platforms. For example, some voters in Quebec thought that the PQ did not do enough to promote the platform of sovereignty especially under the tutelage of Andre Boisclair. The PQ then lost the 2007 provincial election in a landslide, falling to third place.

Another problem with Flemish independence is the idea it is associated with. Essentially, Flemish independence is often thought of in light of Nazi collaboration. During WWI and WWII, the Germans had a policy of flamenpolitik, which encouraged Flemish separatism and gave them significant institutional devolution (Cartrite 2003, 99-100). On the one hand, this was an attempt by Wilhelmine and Nazi Germany to divide and conquer.

They collaborated with the Germans for the second time when they invaded Belgium. The collaborated with the Germans because they were promised bigger independence and cultural autonomy and so on (Interview with Pieter Logghe [VB] on April 14, 2010.

On the other hand, however, despite the opportunity to gain more autonomy, existing thoughts of separatism in Flanders are now in some ways linked to the Nazi occupation. This remains important in the modern discourse but has faded a little given that these events took place over 60 years ago.
In Flanders, nationalist leaders are likely to downplay the connection to Nazi Germany. With N-VA, they are likely to boast in their more civic-based nationalist platforms; although, as noted in Chapter 6, they can only be considered “mixed” on my ethnic-civic scale.

Another significant factor is, quite simply, voter fatigue. The sovereigntist movement in Quebec, after all, has been around since 1960, some fifty years. Anyone who was not politically aware in 1995 has never been acquainted with an aggressive argument for independence. Fatigue coupled with the fear of not being part of an economically secure Canadian federation stops some people from supporting independence. Canada is not the Soviet gulag, after all and the Canadian government does not oppress anyone. All of these changes make the idea of independence a little more difficult. For example:

I think there is a little bit of fatigue, the movement has been around since 1960 so it has been around for almost 50 years now. We tried and it didn’t work (Interview with Richard Marceau [BQ] on January 6, 2010).

And in greater detail:

Sadly, but we don’t have to forget that the sovereignty of Quebec has been on the political landscape since 40-45 years, so we have talked about sovereignty in the last years. So we have some difficulties to give some new energy to the concept of sovereignty, but people still question on that, but it’s not the majority of people, most people don’t get up and think about sovereignty first, they don’t really think on that (Interview with Etienne-Alexis Boucher [PQ] on June 25, 2010).

In Quebec, sovereigntist leaders perceive the problem of voter fatigue as a major ideational constraint on achieving their maximalist goals. Nonetheless, it is likely that Quebec sovereigntist leaders will proceed by highlighting differences between Canada and Quebec, and by describing the major constitutional problems between the province and the federal government.
In both Flanders and Quebec, nationalist sentiments are not met with equal feelings and ideas in other regions\textsuperscript{24} (such as Wallonia or Ontario) of these countries. They are the only regions that want to divide the country. (In other cases like Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union there were a number of regions that asserted a desire for independence.) For people in Wallonia and the rest of Canada, national identity remains strong. Moreover, there is no real desire to “call the bluff of the nationalists” the way that Czech elites did to Slovak nationalists in 1992 (Leff 1997). Even though Slovak nationalists only really wanted more autonomy, Czech elites saw an opportunity with secession for themselves and also to quiet the demands for greater concessions from Slovakia.

Another hindrance to the idea of independence is governance. One of the biggest problems for a positive referendum vote in Quebec is that the PQ must govern before the referendum is held. This, in many ways, can serve to erode support for independence because some people will vote against the government on any measure simply to send a message to the government. In Quebec, it took four years from 1976 to 1980, for a referendum to be held. One of the reasons why the 1980 referendum campaign failed is because many voters saw the referendum as a means to punish the government, even some sovereigntists. For example:

And I think that Rene Levesque had the charisma to bring people with him but he was the first. [And] he lost the 1980 referendum by a lot because all of the left wing voted no and they voted no for stupid reasons that had no relation to the sovereignty question (Interview with Genevieve Mathieu [PQ] on January 7, 2010).

\textsuperscript{24}There are small nationalist movements in a number of provinces in Canada, most notably Alberta, but none of them have active political parties that win seats in either the provincial or federal parliaments.
Additionally, the 1980 referendum was defeated after a strong federalist campaign that emphasized the post-separation isolation of Francophones in Ontario, New Brunswick, and Manitoba as well as the advantages of remaining within the Canadian Confederation. Quebec is advantaged in terms of taxation versus federal subsidies and tariff protections. Quebec was dependent on the Ontario market, federal oil, and subsidies from the central government (Horowitz 1985, 627). This combination of advantage in and dependence on Canada hurts the idea of independence.

In Flanders, the idea of outright independence is still questioned by the population, even though, as shown earlier in Table 7.4, 43 percent of voters vote for pro-independence parties. When asked a different question, however, Flemish voters respond differently. As shown in Table 7.5 below, most voters actually just want more autonomy, and not independence.

**Table 7.5: Support for Constitutional Options (Swyngedouw and Rink 2007, 6)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constitutional Option</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unitary State</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More federal state (powers to Belgium)</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status quo</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More autonomy (powers to Flanders)</td>
<td>45.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In Table 7.5, two factors are obvious. First, only a minority of voters support outright independence given more options. Second, almost a majority of people in Flanders want more autonomy. The idea of independence is not issue number one in Flanders. However, pro-independence parties can insist on greater levels of autonomy given these polling numbers. It is likely that N-VA and/or VB will try to gain more powers, and independence is a possibility if this occurs.

7.2.6 Ideas- Help

The basic right to self-determination, first and foremost, is a reason for independence. In Quebec, the vision of Canada has been diminished by the numerous failures to integrate Quebec into the Constitution. Because there is no Quebec signature on the Canadian Constitution, the identity of Quebecers versus Canadians is at least in question. And throughout the interview process, several interviewees noted that Quebec voters will simply vote for their identity, which is that of a Quebecker not a Canadian. There is no evidence of this and no data to support the claim, but this is an argument made by the sovereigntist camp. The below quote is arguing that Quebec voters will vote with their hearts during the next referendum, which will lead them to create an independent Quebec.

They always say that the youth doesn’t vote, but when it comes time for a referendum, they know where to put their X, to their identity. I am not you, you are not me, I will vote for me and I will respect you. That’s where we are today (Interview with Richard Nadeau [BQ] on June 21, 2010).

In Flanders, the question of Belgium is important. Support for Belgium has seemingly fallen given the rise of two nationalist parties in Flanders. However, in early 2011, police estimated that 34,000 Belgians rallied in support of their country (Brown
The battle for the future of Belgium then is ongoing. Belgium remains a good project for many people, but over 1.5 million voters voted for N-VA and VB in the last election. The idea of independence is ongoing and while it has faced some opposition, nationalists were able to block the formation of a Belgian government for 541 days.

Scandals in Canada and Belgium have also helped both movements. The Gomery Commission, which investigated the Canadian sponsorship scandal surrounding the 1995 referendum, ruled that the Canadian government improperly used funds during the referendum. As a result, there was a significant amount of increased separatist animosity in Quebec shown in two Leger Marketing polls giving supporters of an independent Quebec at over 50 percent (Leger 2008). Moreover, the current scandals with the Christian Democrats in Flanders opened the door to an overwhelming N-VA victory in 2010. If corruption is perceived as rampant in both countries, the idea of leaving might become more attractive. For example, in Quebec:

If they want to buy some publicity in Quebec, it will be tough to stop everything but people will be aware, they know that some things are not acceptable and if they do that, it will be counterproductive (Interview with Etienne-Alexis Boucher [PQ] on June 25, 2010).

Mr. Boucher is arguing that the Canadian government and/or people may use tactics that are somewhat immoral during the referendum campaign in order to keep Quebec in Canada. If there is negative publicity about unlawful activity, however, this could stop the Canadian government and/or pro-Canada supporters from violating the electoral rules.

Another example:
And we just saw at that time, the Gomery Commission, how they were so, it was incredible to listen to people that said, ‘yes, we did that to buy votes, to buy people, to convince them’ (Interview with Carole Poirier [PQ] on June 21, 2010). In Belgium, Rocher, Rouillard and Lecours argue that the restructuring of Belgium since the early 1970s has, in many ways, led to the decline of Belgian national identity (Rocher et al 2001, 177-184). Indeed, Belgian national identity has suffered with an increase in sub-national Flemish and Walloon identities. However, just because some people prioritize Flemish identity over their Belgian identity, does not mean that they support a division of the country. The relationship here is tricky. According to Flemish nationalists, there is a significant division in Belgium. For example:

If you ask them [Flemings] what they know about the French speaking part, just about nothing [is the answer]. For example, I often have this conversation with people who claim to be Belgians. You know the weatherman here? Of course, well who is the weatherman in the French speaking part? Well, I don’t know. I give them names of singers from here, they don’t have to be the best, they don’t even have to be good, but they are known. I ask them to name 2 or 3 on the French side but they don’t know. I ask them the names of mayors? Who is the mayor of Antwerp? Bruges? Usually they know. Then I ask them: Who is the mayor of Charleroi? Namur? They don’t know (Interview on May 6, 2010 with Erik Van In, N-VA).

According to Flemish nationalists, Belgium is very much divided culturally and politically. Some people obviously retain an attachment to the country as a whole. After all, Belgium still exists and people still rally in favor of the Belgian state. Nevertheless, the identity issue remains challenging in Belgium.

The Quebec case is equally difficult. Despite the common perception, many Quebecers primarily identify themselves as Canadians. In fact, 40 percent of Quebecers feel a profound attachment to Canada whereas 52 percent are attached to Quebec (Simeon 2004, 97). In 2000, 46 percent of all Quebecers identified themselves as Quebecers first or Quebecers only (Simeon 2004, 97). A lot of people, therefore, view
themselves as Quebecers, but again this does not necessarily translate into a desire for independence. After all, electoral support for the PQ and BQ respectively is not as high as Simeon’s statistics above (Tables found in Chapter 8). This difficult decision was put best in the interview process.

There are several reasons why it [independence] hasn’t happened and I think the first reason is that a lot of Quebecers find that Canada belongs to them. Canada is Quebec in a sense and it would be leaving a country that they built, that it’s a choice that they shouldn’t have to make and they still expect and hope that Canada will change and Canada will accept the claims and traditions and more autonomy within Canada (Interview with Daniel Turp on June 24, 2010).

It is evident then from these two research articles (Rocher et al, and Simeon) that the problems with questions of identity are considerable. Identity is malleable and people often have more than one identity. At the same time a person can be a student, an athlete, a dishwasher, not to mention a resident of town X, region Y, country Z and whose parents came from country A. Quite simply, identity is messy and identities change (Hancock 2010).

Given that the N-VA in Flanders and the PQ in Quebec have both made some strides towards civic nationalism, political elites think that moving towards a more civic-based identity is one way that the idea of independence can become more palatable to enough people in the respective regions. After all, if immigrants and minorities have a stake in the independence movement, the idea of independence can become a way of helping the nationalist cause.

The idea of independence has, according to nationalists in Flanders and Quebec, gained traction in both regions. What they need now, they argue, is an event that will help them achieve independence. Kingdon’s (2005) model is interesting because it provides a theory as to how a policy idea becomes legislation. Flemish nationalists are
trying to provoke a wider crisis in order to turn the idea of Flemish independence into reality. Quebec sovereigntists are trying to win a provincial election so that they can hold a referendum and have the opportunity to become independent. Both sets of nationalists are trying to create a scenario where people will have to consider their ideas.

7.2.7 Institutions, Interests, and Ideas

In this section I have examined the institutional, ideational, and interest-based ways that have both hindered and helped nationalists in the respective regions. It is clear that these three categories provide reasons why Flanders and Quebec have failed to become independent. However, what this section also reveals is that there are numerous factors that serve to help Flanders and Quebec nationalists towards their maximalist goals and this section also provides evidence that nationalist parties will also remain viable in each region.

Institutions work against nationalists in both cases, especially given that a political party must be formed, they must run in elections, and try to govern before they can achieve their maximalist goals. However, given the fact that Quebec can secede is a major institutional advantage. In Flanders there is no viable way of exiting the state without negotiating a referendum or an end to the Belgian state, which are both very difficult.

The prevailing interests of both states oppose secession as well because national unity is important to most Canadians and Belgians. Moreover, economic interests on the part of the ROC and Wallonia make it difficult to advance the cause of independence.
Nonetheless, both nationalist movements have longstanding levels of support and a longstanding ambition on the part of their members to become independent.

Ideas are also important. The debate over secession is an important step for nationalists. After all, in many parts of the world, such a debate would be unthinkable or would lead to violence. The idea of independence runs counter to national unity, but it is a debate that aids the nationalists because it puts their key issue at the forefront of the agenda.

Institutions, interests, and ideas help to explain why Quebec and Flanders are not independent. There are forces that serve to facilitate the process of gaining independence, but powerful obstacles remain. At this point, I answer the question of failure to secede by conducting systematic, case-specific comparisons between Belgium and Czechoslovakia, and Quebec with Montenegro and Scotland.
CHAPTER 8

Failure to Secede: Quebec and Flanders in Comparative Perspective

8.1 Great-Grandma Horchak

I was only ever lucky enough to meet one of my great-grandparents. Suzanna Horchak (nee Wozarek) was born in 1899 and immigrated to the United States in 1914. She was a devout religious woman, worked hard, raised her three daughters in a suburb of Detroit, and with my great-grandpa, pursued the American dream. One thing was always highlighted whenever we met, however: she was Slovak. Whether through culture, language, or cuisine, all of her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren were introduced to our Slovak roots.

What was most interesting about this focus on identity, as I later found out, was that Slovakia had never actually been an independent country at any point in history until 1993 (just one year before great-grandma Horchak died). Slovak identity was a major part of my great-grandma’s life, a part of my personal history; relatedly, Slovak independence was a recurrent theme throughout the interviews conducted for my dissertation research.

In this chapter, I examine in comparative perspective, the issues facing Quebec and Flanders that have made it difficult to secede. Each of the sections was coded separately in tightly defined categories to investigate the unique reasons for not seceding in the two cases. I introduce a few mini-cases in this chapter simply to provide a
systematic comparison to my two main cases, and to highlight the idiosyncrasies in Quebec and Flanders. Given the prominence of the comparison between Belgium and Czechoslovakia in the interviews, an in-depth discussion is important. However, some background on the nature of the Czechoslovak breakup is required so I start with a discussion of secession versus dissolution before moving to an in-depth comparison of Belgium and Czechoslovakia. After this discussion, I then compare Quebec to two similar cases: Montenegro and Scotland. Finally, I conclude with a summary of reasons why secession has not yet been accomplished by nationalists in Quebec and Flanders.

8.2 Secession versus Dissolution

Based on a cursory examination of the cases of Quebec and Flanders, it is clear that the two regions may become independent in different ways. Secession is the most obvious way of becoming independent in the case of Quebec, and while secession for Flanders is possible, it is more likely that the Belgian state will dissolve.

John Wood defines secession as the “formal withdrawal from a central authority by a member unit” (Wood 1981, 110). There are many similar definitions that have been made by a number of prominent scholars, so Wood’s definition can be taken as a consensus definition of the term. In the Canadian federation of ten provinces and three territories, secession is most likely scenario in the case of Quebec since only one member unit would be withdrawing from the central authority. Since Belgium is essentially made up of two major pieces, however, it is very difficult for one part to withdraw from the central authority without radically altering said central authority.
Therefore, in the case of Belgium, the dissolution of the state through continued Flemish agitation is a possibility. Dissolution is different from secession. Dissolution requires the state to collapse at the center at which point all constituent units become independent states. Secession, on the other hand, is simply one region on the periphery breaking away from the center (Duerr 2009, 32).

Table 8.1: Constitutional Options for Independence (drawn from Duerr 2009, 32)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constitutional Option</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decolonization</td>
<td>Former colonial entities become independent after the colonial power loses control of the territory (either willfully or not)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secession</td>
<td>A territory on the periphery of a state asserts it claim for independence from the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissolution</td>
<td>The center of the state collapses and two or more new states are created</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As noted in Table 8.1, there are at least three distinct mechanisms of obtaining independence. Decolonization is an important mechanism for obtaining independence and is still relevant for existing colonial territories considering independence—like Bermuda and New Caledonia—but it is not really relevant for this discussion. Secession is the main focus of this dissertation and is thus dealt with in great detail. Later on in the chapter, I describe the secession of Montenegro and the secessionist movement in Scotland as compared to Quebec. It is also useful, however, to spend some time on the subject of dissolution as it may be relevant to the case of Belgium.

The dissolution of Belgium is a viable option for constitutional change. Dissolution basically means that the central state ceases to exist and two (or more) new states continue in the wake of the old one. If, for example, Belgium follows the examples
of Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, its constituent parts will become independent states. Czechoslovakia does not exist now, having been replaced by the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The same is true of the Soviet Union, which now consists of fifteen different countries, none of which are called the Soviet Union. Amongst Flemish nationalists, dissolution has the highest possibility for gaining independence.

In an institutional stalemate [is the best way to gain independence], so it’s not that we have to have an election and after the election we say now we have 45% or now we have 51% [and] independence is there. It will not be like that. We will have an event. That’s what I said to you, it already can happen now. But the probability that that event will provoke independence, the probability will rise because the momentum gained by the V parties. We will gain momentum. So we can provoke events and that is what, for example, the N-VA has tried in the parliament. To provoke the event that will give all the more independence, but when the events leads towards a stalemate, the N-VA can say that it was the French speaking people who do not want a solution. So they will blame the French speaking people and we will say N-VA, this is the moment for independence and they will say, ‘yes sure, let’s go for it’ (Interview with Steven Utsi [VB] on April 30, 2010).

Dissolution is the most likely way for Flanders to gain independence. If Belgium were to dissolve, it would be into two pieces (not four pieces with Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels, and the German-speaking region) whereby Flanders and Wallonia would become independent states and Belgium would cease to exist. (The major problem of whether Flanders or Wallonia gets Brussels, in this hypothetical dissolution, is a major point for debate.)

On at least two occasions Belgium has been close to dissolving. There were two times that Belgium had a prolonged period of parliamentary deadlock—1987/88 and 2007/08—when calls for the breakup of the country became louder. At the time of writing, Belgium recently ended a 541 day political impasse without a coalition government. Despite the evidence that a breakup is forthcoming, something is holding
Belgium together. Similarly, something is keeping Quebec in the Canadian federation.

So I posed this question to nationalists in both regions: what is keeping Canada/Belgium together?

8.3 Dissolution: Comparing Belgium and Czechoslovakia

For most nationalists in Flanders, the comparison between Belgium and Czechoslovakia is enticing given the numerous similarities between the cases. Quebec will not become independent in the same way, so the comparison is limited to just the Flemish case. The first major reason for comparison is the likelihood of a similarly styled dissolution given that Czechoslovakia dissolved through a parliamentary decision, and Belgium would likely dissolve in a similar manner because there is no mechanism to hold a referendum. Moreover, a vast majority of the interviewees in Flanders brought up the comparison with Czechoslovakia. There were numerous institutional blockages in Czechoslovakia, which, in many ways, helped lead to the division of the country and in this way present some real similarities with the present situation in Belgium. There are, of course, differences as well including: the high level of debt, Brussels, the monarchy, and the European Union. Each of these points is worth a closer and more systematic examination.

8.3.1 Debt

Belgium has an annual budget deficit of €20-25 million and its national debt is now 99 percent of its annual GDP, a figure that is quite significant for a small country of just over 10.5 million people (CIA Factbook, Belgium). Moreover, it is quite likely that
Flemings will have to take a majority share of the economic burden upon hypothetical independence (Hooghe 2004). This assessment, in many respects, is shared by members of VB and N-VA. Although many are not happy about the debt and think that the French speakers caused the debt, they are willing to pay at minimum sixty percent of the debt in order to become independent.

VB argues that Belgium is basically bankrupt and that social policies have been detrimental to Flanders because they are ones who pay for the social welfare of the country. VB and N-VA oppose “federal solidarity,” a policy that redistributes wealth to Wallonia. Therefore, as most Flemish nationalists reason, “if we are going to pay anyway, we might as well take the debt and get credit for it.”

In Czechoslovakia, the debt was considered low when the country split providing advantages to both the Czech Republic and Slovakia when submitting their respective applications to enter the EU (World Bank 1999, 15). Moreover, the debt was split between the two sides in an amicable way with the Czech Republic taking 2/3 of the debt and Slovakia 1/3 based loosely on population (Ministry of Finance, Czech Republic). The debt to GDP ratio, therefore, is a significant difference between Belgium and Czechoslovakia because it was much lower in the case of the latter. However, the current debt is by no means an insurmountable obstacle for Belgium. More prudent fiscal policies could eliminate much of the debt over the course of a decade, albeit with some significant austerity measures.
8.3.2 Brussels

One of the biggest problems for Flemish nationalists is the issue of Brussels. Many nationalists from both N-VA and VB argued that Belgium would have split a decade or two ago had it not been for the issue of Brussels. In Quebec, there is no equivalent of Brussels, but there are other issues such as the large Anglophone community in Montreal and the First Nations peoples in northern Quebec, both of whom overwhelmingly want to stay in Canada. Given the importance of Brussels to the case of Flemish independence, it is worth examining this in greater detail.

Brussels is an extremely difficult issue to resolve. During the interview process, five viable different options were offered by the interviewees. As a result, I have put together five options for the future of Brussels in various scenarios dividing the country. I have listed the pro and con to each side.

1. Brussels becomes part of Flanders

In our opinion, Brussels is part of the Flemish geography, it is part of the Flemish territory….so in our opinion we need to have Brussels to Flanders. We will remain on the special facilities, bilingual facilities for the French speaking people (Interview with Hagen Goyvaerts [VB] on April 28, 2010).

And:

Brussels, in the view of Vlaams Belang, would become an integral part of the Flemish nation because geographically and historical it is a Flemish city (Interview with Philip Claeys [VB] on April 9, 2010)

Pro: For Flemish nationalists, since Brussels is in Flemish territory, most reason that Brussels belongs to Flanders. There are already plans to allow for Brussels to be given bilingual rights and for education to be provided in French.
Con: Walloon politicians are very unlikely to give up Brussels without major concessions.

2. **Wallonia keeps Brussels**

   I think the moment Flanders becomes independent, we will lose Brussels (Interview with Karim Van Overmeire [VB] on May 12, 2010)

Pro: For Walloon politicians, most would like to keep Brussels. So Brussels becomes their capital city, and Flanders chooses Antwerp, Ghent, or Mechelen. Moreover, perhaps a small part of Flanders would be given to Wallonia to link the territory of Wallonia with the territory of Brussels. This could include one of the following communes (municipalities) from Flemish Brabant including: Sint-Genesius-Rode, Hoeilaart, Overijse, or even some combination of Beersel and Linkebeek. The most obvious choice is Sint-Genesius Rode because it has French language facilities in the commune, basically a guarantee that is given once 30 percent of the population is known to be French speaking. Any change to the map would obviously be heavily contested, but Brussels does not necessarily have to be cut-off from Wallonia.

Con: This would be a major concession for Flemish nationalists. Most nationalists insist, after all, that Brussels is a historically Flemish city in which Dutch was the dominant language for years. Flemish nationalists also insist that there is no link between Brussels and Wallonia, that Brussels is entirely demarcated in Flemish territory. Giving up an additional commune would be seen as a major slight.
3. Brussels becomes an independent city-state

Another possibility is that Brussels is a district like Washington DC….Brussels could be as a European capital and that the EU would take care of Brussels and give money to the city and buildings for the security, that’s also a possibility (Interview with Jan Laeremans [VB] on April 13, 2010)

And:

Well, there is ongoing and growing belief that we should make it a city-state; a European city-state, not a Flemish or French one (Interview with Erik Van In [N-VA] on May 6, 2010).

Pro: Brussels becomes the equivalent of Washington D.C. for the EU. This might even include the whole region of BHV, which would encompass over 1.5 million people and perhaps create a real and viable state.

Con: The problem with this, however, is that the EU runs Europe. The EU does not run cities. Administering Brussels would be a major undertaking for the EU.

4. Wallonia joins France and takes Brussels with it

Pro: Wallonia joins with France and the inclusion of Brussels is used as an incentive for France to annex Wallonia. This view, according to one poll, has 54 percent support in Wallonia.

Con: It is unlikely that France will want to add a poor region to its country. Moreover, a lot of other international powers will not like this idea. And furthermore, the same international powers will not like the fact that the headquarters of the EU are now in France. Since the formal seat of the EU Parliament is already in Strasbourg, France, the French would almost certainly have to give up one of the seats of government.
5. **Brussels is shared between Flanders and Wallonia**

[We even had a model where] in independence, Wallonia and Flanders together govern Brussels (Interview with Jan Jambon [N-VA] on April 20, 2010).

**Pro:** Share the city between Flanders and Wallonia in a condominium model. This is something that some nationalists talk about and it keeps with the spirit of Belgian compromise. Why not split the city and initiate some form of joint jurisdiction? Some parts fall under Flemish jurisdiction; others in Walloon jurisdiction and the middle ground is shared through compromise.

**Con:** This type of division is obviously very difficult. How do you adequately satisfy both parties? How does one city serve as a capital for two countries?

Throughout the interview process, the issue of Brussels was repeatedly mentioned as a sticking point for negotiations. Brussels is a complex issue and dividing the city would be difficult. In many ways, the political future of Flanders and Wallonia remains tethered to Brussels. In the event of the breakup of Belgium, one of these five scenarios presents the most plausible explanation for what could happen.

8.3.3 **Monarchy**

The solution to the King in Belgium, for all Flemish nationalists interviewed from VB and N-VA, is very simple. The monarchy will be abolished and a republic instituted. According to Flemish nationalists, when Belgium falls apart, the kingdom will fall apart. Some interviewees noted that a referendum was possible to decide whether an independent Flanders should have a constitutional monarchy or a simple republic, but this question is already a foregone conclusion. For example:
When the Belgian state is split up, the kingdom has no function anymore in our opinion. But if the Flemish people decide to have a kingdom, then we need to make a referendum in the Flemish part by proposing that the Flemish people also have a king and also have a President. We are in favor of a republic scenario, which you can have a President that you can elect every four years. But if the Flemish people are in favor of a kingdom, okay, we can look out for a king. I don’t know where he should come from but I think in these modern times, kingdoms are degrading and only a popular function. I don’t know what the Flemish people want, but our proposal is to go the republic (Interview with Hagen Goyvaerts [VB] on April 28, 2010).

And:

And the king, the monarchy, I don’t believe in the monarchy, its old fashioned. But I’m not against the king, but I’m a republican too and I want a president who is elected by the people (Interview with Raf Liedts [VB] on April 29, 2010).

The vast majority of Flemish nationalists support a republican form of government and want a break with the monarchy. They align their arguments with economic arguments on getting rid of waste in the system, especially to a monarchy, which they argue is outmoded and serves no real purpose.

8.3.4 European Union

Czechoslovakia, unlike Belgium, was not part of the EU when the country split. In fact, EU membership was a big incentive for the split of the country because Czech liberal reformers were able to separate themselves from dangerous Slovak nationalists like Vladimir Meciar. In Belgium, the EU serves as an institutional constraint on independence because if Flanders secedes unilaterally, then Flanders could theoretically be left out of the EU. Moreover, the dissolution of Belgium would be a major concern for many EU member states that face similar problems within their own borders.
Inside the EU, there are significant institutional constraints against allowing independence. As mentioned in an earlier section, if Flanders were to become independent it could well set off a firestorm of secessionist claims elsewhere. The Flemish, of course, would claim some form of sui generis for their case. The Flemings are, after all, a majority within the Belgian state. All other groups are minorities fighting against the central identity of the state. For example:

The Catalans, they have all my sympathies. But the Belgian state is founded on bipolarity and Flemish nationalism is the only nationalism, or the Flemish strive towards independence, it’s the only national movement, the only national orientation in the whole world where the majority so to speak is against a minority. That’s a unique thing, so when Belgium dissolves it will be because Flemings and Walloons or French speaking people do not get any agreement on any topical policy issue. While the case of the Scots and the Catalans, they have all my sympathies, but it is of a totally different nature (Interview with Steven Utsi [VB] on April 30, 2010).

Nonetheless, despite the claims of Mr. Utsi, it would be a difficult proposition for the EU to support the independence of Flanders without facing other related problems elsewhere. Spain, France, and the United Kingdom are very unlikely to look favorably on the case of the Flemish simply because of demographic information. A challenge to one state will likely embolden challenges to their own national unity.

There is a central paradox in dealing with the EU, as well. VB wants statehood and membership in a wider Europe. Increased European identity, however, is creating a more postmodern Europe, which is devoid of modern values such as desiring independent states (Laible 2010, 141). A related factor is that no member state of the EU has split apart. Therefore, the response of the EU is something of an unknown. But, any schism in the EU would challenge the European project and European identity. This reality is potentially quite problematic for supporters of Flemish independence because, within the
EU, Flanders does very well economically and Wallonia could theoretically veto their accession (if Wallonia is considered the successor state of Belgium). For example:

so we want to have our say within the EU, then we need to be a member state, a fully-fledged member state but we have to go through the whole accession process and manifestation process because we are providing the funds, we are already in this. Belgium is one of the founding countries; we don’t want to go into a situation like this. Secession would not be a good thing for us because we don’t want Wallonia to have the status of the rest of Belgium. We don’t want Wallonia to veto our accession. Technically they could do it if they were recognized as the former Belgium or what is remaining of Belgium and they would not have to go through a recognition process or an accession process and we would have to apply and at the end of the they could say no, we have a veto and they require unanimity of all member states for all new countries that want to join and we don’t want to get into that situation (Interview with Philip Claeys [VB] on April 9, 2010).

As shown in the above quote, Flemish nationalists only want independence if membership in the EU is guaranteed to them. This is a potentially difficult track because Walloon politicians could use it against them in negotiations.

Overall, there are myriad difficulties with dissolving the Belgian state. Although a comparison with Czechoslovakia is perceived by Flemish nationalists to be the best opportunity for independence, it is very difficult. Issues of the debt, Brussels, the monarchy, and the European Union have to be dealt with. The Belgian system of government is also very difficult to change without tacit Walloon acceptance of a problem. A combination of these reasons makes the dissolution of Belgium difficult, at least without overt concessions by the Walloons (which they are unlikely, at this point, to give).

8.4 Comparing Quebec with Scotland and Montenegro

As noted in Table 8.1, secession is a different mechanism of obtaining independence than dissolution. In the case of Quebec, the most likely scenario for
gaining independence is simply hosting a referendum and gaining 50 percent plus one vote. In this section, I compare Quebec systematically to two other cases: Montenegro and Scotland. Montenegro successfully seceded from Serbia in 2006 through a referendum. Although, Montenegro cannot be considered part of the developed world, the vote was free, fair, and democratic. Scotland is in a similar situation to Quebec. Scotland is one of four constituent parts of the UK, and a rump version of the UK could continue with the independence of Scotland. Likewise, the ROC would continue after the secession of Quebec.

In this section, I systematically compare Quebec to Montenegro and Scotland using two different points. First, I examine the issue of holding a referendum since this is the way that Montenegro gained its independence, and the way that Scotland and Quebec could gain independence. There are some differing issues on holding a referendum, however. Second, I examine voter support for independence. Since a majoritarian referendum vote is required, levels of support matter. Therefore, I compare polling numbers in my mini-cases.

8.4.1 Secession through a Referendum

There are many issues concerning the next referendum in Quebec because it presents a real opportunity for Quebec to become independent. Since there have been two previous referenda, in 1980 and 1995 respectively, there is a history between the supporters of an independent Quebec and the Canadian government. Numerous issues like campaign spending, media access, and debates, are key areas for discussion. For Flanders, however, since there is no real history of holding a referendum in Belgium
(only one referendum has been held in Belgian history), the Flemish therefore do not have the same opportunity to become independent. Some Flemish nationalists have proposed a referendum as a way of deciding the future of Flanders. As a result of these differences, I created a code in my data on the issue of holding a referendum in order to better describe this issue. In total, 86 words and/or statements were coded regarding referenda.

Under the tutelage of Quebec Premier, Rene Levesque, the PQ introduced legislation in the National Assembly to host a referendum in May 1980 on the question of Quebec independence. The wording of the question, however, was quite cumbersome and essentially went on to ask whether Quebecers wanted a “sovereignty-association” with Canada.

On the ballot, the question was:

The Government of Quebec has made public its proposal to negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada, based on the equality of nations; this agreement would enable Quebec to acquire the exclusive power to make laws, levy its taxes and establish relations abroad—in other words, sovereignty—and at the same time maintain relations with Canada an economic association including a common currency; any change in political status resulting from these negotiations will only be implemented with popular approval through another referendum; on these terms, do you give the Government of Quebec the mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement between Quebec and Canada?

The result of the referendum was a significant loss for the sovereigntists. Only 40 percent of the Quebec electorate supported independence, a figure quite close to the PQ’s electoral share in the 1976 provincial election. A more telling statistic was that only slightly more than 50 percent of Francophones supported independence (Doran 1996, 99; Legare 1984, 119). Obviously, much work still needed to be done if Quebec was to ever have a successful referendum on independence.
In 1995, the discussion shifted from a “sovereignty-association” to a “sovereignty-partnership.” This basically meant that Quebec would become independent and that the new country would remain tied to the Canadian economy (and likely the Canadian dollar), but to a lesser extent than in an association; a partnership implies some level of equality between the two countries. The question asked, like the question in 1980, was seen as controversial especially by opponents of sovereignty.

The question:

Do you agree that Quebec should become sovereign after having made a formal offer to Canada for a new economic and political partnership within the scope of the bill respecting the future of Quebec and of the agreement signed on June 12, 1995?

The outcome of the 1995 referendum, in the end, was much closer than the 1980. The political leaders opposing each other in the referendum were Jacques Parizeau (PQ leader) and Lucien Bouchard (BQ leader) for the sovereigntists, against Canadian Prime Minister and prominent Quebecker, Jean Chrétien. It seems that all parties involved were strongly tied to Quebec. The survival of the province came down to a battle of Quebecers.

One important change in the 1995 referendum was increased support from the francophone community; this time 63 percent supported independence, up from just over 50 percent in 1980 (Doran 1996, 99). In some ways, it is still strange that only 63 percent of Francophones support independence. In comparison to other independence referenda globally, support for independence is often well above 90 percent especially when an ethnic group is the main contributor to the vote (Kauffman and Waters 2004).

However, many Quebecers are satisfied with the way the Canada works and want to remain in Canada. Support for an independent Quebec remains high, but relative to
other cases of prominent secessionist groups, many people in Quebec are satisfied with living in Canada rather than in an independent Quebec.

The question on the referendum plebiscite became a major issue after the 1995 referendum. The Clarity Act of 2000 (as noted in Chapter 7) states that a question must now be much less cumbersome. A simple—do you want Quebec to become an independent country, yes or no?—is now required by law.

In Quebec, the ability to hold a referendum is given if the PQ holds a majority of the seats in the National Assembly. There are some issues related to the referendum question (as noted above), but the PQ has the opportunity to gain independence at a 50 percent level. In Montenegro, the revised constitution of Yugoslavia in 2003, allowed for a referendum vote in 2006, and the EU pushed Montenegro to vote for independence via a referendum (Fawn 2008, 276). However, in order to try to eliminate any possible violence around the secession of Montenegro, the EU also proposed that a 55 percent threshold should be required for independence (Darmanovic 2007). In Scotland, the system is more difficult than in Quebec. Since the Scottish Parliament is elected through a proportional representation system, the Scottish National Party (SNP) needs to obtain a majority in the Scottish Parliament—which roughly equates to at least 45 percent of the vote—in order to hold a referendum. This is a difficult prospect since there are three other main political parties in the system (Labour, Conservatives, and Liberal-Democrats).

In comparative perspective, the PQ has the fewest constraints on holding a successful referendum. The single member district/plurality vote used in tandem with the parliamentary system makes it quite feasible for the PQ to hold a referendum. In
Scotland, the system of proportional representation makes it more challenging. In Montenegro, the 55 percent “super-majority” threshold made it more difficult for Montenegrin nationalists to gain independence, but also made the result more transparent and acceptable in the eyes of the international community (Fawn 2008, 276).

8.4.2 Support for Independence

Since Quebec, and also Scotland and Montenegro, have (or had) the ability to hold a referendum, the issue of support is important. Moreover, support for independence also became an oft mentioned theme during the interview process so I decided to code this theme and then research the quantitative data to investigate the claims of nationalists.

Now we know that if there is an election tomorrow, we will win. And for us the next step after is a referendum on sovereignty, there is a sequence. If we are not the government, there will not be any referendum, that’s for sure (Interview with Carole Poirier [PQ] on June 21, 2010).

And:

But we will win the next one. The PQ will come in power and bring back the referendum and we will be on there (Interview with Richard Nadeau [BQ] on June 21, 2010).

In Quebec, support for independence has ebbed and flowed since 1976. At some points, the sovereigntist vote was over 50 percent; at other times, it was well below. In Table 8.2 below, I tracked the support for Quebec independence from 1995 to 2008 using statistics from Leger Marketing. For each calendar year, I calculated the average support for independence to show a year-by-year comparison. In some years, obviously, Leger polled more frequently on the question of independence. The number of polls is listed in parentheses next to the year of the poll. My results are as follows:
Table 8.2: Leger Polling on Quebec Independence, 1995-2008 (Leger 2008)

(http://www.legermarketing.com/eng/intref.asp?prov=QC&l=1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Poll</th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Refused</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>59.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005 (2)</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>47.0</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>57.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002 (4)</td>
<td>36.7</td>
<td>55.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001 (6)</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>50.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000 (5)</td>
<td>41.3</td>
<td>50.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999 (9)</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998 (12)</td>
<td>44.2</td>
<td>49.6</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997 (11)</td>
<td>45.9</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996 (11)</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995 (10)</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>43.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.2 shows that as late as 2005, over 50 percent of Quebec voters still wanted independence. And even though the 2008 statistic is quite low, support for independence has not gone away. A related point that came up repeatedly in the
interview process was that prior to the 1995 referendum, internal PQ polling showed that 38 percent of likely voters supported Quebec independence. By the time the referendum came around (after an aggressive yes campaign), the vote was almost tied. However, most interviewees note that the current PQ internal polls show 45 percent support for independence at the time of the most recent round of interviews (June 2010) and that is before an aggressive yes campaign. For example:

Now the situation is better than the day-to-day poll because they changed the poll question. Our question is the same as in 1995. The real situation is 50/50 (Interview with Pierre Paquette [BQ] on January 8, 2010).

And:

It’s still over 40%, which is still significant, significant support for something that has not really been pushed for so long. That would mean that people who vote now were young in the last referendum and have never heard really a coherent, aggressive, strong campaign in favor of sovereignty (Interview with Richard Marceau [BQ] on June 21, 2010).

Given these statements, it is also worth investigating some specific polls. Since my table created an average score over the course of a year, some overall poll results are watered down. Some individual polls show high support (even with abstentions) for Quebec independence including: November 1995 (53.7 percent in favor, 41.9 percent opposed), June 1996 (52.8 percent in favor, 38.5 percent opposed), January 1997 (51.4 percent in favor, 42.7 percent opposed), October 1998 (51.9 percent in favor, 43.7 percent opposed), March 2005 (51.0 percent in favor, 44.0 percent opposed), and May 2005 (53.0 percent in favor, 44.0 percent opposed). Although these polls amount to just a selective sampling, this paragraph highlights the possibility that Quebec could become independent through a referendum given the right circumstances.
In comparison, Montenegrins voted 55.5 percent in favor of independence, thus obtaining the “super-majority” threshold of 55 percent (Fawn 2008; Darmanovic 2007).

In Scotland, polling has—on a few occasions—been a majority. There are a few questions then on independence: what is the perception of voters? And how much support do the PQ and BQ get from the voters?

Table 8.3: How likely do you think it is Quebec will one day separate from Canada?

(Angus Reid Poll 2009) (n=800)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Likelihood</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very likely</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately likely</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A little likely</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not likely at all</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.3 shows the anticipation on the part of Quebecers as to whether their province will become independent. Very few people are overwhelmingly convinced that Quebec will become independent, but taken collectively, people supporting “very likely,” “moderately likely,” and “a little likely,” make up 67 percent of the population.

Perception, however, is not reality. Perceptions were mixed in the Montenegrin case given the number of groups and supporters of union with Serbia. Perceptions on the
likelihood of Scottish independence also have their supporters and detractors. An
examination of votes cast, therefore, is also important.

**Table 8.4: Performance of the PQ in Provincial elections (Source: Elections Quebec)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>23.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>30.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>41.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>49.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>38.69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>40.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>44.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>42.87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>33.24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>28.35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>35.17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8.5: Performance of the BQ in Federal Elections (Source: Elections Canada)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>39.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>48.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>42.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As compiled in Table 8.4 and Table 8.5, support for sovereignty was, at several times, close to 50 percent of the actual electorate. In recent elections, however, both the PQ and BQ have dipped below 40 percent. This is potentially problematic if the sovereigntists are to achieve independence through a referendum. And while some sovereigntists support other parties, the PQ has to get back into power if another referendum is to be held in the future. It is, therefore, worth examining the last few elections in greater detail to see what is happening in Quebec and to see whether the contemporary sovereigntist movement can win a provincial election with a majority, hold a referendum, and find enough support to become independent. I start by examining recent elections including the 2006 federal election and the 2007 and 2008 provincial elections.

The 2006 federal election was the last time that Quebec voters supported a sovereigntist party with over 40 percent of the vote. Part of the backdrop of this election was that it presented the voters a first opportunity to respond to the sponsorship scandal—a scandal from the 1995 referendum in which the liberal party misused funds to win the referendum. In the 2006 federal election, many Quebec voters punished the Liberal party for the sponsorship scandal by voting for other parties. The problem for the BQ, however is that the party only won 51 of 75 seats (which is about normal) and did not win overwhelmingly as one internal Liberal party memo suggested (Clarke et al., 2006, 816). Rather, the Conservative party won ten seats in the province catapulting Stephen Harper to 24 Sussex Drive in Ottawa, the Prime Minister’s residence.
The 2007 and 2008 provincial elections that followed might well have led to further backlash against the governing Liberal Party of Quebec (PLQ). In the polls, the PQ was ahead of the PLQ from November 2004 through January 2007 (Belanger 2008, 72). Jean Charest (Quebec’s Liberal party leader and premier), however, was not only able to avoid defeat but now holds a majority in the National Assembly. The PQ also slipped out of the top two places, which is something that has not happened since 1970. (The ADQ came in second place.) So what went wrong? First, Andre Boisclair, leader of the PQ in 2007, was highly unpopular; he was condemned publicly for his use of cocaine while in office at an earlier time. As a result, support for the party dropped from 50 percent in 2005 to 34 percent in 2007 (Belanger 2008, 73). Second, as mentioned in chapter 4, the ADQ under Mario Dumont took the conservative ground from the PQ when the issue of ethnic nationalism declined. In sum, the PQ had their worst showing for 37 years falling into third place in the province (Belanger 2008, 72). In 2008, Pauline Marois (who took over as PQ leader after Boisclair’s loss) was perhaps too new to the job to win the election. While the PQ did not win, Marois helped to restore much of the lost ground in 2007 and finished in a strong second place to Charest’s Liberal party. Nonetheless, the PQ missed a golden opportunity to get back into power after the sponsorship scandal. The PQ is, however, becoming more popular again as voters may be tiring of the PLQ. Current polls have fluctuated, however. Polls in early 2011 showed the PQ with a significant lead. By mid-2011, however, the PLQ were again ahead of the PQ.

Even though support for independence has fallen since 2005 and the PQ has not done well in recent elections, the party is still a major force in Quebec politics.
Moreover, it is likely according to the most recent polls that, despite its recent problems as noted above, the PQ will have an opportunity to realistically compete the next provincial election. One poll noted the statistical possibility of a PQ victory (although this has since changed, and the ADQ has essentially been replaced by a new party, Coalition Avenir du Quebec). In March 2011, the PQ was forecast to win 37 percent of the vote and leading the Liberal party by 10 percent (Leger, March 2011). (The ADQ was polling at 13 percent, Quebec Solidaire at 11 percent, and the Green party at 5 percent.) In this situation, Quebec nationalists will have a window of opportunity to gain independence. This relates well to Kingdon’s (2005) idea of creating a window of opportunity when the policy and political streams meet. In this way, Quebecois sovereigntists can hypothetically achieve their maximalist goal of independence but only after a provincial election victory and a satisfactory plan to appeal to enough of the electorate in Quebec.

In Montenegro, votes cast in the referendum exceeded the 55 percent threshold. The victory, for Montenegrin nationalists, was very slim. Nonetheless, the vote coincided with the opportunity and became a reality. In Scotland, the SNP has a very slim majority in the Scottish Parliament and could hold a referendum vote. (Although, the majority is so slim that their majority could be threatened by putting forth a bill on independence.)

In essence, support has to meet opportunity in order for independence to occur through a referendum. This is difficult task and requires the idea of “coupling” Kingdon’s idea of a policy stream (independence) with the political stream (opportunity
and seats in the legislature). Obtaining a mixture of support and opportunity is very difficult, and is the major reason why Quebec has so far failed to secede.

### 8.5 Conclusion

Two very different scenes, one very similar answer. In a modern office building in downtown Montreal I met with Stephane Ethier, an advertising consultant in the city who served as the translator for one of my interviews. Almost as an aside Stephane made the argument that Quebec does not really have a story. People are drawn to a story like the American dream, but Quebec does not evoke a similar image. Quebec needs a story to attract people.

By the side of a canal running through Bruges, N-VA regional chairman of West Flanders, Erik Van In, similarly described the plight of Flemish identity. Nothing comes to mind when one thinks of a Fleming he complains. When one thinks of a Brit, an American, a Frenchman, an Italian, something comes to mind, even the Scots have an image. Perhaps the Flemish need a good movie, Van In argues, a movie based on 1302, a Flemish version of *Braveheart*. One’s image does not necessarily have to be true or good, but it has to resonate in the minds of people around the world.

Mythmaking is an important component of support, people have to believe in a cause and give it support (Kaufman 2001). When considering the cases of Flanders and Quebec amongst other prominent cases like Scotland, Montenegro, and Czechoslovakia, there are significant challenges to the secession of Quebec, and to the dissolution of Belgium.
In Quebec, there is a clear opportunity to gain independence that is easier in terms of independence than the case of Scotland, and easier than the case of Montenegro in terms of threshold. However, there is a difficulty in linking the level of support (50 percent) with the opportunity to hold a referendum. In chapter 7, I noted several institutional, interest-based, and ideational impediments to secession. In this chapter, I noted the above problem of support coupled with opportunity. These are the main reasons why Quebec is not yet independent. Quebec could become independent in the future, but sovereigntists have two different sets of obstacles ahead of them.

In Flanders, the dissolution of Belgium is the most likely means to independence. As noted in chapter 7, there are institutional, interest-based, and ideational obstacles to independence that remain entrenched. In this chapter, I outlined the difficulties of a comparison with Czechoslovakia. Flanders is unlikely to become independent without the consent of Wallonia and the EU. Flemish nationalists may still agitate for independence, but issues of dissolving a state and the challenges provide an explanation as to why Flanders is not yet independent. Flanders could become independent, but again, nationalists have two different sets of obstacles ahead of them.
CHAPTER 9
Conclusions and Discussion

9.1 The Trials of transitioning to Civic Nationalism

9.1.1 Overview

At the outset of this dissertation, I asked three main questions. First, whether any of the nationalist political parties in Quebec or Flanders have transitioned from ethnic-to-civic based policy platforms? Second, why have these nationalist political parties made (or not made) an attempt to transition to civic-based nationalist policy platforms? And, third, why have the respective nationalist movements in Quebec and Flanders thus far failed to gain their independence?

In chapters 4 and 6, we have seen that some of the nationalist political parties have made a concerted effort to transition to civic-based policy platforms. Given an examination of five policy platforms—language, culture, immigration, political autonomy, and economics—there is some evidence that the PQ and N-VA have had some moderate success (but the transition is still incomplete) in their respective transitions from ethnic to civic-based nationalist policy platforms. For example, candidates of color ran and now hold office in both parties, and policy platforms have changed, which allow for greater inclusion. Both parties have had some success in their respective transitions, but much more work remains. Political elites from both the PQ and N-VA have stated
that their respective transitions to civic-based policy platforms are the “right thing to do,”
which, they hope, will result in more votes at a later date.

In chapter 5, we also saw how VB has continued to employ platforms advocating
a more ethnic form of nationalism, albeit with some changes to a few of their stances.
VB is a little softer towards immigrants than in the past, but wants a complete stop to
immigration in Belgium. VB remains popular in the Flemish north of Belgium, which is
a major reason why the party has not overtly changed many policy platforms. There is a
contrast then between parties that have tried to adopt more civic-based policy platforms
and those that have not.

The transition to civic-based nationalist policy platforms is relevant to the success
of secessionist movements in the developed world. Since there has not been a case of
successful secession in the developed world since 1921, a new strategy, nationalists
argue, may in time produce a successful outcome. As of yet there is no proof of a
successful outcome, but the pursuit of a new strategy may at least present the opportunity
for nationalists to gain independence.

Given the fact that most countries in the developed world have fairly open
immigration policies, the demographic situations in most countries have changed,
including the cases studied. As a result, some nationalist movements with lukewarm
support for independence have had to adapt to the new environment in an attempt to
garner support from amongst the new inhabitants of their region.
9.1.2 Quebec

On the first question—whether the PQ has adopted civic-based policy platforms—I found mixed results. I categorized the PQ as “mostly civic” in the areas of immigration and language policy. I categorized the PQ as “mixed” in the area of language, and “mostly ethnic” on the policy platforms of culture and political autonomy. While a shift is noticeable, further work needs to be done in reaching out to Anglophones, Allophones, and First Nations people. Moreover, the PQ needs put forth more candidates, and elect more persons (in “safe seats”) of differing backgrounds in order to make a better case that they have adopted civic-based platforms.

The PQ (and BQ) has made a number of important strides. Whilst some political elites have made problematic, ethnic statements, these statements are typically infrequent. People of non-Québécois de souche backgrounds, such as Maka Kotto and Vivian Barbot, have reached some of the higher positions within the sovereigntist movement. The challenge, however, is that these changes can be critically viewed as mere “window dressing” and not as any real indication of substantive change. Until Kotto or Barbot become major elected leaders in the movement, this criticism will remain.

The PQ has spent considerable time and resources reaching out to Allophone communities and there is some evidence of a transition to civic-based nationalism here. Given wider support and platforms of inclusion, the PQ has become more open than in the past. The PQ has also made inroads into the First Nations community and has lobbied for greater recognition of the rights of indigenous persons. However, questions remain as to their inclusivity, especially if First Nations people want to remain in Canada even in the event that Quebec secedes. Finally, the PQ still has a lot more work to do
when it comes to the Anglophone population. Relations between the PQ and
Anglophones are very limited at best, and the issue of language remains tense.

On the second question—why has the PQ attempted to transition to civic-based
policy platforms—I have some partial answers, but no definitive answer. In my
interviews, many political elites from the PQ and BQ said that the transition was the
“right thing to do.” Essentially, their underlying hope is that they will garner more
support from newer members of the society in return for increased openness. I argue that
given the ability of Quebec to become independent through a referendum, there is an
incentive for Quebec sovereigntists to reach out to immigrants and minorities in an
attempt to maximize their number of votes. There is partial evidence for my hypothesis
in this study as the PQ remains relevant to the electoral future of Quebec’s National
Assembly and will, at the very least, vie for an electoral victory in the 2013 Quebec
general election.

9.1.3 Flanders

On the first question—whether VB and N-VA have adopted civic-based policy
platforms—I argue that VB has not, and N-VA has a mixed record like the PQ. I
categorized VB as “ethnic” or “mostly ethnic” on four of the five policy areas with the
exception of political autonomy, which I categorized as “mixed.” N-VA is split. I
categorized N-VA as “mostly civic” in the area of language, but “mostly ethnic” on the
platform of political autonomy. The other three areas of policy were listed as “mixed.”

VB has softened its party platforms since the 2004 court case. However, many of
the core ideas remain in place and continue to attract some support from voters. VB does
not reach out to immigrants and reaches out only to people as Flemings. This is a difficult claim because there is no distinct way of becoming a Fleming according to any of their definitions. In the interview process, I was told it is possible for an immigrant to become a Fleming, but the standard seems extraordinarily high even if a person can speak Dutch, supports Club Brugge, and regularly eats at a frituur.

N-VA has introduced a set of policy platforms that seem much more inclusive than VB. My research shows that these platforms are inclusive, but only to a point. There are limitations when it comes to economics, immigration, and culture, and also real problems when it comes to political autonomy. The Flemish society is open, but it is very difficult for Walloons in particular. Moreover, N-VA is not really too diverse when it comes to their elected officials. This situation is improving, but like Quebec, until immigrants and/or minorities can reach the upper echelons of the party, it will be difficult to claim anything other than “window dressing” when it comes to inclusion.

On the second question—why has N-VA attempted to transition to civic-based policy platforms whilst VB has not—again, I have some partial answers, but no definitive answer. In Flanders, there are two nationalist parties, which affect one another. Since VB has done well on the political extreme and there is no viable mechanism to dissolve Belgium, I argue that they have remained on the political extreme as a means to achieve their goal of independence. N-VA is a newer party and has therefore attempted to move to the political center as a means of gaining votes. It is also a means of separating N-VA from VB and campaigning to a more centrist portion of the Flemish population. This helps to explain why N-VA has attempted a transition to civic-based party platforms whilst VB has not. Finally, this example shows that VB has stayed on the electoral
fringes, as Kitschelt (1995) predicted. There is political space on the far right, which is maintained by VB. Given this, it also shows why N-VA has tried to adopt civic-based policy platforms, in line with Downs’s (1957) Median-voter theory. Since VB occupies the right/far-right, N-VA has tried (and so far succeeded) in winning votes in the center.

Ultimately, I argue that the main reason why the PQ and N-VA have begun a transition to civic-based policy platforms is instrumental: they are trying to win more votes. I believe that many members of the PQ and N-VA are sincere in their belief that people from all over the world are welcome in the party, but I ultimately believe that the primary reason is to remain politically competitive and to win more votes. There is not yet enough ethnic diversity and there are still too many insensitive comments towards ethnic minorities for the change to simply be considered as the right thing to do. The leadership is sincere in its transition, but a major motivating factor is winning more votes over being the right thing to do.

9.2 Failure to Secede

On the third question—why have Quebec and Flanders thus far failed to secede—I answered the question in two separate chapters. In chapter 7, I examined the role of institutions, interests, and ideas. By applying Peter Hall’s work, I was able to help explain why Flanders and Quebec have thus far failed to secede. According to my interviews, the percentage of the statements relating to institutional, ideational, and interest-based hindrances to independence were high across all three nationalist parties. For the PQ, 49 percent of the statements discussed hindrances to independence—most of which were interests and ideas. For VB, 58.8 percent of statements described hindrances,
especially institutional hindrances to independence. Finally, 64.3 percent of the statements from N-VA discussed hindrances to independence—again, on the subject of institutions. These statements do not mean that independence is by any means impossible, but the results highlight the problem areas for the three nationalist parties. In Quebec, the major hindrances to their independence are interests and ideas. In contrast, institutions are the main hindrance to achieving Flemish independence.

Institutions provide a series of major obstacles to the independence of Quebec and Flanders. Most notably, the structure of the respective political systems makes it difficult to secede. In the case of Flanders, the extra constraint of the EU also makes it difficult to gain acceptance when the possible independence of one region could spark other movements throughout Europe. Additionally, because there is no recent history of a referendum in Belgium, institutions provide a further hindrance to the goal of independence in the case of Flanders. Interests play a prominent role as well. Canada and Belgium have entrenched interests in the status quo. Many people quite simply like what Canada and Belgium have to offer. Economic interests against secession are considerable, too. For example, political volatility can often lead to economic problems, which concerns a lot of people. In Quebec especially, this argument remains important and is an ongoing fear amongst a portion of the electorate. Finally, ideas have an important role, as well. There is a strong debate between supporters of independence and supporters of national unity. These debates are often very emotional and historical. All of this is measured at the ballot box, which is where nationalist parties attempt to appeal to people in their respective regions.
In chapter 8, I provided a comparative perspective of nationalist movements in Quebec and Flanders. Given the structure of Canada and Belgium, it is likely that Quebec and Flanders would become independent in different ways. This would happen to Quebec through secession and to Flanders through the dissolution of Belgium. Other cases provide a systematic comparison for each case. I found that the Czechoslovak model of dissolution is widely cited by Flemish nationalists as a way to obtain independence, but that the debt, the monarchy, the status of Brussels, and the EU serve as major differences between the cases. I also found that Quebec has real institutional advantages to gain independence, even when compared to Montenegro and Scotland. However, the coupling of two factors: opportunity and support, is difficult to obtain. This makes it challenging for Quebec to gain independence.

A combination of answers found in chapters 7 and 8 provides reasons why Quebec and Flanders have not gained their independence. Even though nationalists in both regions spend an immense amount of time, money, and energy on their respective projects, independence is very challenging in advanced, democratic states, and they have not made a strong enough case to the populations of Quebec and Flanders that their proposed ideas are any better than Canada or Belgium.

9.3 Implications for the Literature on Nationalism and Secession

There are several important implications for the literature in this dissertation. First, a discussion of ethnic and civic nationalism adds to the Downsian (1957) median voter theory. This work also affirms Kitschelt’s (1995) theory that extreme political parties do not move to the center because they are able to stay involved in the political
system by occupying a particular portion of the political spectrum. In my study, I linked the works of Downs and Kitschelt with regards to nationalist party behavior. Downs’s median voter theory correctly anticipates this vote-maximizing strategy on the part of N-VA and PQ (Downs 1957). And Kitschelt’s work correctly anticipates VB’s desire to retain a “pure” form of nationalism because there is “room” on the electoral right of the political spectrum (Kitschelt 1995).

Second, the literature on nationalism—including Smith (1986, 1991), Anderson (1983), Gellner (1983), and Hobsbawm (1990) in particular—was also useful in explicating the differences between ethnic and civic forms of nationalism. Smith’s concept of an “ethnie” illustrates the idea that nationalism is tied to an ethnic core; something that VB highlights in the party’s various policy platforms. Anderson (1983), Gellner (1983), and Hobsbawm (1990) all indicate the importance of language and its relationship to the nation, but the boundaries of the state have to be considered too, and these boundaries include a sizeable Anglophone minority in Quebec and Francophone minority in Brussels that have not been convinced of either nationalist project.

The use of language (Anderson), high culture (Gellner), and education (Hobsbawm) all served to show some movement on the continuum from ethnic nationalism towards civic nationalism. Defining membership in a nation through citizenship rather than through ethnicity is a key component of transitioning to civic nationalism. This finding speaks to the increased use of nationhood defined as a construct rather than as an a priori, primordialist nation. The challenge, however, is to retain the base identity through language and culture, whilst being open to everyone else living in the society. Despite the moves towards civic-based nationalism, both N-VA and
the PQ have faced criticism when asserting various policy platforms. The overt usage of Hobsbawm’s (1990) idea of creating nationalism through education means that some divisions between French and English speakers remain in Quebec, and between French and Dutch speakers in Flanders. The creation of a separate high culture is essential to Gellner’s (1983) notion of nationalism, but it depends on who is included. Mere “window dressing” does not equate to inclusion or civic-based nationalist policy platforms on the part of the PQ and N-VA when it comes to directing the ideas and high culture of a society through political parties. Anderson’s (1983) notion of print-capitalism is important, but language policies are problematic in multi-lingual states like Canada and Belgium, especially if one language is promoted without some accommodation to other languages. None of the nationalist parties have been able to traverse this idea in a way that exemplifies civic nationalism.

Third, this dissertation adds to the literature on Flemish and Quebecois nationalism. This work is timely in that it examines N-VA’s rise in electoral support coupled with the respective declines of VB in Flanders as well as the BQ in Quebec. In order to reach out to more voters through an attempted transition to civic nationalism, N-VA has improved its electoral support whilst the PQ will have to wait for the next provincial election.

Finally, this work helps to build on the comparative politics of secession, and uses the work of Peter Hall in an innovative way. It is important to know why regions successfully secede and it is also important to know why they fail. Utilizing a combination of institutional, ideational, and interest-based impediments, along with case-
specific comparisons, helped to show why Flanders and Quebec have thus far failed to become independent.

9.4 Assessing the likelihood of Independence for Quebec and Flanders

For the governments of Canada and Belgium, national unity remains an integral issue. Some changes could be made to allow for greater autonomy in Quebec and Flanders to pacify supporters of independence. Of course, these changes may simply whet the appetites of nationalists, but the point is that the respective national governments have constitutional options if real threats to national unity develop. Privately, a number of nationalist political elites in both regions confided that a concerted effort from the government with more autonomy could well pacify overt claims for independence.

For nationalists, opportunities to realize independence are very much constrained by the institutions of their respective national states. In Quebec, the opportunity to hold a referendum is by far the best chance to obtain independence, but the PQ still has to win a majority in the National Assembly (or govern a coalition of nationalist parties). The PQ then has to successfully put forth a bill stating that a referendum will be held at a later date (and the Supreme Court of Canada can review the question). The sovereignty movement then has to convince 50 percent plus one of the voters to support independence over remaining in Canada (and Quebec would still need international recognition).

The Canadian government has been fair in its dealings with Quebec because there is a viable mechanism for self-determination. Independence just needs to be obtained democratically, even with resource asymmetry between Canada and the sovereignty movement. Quebec sovereigntists have not been able to make a strong enough case
against the Canadian government. Moreover, the Canadian system of government, citizenship, and accommodation of Quebec remains stronger than the alternatives posed by the sovereignty movement.

In Flanders, the only real choice for nationalists—unless a referendum option becomes viable—is to block and deride the Belgian governmental system. It would be hard to imagine any more threats to break-up the state than have already been seen, so mere peacocking will not work because it has not worked so far. If, however, attitudes change on the Walloon side and nationalism grows, the Belgian state will dissolve; the parallel with Czechoslovakia would become too similar and the issues described in chapter 8 would be discussed with greater vigor (Duerr 2009).

In the short run, both regions have the opportunity to gain independence. However, in both cases there are real challenges that will not be easily overcome. The PQ faces the challenge of winning an election and then governing well so as to retain support for independence (some voters may vote against independence simply to punish the PQ). Current polls also show that the sovereigntists need to increase their current level of support. According to PQ internal polls, the sovereigntist movement is doing quite well, at around 45 percent on the question of independence. At a similar point prior to the 1995 referendum, the sovereigntists were polling at 38 percent. So members of the PQ are quietly confident that they will secede from Canada. Nonetheless, this is merely an assertion made by sovereigntists. There is no evidence that a future referendum will be successful other than polling numbers that show approximately 40 percent support for independence. This issue is not even really a debate either unless the PQ wins a majority of the seats in the National Assembly, which currently looks unlikely (although this can
change). For Flemish nationalists, the recent government crisis provided another opportunity to gain independence. However, even though it took 541 days, a Belgian government is in place and the country will continue to function. There was another crisis in 2007 that did not result in another state reform giving more powers to Flanders, let alone independence, so there is no real indication that Flemish independence is forthcoming without a rise in Walloon nationalism.

When examined objectively, there are simply too many barriers facing Quebec and Flanders for these regions to gain independence. The proposed Scottish referendum in 2014 may change the situation given that it will likely embolden nationalists, but both regions will most likely remain with their current national states in the short term. The Flemish will likely gain more autonomy, but they will not be able to overcome the institutional impediments to leaving the Belgian state. The EU may, in time, develop more autonomy, but this is a project that will likely remain unwieldy and undecided amongst its 27 member states. Quebec sovereigntists will have the opportunity to become independent but will fail again through lack of support. The status quo will remain in Canada into the foreseeable future without significant changes to the constitutional differences between Quebec and Canada. Unless something changes, either through greater electoral support found via fully civic-based policies with competent and charismatic leadership, through overt mistakes by the respective national governments, or through a change in the status of Scotland, Belgium and Canada will continue to exist with Flanders and Quebec as parts of their respective current federations.
APPENDIX A

LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Protocol Questions

1. Generic Background Information:
How did you become interested in politics? And, how did you become interested in independence?

2. Background Information:
Please tell me about your experiences running for office/entering the NATIONALIST PARTY organization.

3. Policies of Nationalist Parties:
How do you approach the average voter on the street with the platforms of NATIONALIST PARTY? How do you convince them to vote for your party?

4. Obtaining independence:
In your opinion, why has NATIONALIST PARTY not succeeded in obtaining independence yet?

5. More votes/Failure to secede:
In order to become independent, your party needs to win more seats in X chamber. How do you win more votes from Y other parties?

IN QUEBEC: I want to pick up on a point you made, talking about the ADQ and the Liberal party because in 2007, the PQ had one of its worst showings with 28% and you lost power in 2003. In 2008, you picked up a little bit of ground to go up to 35%, but in order to hold another referendum, the party must you must win the election of 2013 (or whether it’s before then), My question is that is seems like you lost some votes to the ADQ and to the liberal party, how do you get those votes back so that you can become a majority again and hold another referendum?

IN FLANDERS (N-VA): In 2009 your party has grown to 16 seats, to 13% of the population and it has really done very well. But where you are positioned you sit close to VB, close to LDD, close to CD&V, close to the Open VLD, how do you get more votes? How do you capture more of the voters from those parties because if you do that you potentially can become the first or second party in Flanders and independence becomes much more likely, How do you capture those votes?
IN FLANDERS (VB): At the regional level in 2004, VB did its best ever getting 24%. In 2009 it slipped back to about 15%. So picking up on something you mentioned, the constitutional blockage, the 2/3 of the House of Representatives and for every language group, if Vlaams Belang became the first party in Flanders, I think it would send a clear message to the French speakers that independence was more likely because things would be blocked. So my question is given the decrease of about 9%, how do you get those votes back? From N-VA, LDD, CD&V in order to become the first party and really show the francophone politicians this isn’t working, lets become two independent states?

Specific Questions

Language

And they [immigrants] have to speak Dutch/French?

Let’s talk a little bit about language issues because historically Brussels was Dutch speaking. You go back 150 years ago and it was almost all Dutch but slowly over time it has become much more French and one of the issues of BHV and language rights in the 19 communities and its almost as if around Brussels the French language is growing. In the event of an independent Flanders, are there language laws that you would institute to protect Dutch?

In Quebec they have a sign law for businesses, in the province all signs have to be in French. Would you implement something similar to that? That it has to be in Dutch outside of Brussels?

In Flanders, you obviously learn Dutch growing up, you learn English as well, you learn German potentially. Do you learn French as well? In Wallonia, the first language is obviously French, do they learn Dutch?

Culture

In the ‘95 referendum, the northern parts of Quebec, specifically where First Nations people live, overwhelmingly voted for no campaign. In an independent Quebec, how would you reassure people, what would you do to them?

In your mind who is a Quebecker/Fleming?

Is Wallonia just a big social welfare system where either people are on unemployment or they work for the government? Is it 40% that works for the government?
**Immigration**

Can an immigrant become a Quebecois/Fleming?

-Can a Turk or a Moroccan become a Fleming?

How does your party reach out to immigrants?

In Montreal, the percentage of immigrants in the city has grown to about 26% in Montreal which is about 9% of Quebec as a whole. What is the sovereignty movement doing to reach out to this community because as it grows, in order for Quebec to become independent, it will need the support of some immigrants, what is the movement doing and your party in particular?

What kind of an impact are MNAs like Make Kotto or the Chilean-born Osvaldo Nunez having? What kind of an impact are they making in the immigrant communities for the sovereignty of Quebec? Is that the path you want to continue to take?

Has N-VA put forth any immigrants on the party list? Where are they now in terms of government, local?

I’m interested in, because VB gets a lot of criticism on the immigration issue, and I’ve asked a number of politicians and staffers who work for the party and they’ve all told me that a Moroccan or Turk can become a Fleming. And you know I can see that would require that they assimilate or something like that. That they at least try. But is there a limit to how many can come in or can become Flemish?

In which geographic areas are immigrants failing to assimilate as you mentioned?

**Political Autonomy**

What are you doing as the PQ to promote Quebec across the world, in the US, France, EU, Russia, China, to the major players who would one day say, Quebec you are independent, come join us at the UN, no problem

Some people especially Anglophones in Montreal and First Nations argue that if Canada is divisible and Quebec can become independent then they are argue that Quebec is divisible that Anglophone Montreal can join Ontario or that the First Nations can become independent, how do you respond to those kinds of claims or those kinds of arguments?

What does the next referendum campaign need to do differently from the last referendum campaign with Bouchard and Parizeau?
How will you get more powers because you mentioned demonstrating it to the people, what kind of areas? How will you get those from the federal government?

So in your mind would you declare independence in the Flemish parliament? Would that have difficulties?

On the issue of independence if you are taking an incremental step, how do you see independence coming about? Is it a vote in the Flemish parliament? Is it a vote in the Chamber of representatives?

In your opinion what is keeping Belgium together?

**Economics**

How viable is the economy of an independent Quebec?

In 1995, economic issues were at the forefront and a lot of Quebecers were afraid that jobs would leave, that companies would leave, that Quebec would be in more financial trouble if the federal government stopped its transfer payment. A lot of it came down to economics, how would respond to that in a campaign in say 2014 or 2015 if the PQ won in 2013, let’s say?

The national debt has grown to about 99% of GDP and has grown a fair bit in the last year or so. [Which side] takes that debt in the case of an independent Flanders and an independent Wallonia?

With regards to the Walloons there is a transfer of 4.6 billion euros per year, what is the stance of N-VA with regards to the transfers? Decrease them or to keep them the same?

According to a study by Frank Vanhecke and Philip Claeys, they say that Flanders give the most money to the EU per person. In your opinion, how much should Flanders be giving? Should it be the top or should it look for other countries to give?

You touched on this issue earlier with the transfer payments to Wallonia. How do you see that changing in the future? If VB was to get in power or become the first party, would you put a stop to it immediately or would you reduce it slowly?

How are you preparing for an independent Flanders, to keep businesses here, especially to keep foreign businesses here? What are you doing to reassure people that independence will be okay?
Others

How do you overcome the money of the federal government and all the money that can be poured in for all the billboards in Quebec that are supporting the no campaign, how do you overcome that?

In the 95 referendum, the First Nations people, most of them voted overwhelmingly for the No campaign. How is the PQ and sovereignty movement more broadly reaching out to that voting bloc?

So we talked about immigrants and first Nations, people in Quebec. I want to talk about Anglophones in Montreal. What is the PQ doing to include the Anglophones in Montreal and to appease them in the event that Quebec becomes independent. What kind of protections will they get?

In your opinion how does Flanders become independent? What’s the way? How does it happen?

In my research I have investigated the breakups of Czechoslovakia, Norway-Sweden in 1905 and just how they came about. Bart De Wever jokingly said Flanders will become independent in 2035. Do you see a similar model, a kind of Czechoslovak model for the breakup of Belgium?

So it (Brussels) is self-governing or a European capital?

- Would it [Brussels] be part of an independent Flanders

What is N-VA doing to promote Flemish nationalism in the US, China, Russia etc. How are you reaching out?

What is your take on the accession of Turkey in the EU? Is it something that N-VA is in favor of or opposes?

In a number of my interviews, I’ve been talking with members of Vlaams Belang, and they have this cordon sanitaire around their party. Is there a point in which N-VA breaks cordon sanitaire? Are there any issues that you can work together with them?

How would you resolve, I guess the way it’s been described is that there is a comparison with Czechoslovakia to some degree, and there are 3 main differences, one is Brussels, one is the debt, and then the third is the King. How would you divide all those? Some are easier than others I think

The BHV issue has been getting a lot of attention as you know, what is the best way to fix this crisis?

Is there any chance of creating a Greater Netherlands?
The nature of Flemish independence is important, the actual breakup is important because hypothetically if Flanders was to leave Wallonia, Wallonia would be the successor state of Belgium will have UN membership and EU membership and could hypothetically veto Flemish accession?

What kind of policy changes have led to this change? What kind of policy differences between you and these other three parties that I mentioned, what is accounting for this? How are keep the polls the way they are?

To break up the federal state in Belgium, there are a couple ways you can do it. Two thirds of each language group in the Chamber and in the Senate and then there is also I suppose you could declare independence at the Flemish parliament. How, in your opinion, is Flemish independence going to happen? How is that going to occur?

It seems in the EU that there is a built in institutional block against Flemish independence, because if Flanders becomes independent, the UK has to deal with Scotland, Spain has to deal with Catalonia, Italy perhaps has to deal with Padania, the northern part with Lega Nord, France has potentially to deal with Corsica and Brittany and so there are a number of larger members who don’t want to see that. How would you respond to that? How would you argue against it?

As part of my I am interviewing politicians and regional leaders, but I am also attending rallies and I was at the May 1st rally for Vlaams Belang and Bruno Valkeniers came on stage and he was talking about other parties and with N-VA. He talked about N-VA supporting a type of confederalism, that independence will occur in kind of the way you describe, one day we will wake up in a Belgium where the federal government will be gone, the regional government will exist and the European government will exist and he told his voters, it’s going to take how long? How do you respond to that? Why is your way better than theirs? For you, it will take time, for them, they want an immediate severing of Belgium

Vlaams Belang is most popular here in Antwerp. You have about 30%. Why are the people of Antwerp so drawn to VB? What’s happening here that’s not happening elsewhere?

Some people in the Flemish movement talk about reunifying with the Netherlands, is that something that would ever happen in your opinion? Is it a good idea? Have you seen policies change say from 2000 to 2010? And which ones and how?

One area in which Vlaams Belang and N-VA differ a little bit is how to become independent. N-VA says we want a little more autonomy and slowly we will become independent and VB says we need to be independent now, why are you right and why are they wrong?

If Bart De Wever is PM of Belgium, what happens next?
How is the financial crisis, over the last year, affecting your party? Are people more interested in VB given the financial crisis or is it not really a factor?

So a policy of deportation is only for illegal aliens?

In 2007, Yves Leterme hinted at independence, he sang la Marseillaise when he was asked to sing the Belgian anthem in French and things like that. Do you see him as an ally for independence at all or?

In late 2007, in November or so, in the De Kamer, Bart Laeremans, Gerolf Annemans, Filip De Man, and Filip De Winter put together a motion to create an independent Flanders. It was voted down but 3 members of N-VA abstained and 3 members of the Christian democrats abstained as well. Do you see allies in N-VA? Do you see allies in Lijst Dedecker and CD&V? Would they potentially work together with you if they thought that independence was forthcoming? And would they jump ship?

Cordon sanitaire against your party, I’m wondering if you did manage to win an election and become the first party in Flanders you will be able to put together a coalition but according to cordon sanitaire no-one will go with you. How do you get around that? Or how do you attract other parties to join you in a coalition?

In my own work I have tried to develop an understanding of other ways, secession being, VB elected to parliament, they could put up a vote, a referendum, the people would say yes or no. That’s one way of becoming independent. Another way is what I call dissolution and that is very much the example in Czechoslovakia where there was no vote, it was simply the parliamentarians. Is there a comparison between Belgium and Czechoslovakia?

Are you familiar with Samuel Huntington’s work the Clash of Civilizations? Do you see that going on in Belgium, specifically Switzerland’s ban on minarets? I am just thinking about one step is for Flanders and Wallonia to go their own way, but they have to be recognized by other countries. What are you doing to promote Flanders both in Europe and globally?

I’ll ask one more questions, kind of imagining Flanders, sometimes you need the imagination of what Flanders would be like in the developed world, sometimes you see regions that would be comparable, for example, England, Scotland, Wales, play their football internationally, Catalonia once a year around Christmas time, people from their region play international matches, Quebec has talked about playing international hockey. Is there anything you can do to put a Flemish football team together against Bulgaria, is that imagination something that would help you towards the goal of independence?

I’ve been reading up on some of your views in Dutch and you are very big in the pro-life movement. I’m curious as to how many people are attracted to Vlaams Belang on that issue? Pro-life? Are there a lot of single issue voters?
How do you expect that 2/3 of the francophone community will accept the agreement because in order to make the constitutional reform to make Belgium into a confederation or two independent states, from what I understand 2/3 of each language groups have to agree. So at what point do you get the Francophones to them to the table, to get 2/3 of them to say this just isn’t working, how does that happen in your mind?

When you describe the economic situation in Flanders, it is interesting because in Canada there is a similar rule that rich provinces provide money to the poorer provinces to prop them up, but people move more I think in Canada. But in the US that doesn’t happen, in fact that would be blasphemy almost if one were to suggest that New Jersey were to give money to Mississippi. Is the model too American for Europe? It’s what VB is proposing, you have to stop money going to Wallonia, you have to be cautious of a growing social system, is that almost too American?

Another aspect of international recognition is the EU. It seems as if there is a built in constraint in a way because if Flanders becomes independent then Scotland will want to become independent, Corsica, Catalonia. How are you going about pacifying the EU about the potential dissolution of Belgium? Because one can imagine that a lot of other members states will all of a sudden start saying, oh dear, this has happened, I need to look out for my own.
APPENDIX B

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES AND LOCATIONS

January 6, 2010:
Richard Marceau (BQ), Ottawa, Ontario

January 7, 2010:
Jonathan Valois (PQ), Montreal, Quebec
Genevieve Mathieu (PQ), Montreal, Quebec (on phone in Quebec City, Quebec)

January 8, 2010:
Pierre Paquette (BQ), Montreal, Quebec

April 9, 2010:
Philip Claeys (VB), Brussels, Flemish Brabant

April 13, 2010:
Jan Laeremans (VB), Grimbergen, Flemish Brabant

April 14, 2010:
Pieter Logghe (VB), Brussels, Flemish Brabant

April 16, 2010:
Tomas Verachtert (VB), Brussels, Flemish Brabant

April 20, 2010:
Jan Jambon (N-VA), Brussels, Flemish Brabant
April 22, 2010:
Jan Lievens (VB), Brussels, Flemish Brabant

April 23, 2010:
Jan Peumans (N-VA), Brussels, Flemish Brabant

April 26, 2010:
Tanguy Veys (VB), Brussels, Flemish Brabant

April 27, 2010:
Kris Van Dijck (N-VA), Brussels, Flemish Brabant

April 28, 2010:
Hagen Goyvaerts (VB), Leuven, Flemish Brabant

April 29, 2010:
Raf Liedts (VB), Antwerp, Antwerp

April 30, 2010:
Steven Utsi (VB), Brussels, Flemish Brabant
Erik Bucquoye (VB), Wilsele, Flemish Brabant

May 3, 2010:
Ludwig Caluwe (CD&V), Brussels, Flemish Brabant
May 6, 2010:
Erik Van In (N-VA), Brugge, West Flanders

May 12, 2010:
Karim Van Overmeire (VB), Brussels, Flemish Brabant

May 13, 2010:
Theo Francken (N-VA), Leuven, Flemish Brabant

June 21, 2010:
Richard Nadeau (BQ), Gatineau, Quebec
Carole Poirier (PQ), Montreal, Quebec

June 23, 2010:
Guy LaChapelle (BQ), Montreal, Quebec
Martin LeMay (PQ), Montreal, Quebec

June 24, 2010:
Daniel Turp (PQ), Montreal, Quebec

June 25, 2010:
Etienne-Alexis Boucher (PQ), Windsor, Quebec
### APPENDIX C

**LIST OF ACRONYMS USED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADQ</td>
<td>Action Democratique du Quebec</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBB</td>
<td>Bye-Bye Belgium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BHV</td>
<td>Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BQ</td>
<td>Bloc Quebecois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDN$</td>
<td>Canadian Dollars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD&amp;V</td>
<td>Christen-Democratisch en Vlaams</td>
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<tr>
<td>EP</td>
<td>European Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FLQ</td>
<td>Front du liberation du Quebec</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross domestic product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GST</td>
<td>General Sales Tax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ISPO</td>
<td>Instituut voor Sociaal en Politiek Opinieonderzoek</td>
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<tr>
<td>LDD</td>
<td>Lijst Dedecker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEP</td>
<td>Member of the European Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MNA</td>
<td>Member of the National Assembly (Quebec)</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament (Canada)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIS</td>
<td>National Institute of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>N-VA</td>
<td>Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open VLD</td>
<td>Open Vlaamse Liberale en Democraten</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLQ</td>
<td>Parti Liberal du Quebec/Liberal Party of Quebec</td>
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<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Prime Minister</td>
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<tr>
<td>PQ</td>
<td>Parti Quebecois</td>
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<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Parti Socialiste</td>
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<tr>
<td>QS</td>
<td>Quebec Solidaire</td>
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<tr>
<td>ROC</td>
<td>Rest of Canada</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sp.a.</td>
<td>Socialistische Partij Anders</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNP</td>
<td>Scottish National Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>Vlaanderen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VB</td>
<td>Vlaams Belang</td>
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