Towards a Theory of Autonomism

Jaime Lluch
Towards a Theory of Autonomism

Dr. Jaime Lluch, URGE-Collegio Carlo Alberto- Working Paper January 20, 2010

Abstract

In many multinational democracies, models of federation are the preferred institutional configuration to address the complexities of multinationalism, and much of the scholarly literature echoes this preference for federation. Yet, we find many examples of sub-state national societies with autonomist nationalist parties that reject a model of federation as an appropriate institutional design to address their needs. Instead, many stateless nationalists advocate autonomism. How can we conceptualize autonomism? How far does autonomy overlap with, or differ from, related concepts including federalism, devolution, self rule, decentralization and self-government? I seek to sketch the general contours of a theory of autonomism as an ideology of territorial order and institutional design. I will do so on the basis of empirical research into the attitudes, discourse, and opinions of the autonomists themselves. I examine the discourse of leaders and militants of the autonomist parties of Puerto Rico, Quebec, and Catalonia. My analysis is centered on five aspects of the autonomists’ credo: the parameters of national and ethnic identity that encompass the autonomist political universe, autonomism’s relation with federation, independence, and sovereignty, and how autonomists order their political preferences.

Keywords

Nationalism; Nationalist movements; Autonomism; Quebec; Catalonia; Puerto Rico
I- Introduction

A multinational democracy, while enshrining the principle of self-determination for its constituent nations, does not seek to nation-state’s propensity to forge political and cultural homogenization as the basis for citizenship. Such states are also arenas where the model of citizenship is negotiated and reconceptualized in view of the dynamic interaction between polyethnicity, internal nations’ claims, and the inertia imposed by central state institutions.

In many multinational democracies, models of federation are the preferred institutional configuration to address the complexities of multinationalism, and much of the scholarly literature echoes this preference for federation (Hechter 2000; Keating 2001; Norman 2006; Kymlicka 1998; Gibbins et al. 1998; Stepan 2001, p. 326; Burgess and Gagnon 1993; Elazar 1987; Watts 2008; McRoberts 1997; Griffiths et al. 2005; Gagnon and Iacovino 2007). A federation, in principle, can serve to provide sufficient institutional recognition for sub-state national societies. Empirically, however, the persistence of the dominant nation-state model has resulted in repeated attempts by central states to deny the recognition of the plurinational nature of the state.

Moreover, an interesting political puzzle emerges in many contemporary multinational democracies: we find many examples of sub-state national societies with autonomist nationalist parties that reject a model of federation as an appropriate institutional design to address their needs. Instead, many stateless nationalists advocate autonomism as the ideal institutional design to accommodate them. Why do many sub-state nationalists reject federation as a model and prefer models that would be consonant with autonomist principles? What are the normative tradeoffs that autonomists seem to be willing to make to maximize self-government? How
would actually-existing models of autonomism evolve if these autonomists’ political programs were fully realized? Are presently-inexisting models of autonomism, yet projected by autonomists in their programs, institutionally and juridically viable? Autonomism has been under-studied, and we need to better understand what autonomism is and what are the institutional models advocated by autonomists.

In order to make analytical progress, we must unpack the notion of autonomy by distinguishing between autonomism, autonomies, and autonomists. “Autonomism” is a term imbued with normative content, and it refers to the philosophy of territorial order that autonomists subscribe to. Autonomism implies a commitment to forms of territorial control that challenge traditional conceptions of the nation-state, sovereignty, national identity, and the generalized reification of statist principles. Autonomism makes a claim for institutional hybridity and political syncretism. It invokes a commitment to the search for political models that tend to be unorthodox arrangements: these are political statuses that generally renounce full sovereign statehood, but lay claim to specific aspects of self-government and sovereignty. In the case of autonomies that are located within states that are organized as federations, these are also political statuses that clearly distinguish themselves from the institutional and political characteristics of the constituent units of such federations. Autonomism is a grey area of territorial management of ethnic differences. It may be conceptualized as “the legally entrenched power of ethnic or territorial communities to exercise public functions independently of other sources of authority of the state, but subject to the overall legal order of the state” (Weller and Wolff 2005).
“Autonomies” are the actually-existing varieties of territorial autonomies. These are models of territorial autonomy that have been successfully established by sub-state territorial units, in cooperation with central state governments. In their institutional design, actually-existing autonomies are the obligatory starting points of reference for giving concrete shape to the aspirations of autonomism. However, actually-existing autonomies do not exhaust the ambitions or the inventiveness of the autonomist political agenda. Autonomism may also put forward models of institutional design that are presently-inexisting, but which, under the right political circumstances, could become juridically and politically viable entities.

“Autonomists” are the actual leaders and militants of autonomist political parties. Many autonomist political parties are also sub-state nationalist parties. Aside from autonomist intellectuals, autonomists are the main proponents of the ideology of autonomism, and their attitudes, ideas, and programs will help us reach a better understanding of the contemporary meaning of autonomism.

Scholarly efforts by comparativists and political theorists to develop theories of independentism abound (Bartkus 1999; Beissinger 2002; Hechter 2000; Hale 2008; Hannum and Babitt 2006; Moore 1998; Murkens et al. 2002). We also have in the existing literature theories about the origins of federalism and federation (Riker 1987, 1964; Watts 2008, 1966; Wheare 1953; Stepan 2001). Yet, we have relatively little in the existing scholarly literature on autonomism as a political program and as an ideology capable of mobilizing people. This is an unfortunate gap, given that there are in fact many political actors in sub-state national societies that are proponents of autonormism. The literature tends to be descriptive, and there have been very few efforts to develop a proper theory of autonomism. Existing works on autonomy and
actually existing autonomies, however, tend to be taxonomic or classificatory surveys with an analytic angle (Elazar 1987; Watts 2008). We also have edited volumes containing a series of case studies with introductory chapters that attempt to be theoretical and synthetic, but which are often unable to develop a broad-based theory of autonomism (Ghai 2000; Weller and Wolff 2005; Suksi 1998; Winter and Türsan 1998). We also have works by political theorists (Lapidoth 1997) or by legal scholars (Hannum 1996; Skurbaty et al. 2005; Hannum 1993), but which are not based on fieldwork in specific countries, or empirical investigation into the attitudes and the discourse of autonomists. Among the best efforts by comparativists in recent years are works that are based on in-depth investigation of specific cases, involving fieldwork in several countries (Hepburn 2007).

None of the works cited above have attempted to develop a theory of autonomism as an ideology of territorial order and institutional design. Nor have these efforts based their theorizing on empirical research into the attitudes, opinions, and ideologies of autonomists who are leaders and militants of autonomist political parties. This paper seeks to contribute to this literature by adopting a broader perspective on autonomism. We will seek to develop a theory of autonomism, but one developed on the basis of empirical research into the attitudes, ideology, and opinions of the autonomists themselves. I will rely principally on an analysis of four autonomist parties of minority nations that exist within states with diverse regime types. The three regime types are decentralized federal Canada, semi-federal Spain, and the homogeneous, centralized federalism of the USA. Within these states, I will examine the autonomist claims of the Quebecois and Catalan autonomist political parties, and the autonomist movement of Puerto Rico. Despite this wide variation in regime types, I will analyze the commonalities shared by these autonomist movements. By focusing on the ideology and discourse of these autonomist
movements, I will be able to develop a theory of autonomism informed by empirical research. The theory of autonomism I present here, based on the evidence derived from the discourse of leaders and militants of autonomist parties, is centered on five aspects of the autonomists’ credo:

*Autonomism and Federation.* The boundary line between federation and the autonomist program for institution-building needs to be better demarcated. My analysis below of the discourse of autonomists will help us see more clearly the contrast between these two models of institutional design.

*Autonomism and Independence.* Underlying the autonomist program is a form of studied skepticism towards the modalities of independence. Understanding the discourse of autonomists towards this issue will permit us to unpack the autonomist cognitive framework.

*Autonomism and Identity.* While autonomism is itself a political identity, we need to understand the parameters of national and ethnic identity that encompass the autonomist political universe.

*Autonomism and Sovereignty.* Autonomists are wary of the independence alternative, but are often engaging in efforts to acquire elements of partial sovereignty, although autonomists and autonomist parties often exhibit some degree of ambiguity in their efforts to expand their sphere of sovereignty.

*Autonomists’ Preferences.* Autonomists must develop a political strategy that will allow them to compete successfully with its competitors, independentist nationalism and federalist nationalism. How do autonomists form their preference for their political orientation?
II- Autonomism

Autonomism is a multi-hued concept, with many variations and which is constantly re-inventing itself with new proposals. Models of autonomism occupy a middle ground between the modalities of independence and classic models of federation. At the outset, it is clear that one can distinguish the diverse modalities of independence from the various modalities of autonomism. Given my overarching interest in the politics of stateless nations, we will limit ourselves to an examination of the notion of territorial autonomism, as opposed to group autonomy or personal autonomy. A territorial political autonomy “is an arrangement aimed at granting a certain degree of self-identification to a group that differs from the majority of the population in the state, and yet constitutes the majority in a specific region” (Lapidoth 1997). Importantly, the autonomous entity is defined in territorial terms. Autonomism denotes the special political status of a region, populated by a people who differ ethnically or culturally from the majority population. Autonomist arrangements imply a division of powers between the central state and the autonomous region. The powers of the latter usually relate to matters of culture, economics, and social policy. The autonomous region usually has the powers of legislation, administration, and, sometimes, adjudication. Some powers may be exercised in common between the central state and the autonomous region. By its nature, autonomism requires cooperation and coordination between the central authorities and the regional ones (174-175) (Suksi 1998). Furthermore, autonomism is an arrangement that allows ethnic or national groups claiming a distinct identity to exercise direct control over matters of special concern to them, while granting the larger entity those powers that cover common interests. (Ghai 2000; Skurbaty et al. 2005) It can only be implemented if the group in question lives within a clearly
delimited area, and constitutes the majority there. In an autonomous territory, all the people living in it are subject to this status, not only the members of certain groups (Suksi 1998).

The cases of actually-existing autonomism vary widely and no single description will be applicable to all such situations. Contemporary instances of actually-existing autonomist relationships include: Åland Islands/Finland, South Tyrol-Alto Adige/Italy, Faroe Islands/Denmark, Greenland/Denmark, Puerto Rico/USA, Northern Mariana Islands/USA, Corsica/France, Isle of Man/United Kingdom, the Islands of Jersey and Guernsey/United Kingdom, Scotland/United Kingdom, Wales/United Kingdom, etc. (Suksi 1998; Lapidoth 1997; McGarry 2002). For the proponents of autonomism, the notion of self-determination is most likely “‘best viewed as entitling a people to choose its political allegiance to influence the political order under which it lives’ and to preserve its identity” (Danspeckgruber 2002). Autonomists would argue that these objectives can in many cases be achieved with less than full independence. Self-determination does not have to be necessarily an instrument of secession, according to the autonomist stance (110)1 (Danspeckgruber and Watts 1997; Suksi 1998). Moreover, the United Nations General Assembly has addressed this matter in the form of the Liechtenstein Initiative on Self-Determination through Self-Administration, which seeks to propose autonomism as an alternative to secessionist self-determination demands. Some would go as far as stating that territorial autonomism can serve as a substitute for self-determination discourse within non-sovereign polities (Weller and Wolff 2005).

1 Thus, in contemporary Western Europe, for example, interest in self determination is not necessarily centered on the modification of borders or the establishment of new sovereign entities. Rather, the parties involved typically address matters of language, culture, education, and related administrative and economic dimensions (196).
In this paper, therefore, autonomist proposals refers to political options that generally renounce independence -- at least for the medium- to short-term -- but which seek to promote the self- government, self administration, and cultural identity of a territorial unit populated by a polity with national characteristics. Thus, it would seem that autonomy proposals are clearly distinguishable from independentist proposals, in all their modalities. However, we do need to distinguish autonomist proposals from models of federation. Certain forms of autonomism may be described as sub-species of the general category of “federal political systems,” if we recognize that the latter is a broad genus, which includes unions, constitutionally decentralized unions, federations, confederations, “federacies,” associated states, condominiums, leagues, and joint functional authorities (Watts et al. 1999b). However, most autonomist proposals can be clearly distinguished from formal federations, strictly speaking. Classic federations, where all the constituent units have equal powers, may not be sufficiently sensitive to the particular cultural, economic, institutional, and linguistic needs of a polity that constitutes a stateless nation, which require a greater degree of self-government (Ghai 2000). Generally speaking, moreover, “autonomy is always a fragmented order, whereas a constituent…[unit of a federation] is always part of a whole…The ties in a federal State are always stronger than those in an autonomy” (Suksi 1998). Autonomism is commonly established in territories that have a particular ethnic character, whereas the uniformizing and homogenizing structure of a federation applies to the

---

2 Wherever there is a polity in which two levels of government interact, one of which is the peripheral, inferior level of government (vis-à-vis the superior, central level of government), the inferior level of government possesses a certain degree of autonomy vis-à-vis the superior level of government. There is autonomy wherever, in the inferior level of government, the superior level of government maintains the capacity to control the action of the inferior level. There is partial sovereignty, on the other hand, whenever the superior level of government does not have this capacity to control the inferior level of government. The partial sovereignty of the inferior level of government, can be expanded to absolute sovereignty, equivalent to independence. (Bernier et al. 1997)
entire territory of a state. In some cases of autonomism, moreover, the autonomous region does not participate meaningfully in the decision making processes of the central state (Lapidoth 1997). In sum, most actually existing cases of autonomism can be distinguished from a model of classic federation. However, in some contemporary federations, certain national parties of sub-state national societies may put forward proposals for asymmetric federalism. In this work, such parties will be classified as federalist parties with a program for asymmetric decentralization of the federation. At various times since the 1960’s, for example, this kind of proposal has been put forward by the nationalist wing of the Parti Libéral du Québec. Such federations, moreover, may also have national parties of sub-state national societies that put forward proposals for autonomy. Generally speaking, such autonomist formulations within an actually existing federation reject a model of classic federation, and propose such a high degree of political autonomy that they transcend a model of asymmetric federation. Their formulation of a constitutional model for the federation is so decentralizing and asymmetric that they are more properly recognized as autonomist proposals, within a federal political system. An exemplar of this kind of national political party would be the Action Démocratique du Québec.

III- Autonomies

Autonomies are not a new phenomenon. Traditionally, however, these unusual arrangements have attracted little attention among Political Scientists because they have existed in geographically unique situations (such as the Åland or Faroe Islands or Greenland) or were thought to exist only due to a historically unique trajectory (e.g., Puerto Rico) or because of very special local conditions (such as South Tyrol-Alto Adige).
In recent years, however, there has been a renaissance of interest in autonomism as a potential remedy for self-determination claims, because now it is seen as a tool for accommodating nationality claims. As mentioned above, actually-existing autonomies do not exhaust the imagination of the autonomist political agenda. Autonomism may also put forward models of institutional design that are presently-inexisting, but which form part of the autonomist program for institution-building. However, we need to scrutinize cases of actually-existing autonomism in order to understand the nature of autonomism as actually practiced in the contemporary world. A complete survey of all actually-existing autonomies is precluded by space contraints, but a brief examination of a very limited number of cases is possible. This exercise is also worthwhile because it will give us an opportunity to distinguish territorial units that are autonomies from the constituent units of federations. In light of this, if we could focus on only one case of autonomy, I would select one which is part of a state that is organized as a federation. This will allow us to contrast autonomism with federation as models of institutional design.

In the existing literature on federal political systems, the universe of “federal political systems” includes unions, constitutionally decentralized unions, federations, confederations, federacies, associated states, condominiums, and leagues (Watts et al. 1999a). Of these, the categories of “federacies” and “associated states” come close to describing the sorts of asymmetric political arrangements that are encompassed by the notion of territorial autonomies.

Associated states certainly enjoy a great deal of autonomy, so much so that they are more properly thought of as a modality of independence. They are not instances of autonomism. Let us see why. Associated states are “relationships that are similar to federacies, but they can
be dissolved by either of the units acting alone on prearranged terms established in the constituting document or a treaty” (Watts et al. 1999a). Daniel J. Elazar defines an Associated State as an “asymmetrical arrangement similar to a federacy but like a confederation in that it can be dissolved by either of the parties under pre-arranged terms” (Elazar 1991). Hurst Hannum defines Associated Statehood as “a relatively modern concept that has arisen out of United Nations discussions with respect to the exercise of self-determination by non-self-governing territories. The modern associated state is perhaps closest to a protected independent state, with an essential attribute being the ability unilaterally to terminate the ‘association’ with another state” (Hannum 1996). Contemporary exemplars of Associated State relationships include Liechtenstein (with Switzerland), San Marino (with Italy), Monaco (with France), Niue Island (with New Zealand), Cook Islands (with New Zealand), and the Marshall Islands/the Federated States of Micronesia (with the U.S.A.) (Watts et al. 1999a) (Lapidoth 1997). Free Association is a “form of political association which is essentially confederal in nature where separate, distinct communities of disproportionate size and resources join together for pragmatic purposes” (Statham 2002). Thus, “a relationship of association in contemporary international law is characterized by recognition of the significant subordination of and delegation of competence by one of the parties (the associate) to the other (the principal) but maintenance of the continuing international status of statehood of each component” (Reisman 1975). An Associated State status is premised on the mutual consent of both principal and associate. The associate is interested in the relationship because it promotes its security and

---

3 Other scholars have classified Liechtenstein, San Marino, and Monaco as “protected independent states”, which are states that have “delegated certain of its powers by treaty to a protecting or guardian state, but it retains full domestic autonomy and its general right of control over foreign relations, except insofar as that control has been delegated by specific treaty provisions” (Hannum 1996).
economic viability. It maintains full internal self government regulated by its Constitution. In certain areas, notably defense and foreign affairs, the principal may have exclusive competence, by mutual agreement. The United Nations has recognized an association as a valid act of self determination, but only under certain conditions (Lapidoth 1997). Associated states are therefore more properly thought of as variants of independence, not exemplars of autonomism.

On the other hand, federacies are “political arrangements where a large unit is linked to a smaller unit or units, but the smaller unit retains considerable autonomy and has a minimum role in the government of the larger one, and where the relationship can be dissolved only by mutual agreement” (Watts et al. 1999b). Elazar defines a “federacy” as follows: “whereby a larger power and a smaller polity are linked asymmetrically in a federal relationship in which the latter has substantial autonomy and in return has a minimal role in the governance of the larger power. Resembling a federation, the relationship between them can be dissolved only by mutual agreement” (Elazar 1991). Elazar cites the Puerto Rico-USA relationship as an example of a “federacy.” Elazar notes that “Puerto Rico has every power of internal self-government of any independent state and, in theory, more than any federated state of the American union. Its citizens are also citizens of the United States but do not have the right to vote in national elections” (Elazar 1987). However, it should be noted, regarding the last element of his definition, that the power to terminate or modify the Puerto Rico-USA relationship rests squarely in the U.S. Congress, contrary to what both Elazar and Watts assert (Elazar 1987, 1991)(Elazar 1987: 56). Nevertheless, “federacies” seem to be the kinds of arrangements one would think of when thinking of contemporary actually-existing autonomies. There are more than 20 such arrangements in existence, including the Faröe Islands, Äland Islands, Greenland, etc. (Elazar 1987; Watts et al. 1999b). Now, given that federacies are perhaps the kind of asymmetrical
arrangements that best encompass the meaning of “autonomism” and that both Elazar and Watts agree that Puerto Rico is the quintessential case of a “federacy” in the world, I will take the case of Puerto Rico as the best exemplar of what an actually-existing autonomy is in the contemporary political scene. It also makes sense to choose Puerto Rico as the best exemplar of contemporary autonomism given that it is a territorial unit belonging to a federation. This will allow us to contrast autonomism with federation as models of institutional design.

Since the late 19th century there has been a strong and well-developed autonomist movement in Puerto Rico. In the last decade of the 19th century, Spain granted an Autonomic Charter (1897), which “created an elected lower chamber and a partially elected upper house for the insular legislative body, and provided for Puerto Rican participation in the making of commercial arrangements with foreign nations” (Anderson 1965). Since the Spanish-Cuban-USA War of 1898, Puerto Rico has been an unincorporated territory of the United States, and its people are US citizens since 1917. According to the U.S. Supreme Court, it belongs to the USA, but it is not part of it (See Balzac 258 U.S. 304 (1922). In 1952, it was established as an Estado Libre Asociado (ELA), translated into English as “Commonwealth” simply because the latter term was more recognizable in the US/English legal tradition. Public Law 600 was passed by the US Congress in 1950 and it aimed to provide constitutional government for the people of Puerto Rico. The Act provided for the celebration of a referendum in Puerto Rico for its approval, and, once approved, authorized the Legislature of Puerto Rico to call a constitutional convention to draft a Constitution for the island. Once the Constitution was adopted by the people of Puerto Rico it was to be submitted to Congress for its approval. The Law also retained most of the Organic Act of 1917 (known as the Jones Act), renaming it as the “Puerto Rican Federal Relations Act.” The latter retained provisions relating to taxes and duties,
citizenship, control of harbors, navigable waters, application of laws of the U.S., and the U.S. District Court in Puerto Rico. The final text of the Constitution was approved on February 4, 1952, and on that same date, the Constitutional Convention approved the new name for the body politic, known as the ELA or Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. The new Constitution was approved by the people in a referendum and it was submitted for ratification to the US President and the Congress. In his letter of transmittal, the Governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Muñoz Marín, observed that the relationship between the US and PR was now premised upon “consent through free agreement.” After striking down the provisions providing for social and economic rights, Congress ratified the Puerto Rican Constitution, and the Constitution came into effect on July 25, 1952, inaugurating the newly baptized ELA (Ramírez Lavandero 1988).

The modern embodiment of autonomism in Puerto Rico has been the ELA since 1952. Under the ELA, Puerto Rico has a degree of self-government, with local government institutions that are similar to the ones in the U.S. states (with executive, legislative, and judiciary branches). Puerto Rico enjoys fiscal autonomy, and income received from sources in Puerto Rico is not subject to federal personal income taxation. However, most federal laws apply, but Puerto Rico has no real representation in Congress, except for a token representative that has no right to vote there. Nor do the residents of Puerto Rico vote for the U.S. federal executive. Most major issues of economic relations, commercial relationships, environmental protection, foreign affairs, communications, transportation, citizenship and migration, etc. are in the sphere of federal legislation, and thus are laws enacted in Congress or implemented by the Executive branch, over which Puerto Rico has no direct influence. The judiciary system in Puerto Rico is a hybrid, given the mesh between the ELA´s judicial system (which in part interprets civil law) with the overarching presence and influence of the Federal District Court in Puerto Rico (which in part
interprets federal common law). Given that local governmental institutions and agencies are controlled by Puerto Ricans, some of the ethnosymbols of nationhood are present in the form of flags, hymns, institutions of culture, education system, etc., and such matters as representation in sports teams in international events and the establishment of cultural institutions have also become subtle mechanisms of nation-building.

For many of the autonomist leaders in 1952, the ELA was founded “in the nature of a compact” between two nations: the US and Puerto Rico. During 1952-53 the US succeeded in getting Puerto Rico off the agenda of the UN Decolonization Committee in part by arguing that the ELA was a compact of a bilateral nature whose terms may only be changed by common consent. However, soon thereafter Congress and the Executive branch started to behave “as if no compact of any kind existed and as if Puerto Rico continued to be a territory or possession of the United States, completely subject to its sovereign will. Puerto Rico leaders would spend the rest of the century unsuccessfully trying to convince the United States to allow full decolonization” (Trías Monge 1997). Supporters of the ELA have tried on several occasions to negotiate a “culminated ELA,” starting with the Fernós-Murray bill of 1959, but they have been unable to obtain the consent of the US Congress. ELA supporters believe this autonomic arrangement can be perfected by turning it into a true bilateral compact and by enriching it with greater elements of sovereignty. As Muñoz Marín said at the US Senate hearings in 1952, “we are establishing a status that is not federated statehood [ie, federation], but is no less than federated statehood” (Trías Monge 1997). Meanwhile, Congress continues to assume that it can unilaterally exercise plenary powers over Puerto Rico under the territorial clause of the US Constitution, and the US government contends that sovereignty over Puerto Rico resides solely in the United States and not in the people of Puerto Rico (162). Still, many in Puerto Rico continue to be supporters of
the ELA, especially its “culminated” version, and this long-standing exemplar of territorial autonomy continues to be an acceptable model of autonomy for many in the US government as well. It is also a model that has been cited often in the literature as an important exemplar of actually-existing autonomism, evincing a clear contrast with a model of federation.

IV-Autonomists

I have studied the autonomist movements and the autonomist national political parties of three sub-state national societies --- Quebec, Catalonia, and Puerto Rico --- focusing on the leaders and militants of the four autonomist national parties within these three cases. In Québec, I have studied the Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ). In Puerto Rico, the Partido Popular Democrático (PPD), and in Catalonia, the federation of Convergència i Unió (CiU) -- consisting of Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (CDC) and Unió Democràtica de Catalunya (UDC) For each of these four political parties, I have conducted in-depth fieldwork. As mentioned above, the theory of autonomism I wish to develop here, based on the evidence derived from the

4 In general, “sub-state national societies” are historically settled, territorially concentrated, and previously self-governing societies with distinctive socio-linguistic traits whose territory has become incorporated into a larger state. The incorporation of such societies has in some cases been through imperial domination and colonization, military conquest, or the cession of the territory by an imperial metropolis, but in some cases reflect a voluntary pact of association (Kymlicka, 1995). These are also known as “stateless nations,” “internal nations,” or “national minorities.” I prefer to use the term “stateless nation”, given that, as Michael Keating writes, the term “national minority” more often refers to a “people within a state whose primary reference point is a nation situated elsewhere” (Keating 2001; Brubaker 1996)

5 I have conducted interviews with over 50 top-level leaders of these parties. Also, I conducted focus group interviews with base-level militants of these parties. In total, I have received 640 answered questionnaires from the militants in the research I have done in Puerto Rico, Quebec, and Catalonia. Two techniques were used to distribute the questionnaire. Whenever possible, I went to party congresses or assemblies and, with the permission and cooperation of the parties, I distributed my questionnaire in person and received the responses the same day directly from the militants. In other cases, the party distributed the questionnaire by email to an email list of their militants. I also interviewed 18 academics.
discourse of leaders and militants of autonomist parties, is centered on five aspects of the autonomists’ credo.

**Autonomism and Federation.** During my interview with Artur Mas, the president of CiU, said: “We at the European level are federalists because we believe in a UE of a federal sort that is a union of the European nations, and we of course aspire to be a European nation. At the level of the Spanish State, we could say that we are confederalists, that is, within the Spanish State we opt decidedly for a recognition of the ensemble of nations and we thus support a plurinational state. This is not de facto independence because we believe that today classic independence has ceased to exist and been replaced by co-sovereignties and co-dependencies.”

The leader of CDC had this to say about how the party’s founder viewed autonomism: “I believe that President Pujol has never been a federalist. He always tried to make the most of the statute of autonomy and the Constitution of 1978, interpreting it in a Catalanist and autonomic note. It was logical that he should do that given that this was the only way available. He lived within that framework, within a Spanish Constitution that he helped to create.” Dolors Batalla was vice-secretary of CDC for political action and strategy when I interviewed her and is now a member of Parliament. With respect to federation, Batalla echoed the views of other CDC members: “we try to avoid at all costs any kind of federalism that leads to the homogenization of all the constituent units…In reality what we are looking for is to have a different and differentiated status within the Spanish state.”

---

6 Personal interview, Artur Mas, November 19, 2004, at CDC headquarters, Carrer Corsega, in Barcelona.

7 Personal interview with Dolors Batalla, September 23, 2004, at CDC headquarters, Barcelona.
As former President Pujol has often emphasized, CiU rejects a model of federation. In Pujol’s view, as he said in a conference in 1996: “we have to say clearly that we are not federalists, because federalism, as it is normally understood...is a federalism that wants to emerge out of a homogeneous base that does not exist, and of a will to homogenize that is unjust towards us” (Pujol 1997). As Pujol said in another conference also in 1996: “the nationalism of CDC promotes the realization of Catalunya as a nation within the framework of the Spanish state, and that sets some limits to sovereignty. Within these limits, we pretend to promote national self-affirmation and an efficient self government” (1997: 150).

According to Eric Duhaime, a political counselor of Mario Dumont (chef du parti of the ADQ) when I interviewed him at the National Assembly in Quebec City, the general idea behind the autonomist nationalism of the ADQ is to “obtain more power for Quebec, but within Canada, yet taking into consideration that Quebec is a nation. Our position is not necessarily against sovereignty nor against Canada...[After two failed referendums,] our position is that the people don’t want another referendum but neither do they want the status quo. We want to see Quebec recognized as an “autonomous state” given that we are unlike the other ten provinces. We are different...and we want more powers in fields such as immigration and health...In a certain sense, we are more confederalists than federalists.”

I asked Duhaime what is the difference between the autonomist proposal of the ADQ and the proposals for a decentralized federalism coming from certain quarters in the PLQ. He said: “The liberals [PLQ] want piecemeal agreements. We want a completely new [political and] social model.” Duhaime stressed that autonomist nationalism has historically been much stronger in the province than independentism.

---

8 Personal interview with Eric Duhaime, June 10, 2005, at the National Assembly in Quebec City.
Autonomism and Independence. Ramon Camp has been one of the most distinguished CDC members of Parliament, and has served as the spokesman of the party in the Parliament. He said: “CDC is not a federalist party but its autonomism in not an ideology nor a paradigmatic system that has an all-purpose solution for the Catalan situation. The Catalan national fact takes different expressions and different routes depending on the time and the circumstances and the political will of the citizens…The autonomic State [created in 1978] was a very Spanish invention that tried to find a historic formula in a given moment…but which lost its singularity the moment…it became a mechanism that tends to be uniformly applied to all the communities.”

According to Ramon Camp, a “strictly independentist proposal is the consequence of not finding another way of expressing the recognition and development of the society…” Camp believes that rupturist proposals are not necessary in the Catalan case because defending national identity and promoting self-government can be obtained through the current status quo. He said further: “Neither Flanders nor Scotland propose [so far] to break with their respective states. Not all nations have to find the political solution to their nationness in independence…It is very easy to make a doctrinal declaration, it is much harder to act in reality.”

Josep Antoni Duran i Lleida is the President of UDC, and with Artur Mas, part of the duo that currently leads CiU. What does UDC aspire to, according to Duran i Lleida? “Not to separate ourselves from Spain…In 1931 when UDC was founded it had a confederal proposal for all the Spanish state…Our aspiration is that the Spanish state will be able to configure itself as a sum of various nations, and not have Spain be identified as the only nation.”

---

Francesc Homs is one of the prominent young ideologues of CDC, part of the new generation of leaders in the Catalan Parliament. He eschews labels and clear-cut definitions. “I believe that people define themselves by what they do, not by what they say. I could spend the rest of my life saying that I am an independentist and not do anything…If one is a nationalist isn’t it the case that one’s ultimate objective will always be the independence of one’s country, in the modalities that each period of history understands as ‘independence’ for the given period?…The classification of [national parties] as autonomist, federalist, or independentist makes sense from the point of view of academia, but cannot be applied to CDC or the Catalan case.”

Regarding the fact that Pujol has always defined himself as an autonomist who spurns independence, Homs said: “CDC’s option has always been in the sphere of what we do, and that is why Pujol has tried to eschew labels, and, I insist, no one believes Pujol when he says he is not an independentist [in the very long run].” Later on in the interview, Homs declared that they are “autonomists by convenience. We believe it is a strategy. We need to be sure to attract as many people as possible to our cause.” (emphasis added)

**Autonomism and Identity.** The autonomist militants of the Partido Popular Democrático show a strong sense of Puerto Rican nationhood (see Table 1). Autonomists agree (99%) that Puerto Rico is a nation and they were almost monolithic in identifying as Puerto Ricans, not as “Americans.” Very few of them think of the USA as their country or their nation, and, at best, merely see the US in legal realist terms: by law, they are U.S. citizens and

---

10 Personal interview with Francesc Homs, November 11, 2004, at the Catalan Parliament.

11 The term estadounidense (or equivalent) is used in Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Latin America, but USA English has no equivalent term. “Americans” literally refers to those who are residents of all of the Americas, but we will use it here as shorthand to refer to those who consider themselves holders of the U.S. national identity.
thus the US is simply the state to which they belong as citizens. The codes and practices that help us recognize the Puerto Rican sense of nationhood are revealed in part in these militants’ responses to the open-ended question about what they thought about what elements defined Puerto Rican nationness. Most replied it was language and culture, and, secondly, a sentiment of belonging and a common history. Very few referred to ethnicity as a defining characteristic. All militants were asked their opinion on what has been the effect of immigration (especially Cuban and Dominican) and emigration (circular migration between PR and the US mainland) on national identity in Puerto Rico. Their responses tell us more about these militants’ conceptions of in-group/out-group boundaries. About 40% of autonomists wrote that such migratory flows were having a negative effect on national identity on the Island. They worried that the immigration by Cubans and Dominicans was helping to make Puerto Rico more pro-U.S. and more right-wing, and that the PR-US circular migration was helping to “Americanize” Puerto Rico, to import socially dysfunctional patterns, and to further dilute national consciousness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Puerto Rico is a Nation?</th>
<th>National Identification</th>
<th>What is the United States?</th>
<th>What is Puerto Rico?</th>
<th>Puerto Rico is Cultural or Political nation?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes-99%</td>
<td>Only Puerto Rican-58%</td>
<td>My Patria-1% (“country”)</td>
<td>My Patria-45% (“country”)</td>
<td>Political-22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-0%</td>
<td>More Puerto Rican than United States identity-33%</td>
<td>My Nation-1%</td>
<td>My Nation-54%</td>
<td>Political and Cultural-54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-1% Colony</td>
<td>Equally Puerto Rican and U.S.A. identity-63%</td>
<td>The State to which I belong as a U.S. citizen-63%</td>
<td>A region of the USA without a national personality-1%</td>
<td>Only Cultural-24%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22
Table 1. National identities among autonomists in Puerto Rico. Responses from PPD militants (N=197).

As Tables 2-3 show below, the militants of the ADQ strongly identified Québec as a nation or as a distinct society and their own party as a nationalist party. Most were inclined to identify strongly with Quebec, but they were less monolithic than the independentists in their self-identification, given that some were willing to express a dual identity. But, still the number of ADQ militants expressing a strong Quebeois identity were a majority. The militant base of the two Catalan parties, CDC and UDC, were strongly nationalist in their responses, on all the criteria (especially CDC). In essence, their responses are comparable to the independentists’ responses. In addition, I would argue that the difference in terms of national self-identification between autonomists and independentists is relatively small. Most autonomists, in sum, are not any less nationalist than most independentists. That is, most autonomists are nationalists of their sub-state national society, but they reject the classic secessionist alternative.

12 In a survey at the XI National Congress of CDC held in 2000 at Cornellà de Llobregat, the delegates at the Congress responded that 66% were only catalan, and 26% more catalan than Spanish, and 4% equally Spanish and Catalan (Baras i Gómez 2004).
Catalunya is a Nation? | National Identification | Identifies as a Nationalist? | Cultural or Political nation? | Opinion of the Central state
---|---|---|---|---
Yes- 100% | Only Catalan- 78.5% | Yes- 91% | Political- 29% | Negative- 30.5%
More Catalan than Spanish- 16% | Other- Catalanist 9% | Political and Cultural- 60% | Neutral- 58%
Also European- 21% | Cultural- 5.6% | Positive- 11%

| Quebec is a Nation? | National Identification | Identifies as a Nationalist? | Cultural or Political nation? | Opinion of the Central state
---|---|---|---|---
Yes-68% | Only Quebecois- 15% | Yes- 68.7% | Political- 22.5% | Negative- 23.7%
Other-Distinct Society 16% | More Quebecois Than Canadian- 37.5% | Other- 22% | Political and Cultural- 20% | Neutral- 41%
No- 18% | Equally Quebecois & Canadian 23.7% | Cultural- 53.7% |
| More Canadian than Quebecois 5% | | | Positive- 32.5% |

Table 2. National identities among autonomists in Catalonia. Responses from CDC and UDC Militants (N=88).
Table 3. National identities among autonomists in Quebec. Responses from ADQ Militants (N=80).

Autonomism and Sovereignty. In studying the political orientation of autonomist parties such as CDC, it should be noted that the position statements that have the most sovereigntist tone are all internal documents of the party, typically produced at its National Congresses, and mostly for the consumption of its militants. CDC’s public face is decidedly autonomist in orientation, even if some of its more recent internal declarations have taken on a more sovereigntist hue. Furthermore, it is important to note that CDC and UDC present themselves to elections within the federation of CiU, and the public face of the federation is even more decidedly autonomist in its orientation than the individual positions of the two parties in their internal documents and position statements. The recent electoral programs of CiU are clearly autonomist in their political orientation. I concur with Aguilera de Prat, who writes that CiU cultivates a studied ambiguity and often evades clear definitions, but, in the end, it is an autonomist formation, although it reserves the right to make rhetorical references full of sovereigntist flourishes (Aguilera de Prat 2002). In any case, CiU has repeatedly stated that its project of nation-building can be plainly accommodated within Spain, and, hence, its strategy is not independentist, preferring to orient itself toward the construction of a plurinational Spain (256). CiU is a nationalist formation that maintains its non-separatist stance (Guibernau i Berdún 2004; Culla 2001). CiU always demands an “autonomic turn” from the Spanish state, which it sees implicit in the model of state founded in 1978, and reaffirms its objective to implement it in an asymmetric way, given that the realities and needs of the historic nationalities are not the same as those of the regions (Aguilera de Prat 2002). In sum, CiU is a nationalist and autonomist formation that proposes an
asymmetric autonomism, without renouncing to a certain dose of supplemental sovereigntist rhetoric (308).

The members of the Corvée Place du Québec prepared for the 5th Congress of ADQ members, held on September 25-26, 2004 at Drummondville, the party’s most complete statement on its autonomist position to date, which was later disseminated in a document entitled Projet: L’ADQ - La Voie Autonomiste. The ADQ states: “our primary fidelity, our passion and our loyalty are towards Quebec; all those who live in Quebec are the Quebecois, without exception; the development for Quebec as a distinct nation passes naturally by a growth in our autonomy; we respect the Canadians outside Quebec, we appreciate our common history and we consider them like our privileged partners…” (3) The ADQ estimates that it is time to ask sovereigntists if it is still pertinent to want to continue having referendums, repeatedly. More than waiting for a “yes” to a question to which the Quebecois have already said “no” twice, or worse risking a third “no” that will further weaken Quebec, it is time to examine new approaches, to explore new avenues, to turn towards new horizons to advance the autonomy of the Quebecois people. (3) “On the federal side, it is hardly better. The federal government has not shown any sign that it understands the need for autonomy of the Quebecois…Apart from the federal intention, the idea of sovereignty in Quebec will never die. We believe that the energy that is at the source of this project, which resides in the will for progress of our people, ought to be canalized in the following years to construct a strong and proud society.” (4) The ADQ concludes: “for a long time, the Quebecois have been divided between sovereigntists and federalists. Our families, our workplaces, our neighborhoods have been divided, even torn. Today, we refuse to be forced to have the label “sovereigntists” or “federalists”. We are ‘autonomists.’” (4)
The ADQ further explains its autonomist orientation this way: “The philosophy behind the quebecois autonomist movement is that a Quebecois autonomy ought to be exercised within a truly confederal cadre…Within an ideal federation, Quebec’s autonomy would have been able to accommodate Quebec’s desire to expand. [Also]… the powers reserved to the central government would be clearly defined in accordance with our common interests and the federal institutions that are prone to intervene unjustifiably would be reformed, if not abolished. This vision is shared by the Rapport Allaire. The report ‘previews the political autonomy of Quebec through the exclusive occupation of numerous camps of competence and the elimination of the federal spending power and its residual power.’ It demands the repatriation of all the sectors touching upon the development of the Quebecois identity.” (13) The ADQ proposes the adoption of a Constitution for Quebec as an act of national affirmation. It proposes also to adopt officially the name “Autonomous State of Quebec” for Quebec. It also proposes to make the Quebec government the sole collector of the federal taxes in the province, which would then be transferred to the federal government. The ADQ also proposes to address the fiscal disequilibrium between the federal government and the provincial government, as decried by all political forces in Quebec.

Autonomists’ Preferences. The last section of the questionnaire that I distributed among the militants of the autonomist parties (PPD, ADQ, CDC, UDC) asked them to evaluate the relative impact of various factors (using a 10-point scale) on their decision to opt for autonomism as their political orientation. These various factors generally represented cultural, political, and economic considerations. I asked them to sort which of these factors weigh most heavily in their decision to opt for autonomism. I consider only the responses that placed a given factor in the top three deciles in the questionnaire (i.e., 8, 9, or 10 in their response in a 10-point scale). The
respondents were provided additional space and additional questions allowing them to explain their answers. In the limited space available here I can provide only the quantifiable portions of the questionnaire responses. Please refer to Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Autonomists in Quebec and Catalonia</th>
<th>Autonomists in Puerto Rico</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CDC, UDC (N=80)</td>
<td>ADQ (N=88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture, identity</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic or industrial</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal</td>
<td>33.5%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Considerations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union/NAFTA</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Globalization</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4. Analysis of the Political Orientation of Autonomist Militants (N=365).

(% of responses of militants that indicated this factor was “important” in accounting for their decision to opt for autonomism. “Important”= answered 8,9,10 on the 10-point scale in the questionnaire)

With respect to the answers by the Catalan autonomists, in the case of CDC, the weightiest factor was the language/culture/identity bloc of factors. 79% of the militants wrote that considerations of language, culture, and identity weighed most heavily in their decision to opt for their option. The political factors, as a bloc, came in a strong second as the factors that weighed most heavily in their decision. 59% of the militants wrote that the existence of Spanish centralizing nationalism accounted for their decision, while 45% indicated that the political...
structures of Spain weighed most heavily, and 29% wrote that the history of the past relationship between Spain and Catalunya accounted for their political praxis. One militant wrote that “our experience with the Spanish state has shown us that it makes us feel like second-class citizens.”

On the other hand, in regards to the bloc of economic factors, 40% said that considerations about economic development or the industrial structure of the principate accounted for their option, while 29% wrote that fiscal considerations weighed most heavily and 9% indicated that globalization accounted for it while 11% wrote that the European Union had a strong influence on their decision.

With respect to UDC, 61% of UDC respondents indicated that the culture/language/identity bloc counted the most in their option for instrumental autonomism. One wrote: “because it determines the being and the not being.” Another wrote: “language and culture are the base for the construction of a national consciousness. Without national consciousness, there is no political will. Without political will, there is no sovereignty. Without sovereignty, there is no independence.”

The bloc of political factors was in second place. 47% of the respondents indicated that the existence of a Spanish centralist nationalism accounted strongly for their political option. One wrote: “It is an oppressive centralism, of conquerors.” Another wrote: “We can’t keep on carrying the burden of a Spain that neither understands us, nor respects us, nor compensates us.” 38% wrote that the past history between Spain and Catalunya accounted for their decision. In this regard, one wrote: “Recent events confirm our belief that Spain is not interested in understanding our idiosyncracy nor our culture, it is only interested in collecting our taxes.” 38% wrote that the present political structures in Spain were a strong factor. One wrote: “the centralism is
unmovable.” Another wrote: “Right now, it looks like the political structures of Spain will not change much.”

Regarding the bloc of economic reasons, 40% of UDC militants wrote that considerations of economic development or the industrial structure of Catalunya weighed heavily in their decision, while 38% indicated that fiscal considerations were strongly relevant, 29% signaled the European Union as an important factor, and 15% wrote that globalization was one.

With respect to the Québécois autonomists of the ADQ, in defending their autonomist orientation, one militant expressed: “presently it is the best solution because it will permit us to put to one side the hand placed over our provincial policies by the federal government.” Another autonomist wrote that autonomy “takes into consideration the will of the Quebecois to have more control over their future, even if taking into consideration the geopolitical reality of Quebec, of Canada, and of the world in general.” Regarding those who identified with two orientations, one of these militants explained: “I am federalist and autonomist, i.e., I am for a decentralizing federation.” Another also explained his ambiguity this way: “I would be a federalist if this were a decentralizing government, but that is not the case, then I am truly more of an autonomist, even though I am not against sovereignty or independentism.” One wrote that she was “autonomist, because the cost of independence is too high,” echoed by another who wrote that she was an “autonomist, because that will permit us to affirm ourselves as a people without risking division in our society between two radical options.” They were emulated by another who wrote: “Autonomist with independentist tendencies, because independence seems a utopia.” Perhaps the best explanation was provided by the following response: “The best thing that could happen to Quebec is that the powerful centralizing liberal [i.e., Liberal Party of Canada]
government of Canada be forced to revisit its role, and its relation with the provinces. If the
government were to decide to respect the competences of the provincial governments…, it may
be possible to re-found this federation on more equitable principles.”

The ADQ militants who answered my questionnaire indicated that economic reasons, as a
bloc, were the most important in accounting for their decision to opt for autonomism. This may
be due to the ADQ’s emphasis on its center-right social and economic program, in addition to its
autonomist constitutional preference. 76% of the militants indicated that considerations of
economic development and the industrial structure of Quebec account for their choice. In this
regard, one wrote: “This is the most important factor. Our economic development has already
been retarded enough by an excessive level of political intervention.” Another wrote: “Because it
is with the economy that one can make social progress, and not the other way around, which is
what the PQ has never understood.” Another added: “the economic structure is at the very base
of society and it is one of the most important items of concern of a political party such as
ours…”

58% indicated that fiscal considerations accounted for their preference. 40% explained
that globalization was an important consideration. One wrote: “Quebec needs to position itself
efficiently on the world market.” 26% indicated that NAFTA was an important consideration. 
One explained: “To experience true free trade, Quebec needs to control all economic initiatives.”

The political considerations as a bloc came in second, given that 55% of the militants
indicated that the existence of Canadian centralist nationalism was an important reason for
supporting autonomism. One wrote: “I am completely allergic to centralism, particularly the
Canadian one, because Canada is so different [from Quebec]…” 45% indicated that the political
structures of Canada (federalism) accounted for their choice. One illustrative comment: “I don’t
think the situation is going to improve in the future…the Canadian government increasingly has the tendency to be more maternalist, infantilizing, centralizing and anti-sovereignty.” 37% wrote that the history of the past relationship between Canada and Quebec accounted for their decision. One illustrative commentary: “In the relationship Quebec has always been the losing side…”

Considerations having to do with language, culture, and identity were cited as a strong reason for their decision to identify with autonomism by only 45% of the respondents. One wrote: “language and culture are the essence of a nation.” Another wrote: “because this constitutes that which we are.”

In relation to the Puerto Rican autonomists of the PPD, 75% of the respondents wrote that considerations of language, culture, and identity weighed most heavily in their decision to opt for autonomism. As one wrote: “to maintain our national identity,” and another wrote: “I don’t believe in assimilation.” Another wrote: “the identity of a people is the differential element in a globalized world.” The next most important consideration (63%) was related to economic or industrial development. One militant wrote: “PR developed itself and became a modern nation with the ELA, not because of the influence of the US. From 1898 until the ELA was inaugurated in 1952 we were the poorest nation in Latin America.” Interestingly, the third most important (55%) factor for these autonomist militants was the long political history of relations between the central state (USA) and the sub-state national society of Puerto Rico. Those who indicated the latter as an important consideration commented as follows: “I would like it if the USA respected more our relationship.” One wrote: “there has been no real political development in the
relationship in more than 100 years.” Another wrote: “Puerto Rico was delivered to the US as war booty.”

In addition, 42% wrote that the structure of federalism in the US was a reason for opting for autonomism. As one noted: “the US federalist system has little flexibility to attend the autonomist claims that Puerto Rico or other territories could make in its relation with the US.” Another noted: “the people of the US have never considered making PR into a US state; to the contrary they are trying to get rid of us. We are no longer useful for them.” Another wrote: “As long as the Republicans win in the US, it will be impossible to talk with them.” One wrote: “language is an impediment.” Lastly, another wrote: “the US is not likely to accept us as a federated state.”

**Conclusion: Towards a Theory of Autonomism**

The empirical investigation we have conducted into the attitudes and discourse of the militants of four autonomist parties has yielded a rich bounty of data, which we can use to establish the general contours of autonomism as an ideology of territorial order and institutional design.

**Identity.** Autonomism is one of the varieties of minority-nation nationalism. Most autonomist movements are part of the national movements of sub-state national societies. Automomists have a strong sense of identification with their sub-state national society as their nation, although some do have dual identities. Autonomism is the political orientation of the autonomist nationalist component of these national movements, and its two rivals are independentist nationalism and pro-federation nationalism. Thus, the difference between
regionalism and autonomism is that the latter is typically espoused by nationalist parties, while
the former not necessarily so.

Federation. Autonomists reject a model of federation because they believe that
federations generally lead to the homogenization of all the constituent units. They therefore
advocate a third way between federation and independence, given that models of autonomism
may be more flexible and adaptable to the needs of their sub-state national society.

Independence. Most autonomists are nationalists. Therefore, they in principle are
generally not unsympathetic to the ideal of independence, given that they have affinities with the
animus behind the drive for independence. However, most mainstream autonomists reject the
independence alternative for practical considerations. Prominent among these practical
considerations are considerations of socio-economic development or industrial production. The
autonomist formula is seen as a useful instrument for generating socio-economic development or
economic growth. In the sovereigntist wing of autonomist parties, however, one can find some
autonomists who see autonomism in purely instrumental terms, and as a way station to much
greater quotas of sovereignty.

Sovereignty. For autonomists, independence and sovereignty are distinct categories.
Autonomism is the search for gradually expanding spheres of sovereignty. There may be
presently-existing juridical or political barriers that impede the expansion of this sphere of
sovereignty. Autonomism’s challenge is to find mechanisms, processes, and institutional
openings that will neutralize (or circumvent) such obstacles, without necessarily recurring to the
call for secession.
Autonomists’ Preferences. The autonomist militants of all four parties indicated in their questionnaire responses and during the focus group interviews that considerations of culture, language, and identity are the primary reason accounting for their choice of political orientation. This is not surprising: as nationalists, identity is a primary consideration. In the case of CDC, UDC, and ADQ, the second most important bloc of factors influencing their choice were political factors. Especially important was the impact of majority-nation centralist nationalism on their decision to opt for autonomism. The second most important political factor was their perception of central state political structures and the likelihood these could accommodate their imagined community. This is a significant finding because this is one bloc of factors about which central state managers can act upon, if they are willing to restrain majority-nation nationalism. The economic factors, as a bloc, came in third in the case of the Catalans and the Québécois. In the case of the PPD, given that the ELA is a very dependent economic model (on the USA), considerations about economic development came in second, but third was a political factor-- namely, the long history of relations between metropole and sub-state national society -- which reaffirms our point about the importance of political factors in accounting for autonomists’ preferences.

Bibliography


———. 2008. Comparing federal systems. 3rd ed. Montréal: Published for the School of Policy Studies, Queen's University by McGill-Queen's University Press.

Watts, Ronald L., Queen's University (Kingston Ont.). Institute of Intergovernmental Relations., and Queen's University (Kingston Ont.). School of Policy Studies. 1999a. Comparing federal systems. 2nd ed. Kingston, Ont.: Published for the School of Policy Studies, Queen's University by McGill-Queen's University Press.

Watts, Ronald L., Queen's University (Kingston Ont.). School of Policy Studies., and Queen's University (Kingston Ont.). Institute of Intergovernmental Relations. 1999b. Comparing federal systems. 2nd ed. Montreal; Ithaca: Published for the School of Policy Studies, Queen's University by McGill-Queen's University Press.


38