

REVIEW: ETHNOREGIONAL CONFLICT IN DEMOCRACIES

Michael Keating

Newman, Saul (1996), **Ethnoregional Conflict in Democracies**, London: Eurospan, hb, £47.95, ISBN 0313300399, 299+xii pp.

This is a study of nationalist parties and political mobilization in Scotland, Quebec, Belgium, Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. The first three are entirely peaceful, while the last two feature political violence. Newman's focus is on the nationalist parties, and his analysis concentrates on political factors, including the political context and the strategies of party leaders, in order to explain the relative success of the various movements in mobilizing support and in achieving constitutional change. Parties are grouped into four ideological types: neo-traditional; classless-inclusive; selective-protective; and selective-developmental. The mode of explanation is firmly within the social modernization school, focusing on the growth of the state, the decline of traditional class alignments, and the contest for state power. Important contextual elements are the party competitive situation, access by minorities to policy systems, and whether the political system is majoritarian or consociational. Newman argues that in majoritarian systems the state reaction to the rise of 'ethnoregional' parties is based on the need to win back voters, while in consociational systems it is enough to coopt the new leaders. Hence the different ways in which the issue has played out in the UK, with its majoritarian system, and Belgium, with its consociational tradition. The United Kingdom has so far achieved no constitutional change despite three decades of mobilization, while Belgium has been federalized, against the apparent wishes of both its linguistic communities. Canada is presented as an intermediate case, with elements both of majoritarianism and consociationalism.

Michael Keating is professor of political science at the University of Western Ontario and visiting professor of government at the University of Strathclyde.

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After a general introduction, each case is given a chapter of its own. Then the conclusion sums up the findings and presents some comparative conclusions. The case material is carefully researched, and illustrated with data, and these chapters will be of wide use to students of nationalism. The main weakness arises from the failure to define the term 'ethnoregional' or the concept of ethnoregionalism that is the central concern of the book. This is a synthesis of two elements, ethnic politics and territorial regionalism, difficult in themselves, conceptually quite different and which may or may not coincide in particular cases. So Newman convincingly explains the rise of territorial protest as a reaction to the centralized mode of regional policy intervention in the postwar era, but does not explain the connection to non-territorial manifestations of particularism, such as the demands of Irish Catholics, Flemish language militancy or linguistic conflict in Quebec. He does make the important point that, in contrast to Northern Ireland, the Basque Country is not a divided society, despite its linguistic duality, but does not ask whether this makes one conflict qualitatively different from the other, as opposed merely to giving it a different context. He even misquotes myself, saying (p.217) that 'Michael Keating argues that ethnic movements are becoming predominantly left of centre', when what in fact I argued was that, as nationalist movements became less ethnically particularist, they emphasized the territorial element, which drew them into struggles of territorial defence and solidarity, providing common ground with the left; even this generalization allows of important exceptions, such as the Lega Nord.

This is a useful analysis of nationalist mobilization in industrial democracies. Its emphasis on political factors and party strategy gives it a distinctive approach. The material is generally accurate although there are occasional mistakes. The writing style is sometimes hard going and the explanations often tied too closely to the individual cases, rather than presented as hypotheses to be tested by the cases. It should nonetheless be required reading for students wanting to know about the rise and decline of nationalist parties.

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