

THE POLITICS OF TERRITORIAL SOLIDARITY

Nationalism and Social Policy Reform in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium

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Despite the recent proliferation of literature on nationalism and on social policy, little has been written to explore the possible interaction between the two. This article explores two essential aspects of the relationship between substate nationalism and welfare-state development in Canada (Québec), the United Kingdom (Scotland), and Belgium (Flanders). First, the article shows how the processes of identity formation/consolidation and territorial mobilization inherent to substate nationalism often involve a social policy dimension. Second, it analyzes the ways in which substate nationalism has affected welfare-state development in recent decades. Substate nationalism can impact social policy making in at least two ways: by reshaping the policy agenda at both the state and the substate levels and by reinforcing regional policy autonomy, which is depicted as an alternative to centralist schemes. To explain significant variations between the three empirical cases, the article underlines specific institutional, ideological, and socioeconomic factors.

Keywords: federalism; nationalism; inequality; institutions; solidarity; social policy

The resurgence of substate nationalism and the emergence of the modern welfare state are among the most striking political developments of the second half of the 20th century. Despite the recent proliferation of literature on nationalism and on social policy, little has been written to explore the possible interaction between the two.¹ Scholars of social citizenship have

1. A significant exception here is the work of Nicola McEwen (2002). On the relationship between nationalism and public policy, see Erk (2003).

implicitly explored the link between national identity and welfare provisions, but they have seldom analyzed this connection in reference to substate nationalism (Marshall 1965, p. 65). Specialists of nationalism rarely mention social policy, focusing instead on the state, language, culture, ethnicity, and religion. For example, a recent book commissioned by the Association for the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism to identify crucial research avenues in the field of nationalism overlooks the welfare state (Guibernau & Hutchinson, 2001).

This article examines the relationship between substate nationalism and the welfare state in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium. It puts forward two main arguments. First, it shows how the processes of identity formation/consolidation and territorial mobilization inherent to substate nationalism often involve a social policy dimension. In Québec and Scotland, the nation is partly defined in terms of social policy preferences. Moreover, the political struggles of *Québécois*, Scottish, and Flemish nationalism have recently involved gaining control over some social policy areas. Second, we argue that substate nationalism affects welfare-state development by reshaping social policy agendas while, in some contexts, strengthening the policy autonomy of regional entities. In conducting our comparative and historical analysis of the relationship between substate nationalism and welfare-state politics, we pay attention to the mediating effect of institutions, ideological forces, and socioeconomic cleavages.

We have divided the article into three parts. The first explains why social policy can be as effective as culture for identity building and territorial mobilization and why exercising power over social policy is a logical objective of nationalist movements. It also discusses the ways in which substate nationalism can impact welfare-state development. The second part looks at the meshing of substate nationalism and social policy in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium. This analysis highlights the similarities and the differences between the three cases. The article concludes with a discussion concerning the possible contribution of this study to the analysis of other forms of territorial politics, such as regionalism and state nationalism, as they intersect with welfare-state development.

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THINKING ABOUT NATIONALISM AND SOCIAL POLICY

IDENTITIES, NATIONALIST MOBILIZATION, AND SOCIAL POLICY

Nationalism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that takes different forms in different societies and whose specific nature is still the subject of debate (Smith, 1998).² Despite the lack of agreement on the origins and dynamics of nationalism, most scholars believe that it involves two elements. The first is an identity most frequently derived from the sharing of common markers such as language, religion, or ethnic origins (real or imagined). Indeed, nationalism is a form of identity politics; this is what accounts for the emotional aspects of its manifestations (Smith, 1998, pp. 146-199). However, nationalism also features concrete processes of territorial mobilization (Brass, 1991); it seeks to gain or maintain for a group—the nation—a measure of self-government most often in the form of autonomy or independence. That is its second element. Nationalism may feature identity prominently, but it is first and foremost a form of politics. Therefore, nationalism's existence is inseparable from the exercise of political power and, more specifically, from the power struggles in which its claims are grounded.

The identity dimension of nationalism usually features a distinct culture and/or history. Cultural distinctiveness, particularly in language, can serve as a relatively straightforward criterion for defining the national community, that is, for specifying who should be included and excluded. Furthermore, once the contours of the nation have been determined, culture acts as a powerful reference for national identity because it is full of symbolic meanings that can provide binding ties to a community. For example, nationalist leaders can trace the history (real, reinvented, or imagined) of a cultural or linguistic group in such a way as to emphasize its continuity, resilience, and dynamism. They create myths and symbols that recall this history and serve as everyday reminders of the existence of the nation. This type of symbolic output has traditionally been at the center of nationalism's process of identity production and reproduction (Hobsbawm, 1992).

Social policy, which refers to "the policy of governments with regard to action having a direct impact on the welfare of the citizens by providing them with services and income" (Marshall, 1965, p. 1),³ can be treated and articulated by nationalist leaders as symbols of a wider set of values, societal priori-

2. This article focuses on substate nationalism, that is, nationalist movements that emerge within multinational states and seek increased political autonomy for the community they claim to represent, or simply an independent state.

3. Education policy does not fall under the scope of "social policy" as defined here. Education, which is closely related to culture and language issues, is thus excluded from our analysis.

ties, and political culture. Yet the incorporation of social policy into identity may also have a “bottom-up” dynamic because social policy represents a tangible manifestation of the existence of a political community. After all, health-care coverage, social services, and income-support programs are, as much as culture, present in the everyday life of individuals and constitute a source of social cohesion. Social services that involve person-to-person contacts and oral communication can become especially central to the development of substate identities in multilingual societies. Language issues and the debates over the delivery of social services intersect because these services generally involve verbal communication. Income-support programs can also constitute identity-building tools because the program’s eligibility criteria and benefit structure can reflect specific values and conceptions of the family.

Furthermore, the mobilization process of nationalism is frequently centered on cultural distinctiveness. In retracing or reinventing the history of their groups, nationalist leaders usually define an enemy that is said to threaten the cultural integrity of the group (Brown, 1999).

If the enemy tag is applied to a central government rather than, or in addition to, another group, jurisdictional battles stemming from the federal or decentralized nature of political systems can become a powerful source of nationalist mobilization at the substate level. Here, social protection becomes the focus of a political competition. The nature of this competition is quite different from the one that may occur in other policy areas, because most social programs are openly redistributive and because they directly raise the question of the boundaries of territorial solidarity. Social policy is frequently at the heart of the idea of a community and is, therefore, connected with sets of collective values. In this context, social policy can be integrated with a broader discourse of mobilization by nationalist leaders who argue that social programs are threatened by the selfish and irresponsible actions of the other government(s) and that increased political autonomy, or even independence, represents the only way to preserve the quality of social protection for the community. Nationalist leaders can also suggest that autonomy or independence is needed for their community because it pursues fundamentally different social and economic objectives from the other.

An argument can also be made that nationalist movements—independently of their instrumental uses for mobilization—have an inclination for creating social programs within the institutions they control. After all, both nationalism and the welfare state are framed in reference to the idea of solidarity.⁴

4. The concept of solidarity refers to a sense of interdependence that brings individuals together. Social programs are frequently seen as a concrete expression of solidarity (Béland & Hansen, 2000).

Nationalism depicts itself as the political expression of a special sense of solidarity among human beings (Derriennic, 1995). Although professional divisions between social insurance schemes exist in many countries, the welfare state is generally meant to reinforce solidarity between citizens. In this setting, abstract notions of solidarity can be transformed into formal relationships involving duties, rights, and redistribution (Miller, 1995, pp. 67-68). National solidarity is a political and ideological construct that owes much to nationalism as a political force and, in contemporary liberal democracies, to the welfare state. In this context, social policy "is both the vehicle whereby common ideals can be expressed and the means whereby a society consciously reproduces its own identity" (Miller, 1995, p. 111). This is why the connection between social policy and national identity is carried not only by left-leaning parties but also by right-wing ones, such as Flanders's *Vlaams Blok*. From this perspective, these types of parties are not that different from mainstream parties; they do not want to extend social programs and economic distribution to populations outside their national framework. In other words, what sets far-right parties apart is their (more exclusive) definition of the nation rather than their vision of social policy.

In multinational states, the formal solidarity of citizenship, as expressed by the welfare state, is often not congruent with the cultural and linguistic solidarity of substate nationalism. In other words, members of a community that considers itself a nation distinct from the one projected by the central state usually give priority to this substate national bond. In this context, nationalist movements will promote the congruence between social citizenship and their nation's boundaries. Such movements can make this adjustment fully by achieving independence for their community. Yet independence is generally perceived as a radical option that is politically difficult to achieve for several reasons, most notably, because garnering popular support for secession is not an easy task. Because it is more feasible, nationalist movements are more likely to seek the partial congruence between their national community and redistribution or at least to proceed gradually toward their full coincidence by attempting to decentralize elements of social policy.

THE IMPACT OF SUBSTATE NATIONALISM ON WELFARE-STATE DEVELOPMENT

During the postwar era, the expansion of modern welfare states often concentrated power in the hands of the central state while reinforcing existing nation-building efforts related to political centralization. In states such as

Canada and the United Kingdom, the emergence of modern social citizenship has been a tool of economic and social integration:

In multinational states, where there exists a nation or nations within the state, the recognition of social and other citizenship rights may serve an important integrative function, reinforcing an attachment to the national state that can complement an identification with an historical-cultural nation within state's boundaries. (McEwen, 2001, p. 87)

For this reason, many nationalist leaders criticized or even opposed “centralizing” welfare-state development.

Since the shift during the 1980s from welfare-state expansion to the “politics of retrenchment” (Pierson, 1994) nationalist movements and their leaders have mobilized to fight perceived fiscal inequities and to expand territorial autonomy in the allocation of welfare. Although welfare-state development largely remains a path-dependant process, new reforms can have a serious impact on the level, as well as the nature, of benefits and services available in a specific jurisdiction (Cox, 2001). Because noteworthy change is possible despite institutional inertia, nationalist mobilizations can reshape social programs in a significant way.

Despite major variations from one country or region to another, substate nationalism can affect social policy making in at least two specific ways: by reshaping the policy agenda at both the state and the substate levels and by reinforcing regional policy autonomy, which is depicted as an alternative to centralist schemes. These two phenomena are often related, but it is necessary to distinguish them analytically.

First, nationalist politicians and organizations can reshape the social policy agenda while putting forward specific alternatives. Here, the concept of agenda points to “the list of subjects or problems to which governmental officials, and people outside of government closely associated with those officials, are paying some serious attention to at any given time” (Kingdon, 1995, p. 3). Consequently, agenda setting is the process that narrows the “set of conceivable subjects to the set that actually becomes the focus of attention” (Kingdon, 1995, p. 3). If the term *agenda* refers to that cluster of issues considered as the “pressing problems of the moment,” alternatives represent the policy options available to solve these problems (Kingdon, 1995, p. 4). For example, nationalist forces have pushed for a significant decentralization of the welfare state as well as “fairer” fiscal redistribution among regions. When nationalist forces gain power in a region, they tend to reshape the social policy agenda at the substate and, in some contexts, at the state level. Of course, this does not mean that nationalist forces have full control over the agenda but

rather that they can successfully pressure regional and national policy makers to address specific issues that are essential to them. Far from being confined to mere “local problems,” issues raised by nationalist movements sometimes have a broad economic and social significance. Thus substate nationalism can affect social policy development beyond the substate level. Most important, it can favor a reshaping of the national policy agenda. For example, in Belgium, nationalist mobilization in Flanders has gradually transformed welfare-state decentralization into an unavoidable political issue across the country. In Canada and the United Kingdom, policies enacted in Québec and Scotland—in the name of national distinctiveness—have had an impact on broader policy debates beyond regional boundaries. The peculiarity of nationalist movements as agenda setters is that they systematically fight the central state in the name of policy decentralization. Furthermore, because it commonly renders secondary nonterritorial social and political cleavages, substate nationalism represents an unusually powerful agenda-setting force. In a federal system, for example, a nationalist movement, if it controls the government of a constituent unit, can claim to speak on behalf of a whole population.

Second, nationalist mobilization can strengthen—or even favor the recognition of—the legislative and administrative autonomy of territorial entities in social policy reform. The relationship between substate nationalism and institutional autonomy is twofold. On one hand, substate nationalism, as a powerful political and ideological force, can protect or increase the power an actor holds in virtue of a specific institutional position. In this context, regional entities, where substate nationalism is influential, tend to aggressively seek more autonomy in the field of social policy, frequently in the name of “national solidarity.” The three cases analyzed below provide ground to this claim. On the other hand, the institutional setting conditions the extent to which nationalist movements can shape social policy outcomes. In particular, autonomous institutions bolster the capacity of a nationalist movement to develop specific programs and, in some contexts, oppose centralizing social policies. Although nationalist mobilization can increase the level of policy autonomy at the substate level, preexisting institutional settings carry much weight. For example, whereas Canadian federalism has long granted Québec more autonomy in the social policy domain, Flanders and Scotland were, until recently, part of more centralized systems. This situation significantly limited their ability to formulate specific social programs grounded in nationalist claims about economic solidarity.

CONTRASTING NATIONAL EXPERIENCES

In this section, we examine how nationalist movements promote a distinct national identity by stressing particular social policy preferences and how they struggle for the decentralization of the welfare regime. This comparative analysis focuses on three cases: Canada and Québec, the United Kingdom and Scotland, and Belgium and Flanders.⁵ The rationale for this selection is straightforward: Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium are, along with Spain,⁶ the only countries with extensive welfare states and strong nationalist movements. They are “comparable cases” insofar as they are liberal-democratic states with advanced economies. At the same time, they feature political, institutional, and ideological differences that should help us appreciate the various dynamics of the substate nationalism–social policy nexus.

Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium present institutional, socio-economic, and ideological differences that must be analyzed to understand variations in the configuration of the connection between substate nationalism and social policy. The forthcoming empirical analysis underlines these three types of factors, which are generally interconnected. First, at the institutional level, this analysis shows that existing territorial decentralization facilitates nationalist mobilization while increasing the profile of nationalist parties and substate governments acting as agenda setters. This insight is coherent with the main assumptions of historical institutionalism concerning the structuring impact of policy legacies and formal political institutions on group mobilization and policy making (Pierson, 1994). Yet institutional structures are never totally frozen, and under specific circumstances, nationalist parties and governments may prove successful in decentralizing the state where they operate. Second, at the socioeconomic level, regional inequalities affect the way nationalist movements mobilize while impacting

5. In the Québec case, we use *nationalism* primarily in reference to the secessionist *Parti Québécois* (PQ), although in some instances, we focus on the two other provincial parties that can also be considered nationalist in the broadest sense. The discussion on the PQ can easily extend to the *Bloc Québécois* (BQ), its federal-level counterpart. For Flanders and Belgium, nationalism is used in reference to all the Flemish parties (there are no significant Belgium-wide parties) as well as the Flemish government. On some occasions, we focus on a particular party, for example, the *Vlaams Blok*. For Scotland, we consider nationalism to be represented by the Scottish National Party (SNP), although this understanding needs to be widened when discussing home rule.

6. We chose to limit ourselves to three countries to offer a more in-depth discussion of each case. Canada, the United Kingdom, and Belgium were each preferred to Spain for a practical reason: These countries feature only one prominent nationalist movement whereas Spain presents two, Catalonia and the Basque Country. In this context, including Spain with two other cases in our research design would have taken us beyond the scope of a journal article.

the content of the policy alternatives they promote. Less prosperous regions such as Québec and Scotland tend to promote redistribution within and beyond regional borders (because they gain from it), whereas richer regions like Flanders tend to depict economic interregional transfers as unfair (because they lose from it). Socioeconomic inequalities matter a lot in the latter case because the critique of “excessive” fiscal transfers toward poorer regions of the country may constitute a winning strategy for a nationalist movement located in a more prosperous region. Third, at the ideological level, factors such as religious values, in conjunction with changing patterns of inequality, can affect the identity, as well as the dominant ideological orientation, of a nationalist movement. In regions where traditional religious values prevail, for example, nationalism is more inclined to promote conservative social and family policies than in more secularized ones. Alliances between national movements and left-wing forces such as the labor and the feminist movements tend to have the opposite ideological effect. Nationalist movements located on the left of the political spectrum have a greater tendency to place social policy at the center of their political identity and state-building project.

Far from offering a comprehensive analysis of the three empirical cases, the following presentation aims only at illustrating the above theoretical claims while underlining specific differences between the countries and regions. We have divided this analysis into three sections, each devoted to one region and country.

QUÉBEC AND CANADA

Institutional variables are crucial to understanding why Québécois nationalism has become so involved in welfare-state politics. Canada is a federal state, and the constitution assigns separate jurisdictions to the federal government and to the 10 provinces. In theory, each level of government has full power within its own legislative domain. Provincial governments—including Québec—have exclusive authority to enact legislation in policy areas such as education, health care, and social welfare. Since the 1940s, however, the federal government has used constitutional reforms as well as its spending power to enter domains of provincial jurisdictions such as health and employment policy. In the immediate postwar era, the Québec government, under the guidance of conservative Prime Minister Maurice Duplessis and his *Union Nationale*, opposed this centralist tendency, and nationalism became mostly a reactive force in the field of social policy (Angers, 1997, p. 239).

In such an institutional context, nationalism in Québec assumed a positive social policy dimension beginning in the 1960s. At the ideological level, the shift of Québécois nationalism toward a more progressive—and statist—vision of social policy coincided with the social and political decline of the Catholic Church, as well as with the rise of a new elite seeking the political, social, and economic modernization of a province that had been dominated by traditional-conservative leaders for more than a century. It also paralleled the transition from a nationalism centered on religion to one based on language. At the socioeconomic level, Québec remained a poorer province where the English-speaking minority largely controlled the economy, and the nationalist elite successfully used the provincial state to modernize the economy of the province while reducing social inequality between the two main linguistic groups. In the context of their struggle, this modernizing elite, acting through the *Parti Libéral du Québec* (PLQ), took control of responsibilities previously assumed by the Catholic Church: education, health, and income support. Because of these ideological and socioeconomic factors, as well as the above-mentioned institutional autonomy of the province within the Canadian federal system, social policy and Québécois nationalism were connected very early on. The election of the *Parti Québécois* (PQ) in 1976 was crucial in building this connection between Québécois identity and the province's social policies because the PQ presented itself as a social-democratic party and enacted several progressive social measures (McRoberts, 1993, p. 267). With the 1980 referendum on independence, the social policy dimension of Québécois nationalism became central to the PQ's mobilization strategy as it played up the dual themes of language and progressive politics. As the PQ enjoyed strong connections with labor unions and the feminist movement, independence was presented both as an emancipation project for Francophones and as a chance to create a social-democratic, progressive, and egalitarian society.⁷

The connection between the Québécois identity and progressive social policies as articulated primarily by the PQ has become more important and more explicit since the mid-1990s. The emphasis on language to articulate the Québécois identity exposes Québec politicians to charges of ethnic nationalism, to which they are very sensitive. In this context, strengthening the link between nationalism and progressive social policies allows the PQ to project a more inclusive nationalism. Of course, linguistic considerations have not been removed from nationalism in Québec (Rocher, 2002): The French language is still central to the expression of the Québécois identity,

7. Yet according to Keith Banting (1999), attachment to federal social policies may have contributed to the defeat of the separatist camp in 1980.

but it coexists with a social policy dimension. To an extent, these are inseparable issues in Québec, as in other regions of multilingual states such as Belgium, because social services like health care and education tend to become the focus of language-rights claims.

The PQ's core argument is that Québec has a different political culture from the rest of Canada, that it is more collectivist, egalitarian, compassionate, and caring for the poorest and most vulnerable elements of society. This discourse is a function of the PQ's ideological slant. As proof of this national character, the PQ suggests that Québec resisted the neoliberal turn taken elsewhere in Canada and in much of the Western world. This claim is debatable because in the late 1990s, Québec's PQ government struggled to eliminate the deficit much like many other jurisdictions in the Western world. Yet during this same period, the PQ also instituted a publicly funded child-care system (the so-called 5-dollars-a-day day-care program) and a publicly funded universal drug plan. It kept university tuition fees the lowest in North America. The PQ government had also adopted an "anti-poverty law," which forces the government to guarantee and boost income support for low-income Québécois (Lessard, 2002). Commenting on this policy, then-Premier Bernard Landry said that the "Québec model"⁸ was not only about economic regulation but also about wealth redistribution.

Social policy was also at the center of the PQ's nationalist mobilization strategy during its tenure (1994-2003). This connection is the combined product of an ideological and an institutional component. The PQ accused the federal government, described as centralizing and domineering, of threatening Québec's distinctively progressive social policies and, therefore, the very foundations of the nation. The PQ's program argues that "unitary Canada is developing following a vision different than ours, and its decisions stand in the way of our [social] projects" (Parti Québécois, 2000, p. 160). In this context, the PQ suggests that independence is the only sure way of preserving these policies.

The definition of the Québec nation along social policy lines transcends partisan politics. The other major party in Québec, the PLQ, has historically espoused similar positions on social policy issues. Now in government, the PLQ has undertaken a "reengineering" of the state. This is a process that has so far involved only a hike in the public daycare system (from 5 dollars to 7 dollars per day) and a relaxation of subcontracting rules, yet it triggered street demonstrations spearheaded by trade unions and antipoverty groups. In this context, the PQ and various public intellectuals have accused the PLQ gov-

8. The "Québec model" typically refers to a model of socioeconomic organization that stresses state interventionism and corporatism.

ernment of breaking Québec's "national state" (see Saint-Martin, 2004). This shows that from a nationalist perspective, being Québécois means speaking French and also espousing equality, solidarity, and social justice as core political values. Another strong demonstration of the connection between the Québécois identity and progressive social policies is the rise and fall of the *Action Démocratique du Québec* (ADQ). A small party created in the early 1990s as a splinter group from the PLQ, the ADQ's popularity remained marginal until 2002 when it experienced a meteoric rise in public opinion. The ADQ favored policies such as school vouchers and a flat tax that stood in opposition to the profile of the Québec nation built over the past 40 years. As the PQ and the PLQ zeroed onto the ADQ's policies, two things happened: The ADQ backtracked on vouchers and flat tax, reducing them to "interesting ideas" and "long-term objectives," and its popularity plummeted.⁹

We have already hinted that nationalism has played a significant agenda-setting role in Québec as the PQ created several important social programs in the name of the progressive character of the Québec nation. The link between nationalism and the social policy agenda is perhaps most visible in the publicly funded and universal day-care program. The avowed objective of this initiative was to make it easier for working mothers to have children. This concern should be understood, at least partly, in terms of the low birth rate in Québec and its consequences for the long-term political power of the province within Canada, as well as the chances for a successful referendum on sovereignty in a context of increased immigration (newcomers tend to oppose Québec's independence).

Considering the high level of decentralization inherent to the Canadian federal system and the left-wing orientation of politics in Québec, Québécois nationalism has long played an agenda-setting role within and beyond its provincial borders. This happened first in the 1960s by supporting social policy expansion yet at the same time seeking to adapt to it its vision of federalism. If the left-wing New Democratic Party and the province of Saskatchewan pressured the federal government to enact bold social measures, Québec pressed for a decentralized version of welfare expansionism. In 1965, for example, legislation to introduce a second tier of earnings-related pensions—the Canada and Québec Pension Plans—was adopted after a long bargaining process between the federal government and the 10 provinces. As a result of Québec's campaign for greater provincial autonomy and national-

9. In the most recent provincial elections held on March 14, 2003, the *Action Démocratique du Québec* (ADQ) received only 18% of the popular vote, compared with 33% for the PQ and 46% for the *Parti Libéral*. Only four ADQ candidates were elected to the provincial legislature. The Liberals now form a majority government with 76 seats out of 125.

ist socioeconomic policies, two separate but highly coordinated earnings-related schemes were created (Bryden, 1974). Benefits from either scheme are based on pension credits accumulated under both, as if only one scheme existed. Money accumulated in the Québec Pension Plans would then be invested in the province's economy to stimulate French Canadian entrepreneurship. Despite the strong level of coordination between the Canada and the Québec Pension Plans, the 1965 reform increased the institutional weight and the policy autonomy of the province of Québec within the Canadian welfare state.

Since the 1980s, Québécois nationalists have reacted against retrenchment initiatives from Ottawa while rejecting an intergovernmental agreement aimed at improving the regulation of Canadian social policy. Indeed, the Social Union Framework Agreement (SUFA) of 1998 emerged as a provincial response to unilateral decision making in the aftermath of significant retrenchment measures (Bashevkin, 2000). After 2 decades of fiscal austerity and imposed responsibility transfer, SUFA represented an attempt to stimulate "collaboration" between Ottawa and the 10 Canadian provinces (Théret, 2001). During the second half of the 1990s, the provinces fought back forcing the federal government to "collaborate" with them in the field of social policy, that is, to stop unilateral, discretionary retrenchment that was detrimental to them. In August 1998, even the PQ government had joined a modified, bold, interprovincial consensus on this issue (Noël, 2000). Then-Premier Lucien Bouchard depicted SUFA as an attempt to centralize the Canadian political system and reinforce "Canadian unity" at the expense of Québec's autonomy and specificity (Bouchard, 2000). The final version of SUFA was quite different from the initial interprovincial plan that included the right for any province to opt out of any Canada-wide welfare measure falling within provincial jurisdiction—with full compensation. If the final agreement maintained the option for self-exclusion, it was limited to provinces that had already introduced a similar measure (McEwen, 2001, p. 99). According to political scientist Alain Noël (2000, p. 11), this final agreement reflects and exacerbates the recent concentration of power in Canadian intergovernmental relations. Yet SUFA has had limited impact on Canadian politics precisely because the Québec government did not agree to it.

Another example of agenda setting by Québécois nationalism in the Canadian federal system is the theme of "fiscal imbalance" developed by the Québec parties. Fiscal imbalance refers to the fact that provinces are empowered to act in areas that are expensive to fund (primarily health and education) while the greater taxation power is with the federal government. In 2001, the PQ government organized a *Commission sur le Déséquilibre Fiscal* (Commission on Fiscal Unbalance), and in the last provincial electoral campaign,

liberal candidate Jean Charest referred many times to this issue as one critical to Canadian federalism. The federal government has denied that such an imbalance exists, but most other provinces have rallied around the idea to pressure Ottawa into increasing funding for health care. In 2004, after years of provincial mobilization, Paul Martin's Liberal government finally agreed to notably increase federal health-care spending.

SCOTLAND AND THE UNITED KINGDOM

Much like in Canada, the development of the welfare state in Britain became a focal point for national integration. Yet different from the situation prevailing in Canada's federal system, concentration of state sovereignty in Westminster facilitated the advent of a centralized welfare state in the United Kingdom. Immediately after the Second World War, the Labor government enacted three key pieces of legislation that became the backbone of the modern British welfare state: the 1946 National Insurance Act, the 1946 National Health Service Act, and the 1948 National Assistance Act.

Over the next 3 decades, in a favorable economic context, other legislation reinforced the path toward political centralization. Although local and regional powers enjoyed significant levels of administrative autonomy, political decisions were made in Westminster and social benefits were distributed by the British state. In this context, the role of the Scottish office (a regional department of the British government) remained essentially administrative. Involved in the implementation and administration of social policy measures such as health, housing, and public education, this department had no legislative autonomy and acted as a mere lobby within the British state defending and promoting Scotland's interests to the Cabinet and other departments (Keating & Midwinter, 1983, p. 24). As opposed to the provinces within the Canadian federation, Scotland had limited institutional autonomy, and it could seldom impact policy making. For example, social benefits originated from a British welfare state designed in London. From a regional perspective, the fact that the British welfare state was ever present in the daily life of Scots reinforced their political and social integration with the United Kingdom. In this context, Scots (especially members of the working class) could identify with generous and popular British institutions, such as the National Health Service (NHS), related to the idea of shared social citizenship. Legitimizing political centralization, widely distributed benefits made the welfare state as strong an agent of national cohesion as the empire had once been (Bennie, Brand, & Mitchell, 1997).

Despite more than 30 years of welfare-state expansion in Britain, a Scottish national identity associated with progressive politics blossomed in the

1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Several factors explain this development. Structurally, the interventionist politics and regional planning of the 1950s and 1960s represented an important contextual element for the evolution of the Scottish identity (Harvie, 1998, pp. 125-130), as did the fall of the colonial empire. Politically, the transformation over the last 25 years or so of the Scottish National Party (SNP) into a left-wing organization bringing issues such as nuclear disarmament to the forefront of Scottish politics set up a wider association between nationalism and left-leaning politics. Yet the decisive force behind the increasing importance of social policy preferences for Scottish nationalism was the combined product of ideological and institutional factors. On one hand, the neoliberal discourse and policies of the Thatcher government alienated many citizens in a region where they appeared to attack institutions (nationalized industries, the education system, local government, social welfare) that embodied the Scottish identity (McCrone, 2001, p. 122). On the other hand, they showed that Scotland was politically powerless to effectively counter decisions made in Westminster (Jones & Keating, 1988).

The result is a Scottish national identity that, ideologically, closely mirrors the Québécois identity by the way it is associated with notions of egalitarianism, compassion, and social justice as well as progressive social policy preferences. Although this image might be exaggerated in the political discourse, it seems to have a sociological basis, at least when it comes to redistribution. For example, Scots are more likely than the English to *strongly agree* or *agree* with redistribution (50%-38%; Paterson, 2002, p. 200). They are also more likely to support the elimination of up-front tuition fees (38%-30%) and to agree that insuring a decent standard of living for the elderly is the government's responsibility (85%-80%; Paterson, 2002, pp. 204, 207).¹⁰

Social policy preference is even more central to Scottish nationalism than to Québécois nationalism because the former is not grounded in "hard" cultural markers such as language. Of course, the articulation of Scottish nationhood in terms of social policy preference is a relatively recent phenomenon. At the center of the historical reproduction of the Scottish identity are the survival, and indeed the development, of distinct civil-society institutions (the Church, the legal system, the currency) after the Union. Yet toward the end of the 20th century, being Scottish became synonymous with espousing progressive values and policies. This was a sharp departure from the Unionist conservatism associated with the empire that reigned in Scotland during the first half of the 20th century (McCrone, 2001, p. 110). The change in Scottish identity is perhaps most strikingly revealed by the steady loss of support for

10. On social issues such as abortion or homosexuality, there are usually no significant differences between Scotland and England. See Paterson (2002) and Park (2002).

the Conservative Party in Scotland since the mid-1970s in favor of Labor and, to a lesser degree, the SNP. Indeed, whereas the Conservative vote was the same in Scotland as in England through the 1940s and 1950s, by the 1980s, support for this party in Scotland was reduced to almost half of what it was in England (McCrone, 2001, p. 108).

Transformations in political institutions frequently affect identity formation; this is likely to be the case for Scotland. The 1998 Scotland Act created a Scottish parliament and a Scottish executive but without dividing sovereignty, which formally remains with Westminster. The Act specifies “reserved matters,” that is, policy areas where the U.K. government retains exclusive responsibility. “Social security” is one of these areas. The Scottish executive is empowered to act in all the fields not listed as reserved. These so-called devolved matters include health care, social work, education, and professional training.¹¹ In this context, the Scottish executive provides the statutory and financial framework for NHS Scotland while administering schools and universities. It is also active in tackling issues such as housing, homelessness, social exclusion, and child poverty (in partnership with the British government). Devolution is likely to sustain or even accentuate the link between Scottish identity and preferences for progressive social policy because the Scottish parliament now has the institutional autonomy to implement such policies. Two recent initiatives may prove symbolically important in further defining Scottish identity in terms of progressive politics: the elimination of up-front tuition fees for university students and the establishment of free personal care for the elderly (McEwen, 2003).

The possibility of distinctiveness in the area of social policy is also at the center of nationalist mobilization in Scotland. The idea that political autonomy would enable Scotland to enact progressive social legislation—that is, legislation said to be in harmony with Scottish values of egalitarianism and compassion—was at the center of the drive for home rule (McEwen, 2002, p. 79). For example, when asked in 1997 if they thought the new parliament could improve education, 71% answered yes (Surrige, 2002, p. 134). Overall, surveys conducted after the devolution referendum of 1997 showed that those supporting devolution thought that it could bring much-needed improvements in various social programs such as the NHS and welfare services (McEwen, 2002). Here again, the framing of the home-rule issue in terms of social policy during the 1980s and 1990s has to be understood in terms of the discourse of Thatcher’s Conservative government. It is no coin-

11. In theory, Westminster can still legislate on devolved matters but, through the so-called Sewell convention, will not do so against the wishes of the Scottish parliament.

vidence that only the Conservative Party opposed devolution in Scotland in the late 1990s.

The prospect of establishing distinct social policy in Scotland is also at the center of the SNP's argument for independence. The SNP describes itself as a party whose aim is "to create a just, caring and enterprising society by releasing Scotland's full potential as an independent nation in the mainstream of modern Europe." Its manifesto for the 2003 Scottish election makes very clear the link between progressive social policy and independence. In a discourse reminiscent of Québec's PQ, the SNP argues that "the ability to implement policies to make a real difference to the lives of those children requires full control of the economy, taxation, social security and employment policy" (Scottish National Party, 2003). The SNP argues that only independence can allow Scottish society to design social policy fitting with its own values.

Recently gained institutional autonomy may radically increase the agenda-setting potential of nationalism within Scotland. Of course, this exact potential remains unclear because the Scottish autonomous institutions are still in their infancy. Yet it is clear that nationalism has already played a major role in setting the Scottish policy agenda by seeking devolution. The achievement of devolution has increased the institutional autonomy of Scotland in the field of social policy. The Scottish example thus illustrates the potential relationship between agenda setting and the quest for institutional autonomy. Furthermore, because the drive toward home rule was heavily framed in terms of Scotland's necessity to be able to craft progressive social policy, nationalism has weighed on the policy agenda of the Scottish executive. The elimination of up-front university tuition fees and the free personal-care program for the elderly represents policy choices falling squarely into the recent trajectory of Scottish nationalism.

Because of the increased institutional autonomy of the region, Scottish nationalism also presents agenda-setting potential within British politics. Much like what has happened in Canada with Québec, Scotland could become a source of policy innovation in the social domain and, as a consequence, put pressure on the British government to implement similar policies. For example, the Scottish home-care-for-the-elderly program caught the eye of progressive pressure groups in England. *Unison*, an English labor union, distributed a poster contrasting a happy (Scottish) senior, under the heading "care free," alongside a sad and lonely looking (English) one, under the heading "care fee." Although the British government made the choice not to follow the Scottish executive's lead in this particular case, further policy divergence might eventually put the British government in uncomfortable situations.

FLANDERS AND BELGIUM

Like in Canada and the United Kingdom, evolving institutional structures are crucial to understanding the relationship between substate nationalism and social policy in Belgium. Until the late 1960s, Belgium was a highly centralized state, and decades of nationalist mobilization proved necessary to favor a gradual decentralization of the country's institutions. This is a key difference between Flanders and Québec, an autonomous province engaged in a struggle to preserve and widen existing jurisdictions. In that regard, Flemish nationalism has more in common with its Scottish counterpart, which emerged in the context of a very centralized constitutional order. Yet like Québécois nationalism, Flemish nationalism is linked more to culture and language than is Scottish nationalism. Indeed, linguistic considerations were behind the emergence of Flemish nationalism in the 19th century as the Flemish Movement struggled for the formal equality of Dutch and French in Belgium, and in the 20th century it strove for the creation of a monolingual Flanders. Linguistic disputes persist in Belgium, albeit in a less severe form than in the past. These disputes revolve around the fate of the approximately 100,000 Francophones living in Brussels's periphery. As a consequence of this history and of the continuing linguistic tensions, the Flemish identity is still very much defined by the Dutch language.

At the ideological level, the Flemish Movement was originally spearheaded by a strongly Catholic Flemish petty bourgeoisie and then evolved in close connection with the Christian Democratic world in Belgium. This connection, which is still visible today, helps explain why Flemish nationalism has not associated itself with progressive social policies and values in the same way as Scottish and Québécois nationalism. In fact, the Flemish identity is much less tied to distinct social policy, or policy preference, than the Québécois or Scottish identity. The definition of the Flemish nation is not yet infused with references to a distinct social policy model.

Although the Flemish identity is not really grounded in specific policy preferences, socioeconomic factors and, more precisely, regional inequalities directly affect the relationship between nationalism and social policy in Belgium. Flemish nationalism is infused with the economic discrepancies that have characterized Belgium over the past 40 years or so. Wallonia, once the economic stronghold of the country, because of its early and advanced industrialization, has experienced a serious decline, while Flanders, historically more rural and less developed, has successfully adjusted its structures to the new economy. This cleavage, combined with the major decentralization of power resulting from the federalization process, has led to policy divergence, including in the social realm, between Flanders and Wallonia.

Because the Flemish government has much more money to finance social policy than the Francophone institutions,¹² Flanders can push its social policies further than Wallonia can. For example, in 2001, the Flemish government established a home-care insurance scheme (*zorgverzekering*) designed to support the elderly and the handicapped. The French Community did not, because it does not have the financial means.

Yet Flemish nationalism is undeniably rooted in conservatism, and the acute knowledge of regional socioeconomic disparities largely frame the nationalist ideology: Flemish nationalists articulate the discourse according to which Walloons are state dependent, whereas Flemings have an entrepreneurial spirit. Some recent policy choices in Flanders, such as the elimination of a tax on television and radio (*kijk-en luistergeld*) and the lowering of registration fees for new property (*registratierechten*), fall in line with this entrepreneurial characterization. And at the center of the Flemish nationalist discourse is the idea that wealthy Flanders is implicitly subsidizing poor Wallonia through a centralized social insurance system. These transfers have become a source of political discord between the two communities, although their extent is the object of sparring between Flemish and Francophone economists. Flemish leaders, especially from the Christian Democratic and Liberal parties, have argued for a *communautarisation* (decentralization) of the social insurance system.¹³

So far, the institutional features of the Belgian welfare state have militated against radical devolution in the field of social policy. As compared with the postwar welfare states that emerged in Canada and the United Kingdom, this system is divided among various occupational groups. Such a Bismarckian fragmentation reduced the potential homogenizing impact of welfare-state development in that country. Despite a gradual expansion of coverage and the fact that the social insurance system is placed under the general control of the central state, economic solidarity at the center of professional schemes is distinct from the universalistic logic of Beveridgian social citizenship present in Canada and in the United Kingdom. Labor unions—including Flemish ones—that participate in the management of these schemes generally oppose decentralization (Poirier & Vansteenkiste, 2000).

12. Social security is mostly a federal prerogative, but federated units have some room to maneuver within certain policy areas. For example, preventive medicine is a community prerogative.

13. *Agalev*, the Flemish ecologist party, opposes such decentralization. The Flemish Socialists are less enthusiastic than the Liberals and the Christian Democrats about the idea, although this is largely because they fear that decentralization could bring retrenchment (Vaes, 1998, p. 175).

Despite these institutional obstacles to the decentralization of the social insurance system, social policy matters now feature as prominently in Flemish nationalist mobilization as language did up until the 1960s. Every Flemish family, the argument goes, pays for a new car for every Walloon family every year (Vaes, 1998, p. 174). Walloons are also accused of “costing more” to the social insurance as a result of their bad life habits and “excessive” use of medical doctors, especially specialists. The rationale for the claims of decentralization of social insurance is similar to the one found in Québec: Solidarity is situated within the framework of a national community that is Flanders not Belgium (Poirier & Vansteenkiste, 2000, pp. 356-362).

The position of the radical Flemish nationalist party *Vlaams Blok* is particularly interesting for understanding the connection between substate nationalism and social policy. The *Vlaams Blok* is a far-right nationalist party with, among other things, anti-immigration and anti-European positions. In the field of social policy, the *Vlaams Blok* favors a conservative family policy that, for example, rewards stay-at-home mothers. This type of policy preference reflects a key ideological factor mentioned above: the enduring influence of Catholicism in Flanders, a region that never experienced a profound wave of secularization such as the one encountered during Québec’s Quiet Revolution of the 1960s. From the *Vlaams Blok*’s perspective, the divergent policy preference is almost beside the point. Its literature makes it abundantly clear: Flemings and Francophones belong to two different nations.¹⁴ Therefore, the solidarity of Flemings does not, and should not, extend to Francophones; rather, Flemings should treat Belgian Francophones with no more and no less generosity than they treat other peoples. The *Vlaams Blok*’s stance, which is grounded in conservative ideas about personal and family responsibility, illustrates the fact that a wealthier region can use nationalism to fight specific mechanisms of redistribution in the name of a restricted form of solidarity. Beyond the *Vlaams Blok*, the moderate Flemish parties also borrow from such a conservative rhetoric against economic redistribution across regional and linguistic boundaries.

For these moderate Flemish parties, the ultimate objective behind the decentralization of social insurance is to take Belgium toward a confederal model. From a short-term historical perspective, the Flemish claims surrounding social policy fall within a pattern of nationalist mobilization, mostly centered on language, which coincided with the federalization of the state in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. This highlights a fundamental difference between the Canadian and Belgian cases. In Canada, as we have already discussed, there is an intense competition between the federal and Québec

14. See the party program (*Vlaams Blok*, 2003, pp. 1-5).

governments over who will protect those living in that province. In Belgium, where conflicts are fewer between the federal and the regional or community governments, the dynamic is different. On the Flemish side, a decentralization of social policy means that the country is evolving in the preferred direction. For Francophones, the social insurance system is seen as the last tie that holds Belgium together as a political community; as a policy matter, it is much different than external commerce or agriculture, two fields recently decentralized. For this reason, many Francophones perceive Flemish proposals to decentralize the social insurance system as an attempt to destroy what remains of Belgium.¹⁵

In the field of social policy, Flemish nationalism has not played an agenda-setting role in Belgium comparable to Québécois nationalism in Canada. In Flanders, few social policy innovations have been carried out as a result of the drive to decentralize the Belgian welfare state. Furthermore, there has been no mimetic effect at the federal level; Belgian federalism follows a squarely decentralist path and the federal government is not looking to outdo the governments of communities and regions in any area. There is some potential for Flemish nationalism to play an agenda-setting role in social policy in relation to the French Community but only when the financial resources of both governments become comparable. As we have already mentioned, Francophone politicians took notice of the Flemish home-care insurance but did not have the financial means to implement such a program.

Yet the impact of Flemish nationalism on the Belgian social policy agenda was felt at the broadest institutional level: Flemish nationalism questioned the very idea of a welfare state—administered by the federal government—that covers the Belgian population as a whole. In the wake of Flemish nationalism, various governmental and academic publications set the agenda for the decentralization of Belgium's social insurance system during the 1990s (Banting, 1999). In 1999 and 2001, fiscal autonomy was achieved but without the decentralization of health care and family policy. The failure of comprehensive social policy decentralization largely is due to a key institutional factor:

Because constitutional changes in Belgium require a two-thirds vote in the federal Parliament, and therefore a bi-national consensus, Walloon objections have prevailed. The issue was not resolved, as many Flemish politicians had hoped, by the 1999 election, and consensus on the issue remains elusive. (Banting & Kymlicka, 2003, p. 38)

15. Survey results show that in Flanders, 36% of the population agrees with “splitting social security,” whereas support is 13% in Wallonia and 10% in Brussels (Baudewyns & Dandoy, 2003).

Although no legislation has been enacted to formally decentralize key elements of the Belgian welfare state, Flemish parties have reshaped the country's policy agenda by inserting the issue of social insurance into the continuous negotiations over the decentralization of the state. The "splittings" of the social insurance system looms behind every new round of constitutional negotiations; in this context, it has far-reaching implications on policy areas because Francophones have been willing to accept the decentralization of many different fields (agriculture, external trade, and part of foreign aid in 2001) if it meant preserving the status quo on social insurance.¹⁶

DISCUSSION

This article has explored the little-studied relationship between social policy and substate nationalism. It has argued that specialists of substate nationalism should pay attention to social policy because nationalist movements are making room for social policy issues, partly to soften their image and to reinforce their political legitimacy. Furthermore, the article has shown that substate nationalism can really matter in social policy reform and that students of welfare-state development in multinational states should consider substate nationalism as a significant factor in the social policy reform process.

At the most general level, our three cases feature a connection between substate nationalism and social policy. Yet specific institutional, ideological, and socioeconomic factors account for significant cross-national differences in the specific political forms that emerge from the meshing of nationalist and welfare-state politics. The following discussion underlines the role of these factors while returning to the issues discussed in the first part of this article: identity formation, territorial mobilization, decentralization, and agenda setting.

Nationalisms in Scotland and Québec have integrated notions of distinctive social programs and policy preferences into their identity much more than Flemish nationalism. This is primarily because of ideological factors as contemporary Scottish and Québécois nationalism are on the Left whereas Flemish nationalism is on the Right. Indeed, social policy is more likely to become a focal point of national identity if nationalist actors advocate its expansion rather than its contraction. Moreover, the arguably more acute nature of linguistic tensions in Belgium—as compared with Canada—contributes to explaining why Flemish nationalism has not equated the Flem-

16. In 2001, Francophones also obtained increased funding for the communities.

ish nation with specific public policies. Unlike Québécois leaders, Flemish leaders do not care that they are sometimes denounced as “ethnic nationalists.” After all, Flemings are dominant in Belgium, and Flemish politicians are not immediately looking to secure the sympathy of the international community for the recognition of an independent state the way nationalist politicians in Québec are.

The most crucial factors for explaining the prominence of social policy preference in contemporary Scottish identity are ideological (the unpopular discourse and policies of the Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major) and institutional (the incapacity for predevolution Scotland to veto or to opt out of Westminster social legislation). There has not been, in recent years, such a fundamental divergence in Canada between the Québec and the federal government, whereas in Belgium, the historical preponderance of the Christian Democratic party (Flanders’s leading party) and the coalition governments have mitigated the potential consequences of ideological differences between Dutch and French speakers. Of course, in Scotland, the absence of hard cultural markers also makes it more likely that nationalism will be policy focused. The increased decentralization of Belgian federalism combined with Flanders’s economic strength favors the development of more distinctive social policies. In this context, the emergence of a more significant connection between Flemish identity and social policy is certainly possible in the future.

We have said that on the issue of identity, Québec and Scotland are strikingly similar. In both cases, the nation is ideologically constructed through references to egalitarianism, compassion, and social justice and by the corollary preference for progressive social policy. However, comparing the articulation of the Scottish and Québécois identities to social policy requires some nuance. The notion of being Québécois is underpinned by a wide set of distinctive social policies that date back to the 1960s. Contemporary Scottishness has been couched in terms of divergent collective values from England but is not truly supported by divergent social policies: They are too few and much too recent. This difference is, of course, the product of institutional factors: The federal nature of the Canadian system has long allowed Québec to craft much of its own social agenda, whereas the United Kingdom gave no such liberty to Scotland before devolution. Even now, Scotland’s more-limited institutional autonomy, as compared with Québec, especially financially, constrains its ability to implement distinctive social policies and, therefore, the extent to which the Scottish identity can be articulated in terms of a different policy corpus in the social domain.

Social policy has factored into nationalist mobilization in all three cases insofar as Québécois, Scottish, and Flemish nationalism have articulated

claims for the decentralization of the welfare regime. Here again, the Québec and Scottish cases are similar, whereas the Flemish case stands somewhat apart. Both the PQ and the SNP argue that independence is necessary for Québec or Scotland to freely implement the (progressive) social policy suited to the will of their nations. In the case of Flemish nationalism, which has never been underpinned by issues of redistributive justice, claims for the decentralization of social policy are directly related to a socioeconomic factor, the wealth disparity between Flanders and Wallonia, as well as to the weak solidarity between the two linguistic communities. In other words, the objective behind the Flemish government's gaining control over social policy is to stop the "indirect subsidy" of Wallonia by Flanders rather than to do something fundamentally different with social programs.

The three nationalist movements have had different degrees of success in decentralizing welfare regimes. Scottish nationalism capitalized on the momentum for home rule in the late 1990s to decentralize some aspects of social policy. In the future, the struggle for the control of social policy will be pursued by the SNP if it takes power. Indeed, neither Scottish Labor nor the Scottish Liberal Democrats are likely to engage in such a confrontational exercise. Not only do they have no interest in this type of decentralization in the short term, but also their organizations are well integrated with the larger British parties for whom this is an undesirable option. Québec has arguably more control over social policy than any other region in the Western world but seeks even more autonomy over this policy area—at least when the PQ forms the government. This has not been an easy task in recent years because the federal government is staunchly defending its social policy role. This is not the type of obstacle that has prevented any major decentralization of social insurance in Belgium. It is, at first glance, surprising that there has not been much movement on this issue, because it is the majority group that seeks change. The sticking point here is the fact that Francophone leaders have basically stated that they would interpret the *splitsing* of social insurance as the end of the country. Because Belgian political practice requires decision making at the federal level to gather support across linguistic communities as the cabinet includes an equal number of Flemish- and French-speaking ministers, Francophones have so far succeeded in preventing bold welfare-state decentralization in Belgium.

In terms of the impact of substate nationalism on welfare-state politics, we have also noticed that Québécois, Scottish, and Flemish nationalism have all, albeit in different ways and to varying degrees, played agenda-setting roles. Institutional factors heavily condition the opportunity for nationalist movements to act as agenda setters. In the context of a federal system, Québec has developed a corpus of distinctive social policies when compared with the

other provinces, and it has also put pressure on the federal government to keep up with its progressive policies on the family. In the United Kingdom, there are signs that devolution for Scotland has launched similar processes. Flemish nationalism has not been an agenda setter in the same way as Québécois and Scottish nationalism. It has not engineered the development of many distinctive social policies, partly because it is ideologically on the Right but also as a consequence of the federal government retaining power over many social policy areas. Nor has it triggered a mimetic effect. Because Belgian federalism is one of “coming apart” rather than “coming together,” the federal government is not in the business of outbidding regions or communities in any policy field. Furthermore, the Walloon Region and French Community do not have the financial means to emulate Flemish policy. Flemish nationalism has set the Belgian political agenda in a broader, and perhaps a more fundamental, manner: It has challenged the legitimacy of the federal government to regulate social insurance. In doing so, it is implicitly questioning the meaning of solidarity in the context of a multinational state.

Despite the fact that this study focused on three cases and that only one other, Spain, would satisfy the double criteria of substate nationalism and a well-developed welfare state, we believe it can provide insight into research on other types of territorial politics such as political regionalism and state nationalism.

Strong regionalist movements often resemble substate nationalism in their claims and discourses. In this context, they lend themselves to an analysis of their interaction with the welfare state. For example, Italy’s Northern League advocates decentralization by arguing that the South of the country drains all the financial resources from the North (Tambini, 2001); this is not unlike the discourse of Flemish nationalism in Belgium. In the name of distinct values of entrepreneurship and efficiency, it has laid claim to Padania as a political community.

Scholars could also consider the role of welfare provisions in building national identities at the state level. In multinational states such as Canada and the United Kingdom, welfare-state development has had a nation-building dimension (Brodie, 2002; McEwen, 2002) that deserves more attention. Even less discussed is the relationship between national identity and social policy in unitary states. Yet in countries like Denmark and Sweden, for example, there is strong evidence that national identity is closely related to social and economic policies (Cox, 2004). It is to hope that future scholarship will draw on the theoretical insights formulated above to explore further the relationship between social policy, national identity, and territorial mobilization.

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