

9-1-2011

Quebec's New Push for Sovereignty: Increasing Civic Nationalism and New Parti Quebecois Strategies for the Next Provincial Election

Glen M.E. Duerr

Cedarville University, gduerr@cedarville.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/history_and_government_presentations



Part of the [Political Science Commons](#), and the [Public Policy Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Duerr, Glen M.E., "Quebec's New Push for Sovereignty: Increasing Civic Nationalism and New Parti Quebecois Strategies for the Next Provincial Election" (2011). *History and Government Faculty Presentations*. 1.
https://digitalcommons.cedarville.edu/history_and_government_presentations/1

This Conference Presentation is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@Cedarville, a service of the Centennial Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in History and Government Faculty Presentations by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@Cedarville. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@cedarville.edu.

**Quebec's New Push for Sovereignty: Increasing Civic Nationalism and new Parti
Quebécois Strategies for the Next Provincial Election**

Glen M.E. Duerr

Kent State University

© Glen Duerr 2011

This paper is a work in progress. Please contact the author before citing at gduerr@kent.edu

Abstract

Rights are an important facet of a democracy. One such battle for rights has been the long debate over the possible secession of Quebec, Canada's second most populous province. Drawing on ten interviews with political elites from the Bloc Quebecois (BQ) and the Parti Quebecois (PQ), this paper investigates the sovereignty movement and their adoption of more civic based nationalist policy platforms as a means to reach out and include immigrant and minority populations. Rights plays a key role in this ongoing transition to make sure that all people in Quebec feel like they play a role in society and that an independent Quebec is not just for Quebecois de souche (Quebecers that can trace their ancestry back to France).

According to the polls and their most recent by-election victory in a Liberal Party "safe seat" in Kamouraska-Temiscouata, the PQ is seemingly poised to win the next provincial election and this could radically change politics in the province. Given the possibility of a PQ majority in the National Assembly in 2012 or 2013, the strategy and governance of the PQ will look very different to that of their 1994 election victory which quickly led to a referendum vote in October 1995.

While a referendum was set very early during Parizeau's premiership, a Pauline Marois government would take more time to set a referendum date. Moreover, before a possible referendum, political elites from the PQ and BQ both note that there are a range of strategies aimed at employing a set of new rights for Quebecers such as citizenship and constitutional rights that differ from the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. By implementing a new strategy and providing Quebecers with a contrasting set of rights to the rest of Canada, it is hoped that the sovereignty movement will appeal to over fifty percent of the electorate in order to obtain a successful referendum result. Therefore, this new battle for rights in Quebec will be a major part of the sovereigntist narrative in the near future and the backdrop of this argument will likely decide the future status of Quebec.

This paper examines the new push for rights in Quebec along with changing demographics in the province. The sovereignty movement has responded by attempting to adopt more civic-based nationalist policy platforms in order to widen the appeal of independence. However, significant institutional constraints remain. Given this situation, the governance of Quebec and the relationship between the federal and provincial government under a PQ government will be extremely important for the future of Canada and for rights of all Canadians.

Introduction

This paper examines the experience of the Parti Quebecois (PQ) and Bloc Quebecois (BQ) in their ongoing transition from ethnic to civic nationalism and discusses this change as a strategy especially in light of the next provincial election. I start this paper with a discussion of the PQ and its relationship with minority groups and immigrants. This discussion is useful because it sets the tone for a more in-depth discussion of this movement towards more civic-based nationalist policy platforms. The rest of this paper then examines the history of the PQ and BQ, their stances on five areas of policy—language, culture, immigration, political autonomy, and economics—and then concludes with a synopsis of how the sovereignty movement is doing in the process of transitioning to more civic-based nationalist policy platforms.

Dealing with the issue of ethnicity and with immigration are sensitive subjects in most parts of the developed world and important to the sovereignty movement of Quebec. During his post-referendum talk, Jacques Parizeau blamed the defeat of the 1995 referendum on money and *ethnic votes* (reported as money and *the ethnic vote* in the rest of Canada). Whether his comment was racist or not, one has to be fair to Parizeau in noting that the vast majority of his career was exemplary. His comments were poorly chosen and they made were largely out of frustration, of coming within 53,000 votes of achieving his goal of independence (Doran 1996, 99).

However, this is not the only time that a prominent member of the sovereignty movement has made a controversial statement regarding ethnicity. Former PQ leader, Andre Boisclair made a comment about “les yeux brides” (essentially, slanting eyes) which was largely seen as a condescending statement about people from East Asia. Similarly, former PQ Premier, Lucien Bouchard, once made a very controversial statement regarding birth rates, “we’re one of the

white races that has the fewest children.” There have also been a number of occasions in which lesser known political figures from the sovereignty movement have said something that is less than inclusive. Moreover, some people in the sovereignty movement still simply hold a position of exclusivity meaning that Quebec independence is for people whose ancestry dates back to France. Periodically, it seems, racist remarks—or at least what can be construed as racial remarks—come from people in leadership positions and at different levels in the movement. Quebecois nationalism does, however, come from a homogenous tradition whereby the population was historically French speaking, ethnically homogenous, and Catholic. Whilst a young man in seminary, PQ founder Rene Levesque wrote on “the mission of our race” referring to French Canadians (Saywell 1977, 2).

Despite these shortcomings, the vast majority of people in Quebec and people within the sovereigntist movement now work extremely hard to convince voters, especially immigrant voters, that they have a place in an independent Quebec. Many leaders did admit that there were problems in the past and that there are still people in the independence movement who support ethnic nationalism. As a whole, however, the leadership is now leaning towards civic nationalism and this is followed by some members.

This paper examines how the sovereignty movement has tried to deal with these demographic changes especially given the high number of immigrants coming into the province. As a result, Quebec is no longer a largely homogenous Catholic population that traces its ancestry back to France. Modern day Quebecers are people from all over the world and from a variety of different religious backgrounds. The underlying assertion in this paper is that the PQ’s original policy of more ethnic-based nationalism changed, at least among party elites, to a more civic-based nationalism in the late 1990s. The sovereignty movement was not racist before the

late 1990s but the nationalist premise was one of homogeneity. Therefore, the sovereignty movement has made a much bigger effort to reach immigrant and minority groups as the ethnic makeup of Quebec continued to change. Even now, some policy platforms retain ethnic-based elements, but these platforms are designed to protect the basic core of Quebec independence; without them, there is really no argument for independence. The change in policy is an attempt to gain more votes and obtain their elusive goal—independence.

Parti Quebecois and Bloc Quebecois: Becoming more civic?

Since Parizeau's embarrassing comments in 1995, the political elites of the PQ and BQ have been moving their respective parties towards civic nationalism, but it should be noted that there is still a need to keep some ethnic supporters of independence happy. In the academic literature and in the media, there is strong argument that the sovereignty movement retains a significant ethnic aspect to its platforms. The *Montreal Gazette*, Quebec's largest English language newspaper, quite often describes the sovereignty movement in ethnic terms. Moreover, scholar Dale Thomson argues that the nationalist movement in Quebec retains a very strong ethnic component and that Francophone Quebecers are "still seeking a positive social identity and, with it, a secure future" (Thomson 1995, 82). Thomson, however, also notes that by using the term "Quebecois" in place of Canadien or French Canadian indicates "a readiness to extend the group identity to encompass Quebec residents of other ethnic origins" (Thomson 1995, 81). Even supporters of sovereignty, Jocelyne Couture, Kai Nielsen, and Michel Seymour have tried to break the ethnic/civic dichotomy in the nationalist literature, by describing Quebec's nationalism as language based (Couture, Nielsen, and Seymour 2001). But is this assertion fair? What is the

real evidence regarding the transition to more ethnic or more civic-based nationalist policy platforms?

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

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

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

The whole point of examining whether Quebec's nationalists are adopting more civic-based policy platforms rests on the idea that a shift in strategy can result in independence. According to a CROP poll taken in 2010, 58 percent of Quebecers believe that independence is "outmoded" (Chung, *Toronto Star*, May 19, 2010). The major problem with this poll, however, is that the electoral reality is different. According to a March 2011 opinion poll, the PQ is leading the Liberal party of Quebec by Leger Marketing shows a 37 to 27 percent lead for the PQ over the Liberals (Leger Marketing 2011). Recent polls have shifted towards the Liberal party, but if the PQ does win the next election, the implications could be great. The PQ could gain a majority in the National Assembly and, with a majority, could hold another referendum on independence. The sovereignty movement, therefore, remains relevant and an investigation of policy platforms is integral to understanding their approach to nationalism.

LANGUAGE

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

As a result of trying to reinforce language policy across the province, there are many language laws that have sought to cement the position of French as the only official language of the province of Quebec. Sovereignists argue that given the predominance of English language media, that French must be protected.

In Quebec, there are several important pieces of legislation that have served to protect the French language in the province. Under former Premier, Robert Bourassa, Bill 22 came into law. This law basically served to make French the sole official language in Quebec, especially

concerning a number of key areas of public life such as education and business. Bill 101, which was passed by the first PQ government, came into force in 1977. Bill 101 expanded a number of key provisions in Bill 22 making French the language of communication for people in Quebec despite a significant Anglophone population. One important way that French became the official language of the province was to make sure that all non-Anglophone children, including the children of immigrants who came to Quebec, would be educated in French and not English. Prior to Bill 101, 90 percent of immigrant children went to English schools (O'Sullivan-See 1986, 143). As a result of this application to education and for the imposition of French on Anglophones in Montreal when dealing with the government, Bill 101/Loi 101 remains one of the most contentious pieces of legislation in the province.

Initially, Bill 101 was not fully enforced throughout Quebec and many francophone Quebecers were reluctant to impose linguistic uniformity on Anglophones. After the defeat of the first referendum in 1980, however, the temporary provisions in Bill 101 became a permanent fixture in Quebec (Dufour 1990, 94). This meant that there were more pressures on school-age children to attend Francophone schools. Anglophone children could only go to Anglophone schools if both parents (one of which has to be a Canadian citizen) attended Anglophone schools.

Bill 101 became the centerpiece of the PQ's language policy and, as the party envisioned, helped to foster a greater sense of an "imagined community" throughout the territory given the ability to imagine a nation of other people united through a common language (Anderson 1991). The imposition of Bill 101 affected numerous areas of life. Education policy was the most controversial, but the preeminence of the French language carried over into the courts, government, labor relations, and business.

Driving through Canada, one notices obvious ways in which the Canadian government attempts to promote bilingualism (English and French). In all government documents, food labels, and on highway signs, Canada is bilingual. However, very few people outside of Quebec or Francophone backgrounds speak French fluently. This is another reason for animosity on the part of sovereigntists.

In Quebec, however, there has been a reaction to the language issue. Since January 1, 1993, street signs have only been in French (Richler 1992, 7). The famous red Stop/Arrêt sign is now just Arrêt in Quebec. Canada as a whole, however, is officially a bilingual English and French speaking country. From Ontario to British Columbia, Newfoundland to Alberta, road signs are clearly marked in both English and French. As part of the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms, English and French have equal status in government institutions and federal courts. With the enactment of French only laws in Quebec, the bilingual nature of Canada has different applications in Quebec. This is especially interesting in private businesses.

Tim Horton's, for example, is one of Canada's most enduring symbols. The nationwide establishment is renowned for its donuts and coffee. In Quebec, this symbol of "Canadiana" bumps up against Bill 178—Quebec's controversial sign law that requires businesses to make their signs in French.¹ Throughout the city of Montreal, the menu of Tim Horton's is mainly described in French, although there was a much smaller translation underneath in English. Customers are free to order in French or English, and it is simply up to the servers to accommodate the customers. Bill 178 was designed to protect French, but a business has to make a profit (and this can best be accomplished by serving customers).

¹ In 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that an aspect of Bill 101—requiring businesses to only use French—was unconstitutional. Bill 178 was an attempt to bolster this provision.

From these examples, we are able to see how language laws in Quebec extend to public institutions, education, and private businesses. The Supreme Court of Canada has ruled that some of these provisions are unconstitutional given Canada's official bilingualism. However, in the opinion of many sovereigntists, these stringent policies are required because French makes up just 2 percent of North America and could be lost if adequate measures are not taken. Extending more language protections is a key part of the PQ's current platforms.

Language in Quebec did not necessarily have to be an issue though. After the British defeat of the French at the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759, it was the gradual decision of the British to allow the 60,000 French inhabitants to retain their language and religion (Adams 2003, 107). Assimilation was a real option for the British and linguistic assimilation was commonly practiced in the colonial world. By 1867, however, with the creation of the Confederation of Canada, language equality remained part of the new constitutional structure. Nonetheless, English occupied a privileged position in Canada, and also Quebec. English Canada was richer than French-Canada, and as a result English was the language of commerce and education. French-Canadians² had very few upper level jobs (O'Sullivan-See 1986, 135). For sovereigntists, there is a natural sense of assimilation when business and commerce are conducted in English as well as government.

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

² French-Canadian is a historical term used to describe someone from a Francophone background who could trace their ancestry back to France. The term "Quebecer" is simply used now and does not imply a given ethnic background.

battleground. If the children learn one language, said language is likely to retain some level of dominance in the province.

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

With increased security of the French language in place, Quebec sovereigntists have now become more accepting of its “allophone” population—that is, people whose first language include something other than English or French. In this way, sovereigntists are now accepting of every language but English in the province, a key point in the transition to greater civic nationalism. The PQ is seeking to advance greater accommodation of immigrants and minorities in the province and has set-up a commission tasked to do so (*Globe and Mail*, Oct 5, 2007). This shows a marked change to the language policy platform. The change is a nuanced one. French still has to be protected from English, but some linguistic allowances can be made for minority groups so that Quebec becomes a modern and cosmopolitan region.

Even though French is protected and reinforced against the dominance of English, the PQ has tried to reach out to Anglophones in Quebec. The 1994 election campaign illustrates fairly consist statements on behalf of the PQ towards English speakers in Canada:

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

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

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

Quebec can get international recognition? (Don MacPherson, *Montreal Gazette*, April 10, 1997).

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

CULTURE

The concept of distinctiveness is a difficult one in Quebec. Most people in the sovereignty movement argue that Quebecers have a distinct culture which provides a central reason as to why they should have an independent state. Many people outside the sovereignty movement, however, think that the PQ displays an ethnic form of nationalism because of this distinctiveness. For example, Don MacPherson from the *Montreal Gazette* wrote in 2007:

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

MacPherson asserts in this piece that ethnic nationalism is returning to Quebec.

However, there is an implicit assumption that Quebec did transition to a more civic form of nationalism for a while after the second referendum in 1995. Culturally, Quebec has undergone a lot of changes recently. Moreover, the PQ has really tried to bolster the French language and base its cultural policy in line with its language policy.

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

In some ways, the culture of Quebec may well be shifting away from Canada in terms of political culture. According to an EKOS poll comparing political attitudes in Quebec and the Rest of Canada (ROC), Quebecers diverged from ROC on some important issues. While 91 percent of Canadians have a strong attachment to Canada, only 54 percent of Quebecers have a similar attachment to the country (EKOS 2006). Another issue, support for Canada's military action in Afghanistan is significantly lower in Quebec (22 percent) than the ROC (40 percent) given three choices: support, oppose or neither (EKOS 2006). The PQ and BQ have been quick to exploit these points as well as others including the environment and alternative energy (especially in opposition to the tar sands of Alberta).

Numerous overtures have been made by the Canadian government to traverse these differences in culture in order to keep Quebec within the Canadian federation. During former Prime Minister, Jean Chretien's second term, he sought to pacify some of Quebec's historic demands. Legislation was passed in the House of Commons to recognize Quebec as a distinct society, and Quebec (along with four other regions) was given a veto over constitutional amendments (Tanguay 2006, 99). The demand for cultural autonomy, however, was not fully satisfied for many sovereigntists.

Furthermore, current Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, described Quebec as a nation within a united Canada. While this initiative was initially opposed by the BQ, leader Gilles Duceppe quickly changed his mind and accepted the overture. Initially this overture was seen as a very good thing, however, most sovereigntists still do not believe that enough action has been taken on the part of the federal government to satisfy their demands for cultural recognition. Privately, a number of elite political leaders have argued that more power for the National Assembly in the form of a federacy model (one part of a federation has special rights), and overt

protections for the French language in Quebec would satisfy the demands for greater cultural protection and dissuade voters from independence. The federacy model would recognize Quebec as distinct amongst all of Canada's provinces and provide the province with more autonomy. Overt language rights in Quebec, they argue, would show a commitment to the future of the French language in Canada.

Regarding the policy area of culture, the sovereignty movement has made some progress towards more civic-based policy platforms, but as noted by the above quotations, there are some potential problems. If a person must integrate into a culture, then is the culture civic? Moreover, if French language and culture, is it acceptable if a Francophone from Africa or Haiti or an Allophone from elsewhere in the world has an impact on the language and culture? The political elites in the sovereignty movement are trying to become much more inclusive, but an ethnic veneer remains.

IMMIGRATION

Immigration has long been a staple in Canadian society; in fact, the whole country is built on immigrants from different parts of the world. However, it should be noted that prior to World War Two, Canadian immigration policies heavily favored people from Western Europe, and even then there was a preference for British Protestant immigrants, not Irish or French Catholics. Typically, immigration policy is described as racially based prior to 1947 especially when highlighting the well-known Chinese Head Tax of 1885 and the comprehensive discrimination against Chinese that remained from 1923 through 1947. After World War Two had concluded and life was slowly returning to normal, a new immigration policy in 1947 opened the country to

immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe including large Italian and Ukrainian communities. The Immigration Act of 1976 changed immigration policy once again to be more inclusive of people from non-European backgrounds and Canada became much more open to everyone. As a result of these changes to immigration policy, Canada has now become one of the most culturally diverse countries in the world especially in its major cities.

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

Because of immigration, modern Canada—and by proxy, Quebec—is very culturally diverse. Many Canadians and Quebecers love that their country is rich in diversity. But Canada and the PQ diverge in terms of approach to diversity. For Canada, the model of multiculturalism is best where each individual can retain their cultural heritage within Canada. For the PQ, however, the party rejects this Canadian *model* of multiculturalism. The PQ does not reject diversity; rather, they view the process of building Quebec as a shared project for all people. The policy of the PQ is one of “inter-culturalism” and not multiculturalism. The main difference is that in a multicultural Canada, people can retain their heritage in a very distinct way such that people are often referred to in hyphenated terms. For example, people from different groups are referred to as Italian-Canadians, Greek-Canadians, Ukrainian-Canadians, Chinese-Canadians and

so on depending on a person's ancestral background. Inter-culturalism, however, is like assimilation in one sense because people are expected to lose their ethnic label. However, inter-culturalism is different from assimilation because people from all over the world are expected to influence and shape the culture of Quebec given their heritage. Inter-culturalism is a project in which all people living in Quebec assimilate on three core ideals and build the society from there.

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

The debate surrounding reasonable accommodation and the changing nature of Quebec is not a new issue, however. After the Quiet Revolution of the 1960s most nationalists were quite alarmed with the influx of immigrants into Montreal. New communities of Portuguese, Italians, Greeks and Jews were entering the city (Handler 1988, 175). Many sovereigntists worried that this population would eventually Anglicize Montreal and ruin any hope of an independent Quebec (Handler 1988, 175). Similarly, there are protections in Quebec against any erosion of secularism. Part of the tight rope includes dealing with the increasing Muslim population. With religious differences, the topic of racism is always near the forefront of the debate.

When asked a question on immigration to Quebec under the pretense that Quebec is racist, former Premier Rene Levesque responded that Quebec was not a racist society, but that racism exists. Levesque argues that sometimes "wanting to slow down the arrival of foreigners

for economic reasons is not racism” (Levesque 1979, 126). The key principle, however, is where and how immigrants and minority groups are brought into the sovereignty movement. Levesque argues that the PQ did a great job of this and even helped M. Jean Alfred, a Haitian immigrant, win elected to the National Assembly in the 1970s. Levesque went on to note that some mayors and councilors are also from different backgrounds (Levesque 1979, 126).

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

Another important demographic is Anglophones. Historically, 11 percent of Quebec’s population is from the English language minority group, although they could be English, Scottish, Irish or American Loyalist³ immigrants (Handler 1988, 179). In Montreal, this means that Anglophones account for more than one quarter of the population, but this is also a demographic that is leaving Quebec quite rapidly (Cote and Johnson 1995, 59). First,

³ An American colonist who remained loyal to the Kingdom of Great Britain

Anglophones do not have the same confidence in Francophone institutions. Second, young Anglophones are already moving out of the province to find jobs elsewhere. And third, if Quebec were to become independent, many Anglophones have said that they would leave (Cote and Johnson 1995, 59-61). All of this is potentially quite contentious for the sovereigntist movement.

In some ways, the Quebec government has tried to counterbalance the Anglophone population by actively pursuing Francophone immigrants from former French colonies in West Africa and from Caribbean states and colonial entities, notably Haiti, Guadeloupe and Martinique (Kymlicka 1998, 118). The government of Quebec has no power over immigration policy, but if Francophones are coming to Canada, then Quebec is a very attractive place to settle.

As part of their overall strategy, the PQ wants more autonomy if elected. One area of greater autonomy is immigration policy such that the provincial government can control who resides in the province. More power in this area of policy will help ensure the Francophone nature of Quebec because Francophone immigrants can be targeted. Current PQ leader, Pauline Marois, has called for Quebec to control its own immigration so as to integrate people into a “francophone state” (*National Post*, Aug. 15, 2007). In this way, Quebec will have greater choice over who enters the province and this will allow the PQ to select francophone speakers.

Dealing with immigrants is an obvious way to determine whether a given party or movement is more civic or ethnic based. Perhaps the most obvious change to the sovereigntist’s strategy has been the use of people of color in PQ advertisements. Obviously, advertising is not the only factor as anyone can use multicultural advertising, but some people of color in the

sovereignty movement occupy high positions in the party which does show a change in policy. When the face of the party is of color and the orders from the party leadership support diversity, this change shows that an active attempt to transition to civic-based nationalist policies is being made. The transition is still flawed in many respects, but there is a movement to reach out to immigrants.

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

POLITICAL AUTONOMY

Independence and, at the very least, greater political autonomy, is a major demand on the part of sovereigntists. For one prominent Quebecer, however, Quebec’s push for sovereignty represents “smallness of thought.” The son of a former Canadian Prime Minister and current MP, Justin Trudeau, stated in 2006 that Quebecers should look forward to the future rather than being wrapped up in the idea of independence (*Toronto Star*, Oct 26, 2006). For many

Canadians, Quebec already has a great deal of autonomy within the Canadian federal model and does not need a special status in the country, and especially not independence.

Despite this comment, polling on support for independence remains at around 40 percent. Moreover, the head of Leger polling argues that unless Canada reforms, then the PQ will have a strong chance to secede through a referendum. Mr. Leger argues that it will be almost impossible to reform the country once in the middle of another national unity debate (Hamilton, *National Post*, Dec. 27, 2010).

In order to see why the debate over Quebec's status in Canada is so controversial, some investigation of the past is important. After all, many Quebecers have long sought a special and privileged status in Canada. In some way, shape, or form, most Quebecers have wanted asymmetric federalism, a recognition that Quebec has a distinct place in Canada that will endure forever. Obviously, Quebecers cannot be guaranteed such protections because demography changes over time, but there is a real desire on the part of Quebecers to protect their linguistic heritage given the overwhelming use of English elsewhere in North America.

Providing Quebec with greater political autonomy is a difficult issue. Given the failure of the Charter, and the subsequent failures of the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords to rectify the Charter, more autonomy is at a standstill. In many ways, 1982 and the signing of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms without Quebec's signature, for supporters of sovereignty, served as a rebuttal of federalism in Quebec, taking away the notion of shared governance for French-Canadians (Keating 2001, 50). In Quebec, the Canadian Constitution is still seen as a deep division between the province and the rest of the country. Through the advancement of the Meech Lake Accord of 1987, former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney attempted to get Quebec to

endorse the 1982 Constitution Act. Ramsey Cook (cited in Keating 2001) argues that Mulroney foolishly reopened the constitutional debate seeking special status for Quebec as a “distinct society within Canada” (Keating 2001, 50).

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

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

Political autonomy has to do with images, flags, and feelings. When traveling across borders in different parts of the world, especially by foot or car, it is most obvious that one is leaving one country for another. Flags often demarcate one territory from another. When crossing state lines in the United States, new signs and/or flags often greet the person entering a new state. Outwards signs upon entering Quebec, however, tend to be sparse. From Ottawa,

Ontario, to Gatineau, Quebec, for example, there are no flags on any of the main bridges. This seems like a significant issue given the importance of symbols to statehood and distinctiveness.

At this point, it is extremely unlikely that any politician in Quebec from either the federalist or sovereigntist camps will bring up the issue of Constitutional reform. As a result, sovereigntists are not pushing for much more autonomy; they simply want to become independent. It is plausible, however, that an energetic pro-unity Canadian politician who is willing to adequately listen and respond to the demands of Quebec sovereigntists, could answer the question of national unity once and for all (at least concerning Quebec). For some sovereigntists the aforementioned federacy model could be quite compelling (where Quebec would have the most political autonomy in Canada in exchange for remaining in the union). As noted in a previous section, this discussion is difficult, but so is the status quo for supporters of Canada and supporters of sovereignty alike.

For sovereigntists the main objective is independence. However, some political leaders advocate greater political autonomy in order to demonstrate their competence as a way of showing why Quebec should be independent. In essence, the PQ wants to prove that Quebec can be governed as an independent state. Because demands for political autonomy are limited, there is evidence of civic nationalism because the sovereignty movement is not trying to gain special rights for Quebecois de souche. However, some political elites are targeting more areas of policy in order to make a case for independence. This, in some ways, evidences ethnic-based nationalism because there is a desire on the part of the PQ to increase their areas of governance and impose the changes on immigrant and minority groups.

ECONOMICS

The economic history of Quebec is a contentious one. Historically speaking, Quebec (at least in per capita terms) has been much poorer than the ROC and there is still a significant amount of historical animosity regarding the treatment of French-Canadians in Quebec. Milner and Milner, for example, argue that Les Quebecois were an oppressed majority with unemployment rates 20 to 50 percent higher than the rest of Canada (Milner and Milner 1973, 53).

The Canadian government has, however, tried to shrink the gap between rich and poor throughout the country. As a result, the government makes equalization payments to poorer provinces to retain a relatively equal standard of living in all of Canada's provinces. In Canada, this distinction is described as "have" and "have not" provinces. In 2010-2011, the value of equalization payments in Canada was set at CDN\$14.4 billion.⁴ Of this pool of money, Quebec received the highest amount of economic redistribution from the federal government. However, it is worth noting that when one controls for population, Quebec is middle income in Canada. Quebec is a "have not" province, but one that is industrialized (Young 1995, 10).

Supporters of the sovereignty movement, however, vehemently defend the ability of Quebec to make it as a viable country even though they received CDN \$8.5 billion in equal payments in 2010.⁵ Many supporters of sovereignty note that they are entitled to the money. After all, the money they receive back from the federal government is paid from Quebec taxpayers, both in the form of 5 percent General Sales Tax (GST) and through federal income and corporate taxes.

⁴ Department of Finance Canada. <http://www.fin.gc.ca/fedprov/eqp-eng.asp>

⁵ Ibid

Another related area of economic policy for the sovereignty movement concerns the issue of economic viability. There is a lot of fear in Quebec regarding the financial state of the province and this fear is not necessarily insignificant. After the adoption of Bill 101, for example, three major financial corporations moved their headquarters from Montreal to Toronto (O'Sullivan-See 1986, 153) including Sun Life, Royal Bank, and the Bank of Montreal. Moreover, it was around this time that Toronto replaced Montreal as the hub of Canada's financial institutions.

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

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

ETHNIC VERSUS CIVIC

In its early years, the PQ used to sell monographs advocating various reasons for supporting the party. The second monograph written by former leader, Camille Laurin, in the late 1960s, lays out his reasons for supporting sovereignty. Laurin starts his argument by

discussing the collective personality of Quebecois, framed very much in ethnic terms in need of protection against cultural dilution from English-Canada and the United States (Laurin n.d.). Since immigration to Canada, at least from non-European sources was quite new at that time, very few politicians anywhere were reaching out to immigrants in the hopes of creating a civic society.

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

Regardless of the past, there is evidence in this paper that both PQ and BQ have made moves to become more inclusive of immigrants and minority groups. The transition is incomplete and there is still evidence of ethnic nationalism, but overtures have been made to be more inclusive. The truth of the matter, however, is that only a small percentage of immigrants vote for sovereigntist parties and many minority groups do not like the idea of sovereignty. Some minority groups like the Anglophones may be moving away from Quebec, but immigrants will continue to move to Quebec. Given that the percentage of Quebec’s immigrant population is 9 percent and rising, the low level of support for sovereignty is one that needs to be improved. The inclusion of ethnic minorities in their party, advertisements, and platforms is a good start. It is evidence that people of different backgrounds can get elected in Quebec, even sovereigntist parties.

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

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

The transition towards more civic-based nationalist policy platforms then is contested by the vast majority of Anglophones in Quebec. There is an acceptance on the part of Anglophones that the leadership of the sovereignty movement has officially adopted platforms of civic nationalism. However, there is deep skepticism on the part of Anglophones and fear that the rank and file members of the PQ and BQ are still supporters of an ethnically homogenous Quebec.

Nonetheless, even in line with Anglophone acceptance, the leadership of the sovereignty movement given an examination of the platforms from the perspective of Francophone Quebecers—language, culture, immigration, political autonomy and economics—evidences a move away from ethnic-based policies and towards a more inclusive civic-based nationalism.

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

A second challenge on the ethnic/civic divide is simply where the policy platforms of the PQ stand on the “intercultural” argument. This debate is somewhat of a judgment call between ethnic and civic. The interculturalist argument rejects multiculturalism; the creation of different pockets of people into ethnic groups within a given country, and argues that we should all be moving in a common direction based on the people residing within the territory, not blood, ancestry or any other a priori characteristics. This does not make life easier or more palatable for Anglophone residents of Montreal. Moreover, proponents of multiculturalism also reject the sovereigntist’s vision of inter-culturalism instead. But given these two important caveats, it is clear that the sovereigntists have made a move towards civic-based nationalist policy platforms. The transition is far from complete, but most immigrants are being included in the sovereignty movement. The task remains more difficulty when discussing minority groups like Anglophones in Quebec.

DISCUSSION

The transition towards more civic-based policy platforms is a way that the PQ and BQ can reach out to more people in the province of Quebec as a way of achieving their overarching electoral goal of independence. Elections in Quebec, however, are notoriously volatile. In 1976, the voters of Quebec elected a majority PQ government despite their relative newness on the political scene. In the 2007 Quebec provincial election, the Action Democratique du Quebec (ADQ) vaulted surprisingly into second place. And in the 2011 federal election, the New Democratic Party (NDP) did very well in Quebec which helped them reach the status of Official Opposition. Previous to 2011, the NDP always did poorly in Quebec. The BQ which had dominated federal elections in Quebec was reduced to just four seats in the House of Commons.

The volatility of Quebec voters makes elections in the province very difficult to predict. It is the stated goal of the PQ to win a majority of the seats in the National Assembly in the next provincial election (to be held before December 2013). With a victory, the PQ would have the opportunity to hold another referendum on independence. The heavy defeat of the BQ does not bode well for the PQ but as noted above, voters can change quite quickly in Quebec.

Polling from Leger Marketing and CROP, during the first half of 2011, was quite favorable to the PQ and showed that the party would win the election. However, recent polling shows that the Liberal party of Quebec could win their fourth straight election. Much depends on upstart political parties like Quebec solidaire (which is also in favor of independence) and the Green Party of Quebec. Nonetheless, the PQ have a strong chance to win the provincial election

and, if victorious, to hold another referendum. The outcome will depend on how voters continue to react to changes made by the PQ towards more civic-based policy platforms.

On the platforms of language, culture, immigration, political autonomy, and economics, the voters of Quebec will have to compare and contrast the platforms of the PQ with all of the other parties in the province. The strategy of greater emphasis towards civic nationalism will be greatly examined in the next provincial election. This election result could do one of three things: 1) lead to victory and a resurgence of the sovereignty movement, 2) maintain the status quo whereby the PQ contends but does not win elections, or 3), the PQ suffers heavy losses and becomes more obscure like the BQ after the 2011 federal election.

WORKS CITED

- Adams, Michael. 2003. *Fire and Ice: The United States, Canada and the Myth of Converging Values*. Toronto: Penguin Canada.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1983 (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso
- Bouchard, Lucien. (trans. Dominique Clift). 2001. *On the Record*, Toronto: Stoddart.
- Chung, Andrew. 2010. "Sovereignty "outmoded," Quebec poll indicates," *Toronto Star*, May 10, 2010.
- Coleman, William. 1984. *The Independence Movement in Quebec, 1945-1980*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Couture, Jocelyne, Kai Nielsen, and Michel Seymour. 2001. *Rethinking Nationalism*, Calgary: University of Calgary Press.
- Department of Finance, Canada. 2011. <http://www.fin.gc.ca/fin-eng.asp>, Accessed on February 2, 2011
- . 2011. "Equalization payments"
<http://www.fin.gc.ca/fedprov/eqp-eng.asp>, Accessed on April 3, 2011.
- Doran, Charles. 1996. "Will Canada Unravel?" *Foreign Affairs*, 75(5): 97-109.
- EKOS Research Associates. 2006. www.ekos.com Accessed February 2, 2011
- Fraser, Graham. 2001. *Rene Levesque and the Parti Quebecois in Power* (2nd edition), Montreal, QC/Kingston, ON: McGill-Queens University Press.
- Guibernau, Montserrat. 2006. "National Identity, Devolution and Secession in Canada, Britain

- and Spain” *Nations and Nationalism*, 12(1): 51-76.
- Hamilton, Graham. 2010. “Fait accompli: Is a separate Quebec only a matter of time?” *National Post*, December 27, 2010.
- Handler, Richard. 1988. *Nationalism and the Politics of Culture in Quebec*, Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.
- Keating, Michael. 2001. “Nations without States: The Accommodation of Nationalism in the New World Order, in Keating, Michael and John McGarry (eds.). *Minority Nationalism and the Changing International Order*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kymlicka, Will. 1998. *Finding our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations across Canada*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leger Marketing. 2011. <http://www.legermarketing.com/documents/POL/113141FR.pdf>
Accessed on March 25, 2011.
- Levesque, Rene 1979. *My Quebec*, Toronto: Heuthen
- MacPherson, Don. 1997. “Bloc MP lets sovereigntist cat out of the bag – again” *Montreal Gazette*, April 10, 1997. A21.
- . 2002. “Chips off the old Bloc: Lebel's revolt against party brass could cost Landry hard-line support” *Montreal Gazette*, August 14, 2002. B3.
- . 2007. “Dumont makes it respectable again; Surge in ADQ support began after it took up the defence of Quebec's identity” *Montreal Gazette*, April 5, 2007. A21.
- Mathieu, Genevieve. 2001. *Qui est Quebecois? Synthese du debat sur la redefinition de la nation*, Montreal: VLB

- Milner, Sheilagh and Henry Milner. 1973. *The Decolonization of Quebec: An Analysis of Left-Wing Nationalism*, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- O’Sullivan-See, Katherine. 1986. *First World Nationalisms: Class and Ethnic Politics in Northern Ireland and Quebec*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Richler, Mordecai. 1992. *Oh Canada! Oh Quebec! Requiem for a Divided Country*, Toronto, ON: Penguin Books.
- Saywell, John. 1977. *The Rise of the Parti Quebecois, 1967-1976*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Statistics Canada. 2011. “2006 Census” www.statcan.gc.ca. Accessed January 21, 2011
- . 2011. “Population by year, by province and territory”
<http://www40.statcan.gc.ca/l01/cst01/demo02a-eng.htm>, Accessed on April 5, 2011
- . 2011. “Real gross domestic product, expenditure based, by province and territory” <http://www40.statcan.ca/l01/cst01/econ50-eng.htm>, Accessed on April 5, 2011.
- Tanguay, Brian. 2006. “Quebec and the Canadian Federal Election of 2000: Putting the Sovereignty Movement on the Ropes?” in Mary Kirtz et. al (eds.) *The Elections of 2000: Politics, Culture, and Economics in North America*. Akron, OH: University of Akron Press.
- Thomson, Dale. 1995. “Language, Identity, and Nationalist Impulse: Quebec” in Doran, Charles and Ellen Reisman Babby, *Being and Becoming Canada*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publishers
- Young, Robert. 1995. *The Secession of Quebec and the Future of Canada*. Montreal: McGill-

Queens University Press.