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Ethno-regionalist parties in Europe: a typology

by

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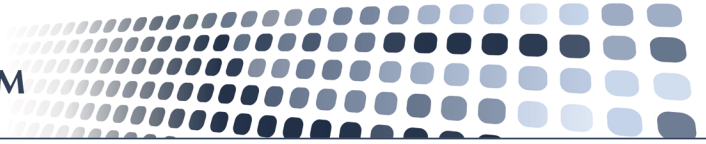


Abstract

There is barely any agreement in the literature on the way one should compare the political parties defending the interest of a specific community on a particular territory – the ethno-regionalist parties – and classify them. Based on the analysis of the ideological positions of ethno-regionalist parties in Western Europe, this article suggests a identification of these parties, partially relying on previous attempts of building typologies. Focusing on the essential dimension of the strength of the demands regarding the preferred state structure and the future of their region, we will suggest a renewed typology and we will demonstrate the neglected importance of the protectionist parties (soft demands) and of the secessionist parties (strong or radical demands) in such typology. This article will also clarify the terminology used when dealing with independentist, irredentist and rattachist parties by complementing the traditional approach with studies from international relations.

Key-words:

Ethno-regionalist parties – Ideology – State Structure – Regionalism – Political Parties



1. Introduction : Regions and ethnicity

The parties that defend the interests of a particular community or a particular region are numerous in Western Europe.¹ With the exception of small countries such as Luxemburg or Malta, every European state has witnessed the presence of regionalist parties in its political history. Political parties are said to be mainly defined by two interrelated elements: cleavages and issues (Tursan 1998: 5). In their seminal work, Lipset and Rokkan (1967) identified the centre vs. periphery cleavage as one of the four fundamental cleavages. According to Seiler (2005: 34), this centre-periphery cleavage allows us to create an unambiguous categorization of parties: the parties of the defence of the territory and the periphery. But the contemporary rise of ethno-regionalist parties (ERPs) is not simply the re-emergence of this centre-periphery conflict or even a territorial protest against established political institutions' behaviour (Muller-Rommel 1998: 24). The question of the other identified element – the issues – can be found in the framework of demands for reorganisation of the national state structures. These demands are said to be 'the' issue of the ERPs and basically distinguish them from any other party family (De Winter 1998: 204).

This article will investigate the nature and variety of the demands and claims that ethno-regionalist parties all over Europe articulate and will lead to a classification of these demands into larger and common categories. The main typologies concerning such parties existing in the literature are indeed unsatisfactory and a renewed typology of ERPs based on ideology will be proposed. But these classifications need to be preceded by a short definition of such political movements and their main characteristics. There is a lack of commonly shared definition of what an ethno-regionalist party actually is. There is even little consensus on the term 'ethno-regionalist' itself^{II}. As clearly indicated by its name, this party conciliates two main dimensions or characteristics: ethnicity and regionalism. The 'nationalism' of the ERPs^{III} is therefore characterized by an ethnical distinction and territorial claims within established states (Tursan 1998: 5). In other words, ethno-regionalism is dealing with two interrelated dimensions: a community/membership space (based on some common socio-cultural characteristics) and geographical space (occupation of a territory and identification to it) (Urwin 1983: 237).



The first main characteristic of an ethno-regionalist political movement can be related to the sub-national territorial border and the identification with some pieces of territory. According to Strmiska (2005: 7), ethno-regional parties are only a sub-group of regional parties and this author refuses to treat regional parties as identical to ethnic parties and vice versa. Regional parties^{IV} can be defined as an “autonomous party formation of regional obedience, whose ideological, program and organizational identity (...) are of regional nature” and, in this framework, the territorial aspect is clearly of crucial importance. Similarly, regionalism refers primarily to the project of a territorial-political organization carried out by a party (Urwin 1983: 237; Tursan 1998: 5; Strmiska 2005: 7). As territory is their most important feature, regional (or regionalist) parties may but do not have to be built along ethnic lines. Regionalism could be, for example, of a purely economic or geographic nature. In addition to these non-regionalist regional parties, regionalist parties have to be distinguished from non state-wide parties as this large concept also includes sub-regional and local parties. Some regionalist parties can also be considered as state-wide as they often compete at elections at the national level. State-wide parties may finally become “regionalist” movements under specific circumstances, i.e. “providing they assume a corresponding location in the continuum integration-separation or in the framework of territorial reorganization policies in general” (Strmiska 2003).

Secondly, besides these territorial aspects, ethno-regionalism requires an exclusive group identity or, in other words, a consciousness of group membership identity and belonging. This second characteristic – the ethnic aspect – is also important “because it indicates [...] ‘belonging’ to a group with shared experiences and history” (Urwin 1983: 225). An ethnic party could be therefore defined as a party that intends to protect the interest of the specific group it represents. The political expression of ethnical, cultural or linguistic differences is considered as a decisive and structuring force of a party system at the regional level. According to Muller-Rommel (1998: 18), this orientation can be found in the electoral platforms of such parties.

As a result, ethno-regionalist parties can be defined as “referring to the efforts of geographically concentrated peripheral minorities which challenge the working order and sometimes even the democratic order of a nation-state by demanding recognition of their cultural identity” (Muller-Rommel 1998: 19). To use Tursan’s words (1998: 5), these parties are “ethnically based territorial movements in Western European national states that aim to



modify their relations with the state.” This rather restrictive definition leads to the exclusion of two kinds of parties. First, it excludes parties that demonstrate a nationalist or a fascist nature or an ideology directed against migrants. This would obviously exclude parties such as the Belgian extreme-right party *Vlaams Belang* that has been often wrongly identified as an ERP in comparative studies on regionalism. Secondly, it also excludes regionalist parties for which the reorganisation of the national state structures is not the most important issue or objective as they might for example primarily favour socio-economic policies. Overall, the only accepted exception to this restrictive definition is the one of the Flemish regionalist parties. These parties constitute a unique case in Europe as they are parties representing a community that consists in a majority of the population of the country and not in a minority, as in any of the other observed states.

As we have seen, ethno-regionalism relies on both claims of regional identity and of ethnic distinction. In this regard, ideological and programmatic identities are of prime importance, not only for ethnic parties (Muller-Rommel 1998: 18) and for mini-nationalists (Snyder 1982: 13) but also for regionalist parties (Strmiska 2005: 7). According to De Winter, “the defining characteristic of ethno-regionalist parties’ programmes is undoubtedly their demand for political reorganisation of the existing national power structure, for some kind of ‘self-government’” (1998: 204). The most prominent and common feature of ERPs is therefore these claims for a reorganisation of the national state structure in the direction of more autonomy or decentralisation. They challenge the existing state and political-territorial order, its structure, its political systems, its boundaries and its distribution of power between the centre and the periphery. “By definition, they [ERPs] challenge the foundations of existing political systems” (De Winter 2006: 14). The centrality of this demand for empowerment of the regional group distinguishes this type of party from other party families (De Winter 1998: 241; Tursan 1998: 5). “What separates these parties out from the mass of European parties is the nature of their claim upon the state” (Urwin 1983: 232).^v

Based on the analysis of the ideological stances of ethno-regionalist parties in Western Europe, this article suggests the identification of new types of parties, partially relying on previous attempts to build ideological typologies. Focusing particularly on the two extremes types when positioning the parties on a dimension of the strength of the demands regarding the preferred state structure, we will demonstrate the importance of the

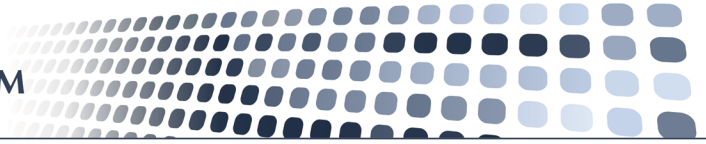


protectionist parties (soft demands) and secessionist parties (strong or radical demands) in such typology. This article also intends to clarify the terminology used when dealing with secessionist, irredentist and ‘rattachist’ parties by complementing the traditional approaches with studies from the domain of international relations. In a first section, we will address the different typologies existing in the literature, particularly the ones based on ideology and positions of ERPs. Secondly, we will develop a new typology of ethno-regionalist parties based on their ideological claims regarding the state organisation and the autonomy of their territory. In a third section, we will further analyse each type of party, i.e. protectionist, decentralist and secessionist parties and several subtypes, before concluding with some general considerations on the ideology of ERPs.

2. Classifications

Even though some argue that any attempt to build a typology would be “self-defeating” as it would rely on an inductive process (Keating 1988: 8)^{VI}, the classification of the ERPs in different categories is a recurrent exercise in the literature, although often based on divergent indicators. The purpose of these indicators is to cover the inherent characteristics of the ERPs, and to stress the most important features of these parties. The subsequent typologies that can be derived from these features are numerous. Nonetheless, the purpose of these typologies stays the same: to facilitate the understanding of a party ‘family’ that looks very diverse and whose members have sometimes opposite electoral and political destinies. The different typologies indexed in this section are based on ideology, party origin, geographical location, means and repertoires of action, electoral success, impact on the party system and government formation and composition.

Even if “regionalist parties are the most disparate in the specificity of their demands” (Urwin 1983: 227) and little common view of the structure of the society can be observed among them, the most common classification of these parties is the one based on ideology. As the defining characteristic of ERPs is their demand for ‘self-government’ and state reorganisation, the typology we propose in this article is based on these ideological claims and on their vision of the future of their territory. The analysis of the electoral manifestos reveals that the centrality of these claims and this vision, ideology or the



radicalism of their demands is the best division line between the ERPs. These classifications will be the basis of our attempt of building a renewed typology. Of course political demands and ideology are not the only way to distinguish between ERPs. Other kinds of classifications have been drawn, mainly related to the present situation - and not the scenarios for the future of the region..

Basically, the origin of the ERPs may be a useful tool for classification. Each party has a different political and sociological history that can sometimes be helpful for understanding its success or its ideology. Strmiska (2005: 9) distinguishes between several regional party models that we can easily translate into a classification based on the birth conditions and origins of all ERPs. To summarise, six main categories can be identified. Even if the first one may be the largest and the most obvious – i.e. a party created on autonomist demands or a party dissenting from an autonomist party – other types may occur. These types are those of a national party that becomes regional, a regional dissent from an national party, a dissent from an multi-regional party, the growth of a local party or the unification of several local parties, and the creation of a party due to exogenous factors (as the annexation of a territory by another state). Unfortunately, Strmiska does not provide us with examples of parties belonging to such classification. In addition, this typology renders difficult the distinction between regional parties and regional branches of state-wide parties.

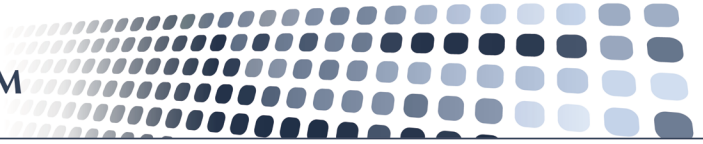
Another classification related to the roots and the environment of an ERP is the question of its geographical location. Based on Rokkan's conceptual map, Seiler (2005: 45) observed that most of the ERPs – or parties defending the periphery vs. the centre – can be found in three precise places of Europe. First of all, the maritime periphery of Europe, where one can find examples of ERPs in the cases of the Canary Islands, the Basque country, Corsica, or even Northern Ireland. Probably, the cultural and linguistic particularities of these territories were preserved for centuries due to their peripheral location. Secondly, the oriental periphery of Europe is considered as a 'buffer' zone between Western and Eastern Europe. ERPs can be located in this region as in former-Yugoslavia, Romania, Estonia, etc. Finally, many other ERPs can be found alongside the so-called 'Brunet banana', i.e. this region going from South England to North Italy. This territory corresponds to the historical autonomous 'city-states' and includes regional examples as Flanders, Valle d'Aosta, the North of Italy, etc.



The means and repertoires of action are often used when one wants to distinguish political movements and actors, for example in the case of community conflicts. De Winter (1998: 207) and Schrijver (2006: 51) distinguish between pacific (or democratic) and violent means of action (i.e. the political organisations more or less close to terrorist groups such as HB - *Herri Batasuna*, IRA or even some Corsican parties). If bombings and other violent actions are often mediated, they are used by only a tiny minority of the ERPs and are often electorally sanctioned. These repertoires of action can also be threefold (Seiler 2003): ‘governmental’ when one uses the participation to the power in order to implement its programs; ‘tribunitial’, i.e. mainly based on political speeches and discourses; and ‘out-system’ when one uses non-conventional means such as demonstrations or terrorism. But these distinctions remain too vague and there is therefore room for a larger classification that would deal with the important diversity of repertoires of action. This could, for example, be done with the help of the typology of Barnes and Kaase (1979).

Regarding electoral success^{VII}, four levels can be distinguished and related to a type of party (De Winter 1998: 212): hegemonic ethno-regionalist parties, large parties, medium-sized parties and small parties, and every ERP can be easily located into one of these categories. But one has to pay attention on the level of analysis of these electoral successes as the ERPs tend to perform differently depending on whether they participate in local, regional, national or European elections. The classification of these parties can therefore be carried out with the help of two dimensions: a dimension based on electoral results and a differentiation according to the level of the elections, i.e. which type – European, national, regional or local – of elections they participate (Müller-Rommel 1998: 20; Deschouwer 2006: 292; Barrio et al. 2009: 3 for the Spanish cases). For strategic, ideological or merely financial reasons, ERPs compete at elections in various but different ways: alone or in an alliance with another party (forming an electoral cartel). They can also compete at the regional level only, at the national level only, at both levels, or combined with all possible levels including local, European and other sub-national elections (Schrijver 2006: 52).

Regarding ideology and election strategies, Newman (1996: 10-11) distinguishes four ideal types of ethno-regional parties according to the type of voter or constituency: the ‘neo-traditional ideology’ that appeals to conservative nationalist constituencies (based on religion, culture, language, etc.), the ‘classless-inclusive ideology’ that indifferently appeals to all socio-economic groups of the region (based on the socio-economic opposition to



other regions), the ‘selective-protective ideology’ that appeals to a specific socio-economic group belonging to a declining sector of the region, and the ‘selective-developmental ideology’ that appeals to a specific socio-economic group belonging to a rising or promising sector of the region. On the other hand, Strmiska gives “preference to formative aspects related to the electoral ‘demand’ at the expense of factors related to party and electoral ‘supply’” (2005: 19). The analyst should therefore pay more attention to electoral behaviour (Keating 1998: 97) as such phenomena supposedly have a better explanatory power of the differences between ERPs than programmatic and ideological preferences.

The last typology that can be found in the literature concerns the ability of the ERPs to enter a governmental coalition at regional or national level (Barrio et al. 2009: 11) and the type of government and the role that the ERPs might play in it. Strmiska (2005: 31) identifies what he calls a “typology of party systems” but, in fact, refers to the types of cabinet and grand coalition in the framework of Lijphart, i.e. mono-partisan cabinets, coalition cabinets, etc. together with complete, partial or absent alternation of the ruling parties. In addition, he identifies the different roles that a regional party can play according to the different party systems. Depending on both its electoral strength and the type of cabinet, an ERP may participate in the government (alone if being a predominant formation) or may play an opposition game, being a potential coalition partner, may have blackmail potential, etc. Moreover, in the case of regional party systems composed of two or more ERPs, one has to pay attention to the type of the coalition, i.e. whether it is a ‘pure coalition’ (composed solely of ERPs) or a ‘mixed coalition’ (composed of one or more ERP and one or more other party).

Overall, such typologies are useful for a better description or understanding of ERPs in Western Europe. But they are not fully satisfactory regarding their comparative understanding - across time and across countries - and they primarily concern peculiar characteristics that are limited in scope. In this regard, the ideological positioning appears to be a more encompassing way of identifying and classifying ERPs. Its scope is not limited to some particular moments or phenomenon as in the case of the typologies based for example on birth condition, electoral successes, formation of electoral cartels or even government participation. On the contrary, the neglected ideological perspective is often the underlying feature of some of the typologies presented above as, for example, in the electoral demand and in the electoral success of a party or even in the possibilities of being



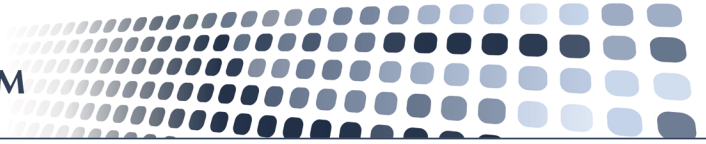
included in a coalition at the governmental level. In our attempt to reformulate a typology of ERPs, this ideological perspective will be a prime importance.

3. A typology based on ideological positions

According to Gomez-Reino, De Winter and Lynch (2006), the study of ideology is not only important to identify the determinants of electoral successes (see mainly Montabes et al. 2004), but also to determine whether the ethno-regionalist parties constitute a political family as such. They hypothesised that the regionalist family not only exist but also exhibit a distinct ideology when compared to other party families. Even if significant variation inside this party family can be shown, the overall ideological image of the ERPs is less heterogeneous than one might suppose. There is a consensus among scholars in acknowledging that the more relevant classifications of ERPs are based on ideology, on these claims for autonomy, for self-government and for a reorganisation of the national state for the benefit of a limited territory (see for example, Mikesell, Murphy 1991; De Winter 1998; Seiler 2005; Gomes-Reino et al. 2006).

The autonomy/decentralisation issue is not the only dimension we can find when performing a programmatic analysis of the ERPs. Gomez-Reino et al. (2006) divide the ethno-regionalist parties' ideology according to four main dimensions: self-government, left-right cleavage, European integration, and post-materialism – mainly the first three^{VIII}. Each dimension can be analysed separately and can be considered as a category as such in one's typology.

Concerning the left-right axis, the underlying question in the literature is generally whether it is possible to locate ethno-regionalist parties on this axis or whether such categorization is inappropriate as their different ideological nature does not take into account the left-right dimension. The latter approach is to be found in the observations of Müller-Rommel (1991) and Keating (1998: 108)^{IX} who consider ethno-regionalist parties as 'detached small parties', that is parties that cannot be classified on a left-right axis. Other authors argue that the position of the ethno-regionalist parties on the left-right dimension not only can be analyzed, but also that their observed position is so widespread that it is impossible to draw any general conclusion (Urwin 1983; Delwit 2005). Even if this does



not concern the majority of the ethno-regionalist parties, some of them can be found on both extreme points of the axis. More generally, ethno-regionalist parties can be found at every possible place on this dimension and one may add that, while ERP can gain electoral support from across socio-economic boundaries, this support tends to be strongly set in the direction of middle-class groups (Urwin 1983: 235). According to Seiler (2005: 45), when located on a left-right dimension, ethno-regionalist parties tend to disappear as an autonomous category. This author consequently refuses to use the left-right cleavage as a typology. According to him, the best predictor of the ethno-regionalist vote is the identity question and not otherwise significant socio-economic variables.

Yet other authors (De Winter, 1998; Gomez-Reino et al. 2006) have argued that some patterns of ideological position can be found in the parties considered. Limiting to socio-economic aspects of the left-right axis, they analysed the location on this dimension of the ERPs and they observed that the majority of these ERPs can be placed on the left or the centre-left and that only a few of them can be positioned somewhere else. But it should also be noticed that the positions on this dimension are not always consistent because some ERPs tend to change their left-right location over time as, for example, the VU (*Volksumie*). Based on a empirical manifesto analysis, Dandoy and Sandri (2008) nonetheless observed that the ERPs are widespread on this dimension and that a centre-left tendency can be noticed. The ERPs seem to be slightly more on the left than the average of the other parties – this is well exemplified by the cases of Spain and Italy, with the exception of the recent years – but no general trends can be clearly derived from any group of parties.

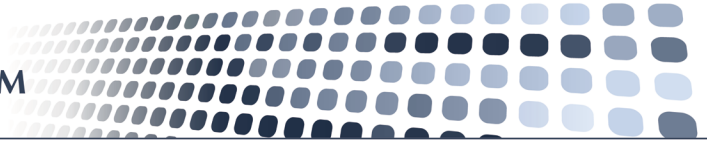
Europe is considered as such an important issue that it is often integrated in previous ideological typologies (Ray 1999; De Winter 2001; Jolly 2006, 2007; Lynch, De Winter 2008). The image that the ERPs have of Europe can be apprehended via their scenarios for the future of their region and their central state. For example, De Winter (1998: 205) adds another category of ERPs, i.e. the European federalist parties. Indeed, almost all electorally significant ERPs are represented in Brussels but their ideological discourse is different and adapted to the Brussels' tone. And their demands are situated in the framework of a federal 'Europe of the regions' (De Winter 1998: 205). These parties somehow favour an 'integral federalism', with European integration serving in their mind as a basis for the regionalist movement and capable of being associated with the future of their region and their state (Seiler 2005: 36). The literature mainly focuses on the



overestimated importance of the membership of ERPs inside the different groups in the European Parliament, but neglects the approaches of such parties regarding public policies (concerning for example structural funds, their participation to the Committee of the Regions, etc.). The positions of these parties on European issues could lead to a typology based on differing visions of the future of Europe.^x But many ERPs have demands that do not fit into the framework of a federal ‘Europe of the regions’ as some reject the idea of a federal Europe or a submission to any other type of supranational authority.

We observed earlier in the definition of an ERP that, besides territorial and ethnic elements, their prominent feature is the demand for reorganisation of the national power structure and of some kind of ‘self-government’. This demand for empowerment is often considered as ‘the’ issue of the ERPs – De Winter et al. (2006: 17) even speak about an ‘ownership’ on the issue – and it is this ideological item that distinguish these parties most compared to other party families (Tursan 1998: 6; De Winter 1998: 204)^{xi}. Based on empirical observations, Dandoy and Sandri (2008) argued that the content of the manifestos of the ethno-regionalist parties is different from the ones of other party families. The decentralisation or autonomy issue is clearly a theme that belongs to the ethno-regionalist parties^{xii}, with the exception of the SFP (*Svenska Folkpartiet*).

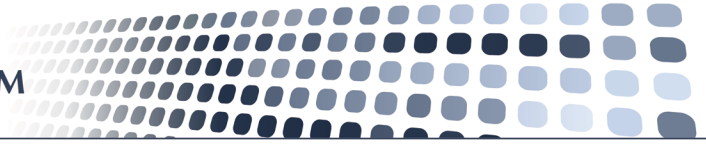
The typology proposed here finds its roots in this important and central issue of autonomy or decentralisation, and in the scenarios developed by the ERPs for the future of their region or community. These projects may sometimes appear very different among themselves and considerable variations and distinct options are observed across parties. Even if Urwin (1983: 246) speaks about a “market of futures”, some common patterns and characteristics can be found in the different scenarios. The conceptual basis of our typology relies on Bugajski’s (1994) and De Winter’s (1998: 205) classifications, which are based on the party goals and the radicalism of the demands made by the parties for self-government^{xiii xiv} and on Mikesell and Murphy’s typology of minority-groups aspirations^{xv} based on their policy options and quests for particular cultural-political arrangements (1991: 587). In this article, we will distinguish between three main different types of ERPs – each divided into several subtypes – based on the project they have for their region or territory in the future: protectionist parties, decentralist parties, and secessionist parties. The first category concerns regionalist demands for recognition of linguistic, religious or cultural identity and for access and participation to the national political life that do not



challenge the existing state structure. The second category deals with parties demanding a structural – and sometimes in-depth –reordering of the state organisation, its institutions and its internal borders. And the third category concerns demands for separation (in the sense of demanding an exemption from social norms), autonomy and independence.

Table: Typology of ethno-regionalist parties

	Category	Sub-category	Demands
<i>Soft demands</i>	Protectionist	Conservative	Recognition, Preservation
		Participationist	Access, Participation
<i>Mild demands (challenges to internal order)</i>	Decentralist	Autonomist	Authority, powers for one region
		Federalist	Authority, powers in a federal framework
		Confederalist	Authority, powers in a confederal framework
<i>Strong or radical demands (challenges to international order)</i>	Secessionist	Independentist	Independence
		Irredentist	Independence (including neighbouring territories)
		Rattachist	Joining neighbouring state

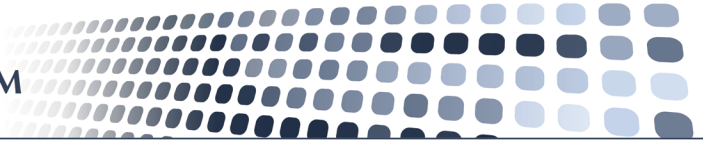


4. Protectionist parties

The protectionist ethno-regionalist parties^{xvi} seek to defend the interests of a culturally and linguistically defined and territorially concentrated minority. But the scope of their demands remains limited to preservation or conservation of mainly cultural and political rights. These parties do not question the existence of the national state itself and the centrality of its institutions. They rather focus their claims on the protection of their cultural identity, of their specific language and on the recognition of their political rights. Not many ERPs can be found in this type as many of the parties observed here display more radical demands (see below) but we may nonetheless distinguish between two sub-types of protectionist parties: conservative and ‘participationist’ ERPs.

The first sub-category concern parties that merely try to put an end to discriminatory measures or socio-political behaviours that are based mainly on cultural and linguistic grounds and they also intend to preserve their cultural specificities vis-à-vis a culturally overwhelming state. These parties can be labelled as **conservative parties** as they want to maintain and preserve a status-quo of their cultural and linguistic situation and try to prevent more discrimination on these bases. Their demands not only concern the acknowledgment of the existence of the group and its due respect, but also might seek for the recognition of the regional language as the official language of the region (or even of a bilingual status) or the creation of specific cultural institutions. Examples^{xvii} of these parties can be found in the Slovenian political movements in the Austrian region of Carinthia, like the *Koroška slovenska stranka* (Carinthia Slovene party) between the two World Wars or the EL (*Enotna Lista*) that seek to secure the collective rights of the Slovenian-speaking minority. This cultural conservative strategy was not a real success and the political ambitions of the Slovene community in Carinthia have continued to be hampered and their position further weakened.^{xviii}

The second sub-category of protectionist ERPs – the **participationist parties** – is slightly more pro-active as it not only asks for the end of social, linguistic or political discrimination but also wants to reach an improvement in their political situation. This improvement is limited in scope and restricted to political and citizenship rights but seeks nonetheless to facilitate the preservation of the minority’s specificities. This can be

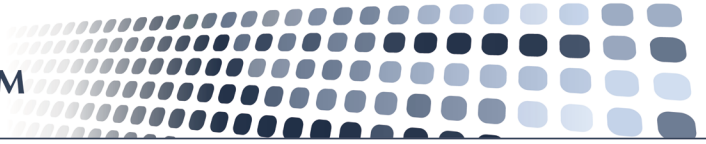


achieved through moderate claims such as the use of a proportional electoral system, the establishment of positive quotas for members of the minority to be employed as civil servants, the establishment of ethnic or linguistic quotas in local, regional, national or European parliaments and cabinets, as well as veto rights and specific legislative majorities for policy domains of a major interest for these communities. Examples of this type of ERPs can be found in the case of the Belgian FDF (*Front Démocratique Francophone*) before the 1970s (De Winter 1998: 205), of the German SSW (*Südschleswiger Wählerverband*), and in the case of the majority of the French Basque regionalist parties (Izquierdo 2005: 209), like PNV (*Partido Nacionalista Vasco*), *Enbata*, HBAS (*Euskal Herriko Alderdi Sozialista*), EMA (*Ezkerreko Mugimendu Abertzalea*), EB (*Euskal Batasuna*), or even AB (*Abertzaleen Batasuna*).

5. Decentralist parties

Compared to protectionist parties that solely want recognition and preservation of their cultural identity, granted access to the decision-making process and a political representation, decentralist parties challenge the division of power between the central state and the region. The main objective of such parties concerns a regime change and consists in a challenge of the internal order of the state. These decentralist demands typically deal with internal borders (borders of the region), regional institutions, division of power between the centre and the region(s), regional self-rule, fiscal autonomy, regional representation at the central level, etc. (Schneckener 2004: 30-34). In addition, and as indicated in this category's name, these parties seek for further autonomy for their region in numerous policy domains. These domains can be, for example, related to culture and language, to education or media, to economy and budget, to taxes or regional development, to supervision on local decision-making levels or even to international relations. Three sub-categories of decentralist ERPs can be distinguished: the autonomist parties, the federalist parties and the confederalist parties.

Concerning the first sub-category, its main characteristic is that their claims are made for their own region only and do not concern the other regions of the national state. **Autonomist parties** want to be treated differently from other sub-national entities and to receive substantively more autonomy and responsibility. They look for a recognition either



as a region *per se*, independently on the status of the neighbouring territories, either as a specific or special region – when the regional level already exist – and they seek the decentralisation of administrative services and the creation of autonomous and competent political institutions.

The regions where these parties originate from are traditionally historical regions or regions with a specific cultural identity and often at the periphery of their national-state, demanding a particular status and a unique recognition of the autonomy of their region. Even if some of these autonomist parties do not explicitly exclude full independence as a future option, their primary goal is this quest for a maximum autonomy of their region. Examples of this type of party can be found in historic or peripheral regions as Valle d'Aosta with *Union Valdôtaine* (Sandri 2008), Brittany with *Union Démocratique Bretonne* (Keating 1988: 202; Schrijver 2006: 251), Alsace with *Union du Peuple Alsacien* (UPA), Catalonia with *Convergència i Unió* (Keating 1988: 237), Galicia with *Coalición Galega* (CG) and *Esquerda Galega* (EG) (Schrijver 2006: 157) or the Basque country with *Partido Nacionalista Vasco* (Perez-Nievas 2006).

As indicated by their name, **federalist parties** want to implement federalism at the national level, implying a share of power between the central state and the sub-national entities. This sharing of power is often protected by the existing national constitution, with the central state defining the functional rules and each region more or less recognised in the same way and benefitting from the same share of power. According to Urwin (1983: 249), federalism is the classic pattern of territorial accommodation. Unlike autonomist parties that look for a reorganisation the state that would benefit to their region only, federalist parties seek for the organisation, under a federal umbrella, of a general autonomy for all regions of the state. Obviously, as in the case of Belgium, federalism can remain imperfect as some regions benefit from more or less power (the so-called asymmetric federalism), but in principle the federal system recognises and protects every region the same way.

Contrary to the claim of De Winter (1998: 205), federalist parties cannot be said to advance more radical demands than do the autonomist parties. In order to assess the 'radicality' of their claims, one has to look at every policy domain (education, health, law and order, taxes, etc.) and not just at the proposed type of autonomy for the region and the scope of the change of the internal order. Indeed, the Basque country region seems to be



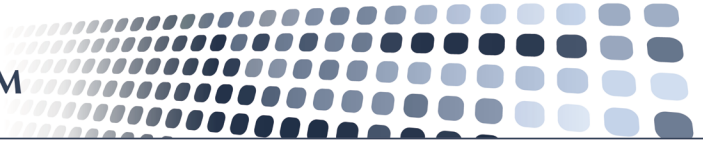
more autonomous within the regionalised Spanish system than any *Länder* within the Austrian federal state. This category of ERPs can be exemplified by the Dutch case of the FNP (*Fryske Nasjonale Partij*) that seeks for more power to the provinces and by the Belgian case with the three ERPs before 1980: the Flemish VU (*Volksumie*), and the French-speaking RW (*Rassemblement Wallon*) and FDF (*Fédéralistes Démocrates Francophones*). As in the case of autonomous parties, demands from federalist parties can also have as ultimate aim the independence of the region, but in a much broader future.

Confederalist parties can also be classified as a subtype in the broad category of decentralist parties. Confederalism globally implies a similar dynamic to that of federalist demands, i.e. the exercise of competencies by sub-national entities, but with the difference that the regions hold the sovereignty and decide which competences, powers and decision-making processes they delegate to the state. An obvious example of such confederalist parties can be found in the case of Flemish ERPs, for example the transient *Sociaal-Liberale Partij* (Social-liberal Party) that wishes to transform Belgian federation into a confederation.

6. Secessionist parties

Secessionism can be defined as “the political movement of a specified population group that drives a process at the end of which it hopes to have succeeded in detaching itself and its territory from its host-state and to have established an independent state of its own” (Wolff 2004: 5). But the form this independent state may take varies greatly across cases and depending on the environment. Unlike decentralist parties, secessionist parties rely on two main characteristics. The first is what Kellas calls “the territorial imperative” (2004: 10). Secessionism is not only based on a population and on a strong political demand, but also on specific and well-defined piece of territory (Premdas 1990: 15). The goal of secessionist parties is mainly a change of the ‘ownership’ of a territory.

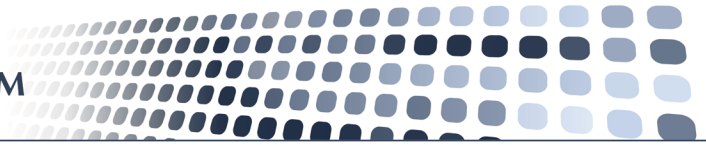
The second characteristic concerns the international environment (Premdas 1990: 16). Even in its simplest forms, secessionism has an impact on the international community, at least with the creation of a new independent state – requiring an official recognition from the international community and the establishment of numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements^{XIX} –, the redefinition of international borders, and the



weakening of the host-state. In addition to a challenge to the national – or internal – order of a state as in the case of decentralist parties, secessionist parties imply by definition a challenge to the international order. But their ultimate goal can create complex situations, as in the case of the disappearance of the host-state (for example, some Flemish secessionist parties), the coupling of the independence with an irredentism on a territory belonging to another host-state (irredentist parties) or even the re-attachment of the secessionist territory to an existing neighbouring state (rattachist parties). Our analysis of this type of ERPs needs to seek roots not only in the classic study of political parties but also in the field of international relations as the scenarios developed by these parties have a direct impact on the neighbouring countries and on the more global European equilibrium.

The main objective of the **independentist parties** is the full political independence of their region.^{xx} Their claims seek *de facto* a full reorganisation of the existing state in the perspective of the creation of a new sovereign state based on the previous region or territorial entity. The most common ideas spread by such parties rest on the rights for self-determination and for independence. The Flemish VU (*Volskunie*) and one of its successors, the N-VA (*Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie*), some Italian parties in the aftermath of the WWII as the *Movimento per l'Indipendenza Siciliana* (MIS) and the *Partito Sardo d'Azione* (since the eighties), numerous Corsican parties (*Movimentu pa l'Autoderterminazione*, *Corsica Viva*, *Unita Nazziunalista*, *Corsica Nazione*, *Accolta Nazziunale Corsa* and *Rinnovu Nazziunale*), the Basque AB (*Abertzaleen Batasuna*), the Galician ANPG (*Asamblea Nacional-Popular Galega*), the French *Ligue Savoisiennne*, the Welsh *Plaid Cymru* or even the Scottish SNP (*Scottish National Party*) and SSP (*Scottish Socialist Party*) are obvious examples of these independentist parties. In addition, we can include in this category the parties that demand not only their independence, but also those of neighbouring regions from the same host-state. It is the case of ERC (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya*) that wants the creation of a Greater Catalonia including the Spanish regions of Valencia and Balearic Islands (Schrijver 2006: 110).

A further distinction we could operate within this category is the one of the future and format of the remaining state. Depending on the structure of the state and the scope of the territory that wants to secede, the initial state might survive and even collaborate with the newly created state, or might completely disappear. The independence of a part of its territory challenges the unity and existence as such of the state. Furthermore, coercive



measures could be taken by the state facing such independentist claims that could be perceived as a ‘violation’ of its integrity (Urwin 1983: 238). This might lead both sides to an escalation using, for example, terrorism and assassinations on behalf of the ERPs or intimidation and violent repression on behalf of the state.

Independentist parties can be found in the cases of the secessionist demands of a linguistic minority (with notable exception of Flanders) in a state, but the situation becomes more complex in the case of a linguistic minority spread over two – or more – states. This is the case of the **irredentist parties**. According to Conversi (2003: 266), secessionism and irredentism should be kept distinct. The term ‘irredentism’ comes from the field of International Relations and can be defined as “a state-based movement that seeks to retrieve an external minority, together with the territory it inhabits across an existing border, i.e. to add territory as well as population to an existing state” (Wolff 2004a: 5). In other words, irredentism is a policy for regaining lost territory (Snyder 1982: xvi). Enlarging this International Relations’ concept to ERPs, the territory of the region is regarded by these parties as incomplete, since a significant part of its population lives outside the host-state. Nationalists may then claim that all co-nationals be united in the one single nation-state (Kellas 2004: 15).

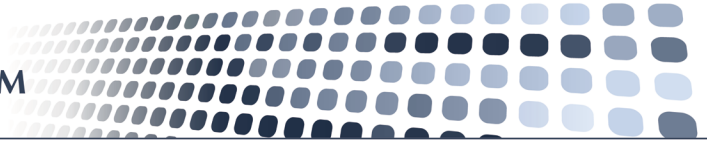
In this sub-category of secessionist parties, the irredentist parties not only seek to break away from the national state but also favour the annexation to their newly created sovereign state of territories that belong to another nation-state (De Winter 1998: 207). This type of secessionist demand typically comes from political movements settled close to a border and sharing cultural, linguistic and often historical links with a community on the other side of the border. The most well-known examples of such parties are HB/EH (*Herri Batasuna / Euskal Herritarok*) and EA (*Eusko Alkartasuna*) that claim the creation of a Basque state, based on the Basque country region and on irredentism regarding the Navarre region and the French Basque country (*Iparralde*) (Perez-Nievas 2006: 61; Acha 2006: 77; Schrijver 2006: 110). All historical Basque territories should on this view eventually be integrated into a united *Euskalherria*. With regard to this topic, the discourse of the PNV is more realistic as it asks for co-ordinating policies with Navarra and the transformation of the French Basque country into a single regional and administrative unit. On the French side of the border, all ERPs belong to the autonomist category and favour



trans-border cooperation, with the exception of EA (*Eusko Alkartasuna*) that shares the idea of a united Basque country in the long term (Izquierdo 2005: 209).

The last sub-category of secessionist parties – the so-called **rattachist parties** – concerns parties that wish to break away from the state they belong to (host-state) and to join another state (kin-state). This is often the case of small minorities in a state living next to another state sharing similar linguistic and cultural identity. This is more likely to occur if the minority is relatively small in terms of population, if the neighbouring state is culturally strong (for example an important culture or a dominant language) and in periods of international turmoil (De Winter 1998: 207). Rattachism is nowadays the label of the political movement that wants Wallonia (with or without the Brussels region) to leave Belgium and join the neighbouring French state. This term has been recently enlarged to include other similar movements and parties in Belgium and in other European countries (Dandoy 2009).

The main difference between rattachist parties and independentist (and irredentist) parties is that they do not seek for independence. These parties do not wish to build a new and independent state but rather join another (pre-existing) one and to be considered as an inherent part of its territory. In other words, even if they usually favour some kind of autonomy for their region, rattachist parties prefer to be part of an existing country rather than to become independent. Historically, such parties have received various labels as, for the example, ‘reunionist’ or ‘reunificationist’.^{XXI} More recently, this category has wrongly been labelled as ‘irredentist’ in the literature (see for example De Winter 1998; Bugajski 1998; Keating 1998; Wolff 2004a; Gomez-Reino et al., 2006). As stated above, even if they want to be united with part of another state’s territory, the ultimate goal of irredentist parties is still independence. Examples of rattachist parties can be found in several European countries as in the case of Italy with the UV in Valle d’Aosta that wanted to be part of France (Keating 1988: 139; De Winter 1998: 207), of SVP, *Heimatbund* and *Südtiroler Freiheitlichen* in South Tyrol that considered leaving Italy and joining the Austrian state (Keating 1988: 140; Holzer, Schwegler 1998: 169; Pallaver 2006: 183) and the case of the Aland movement for reunification with Sweden (Daftary 2004: 118). Each Belgian linguistic community witnessed rattachist ERPs (respectively to join Germany, the Netherlands and France), as in the case of the German-speaking CVP (*Christliche Volkspartei*) and HF (*Heimattreue Front*), of the Flemish VNV (*Vlaams National Verbond*) and



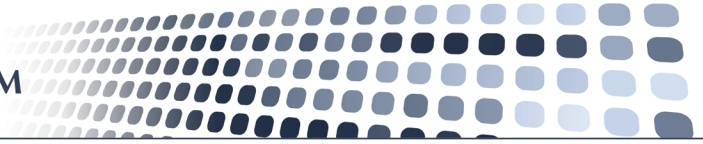
more recently of the French-speaking RWF (*Rassemblement Wallonie-France*) (Dandoy 2009). But the most famous examples are probably the catholic parties in Northern Ireland, i.e. *Sinn Fein* and SDLP, that seek to be integrated in the Republic of Ireland (Keating 1988: 193).

7. Concluding remarks

This article aimed at providing a useful frame for analysis and comparison of a type of party that has often been neglected in the literature on party families, i.e. the so-called ethno-regionalist parties. Partly relying on previous attempts at building typologies, this article suggested a renewed classification of ethno-regionalist parties in Western Europe. This typology of ERPS has been based on ideology and, more particularly, on the essential dimension of the strength of the party demands regarding the preferred state structure and the future of their region. Three main types and several sub-types of ERPs have been identified, each of them corresponding to actual existing cases in various European countries. The parties situated at each extreme part of this typology (the protectionist parties and the secessionist parties) and often neglected by the literature were specifically covered. This article will also have contributed to a clarification of the terminology used when dealing with independentist, irredentist and rattachist parties by complementing the traditional party politics approach with studies from international relations.

Admittedly, the attempt of this article to build a typology of ERPs based on ideology has been confronted by numerous methodological and empirical problems, but we have argued that our attempt could constitute a useful tool for understanding such parties. We will conclude with two general remarks concerning the ideology of the ERPs. We will demonstrate that parties are not monoliths but are rather subject to adaptation and change. Indeed, ideological tendencies and factions exist inside each ERPs and future scenarios promoted by such parties evolve over time.

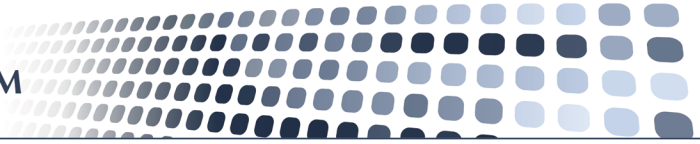
Following De Winter (1998: 208), we believe that it is barely possible to place the ERPs in one of the above categories and sub-categories on a fixed and permanent basis. The party positions and visions for the future of their region have often moved over time between these categories as ERPs often tend to adapt their strategy, their ideology and



their discourses depending on many factors (electoral, demographic, contextual, etc.). For example, the BNG (*Bloque Nacionalista Galego*) claimed at first independence as an ultimate goal. Their demands afterwards moved towards ‘self-determination’ and ‘national sovereignty’ and independence claims were definitely abandoned in 1982 (Schrijver 2005: 151). Nowadays, this party ‘only’ demands autonomy and institutional recognition of Galicia as a nation. On the other side, the Welsh party *Plaid Cymru* originally demanded more ‘self-determination’ and a ‘full national status’ but, in 2003, asserted for the first time Welsh independence as its ultimate goal. Some ERPs therefore witness a programmatic moderation over time while others experience a radicalisation of their demands.

But, rather than a methodological limitation of the use of such typology, it could be interesting to analyse the conditions of passage from one category to another. For example, rattachist parties often moderate their ideology after a few years. Are there global trends among ERPs and among countries? In other words, can we see a relation between the degree of radicalism in the regional demands and the age of the ERP or even other factors? Further analyses are necessary to assess whether ERPs radicalise their ideology across time and to determine what are these other factors (such as governmental participation or electoral defeat) affecting the transformation of the ideology towards more or less demands and radicalisation. Besides observations regarding the origin of the ERPs (see for example Strmiska’s typology presented above), an in-depth analysis of the ‘death’ or disappearance of such parties could provide much useful information.

Moderate and radical objectives often cohabit within the same party (Gomes-Reino et al., 2006: 251). It is not uncommon to find in the same party different traditions and different degrees of preferred self-government. These opinions and diverging ideologies are represented by different factions that might change over time and sometimes collaborate or oppose each other. Depending on the strongest faction and sometimes on individual elites, the overall and official ideology of the party can evolve. As a result, factionalism can create tensions, not only for the determination of the ideology of the party, but also when the ERP envisages participating to the government. As they rarely govern alone, coalition participation requires that compromises should be made as, for example, the support to socio-economic policies in exchange for passing institutional reforms. These moments of negotiation and cabinet participation are often the place for high intensity conflicts within the party.



If electoral success tends to reinforce the relative weight of the dominating faction, any electoral defeat often provokes the resurgence or revival of numerous factions that threaten the dominant ideology and could lead to lethal party splits. But factionalism is not always negative and counter-productive for a party, as De Winter (1998: 228) observed that there is no link between factionalism and the electoral performance of an ERP. In the same way, factionalism can even constitute a resource and can be used strategically by presenting both moderate and extremist objectives (Gomes-Reino et al. 2006: 254). As most of the ERPs turn into catch-all parties (Dandoy, Sandri 2008), they adapt to their electorate and try to attract voters on both sides of the left-right spectrum.

^I Urwin (1983: 228) identified no less than 115 distinct parties across 17 western European countries since 1945.

^{II} For example, Keating (1988: 235) uses the term ‘peripheral nationalist parties’ while Premdas (1990: 17) talks about ‘ethno-national’ and ‘ethno-linguistic’ movements.

^{III} Snyder interchangeably uses the term ‘mini-nationalism’ with ‘regionalism’ and defines the former as “these smaller nationalisms controlled by a larger nationalism in multi-national states” (1982: 5).

^{IV} Similarly to Deschouwer (2006), Strmiska furthermore distinguishes regional parties from multi-regional parties, as the latter are also a form of sub-national parties. An obvious example of such parties can be found in the case of the LN (*Lega Nord*) in Italy.

^V These elements raise the unanswered question of whether we could consider all the ERPs as a specific ‘party family’. As Strmiska (2003) stated: “we cannot ascertain that there is a family of ethno-regional parties or, to be more precise, a family equivalent to the standard *familles spirituelles* or political party camps”. Yet, no empirical research has been done regarding the comparison of ethno-regionalist parties with other types of parties or other party families, with the exception of Dandoy and Sandri (2008) and of some other comparative analyses solely focused on specific themes or issues. For example, Ray (1999) and Jolly (2006, 2007) have compared the issues of Europe and European integration in ethno-regionalist parties and state-wide parties through expert surveys.

^{VI} Keating nonetheless distinguishes between three categories of regionalist parties: extra-constitutional separatist parties; constitutional separatist parties; non-separatist parties (1988: 235-238).

^{VII} Already in 1983, Urwin (1983: 228) differentiated parties by region according to their electoral activities, that is the readiness of a party to contest seats, its ability to win votes, and its ability to secure representation from a region in the national legislature, but these differentiations were more considered as logical steps rather than a real typology. Nonetheless, he concentrated his analysis on the electoral strength of parties and classified 115 ethno-regionalist parties according to an ‘index of cumulative regional inequality’ based on regional and national election results. Kellas (2004: 225) also states that elections and votes are the key for understanding regional nationalism.

^{VIII} There is nearly no empirical evidence of the existence of the post-materialism dimension and even De Winter (2006) admitted that this dimension can be found in the case of only a few ethno-regionalist parties. For empirical evidence concerning the first three dimensions, see Dandoy and Sandri (2008).

^{IX} In this regard, Keating contradicts himself as his 1988 book (*State and Regional Nationalism*) deals with an analysis of the left-right positioning of the different regionalist parties.

^X De Winter (1998: 206) identifies different scenarios for the future of Europe: an intergovernmental Europe where the regions are equivalent to the states, an intergovernmental ‘Europe of the Regions’, a Federation of Europe composed of regions and states, a Federation of Europe composed of regions only and a Federation of Europe of nation-states where the regions are equivalent to the states.

^{XI} Urwin goes even further by declaring that “territorial identity is the only thing that all [ERPs] have in common” (1983: 232).



^{XII} However, this superiority in terms of space dedicated to this issue inside the manifestos of the ethno-regionalist parties is no longer unique to them.. Not only their attention to the decentralisation issue has been stagnating after decades of growth, but other parties seem to have been ‘contaminated’ by the issue. Dandoy and Sandri (2008) observed that other parties, in a range of countries, deal with the issue of decentralisation in their manifestos.

^{XIII} Gomes-Reino et al. (2006: 250) add to this classification De Winter’s future of Europe, that is intergovernmentalist and federalist of various kinds. Their classification concerns seven different classes: cultural protectionist ; autonomist parties ; devolutionist, regionalist or decentralising parties ; national-federalist parties ; confederal parties ; independentist or sovereignist parties ; irredentist parties. Bugajski’s classification (1994, xxii-xxiii) is based on five categories, very similar to De Winter’s ones : cultural revivalist or protectionist parties ; (political) autonomist parties ; territorial self-determination or federalist parties ; separatist or independentist parties ; and irredentist parties.

^{XIV} These classifications have been the basis for further attempts. Seiler’s classification (2005: 36) also based its typology on ideology and distinguishes four types of ERPs: legitimist parties, national peripheral parties, anti-nationalist (or post-nationalist) parties and neo-centralist parties, while Ishiyama and Breuning’s typology (1998: 6) concerns output-oriented parties ; anti-authority parties ; anti-regimes parties ; and anti-community parties. Snyder (1982) indicates that mini-nationalists vary in the intensity of their demands, ranging from moderate autonomists to extreme separatists but he does not specify exactly which categories. Wolff (2004) distinguishes four levels of territorial claims: autonomist ; non-irredentist / secessionist ; irredentist / non-secessionist ; irredentist / secessionist. Regarding ethno-regionalist demands as such, Coackley (2003: 7) detects four categories: equality of citizenship ; cultural rights ; institutional political recognition (from autonomy to confederalism) ; and secession while Roessingh (1996: 25) distinguishes between demands concerning control ; access ; autonomy ; and exit.

^{XV} In their classification, minority movements can be distinguished between demands towards recognition ; access ; participation ; separation (in the sense of an ‘exceptionalism’) ; semi-autonomy ; autonomy ; and independence (1991: 588-589).

^{XVI} This category broadly corresponds to the ‘protectionist parties’ classification used by De Winter (1998: 205) and to the ‘legitimist parties’ classification used by Seiler (2005: 36). Remarkably, Gomes-Reino et al. (2006: 267) prefer to make no explicit reference to culture as the word ‘protectionist’ is often used in commercial and economic terms. Nonetheless, we may not restrict the definition of this category of ERPs to only cultural and linguistic aspects as the demands of these parties are often of a political and even economic nature. The same comment applies to Bugajski’s typology (1994) according to which this type of ERPs would belong to the ‘cultural revivalist’ category.

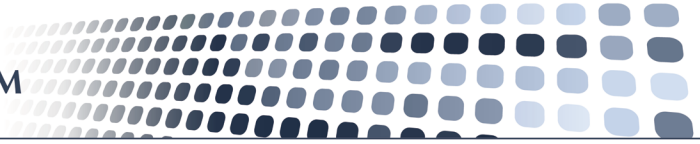
^{XVII} A particular example of ERP belonging to this category can be found in the case of the Spanish UPN (*Union del Pueblo Navarro*). The specificity of this regionalist Navarrese party is that it combines not only the defence of the Navarrese culture but that it also was set up in opposition to the Basque nationalists. The ideological position of this party is therefore partly based on an opposition towards the Basque radical separatists that saw Navarra as a part of the future independent Basque state (Schrijver 2006: 109).

^{XVIII} For example, compulsory bilingual schooling was abolished in 1959 and in 1975 the Slovene territory was split into four electoral constituencies in order to prevent the Slovene parties from getting a seat in the regional parliament.

^{XIX} This would be particularly the case if the host-state belongs to a regional organisation (such as the European Union).

^{XX} Independence requires a huge investment in economy and infrastructures and it is not a coincidence if the majority of the independentist ERPs originates from a wealthy region. Seiler (2005: 36) qualifies this situation as a ‘neo-centralism’, that is a situation where the periphery is richer and more developed than the centre.

^{XXI} The term ‘reunionism’ has been mainly used in relation to the reunion of the Anglican Church with the Roman Catholic Church. And if the reunification consists in is the political unification of separate political entities which had previously been united, it mainly concerns states. Examples of reunifications are numerous, like the *Anschluss* in 1938, the Vietnamese reunification in 1975-76, or even the German reunification in 1990.

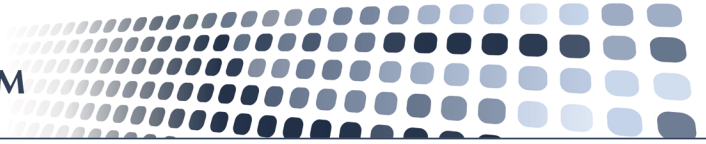


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