

## **The identity politics of multicultural nationalism: A comparison between the regular public addresses of the Belgian and the Spanish monarchs (1990–2000)**

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**Abstract.** A nation-state confronted by sub-national claims may opt for a corporatist or managerial approach, where the centre accommodates ethnic and regional claims and at the same time develops an identity politics of multicultural or multination nationalism. In this way, it is attempted to re-legitimise the nation as a community that allows different cultural and ethnic groups to live together in harmony. On the basis of a comparative analysis of the regular public addresses of the monarchs in the period 1990–2000, this article investigates to what extent Belgium and Spain have adopted such a strategy of multicultural nationalism. It is shown that multiculturalism is the core value of the Belgian nationalist discourse, in the sense that the Belgian nation is constantly defined in terms of its constituent cultural segments. The Spanish nationalist discourse is predominantly unitary and hardly reflects the compound nature of the state. Democracy is the core value of this discourse. It is argued that the more unitary representation of the Spanish nation is due to the lack of elitist consensus about the compound nature of the state and the dominant position of Hispanic culture.

### **Introduction**

While the decline of the nation-state and the rise of regional and sub-national identities have generated a lot of research and theory, comparatively little attention has been paid to the strategies which the nation-state uses to fend off this threat from below and to reconstruct the centre. When the state proves unable to marginalise the sub-national claims and does not dare to risk a head-on confrontation, it can opt for what David Brown (1997, 2000: 135–151) describes as a ‘corporatist’ or ‘managerial’ strategy. This implies that the centre attempts to acquire a new legitimacy by accommodating the ethnic or regional claims and acting as the authoritative manager of the nationalist tensions within the state. This strategy not only has a structural component, which normally involves granting a form of autonomy to the sub-groups, but also a component of identity politics. In Brown’s view, a corporatist strategy obliges the centre to redefine the nation’s identity in multicultural terms. While the nation

used to be legitimised on the basis of civic or ethnocultural nationalism (a vision of a nation as a community of equal citizens bound by and committed to a basic contract or sharing a common cultural heritage), the state now has to rely on an ideology of multicultural nationalism. This means that the nation is viewed as a community bound by a commitment to the values of ethnic diversity and inter-ethnic equity (Brown 2000: 128–129). When applied within a corporatist framework, the identity politics of multicultural nationalism involves the re-legitimation of the nation as a compound state allowing a predefined number of constituent cultures to live together in harmony. To the extent that those constituent cultures are territorially concentrated and can be considered as sub-nations, the term ‘multination nationalism’ could also be used.

However, according to Brown, this corporatist or managerial strategy is inherently flawed. The multicultural nation risks being perceived as an artificial, state-concocted construction lacking authenticity and emotional power, and thus failing to engender national loyalty. Conversely, the legitimacy of the nation risks further erosion as a result of the constant emphasis on its compound, and thus fragmented, character. An efficient way to enhance the appeal of the reconstructed national identity might be to define it in contrast with a threatening ‘other’, but diverse ethnic perspectives on the history and geopolitical position of the state often impede such a strategy. An additional problem is that the language of multicultural nationalism is intrinsically ambiguous as it celebrates cultural diversity as a value, on the one hand, but vindicates the right of any individual to be embedded within her own culture, on the other (Brown 2000: 48–49, 130).

The corporatist or managerial approach also implies a reification of a single ethnical categorisation and pre-empts the development of fluid and multiple identities in society. It entrenches the conflict and creates permanent ethnic compartments for the purpose of political (re)allocation (Brown 1997: 257–258). This touches on the fundamental difference between a corporatist and a pluralist strategy. While the former is based on a prioritisation of one form of identity, the latter aims at a more multifaceted and hybrid identity structure, treating the ethnic communities as interest groups rather than as the constituent components of the nation (Brown 2000: 148–150).

While Brown has investigated the cases of Australia, Singapore and Canada, this article focuses on two Western European states, Belgium and Spain, that can be considered to have adopted a similar corporatist strategy to accommodate the sub-national demands and re-legitimise the centre. During the past three decades, both countries have granted a substantial amount of territorial autonomy to the sub-national communities, and have constitutionally recognised the ethnically compound character of the state.

In the preamble of the Spanish Constitution, approved by referendum in 1978, it is stated that 'the Spanish nation . . . proclaims its will to . . . protect all Spaniards and peoples of Spain in the exercise of human rights, their cultures and traditions, languages and institutions'. Article 2 of the Constitution tries to find a balance between the principles of national unity and sub-national autonomy: 'The Constitution is based on the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, the common and indivisible homeland of all Spaniards, and recognises and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions which compose it and the solidarity among all of them.' Spain now consists of seventeen autonomous communities with different degrees of autonomy, as defined in their respective statutes of autonomy. At the outset, the so-called 'historical nationalities' of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia obtained a special status, involving more extensive autonomous powers. Later on, this special status was also achieved by Andalusia and in practice by Navarra, the Canary Islands and Valencia. The remaining autonomous communities have adopted ordinary statutes granting them more limited competences (Solozabal 1996; Agranoff 1997; Moreno 1997).

Since 1970, Belgium has gone through a series of profound institutional reforms which culminated in the adoption of a constitutional amendment in 1993, stating that 'Belgium is a federal state composed of regions and communities' (Article 3). As indicated by this Article, it is a peculiarity of the Belgian federal system that two different kinds of sub-national political entities are distinguished. The country is divided both into three economic regions (Flanders, Wallonia and Brussels) and three cultural communities (Flemish-, French- and German-speaking), the Flemish and the French communities overlapping each other in the Brussels region. This complex institutional structure is a compromise between the Flemish view that Belgium is essentially a bicultural country, consisting of a Dutch- and a French-speaking part, and the Francophone view that Belgium consists of three socio-economic regions, including Brussels as a distinct and equivalent entity (Alen & Ergec 1998; Hooghe forthcoming).

Given that both countries fit the corporatist or managerial model from an institutional point of view, it is to be expected that they have also adopted the identity politics of multicultural or multination nationalism and have to cope somehow with the inherent flaws and ambiguities of such a strategy. At the same time, the attempt at national reconstruction in Belgium and Spain faces two additional challenges to the nation-state, apart from the sub-national demands: the Europeanisation of politics, on the one hand, and the growing transnational migration, on the other.

While the sub-national mobilisation is hollowing out the centre from below, the process of European integration and the incipient European 'national'

identity are increasingly threatening the nation-state from above. The corporatist reconstruction of the nation will have to come to terms with this prospect of a European nation, which could eventually bring about a demotion of the Western European nation-states to a mere 'member state' status. Theorists of European integration argue that there is a relationship between the way the national identity of a state has been constructed and its vision of the emerging European national identity, in the sense that the state will cherish those views on Europe that resonate most with its national self-image (Risse et al. 1999). In addition, internally divided states are normally expected to be favourably predisposed towards European integration, as such states will be less successful in capturing loyalty for the nation (Beetham & Lord 1998: 23–24) and as their legitimacy will rest on the belief that the political integration of culturally heterogeneous communities is both feasible and desirable (Beyers & Kerremans 2001: 156–157). Thus the rhetorics of multicultural nationalism, even though initially used and developed for domestic purposes, will arguably translate into a positive and similarly multicultural discourse about European unification.

A second major challenge to the politics of corporatist multicultural nationalism is the growing influx of transnational migrants and refugees that both Belgium (Wets et al. 2000) and Spain (Izquierdo 1996; Checa & Arjona 1999), as most Western European countries, face. The growing presence and visibility of various immigrant cultures is not only inimical to the traditional nationalist myth of the culturally homogeneous nation, but also runs counter to the logic of managerial multicultural nationalism. A refurbishment of the state along corporatist and multinational lines can be considered as a traditional tool of ethnic accommodation that is not fit to satisfy the demands of the new immigrant minorities (Kymlicka & Norman 2000: 16). As argued above, a reconstruction of the nation in terms of a predetermined number of constituent cultures is inherently at odds with the multifaceted and fluid pattern of migrant cultures. It can thus be hypothesised that the discourse of multicultural or multination nationalism will either disregard the issue of immigrant cultures or contain inconsistencies in that respect.

The article attempts to provide a partial answer to the questions raised above on the basis of a comparative discourse analysis of the regular public addresses delivered by the Spanish and Belgian monarchs during the last decade, which in both countries can be considered as a period of consolidation of the decentralisation process.

The monarchy as an institution is inherently connected to nationhood and nationalism (Billig 1992: 12, 25) and thus almost by definition an important factor of national identity politics. To a far greater extent than an 'ordinary' head of state, the monarch is – as General de Gaulle once described Queen

Elizabeth II – ‘the person in whom the people perceive their nationhood, the person by whose presence and dignity, the national unity is sustained’ (quoted in Nairn 1994: 9). It is not just because of his or her apparent political neutrality that the monarch is such a powerful icon of national unity, but also, and more importantly, because the principle of hereditary succession to the throne helps to construct and maintain the myth of continuity that is central to the nationalist discourse. Given also the popularity that a monarch normally enjoys,<sup>1</sup> his or her public addresses constitute a powerful instrument that the elites in the centre have at their disposal to directly influence public opinion and mould the national identity of the citizens.<sup>2</sup> Even though this would probably be difficult to prove empirically, it is reasonable to assume that the addresses have at least some impact on public opinion. The viewer ratings for the addresses of the Belgian and Spanish monarchs are particularly high.<sup>3</sup> There is also an important spin-off effect in the media as the speeches are considered major political events in both countries and get extensive coverage in both television bulletins and newspapers.

While the Belgian monarch used to address the nation only on Christmas Eve, it was decided in 1983 that the monarch would deliver an additional annual address on the national holiday (July 21). This decision was inspired by the fear that the ethno-nationalist conflict and the resulting reform of the state would gradually undermine the unity of Belgium. The additional address on the national holiday was specifically aimed at providing a counterweight to this process of disintegration and at creating a new sense of Belgian patriotism (Buckinx 1998: 262). The Belgian monarch’s addresses are delivered in three languages: a Dutch version of the addresses is broadcast by the Flemish public and commercial networks and a French version, with a short section in German, by the Francophone public and commercial networks. The Spanish king addresses the nation only on Christmas Eve. The address, in Spanish, is broadcast by both the national and the regional public and commercial networks, with the notable exception of the Basque regional networks.

The Spanish corpus thus consists of 11 Christmas addresses (coded as S90, S91, etc.). The Belgian corpus is considerably larger and consists of 11 national holiday addresses (coded as BN90, BN91, etc.) and 11 Christmas addresses (coded as BC90, BC91, etc.). The first seven addresses (BN90 to BN93) were delivered by Boudewijn, who died on 31 July 1993 and was succeeded by his brother, Albert.<sup>4</sup>

The article loosely applies the methodological framework outlined by Wodak et al. (1999) in their study on the discursive construction of the Austrian national identity. The analysis focuses on three different discursive strategies that these authors distinguish. A first and central part of the analysis concerns the strategy of *constructing the nation* as an imagined

community. How are the identity and the uniqueness of the nation defined? To what extent does this construct incorporate the institutional recognition of the sub-national components and is it based on the ideology of multicultural or multination nationalism? If so, how are the contradictions inherent in this ideology coped with? Is the notion of multiculturalism on the level of the constituent sub-nations also extended to the migrant cultures? Second, the analysis will focus on the strategy of perpetuation, more in particular the strategy of *defending the national identity* against external threats. To what extent is the concept of the nation buttressed by the construction of a threatening 'other' and, if applicable, how does this strategy dovetail with the ideology of multicultural or multination nationalism? A final part of the analysis deals with the strategy of *transforming the national construct* in the context of an accelerating process of European unification. How far is the European Union conceived as an emerging nation and how does this affect the (multicultural) national identity construct?

### **Constructing the nation**

While the Spanish monarch constantly refers to his country as a 'nation', the words 'nation' or even 'national' are hardly used in the Belgian addresses. Belgium is generally referred to in a very neutral way as 'our country'. In fact, there is a peculiar reticence in the Belgian addresses to even name the country, the words 'Belgium' or 'Belgian' being employed relatively scarcely, as shown in Table 1. And when they are used, it is mostly in a purely functional way, for instance to refer to the Belgian peacekeeping forces abroad.

The Spanish monarch not only frequently names Spain – which would hardly bear mention were it not for the contrast with Belgium – but also often makes use of emotional and unifying expressions, like 'our fatherland' or 'we Spaniards'. This lends a distinctly patriotic note to the addresses, which is almost<sup>5</sup> entirely lacking in the Belgian ones. In addition, the Spanish are often referred to as 'the Spanish people' or 'our people'. Spain is said to have a 'national identity' (S92) and an own 'culture' (S97). The monarch also does not hesitate to anthropomorphise the nation, speaking for instance of 'our life as a nation' (S96, S97), 'the vitality and maturity of a people' (S96) or 'our historical personality' (S97).<sup>6</sup>

The latter expressions are symptomatic of an almost obsessive emphasis on the unity of Spain throughout the addresses. Moreover, democracy is the core value of this unitary Spanish nation: the Spanish are united by their adherence to the democratic principles of liberty, pluralism and solidarity that are guaranteed by the Constitution. In a way, it is not democracy as

Table 1. Number of occurrences of the words 'Belgium'/'Belgian', 'Spain'/'Spanish'/'Spaniards' and 'Europe'/'European' in corpus (in absolute and relative values)

	Belgium		Spain	
	Frequency	Permillage	Frequency	Permillage
Belgium/Spain	23	1.2	62	4.2
Belgian/Spanish [adjective]	7	0.4	16	1.1
Belgian(s)/Spaniard(s) [noun]	9	0.5	43	2.9
<i>Total</i>	<i>39</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>121</i>	<i>8.2</i>
Europe	63	3.3	25	1.7
European [adjective]	56	2.9	18	1.2
European(s) [noun]	0	0	2	0.1
<i>Total</i>	<i>119</i>	<i>6.2</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>3</i>
N (total number of words)	19.066*		14.803	

\*Based on the Dutch version.

such that primarily constitutes the uniqueness of the Spanish nation, but rather the exemplary transition towards democracy. 'We have to be proud,' it is said in S91, 'of the civilised and harmonic manner in which we have managed to become a democracy, at a time when so many considered this almost impossible.' This unique feat serves as an example and point of reference for other countries that are going through a similar democratisation process (S90) and was recognised and admired all over the world (S95). Again and again in the addresses, the Constitution is referred to as an almost sacred symbol of both the transition and the present unity-in-democracy of the Spanish nation.

While the notion of plurality as a democratic value is mostly associated with free expression and political competition in general, it is twice specifically linked to the institutionalisation of cultural diversity. Both on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Juan Carlos's reign (S95) and on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Constitution (S98), the constitutional recognition of this cultural diversity and the resulting *Estado de las autonomías* are listed among Spain's important democratic achievements. In S95, 'the recognition and development of the cultural and institutional plurality of Spain' is mentioned as one of the cornerstones of the 'full democracy' that Spain has enjoyed for an unprecedented long period and, in S98, it is stated that the Constitution 'stipulates the organisation of the state on the basis of autonomous communities, which recognises and protects the plurality and diversity of our society'.

Mostly, however, the autonomous communities are referred to in a more casual and vague manner, as in S98 where a concern is expressed about the unequal economic development of 'the various communities and territories of our fatherland'. The constitutional term 'nationality' (Article 2) is never employed to refer to those communities, even when an explicit reference is made to the constitutional recognition of the cultural diversity in Spain, as in the above cited passages. Neither is the common term '*autonomía*' used, and it rarely happens that one of the autonomous communities is mentioned by name. In S92, the monarch expresses his sympathy with both 'the Galician people' on the occasion of the oil spill near La Coruña, and the families of 'the Asturian labourers' that died in a mining accident. Finally, there are two mentions of 'the Basque society' (S97, S99), each time in connection with terrorism.

It is apparent from the above that the concept of a multicultural Spain cannot be considered as central to the discursive construction of the Spanish nation in the royal addresses. Even though the recognition and institutionalisation of Spain's cultural diversity are occasionally hailed as important hallmarks of the democratisation process, the various cultures are not viewed as constituent elements or building blocks of the Spanish nation. This approach contrasts sharply with the way the Belgian nation is constructed in the royal addresses. Belgium is almost emphatically defined in terms of its constituent parts (i.e., its different cultures). Concepts like 'the Belgian culture' or even 'the Belgian identity' are entirely absent. Belgium is twice explicitly defined as a 'multicultural' society (BN91, BN97): it is a crossroads of different cultures that manage to live together harmoniously.

Nevertheless, there is some ambiguity as to what exactly are the constituent parts of this multicultural nation. Most often, the Belgian monarchs simply mention the constitutional entities of the regions and communities as the building blocks. They either link both entities or refer to just one of them, depending on whether they are discussing an economic or a cultural matter. Monarchs hardly ever mention the different parts of Belgium by their names, probably to avoid political dispute about the nature of the federal state. Even when they do so, they try to find a balance between the two points of view: Boudewijn by enumerating all the different entities ('Flemings, Walloons, Brusselers, Francophones and Germanophones' in BN92) and Albert by alternatively adopting the Flemish ('our Flemish, French and Germanophone communities' in BN95) and the Walloon perspective ('the Flemings, the Walloons and the Brusselers' in BC96).<sup>7</sup> It is also noteworthy in this regard that the monarchs, whenever they want to illustrate a thesis, always give both a Flemish and a Walloon example, implicitly recognising the dual nature of the country.

Although Belgian monarchs painstakingly avoid defining the Belgian nation in an ethnocultural or essentialist way, they nevertheless come close to employing an ethnocultural discourse when portraying the constituent parts of the nation. The regions and communities are described as having their own ‘identities’ (BN92), a concept that is never explicitly used with regard to Belgium as a whole. Albert even goes as far as to anthropomorphise the constituent parts: both in BN94 and BN00 he talks about the ‘personality of each region and community’, which they have to be able to develop fully. This self-negation of the nation *vis-à-vis* the sub-nations is pushed to the limit in BN97: ‘During our history, we have learnt to fight for the autonomy of our municipalities, provinces and regions.’ Strikingly, the monarch does not mention the fight for the autonomy of Belgium and thereby effectively downplays the founding myth of the Belgian nation – the 1830 struggle for independence against the Netherlands. Still, as a kind of counterweight, it is immediately added that ‘this history has also taught us that important challenges can only be met when we join forces’.

It is also Albert who goes to considerable lengths to describe the nature of these ‘identities’ or ‘personalities’, which he tends to define in cultural-linguistic rather than economic terms. Particularly revealing in this regard is a sophisticated – and therefore also rather exceptional – passage on linguistic diversity in BC98:

A person’s language determines to a large degree the way in which he reasons and feels, what he sees and does not see. The language in which he thinks is like a window through which he perceives reality. His image of the world is also determined by his language, and what he cannot put into words, will quickly escape his notice. Each language has its own identity, which is reflected on every speaker of the language. Mastering a language thus not only implies being able to communicate with other people, but also to grasp their sensibilities, their culture, in other words being able to really understand them.

Thus, on the one hand, the monarch acknowledges the existence of fundamental differences between the constituent parts of Belgium, whose inhabitants have a different language, a different view of the world and different sensibilities.<sup>8</sup> Yet, on the other hand, by tracing those differences down to their linguistic core, he shows that they are not insurmountable. By learning the language of the other, a person can adopt his or her identity, his or her view on the world, his or her mentality. Throughout the royal addresses of Albert in particular, the Belgians are exhorted to become acquainted with the other communities’ cultures by learning their language. In this way, citizens can not

only bring about a more harmonious relationship between the communities, but also enrich themselves personally.

This notion of multilingualism thus enables the monarch to somehow transcend the tensions inherent in multicultural nationalist ideology. The emphasis on the right of each community to experience fully and develop its own cultural identity is counterbalanced by the notion that the citizens can acquire a second identity by acquiring the language of the other and in a sense become 'genuine' Belgians.

The theme of openness towards the other culture in Belgium frequently blends with the theme of openness towards other cultures in general and anti-racism. In those cases, the notion of cultural diversity is implicitly broadened to encompass not only the constitutional regions and communities, but also the transnational migrants. However, the focus here is generally on the racist attitudes of Belgians and less on the migrants themselves who are usually referred to as 'migrants' (BN91, BN96, BC96) and only once as 'foreigners' (BC98). They are never explicitly portrayed as additional building blocks of the compound nation, and the issue of the integration of immigrants is largely avoided. When this delicate problem is touched upon, monarchs only indirectly commit themselves by referring to an external authority. In BN91, Boudewijn approvingly cites from the anti-racist message that a group of youngsters had prepared on occasion of his sixtieth anniversary: 'Young migrants need not renounce their cultural identity. But you [i.e., the authors of the message] do expect that they behave in a moderate way; that they adapt to our rules and habits; and that they respect our laws, as everybody has to do. . . . Knowledge of the language of the host community is absolutely required.' Similarly, in BC96, Albert seeks the moral backing of the White March (the huge mass demonstration over the Dutroux affair) when he states that 'we want a country where migrant families are fully integrated in society, as was the case during the White March'.

As expected, tension is apparent in the discourse between the multicultural language as applied to the relationship between the regions and communities in Belgium and its use with regard to foreigners or immigrants. Extending the multicultural logic used in connection with the language communities to the immigrants would imply not only that the Belgians of foreign origin have a right to maintain and develop their own culture, but also that the autochthonous Belgians should attempt to become acquainted with those cultures and thus learn the language of the foreigners. Instead, a much weaker and one-way notion of multiculturalism is applied, since Belgians are not asked to develop an interest in – let alone learn the language of – foreigners. In addition, foreigners are not really urged to maintain their culture, which would enrich the nation from a multicultural nationalist perspective, but are merely

allowed not to renounce it. It is also apparent from the above citation from BN91 that the discourse oscillates between a multicultural ('migrants need not renounce their cultural identity') and an assimilationist ('... adapt to our rules and habits') stance. Thus, while multiculturalism as a general principle is presented as embracing both the Flemish/Walloon and the autochthonous/allochthonous relationships, it is not applied in the same way.

In the view of Belgian monarchs, it is precisely the harmonious and peaceful relationship or synergy between different cultural identities that makes the country unique and constitutes its identity as a nation. In one passage, the multicultural theme is used in an attempt to construct a *homo Belgicus*, suggesting that a positive attitude towards other cultures is a characteristic trait of 'the' Belgian: in BN96 a reference is made to 'our natural openness, tolerance and hospitality towards others', which result from 'the personal, family, cultural and economic bonds' between the regions.<sup>9</sup> A recurring theme in the royal discourse is the portrayal of Belgium as an example or a model for other countries, and particularly for the European Union. In this context, a link is often made to the concept of federalism as a means to achieve intercultural harmony: 'If we can demonstrate that population groups with different cultures can live together harmoniously within a federal system, then we are working together on a pioneer project for Europe and the world' (BN96). In BC91, Boudewijn even uses the metaphor of the 'vocation of the country', to 'show that within one political system different cultures can live together and harmoniously develop themselves'.

### **Defending the nation**

While the construct of a multicultural nation may require an external enemy in order to obtain an emotional appeal for the public at large, Brown (1999, 2000) doubts whether it is feasible to construct a common outsider to the various cultural segments of the nation. Now that it has become clear that, contrary to the Spanish case, multiculturalism is the core value in the Belgian nationalist discourse, we take it as the point of departure for the analysis. Three main threats to the Belgian nation can be distinguished: separatism, nationalism and racism.

Although the danger of separatism is seldom explicitly evoked in the Belgian addresses, it is constantly present as a spectre lurking in the background. The discursive construction of the multicultural Belgian nation, as discussed above, can to a large extent be interpreted as a defence of Belgian unity in the face of the separatist movement in Flanders. Obviously, to the extent that living in a multilingual and multicultural country is a source of both

material wealth and human enrichment – as stated again and again in the addresses – a division of the country into its monocultural segments would constitute an impoverishment. In this sense, the warning against separatism is often implied in the defence of multiculturalism. In other instances, the danger of separatism is evoked in a more or less concealing language, separatism being circumscribed as, for example, ‘pushing the tensions to extremes’ (BK91) or as ‘absolutising the diversity’ (BK98).

Finally, the Belgian addresses contain three explicit mentions of the separatist threat. In BN92, Boudewijn states: ‘We have to remain vigilant and to reject any form of overt or hidden separatism unambiguously.’ Interestingly, Albert uses exactly the same qualifiers in BN96, four years later, when he argues that Belgium has opted for federalism, ‘which rejects any form of overt or hidden separatism’. This reference to ‘overt or hidden separatism’ is cleverly phrased in the sense that it denounces not only explicit separatism, which is marginal even in Flanders, but also, indirectly, any attempt by the regions and communities to obtain more autonomy. Because of the word ‘hidden’, the concept of separatism is broadened to encompass any form of further autonomy that might eventually lead to a complete break-up of the country. The French text is even more suggestive as it contains a medical metaphor, the adjective ‘*larvé*’ (hidden) normally being used in connection with diseases that remain hidden and are difficult to diagnose.<sup>10</sup> The third explicit reference to separatism, in BN93, includes a similar though more neutral broadening qualifier: ‘The overwhelming majority of our compatriots insist on [a sense of tolerance, goodwill, reconciliation and federal civic duty amongst politicians], because it does not support any form of separatism, and it does not hesitate to let this be known loud and clearly. I am glad of that.’

This quote also illustrates another feature common to the three explicit mentions of separatism: each time it seeks to marginalise the separatists and, by extension, the more radical regionalists. Those proponents are described as a tiny minority faced with a vast and unwavering majority. In BN92 (‘We have to remain vigilant . . .’), this marginalisation is brought about in a more subtle, but at the same time more radical, way through the use of the deictic ‘we’, which clearly should be understood as ‘all Belgians’. The implication is that the proponents of open or hidden separatism exclude themselves from the Belgian in-group and in a sense become foreigners. Similarly, though somewhat less directly, it is said in BN96 that ‘our country’ has opted for federalism, and thus against open or hidden separatism.

A second alleged threat to the multicultural nation is nationalism. The word ‘nationalism’ is always accompanied by a pejorative or at least distancing qualifier in the Belgian addresses: ‘nationalisms in their most extreme and atrocious

form' (BC91), 'insane' (BC91), 'blind' (BC91), 'extreme' (BN91, BN95, BC00), 'narrow-minded and outdated' (BN96) and 'frenzied' (BC92, BN99). The addresses thus provide a nice illustration of what Billig (1995: 48) describes as the magnetic pull of the term 'nationalist' upon the critical adjective 'extreme' in the force field of commonplace semantics. This use of what almost appears as a fixed epithet to 'nationalism' allows the monarch to distance himself from whatever the listener considers 'bad' nationalism, while at the same time suggesting that there also exists a 'good' form of nationalism. Nevertheless, this distinction remains implicit and the usual rhetoric strategy of presenting the more 'benign' form of nationalism as 'patriotism' is not applied.

In keeping with common practice (Billig 1995: 5, 55), nationalism is as a rule located abroad in the Belgian addresses. It is mentioned as the cause of the civil war in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BC91, BN95) and, later on, of the conflict in Kosovo (BN99, BC00). It is in this context that the most intense qualifiers ('insane', 'frenzied', 'atrocious', 'extreme') are used. On other occasions, nationalism is mentioned as a force that impedes European unification and the ideal of a federal Europe. In those instances, nationalism is merely qualified as 'narrow-minded' (BN93) or, in an exceptionally neutral manner, as a 'current' (BN92). Apparently, a further distinction is being made here between 'bad' and 'very bad' nationalism.

Even though nationalism is generally portrayed as an outside force, it is at times more or less subtly hinted at that Belgium also faces the danger of (very) bad nationalism. In BN92, 'extreme nationalism' is listed among a number of vices that the Belgians have to resist (i.e., egoism and racism) and that are described as running counter to the Belgian tradition of openness and tolerance. A second hint can be found in BN95, in which the above-cited mention of 'extreme nationalism' in Bosnia is linked to a warning that the values of freedom, democracy, tolerance and solidarity should never be considered as safe, 'neither in Belgium nor elsewhere' (BN95). Here, it is clearly the very bad variant that is referred to. The most explicit mention of bad nationalism in Belgium can be found in BN96, in which the concern of the citizens with regard to the institutional problems of both Belgium and the European Union are said to be caused by 'certain forms of nationalism'. In this instance, both the more neutral qualifier and the association with European unification point to the merely bad form of nationalism.

As illustrated by the above citation from BN92, very bad nationalism is often associated with racism. The concept of 'racism' is not primarily linked to the immigrant issue, but is defined very broadly as 'an attitude that denies or downright pushes aside fundamental human and democratic values' (BC91) and is thus contiguous to the concept of totalitarianism. As such, it can be

linked to a wide array of phenomena like anti-Semitism (BN90), trade in women (BK92), the Nazi regime (BN94) or nationalism (BC91, BN92, BN95, BC00).

Overt mentions of racism in Belgium are rather exceptional,<sup>11</sup> and the racist threat to Belgium, like the nationalist threat, is generally evoked by association. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II, Belgians are twice (BN94 and BN95) warned to be vigilant and not to forget the lessons that history taught them. For the values of freedom, democracy, tolerance and solidarity 'are never permanently achieved, neither here nor elsewhere. In recent years, we have witnessed the re-emergence of racism and extreme nationalism' (BN95). It is remarkable that World War II is the earliest event in Belgian history commemorated or even mentioned in the royal addresses.<sup>12</sup> Given the fact that multiculturalism has become the core value of the Belgian nation, it is logical that the defeat of the Nazi regime is now considered the zero hour of national history. Thus, in a way, the defeat of fascism has replaced the 1830 victory against the Dutch as the founding myth of the nation.

As the Spanish addresses contain some traces of multicultural rhetoric, it can be expected that the concomitant themes of anti-nationalism and anti-racism are also sporadically touched upon. However, this expectation is hardly borne out for anti-nationalism since it is almost entirely absent from the Spanish discourse. Only a single allusion is made to bad nationalism, although the word 'nationalism' itself is not used: in S93, 'national egoisms' are mentioned along with 'new pockets of fanaticism' and 'violence' as problems that Europe faces – referring to the turmoil in the former communist countries.

The theme of anti-racism is somewhat more prevalent in the Spanish addresses. Xenophobia is twice explicitly denounced. In S94, Spaniards are exhorted 'to denounce and persecute manifestations of intolerance, racism and xenophobia that directly violate human dignity'. It is added that 'we have to learn to live together with those that are socially, culturally or religiously different'. Interestingly, and contrary to the Belgian discourse, the 'otherness' is fully accepted here, as it is not demanded that the foreigners assimilate the Spanish rules and habits. A second reference to xenophobia can be found in S92: 'Bad winds of xenophobia are blowing in some parts of Europe and have affected persons or groups that here, amongst us, constitute an irrelevant though violent minority.'

While the themes of anti-racism and openness towards foreigners are less conspicuous in the Spanish than the Belgian addresses, it can be argued that the discourse as a whole is permeated by a more friendly and warm-hearted attitude towards foreigners. The citation from S92 mentioned above, for

instance, is immediately preceded by a cordial salute to 'those who honour us with their presence and who share with us the hopes and toils of every day'. And, in the next section, foreigners are referred to as 'brothers' and assured of continued Spanish hospitality and solidarity. Particularly indicative of this cordiality are the instances in which the monarch directly addresses foreigners, as in the concluding section of S00: And to all of you, Spaniards, immigrants who share with us your labour, your efforts and hopes, and foreigners<sup>13</sup> who have chosen to live with us, I wish you all the best and I wish that the new year may bring you well-being and happiness.'

These enemies of the Spanish nation, however, are eclipsed by one supervillain: terrorism. The monarch mentions this enemy in every single address and often goes into the subject at length. Each time, the problem of terrorism appears as completely detached from the broader societal and political context. It is portrayed as an abstract, alien force that strikes at the very core of the Spanish nation (i.e., democracy), without particular cause or motive. This depoliticisation and depersonalisation is brought about by means of various discursive devices. The monarch generally speaks of 'terrorism' in the abstract and hardly of the terrorists themselves. This contrasts sharply with the personalisation of the victims of terrorism, who are sometimes mentioned by name and to whose families and relatives the monarch always offers his sympathy. While terrorism is approached as a kind of disease, this medical metaphor is only sparsely employed in the addresses. In S95, terrorism is compared to 'an open wound', an 'ulcer' and a 'scar'.

Nevertheless, in S98 – the only address delivered during the ETA ceasefire<sup>14</sup> – the monarch clearly deviates from this general pattern and takes a step in the direction of a more personalised approach. He refers to 'the cease of the terrorist activities' and appears to move towards conciliation with the terrorists or at least their supporters: 'We Spaniards have always known how to walk with determination the long and sometimes difficult road of conciliation. We can now continue on this road, strong in our resolve, and with the same tools of dialogue, generosity and justice that we have used to achieve the collective successes to which we have now dedicated ourselves for more than two decades.'

The depoliticisation of terrorism also implies that the link with the nationality problem in Spain is never made. There is only the slightest of hints when, as already cited above, the monarch twice refers to the rejection of terrorism in 'Basque society'. Interestingly, as if to exorcise immediately the separatist spectre summoned by the word 'Basque', the monarch each time refers also to the rejection of terrorism in 'the whole of Spain' (S97) or 'the rest of Spain' (S99). These passages illustrate another recurring theme in the sections on terrorism: the unity of the nation in the combat against terrorism. Sometimes this

unity is simply taken for granted, sometimes the Spanish are exhorted to remain united in their rejection of terrorism.

Still, there are a few instances in which the sharp distinction between the entire nation and terrorism becomes somewhat blurred. There is the appeal for conciliation in S98, which is suggestive of a possible re-integration of the terrorists or at least their supporters in the nation. These supporters, who form another possible disturbance of the clear-cut nation/terrorism dichotomy, are twice hinted at. In S96, the monarch considers it encouraging that 'the immense majority of the society' is resolved not to give in to terrorism, thus implying that a tiny minority shows less resolve. In S91 he is more explicit when he expresses his indignation not only about terrorism itself, but also about 'the ambiguous statements, wherever they come from, or the hidden equalisations of those who terrorise and those who are the victim of their madness'. The terrorists are thus more or less put on a par with an indefinitely broad group of open or secretive justifiers. Particularly through the use of the qualifiers 'hidden' and 'ambiguous', it is insinuated that whoever puts part of the blame for the terrorist problem on the Spanish authorities is justifying terrorism and thus takes side with the terrorists against Spain. This rhetorical ploy is strongly reminiscent of the way the Belgian monarchs attempt to ban the more radical regionalists from the national in-group by denouncing 'both open and hidden separatism', as discussed earlier.

While Brown is sceptical regarding the possibility that the appeal of multicultural nationalism is enhanced through the construction of an external enemy, the Belgian case suggests that this enemy is in a sense intrinsic to the multicultural nationalist ideology. From the perspective of multicultural nationalism, foreign cultures are not a threat to the nation, but the people and forces that oppose the multicultural ideal. It is they who become the *homines exteriores* or outsiders in opposition to which the nation is constructed. In this way, the normal actantial model (i.e., a model that describes the relationship between the different 'actants' – the abstract functions in a narrative that are embodied by one or more characters; see Greimas 1966) of the nationalist narrative is reversed: the defenders of monocultural national identity are transformed from heroes into villains, while the villains – the non-nationals who are traditionally considered to endanger cultural identity – now become the heroes who shape and validate multicultural identity. Both the Spanish and the Belgian cases show that any nationalist discourse is inherently reactive and involves a demarcation between 'us' and 'them' (Brown 1999: 296). Far from being confined to a territorial inside/outside distinction, this 'othering' mechanism also (and perhaps even primarily) involves the drawing and maintaining of internal boundaries (Mottier 2001: 5–6); boundaries between 'good' and

'bad' citizens, depending on their conformity with the core values of the nation. The 'bad' Belgians are those that reject the multicultural ideal, either because of an 'open or hidden' separatist stance or because of an intolerant attitude towards foreigners. The 'bad' Spaniards are predominantly those that reject the democratic principles laid down in the Constitution by supporting or justifying terrorism.

### **Transforming the nation**

Belgian and Spanish monarchs not only have to come to terms with the multinational reality within their own countries, but also with the growing internationalisation and particularly the drive towards an ever more powerful European Union. While, as discussed above, it may appear that the construction of a multicultural Belgium and of a multicultural Europe blend nicely and are in fact mutually reinforcing, on closer look there is an inherent contradiction or at least a tension between them. Belgium is considered a pioneer in creating a multicultural future for Europe. This reasoning can easily be interpreted to imply that, if and when this ideal of a multicultural Europe is realised, the whole of Europe will be 'Belgianised' or, put differently, Belgium will be subsumed into this European whole and thus disappear as a distinct multicultural nation. In this scenario, the constituent parts of the present federal Belgian nation will become constituent parts or member states of the European federation. Ironically, this is the very same scenario that is also envisaged by the Flemish separatists and by various autonomist parties in Europe (Keating 1996: 223–227; De Winter 1998a: 205–208).

This 'separatist' inference is not made in the royal addresses. However, in BN92, Boudewijn comes close to it when he makes an analogy between the federalisation process in Belgium and in Europe. In this section, 'real European federalism' is explained as 'a closer cooperation with the Irish, the Greek, and possibly with the Finns shortly'. It would be contradictory, the reasoning goes, to defend this kind of federalism on a European level 'while considering it as outdated concerning the relations between the Flemish, the Walloons, the Brusselers, the French-speaking and the German-speaking population'. Clearly, the constituent parts of Belgium are put on the same level here as the Member States of the European Union. As a further irony, this section is immediately followed by the above-cited warning against 'overt or hidden separatism'.

On the other hand, while the addresses are generally vague about the institutional position of Belgium and its constituent parts in the future European

federation, there are some indications – actually surprisingly few – that the monarchs like to believe that Belgium will continue to exist as a distinct entity and even as a nation-state. A small section in BN92 betrays a concern about this issue: ‘It would be an illusion to believe that the nation-states will not play a role anymore in a federal Europe. Their role will change, but it is out of the question that they will disappear.’ In fact, the section appears to echo the very same nationalist and confederalist discourse that, earlier in BN92, is contrasted to the Belgian federalist approach. In that passage, the rejected ‘confederal’ Europe is defined as ‘a Europe consisting only of states’.

There is thus, as expected, a strong parallel in the Belgian discourse between the construction of the Belgian and the European multicultural nation, with European unification process described as a ‘wonderful road’, an ‘epic’ and an ‘exceptionally inspiring adventure’ (BN95). If there is a difference at all, it is, paradoxically, that the European discourse of the Belgian monarch at times has a more patriotic ring. It is also significant in this regard that the words ‘Europe’ or ‘European’ are used with a substantially higher frequency than the words ‘Belgium’ or ‘Belgian’, as can be seen from Table 1. A reverse pattern is found in the Spanish addresses. The emotionally laden European nationalism of the Belgian monarch is indeed poles apart from the more detached pro-European stance of his Spanish colleague. While the Spanish and Belgian monarchs do share a firm belief in European integration, the Spanish monarch adopts a much lower profile in this respect. For one thing, it is never stated or even suggested in the Spanish addresses that the European Union should evolve into a full-fledged federation. While the unification process and, more in particular, Spain’s ever more firm integration in Europe is explicitly supported, the finality of this development remains vague. And no matter how strongly the monarch endorses the European project, there is always a more or less latent reserve, as in S92: ‘we unify ourselves ever more with [Europe], without obsessions or rashness, but conscious that we have to follow this road, taking steps that are inspired by confidence and prudence’. The implication is clear: Europe is fine, but let us not rush towards more integration.

One reason for this reticence is given in S93, with the warning that European integration should not involve ‘giving up what is our own and merits to be defended’. Elsewhere (S91), he points out that Spain participates in Europe with ‘its own personality’. These remarks are indicative of a latent fear that an ever more integrated Europe might eventually subsume the Spanish identity. Moreover, by means of an associative link between the European Union issue and the theme of national unity in S92,<sup>15</sup> it is subtly suggested that this potential danger requires the Spanish to be more united than ever. Yet, the European endeavour is worthwhile because in Europe ‘our interests are

well protected and harmonised with those of the other European peoples' (S93). Clearly, the Europe that is envisaged by the Spanish monarch is a joint venture of separate nations that have a number of common interests, rather than an incipient nation in itself. The Belgian vision of a development towards a transcendent European national identity composed of and shaped by the various 'sub-national' identities is actually reversed in the Spanish discourse: 'Belonging to Europe enriches our national identity. . . . Being European has to be rooted in the essence of being Spanish' (S92). The European identity thus appears as a constituent part of the Spanish national identity, and not vice versa. It does not transcend the Spanish identity, but is embedded in it.

This approach towards Europe is related to a broader view on the place of the Spanish nation in the world: 'Three large zones continue to be the main focus of our foreign concern: Europe, Ibero-America and the Mediterranean area' (S99). The juxtaposition of Europe with the Ibero-American and the Mediterranean communities involves a major relativisation of the European project. Europe is effectively downgraded to one of the three geopolitical spheres to which the Spanish nation belongs. On the other hand, the order in which the three areas are mentioned, and are also dealt with in the following sections of the address, points at a certain hierarchy between them, implying that Europe takes precedence over the other two areas. Yet, at the same time, this formal precedence is thwarted by the fact that the addresses show an intense emotional attachment to the two 'lesser' areas, in counterpoint to the more detached attitude towards Europe, as mentioned above.

This emotional involvement with the Mediterranean and Ibero-American countries is apparent from the cordial manner in which the monarch either applauds their successes or comforts them in the case of disasters. Both the Mediterranean and the Ibero-American countries are often referred to as 'brother countries' or 'brother peoples', expressions which are never employed with regard to the European Union countries. This is strikingly illustrated by one of the concluding sections in S95: 'I also want to send my wishes for prosperity and wellbeing to all the peoples who are befriended to us, and in particular to the European nations and to the brother peoples of Ibero-America and the Arab countries.' The family metaphor appears to be specifically reserved for this broad community of Ibero-American and Mediterranean peoples, and is almost never used to refer to the Spanish nation itself. There is one exception, in S90, but even here the metaphor embraces a broader community than Spain as such: 'This large family of all Spaniards, both inside and outside of Spain.'

The reserve towards Europe and the emotional attachment towards the two other spheres are in a way connected. Some passages are indicative of a

concern that a 'Fortress Europe' might disturb the privileged relationship between Spain and the Ibero-American and Mediterranean countries, and in this way infringe upon what is considered as an integral part of the Spanish identity. 'We want,' it is emphasised in S97, 'that our historical personality and our Ibero-American and Mediterranean bonds become stronger in this process [of European unification].'

## Discussion

As mentioned in the introduction to this article, Brown (1997, 2000) questions the effectiveness of a corporatist or managerial strategy. He argues that its strong emphasis on the segmented nature of the country might lead to disintegration, given also that the rhetoric of multicultural nationalism is inherently contradictory and lacks emotional appeal. Nevertheless, the Belgian case appears to contradict Brown's assessment. Belgian monarchs manage to transcend the tensions inherent in the multicultural or multination nationalist ideology by focusing on the theme of multilingualism. In addition, they succeed in creating a common threat to the multicultural nation by reversing the normal actantial model of nationalism and transforming the defenders of the ethnic or monocultural ideal from heroes into villains. In this way, the statewide emotional appeal and integrative power of the multicultural discourse is probably enhanced. The expectation was borne out that the Belgian vision of a future Europe is coterminous with the construction of the Belgian national identity. The monarchs wholeheartedly embraced the prospect of a European federation, based on the Belgian model. Yet it was also found that the multicultural narrative contains inconsistencies with regard to the position of the Belgian nation in this future Europe. A second inconsistency and source of tension in the discourse derives from the apparent reticence of the Belgian monarchs to extend fully the multicultural logic to the relationship between the autochthonous and allochthonous Belgians. This finding confirms the hypothesis that a corporatist multicultural approach cannot easily be reconciled with a policy of cultural diversity aimed at accommodating the demands of transnational migrants.

It has also been shown that nationalism is portrayed in the addresses as an external threat to Belgian nationhood. This obviously raises the issue of the apparently oxymoronic nature of the very notion multicultural or multination nationalism. The rhetorics of Belgian monarchs can hardly be labelled 'nationalist' if the ideal of a culturally homogeneous nation is considered inherent to the nationalist discourse or ideology. Yet, in our view, this conceptualisation

of nationalism is too narrow. Instead, nationalism should be viewed as a discursive practice drawing boundaries between national in- and out-groups, departing from the mostly implicit notion that there exists a natural world order of nation-states with distinct identities. From this perspective, a discourse that constructs Belgium as a special nation allowing various cultures to live together peacefully and harmoniously, as a model for other nations, and as threatened by an out-group of nationalists is – however paradoxically this may sound – a nationalist discourse.

There are some indications that public opinion in Flanders has resonated to the rhetoric of multicultural nationalism. Survey research (Maddens et al. 1998, 2000) shows that citizens with a strong Belgian identification appear to have a positive attitude towards Turkish and Moroccan immigrants, while citizens with a strong Flemish identity are more negative, even when party preference is controlled for. In addition, Flanders has recently witnessed a slight increase of Belgian identifiers (De Winter 1998b), which might well be due to the attractiveness of the remodelled Belgian identity among the multicultural-oriented citizens, who also tend to be the younger ones. It is also plausible that the existence of a large extreme right and separatist party in Flanders, the *Vlaams Blok*, enhances the appeal of multicultural nationalism in this region and lends credibility to the warning against a racist threat to the nation. This might also explain why the impact of Belgian multicultural nationalism appears to be smaller in Wallonia. In this region, a weaker and also reverse relationship between national identity and the attitude towards foreigners is found: Belgian identifiers tend to be more negative and Walloon identifiers more positive. This is partly due to the fact that the Walloon nation is also predominantly defined in multicultural terms by Walloon nationalists. At the same time, the official presentation of Belgium is to a certain extent thwarted by the ethnocultural Belgian nationalism of the, albeit more marginal, extreme right.

While Belgium is clearly a case in point of a state that has adopted a multicultural nationalist discourse as the rhetorical pendant of a corporatist strategy to cope with sub-national demands, Spain appears to be a counter example. From an institutional point of view, the Spanish state pursues a similar corporatist or managerial policy. Yet this is hardly reflected in the way the Spanish nation is discursively constructed by the centre. While some traces of a multicultural approach can be found in royal addresses, the representation of the nation is predominantly unitary. In a sense, this unitary vision is also reflected in a more reserved, although still positive, approach to European integration. Indeed, it could be argued that the latent fear of a European nation-state, apparent in the royal addresses, is rooted in the same unitary

conception of the nation (i.e., the inability to conceive the nation as a multinational and multicultural polity).

A first explanation for the significant difference between the Belgian and the Spanish cases concerns the extent to which the notion of a compound multicultural state has been accepted by the elites in the centre. In the course of the 1970s and 1980s, the idea that Belgium essentially consists of different constituent cultures and thus requires a federal structure gradually became part of the Belgian elitist consensus (Dewachter 1996: 125–130). In Spain, on the other hand, the compound nature of the state remains a matter of considerable political controversy. Article 2 of the Constitution can be interpreted to reflect two different and competing visions of Spain: Spain as a single and indivisible nation versus Spain as an aggregate of regions and nationalities (Solé Tura 1985: 101). Even though the *Estado de las autonomías* has now become more or less consolidated, and, albeit grudgingly, accepted by the right, the Spanish *Nationalfrage* is still pending and fiercely debated. While the proponents of a compound state demand that Spain's plurinational character be reflected in its symbols and central institutions (Requejo 1999: 273), others fear that abandoning the concept of a unitary Spanish nation might de-legitimise the state and eventually rekindle extreme Spanish nationalism (De Blas Guerrero 1994). Put somewhat differently, Spain is a good example of a federation where the status of the federated units is perceived in various and conflicting ways (Kymlycka 2001: 112–117): while the centre appears to view the *autonomías* as mere regions, some of them consider themselves as distinct nations that comprise the constitutionally recognised components of a multinational state. As shown in the analysis, the royal discourse predominantly conveys the unitary vision of Spain and thus clearly takes side in this debate.<sup>16</sup>

Requejo's (1999: 273) complaint that plurilingualism, as a central feature of the pluriform nature of the country, is entirely absent from the policies of the centre and thus confined to the autonomous communities, can easily be extended to the royal addresses. In comparison with Belgium, it does appear odd that the plurilinguistic character of the nation is not mirrored in the language used by the monarch to address his subjects. In a way, this can be considered a logical formal corollary of the predominantly unitary stance taken in the addresses. On the other hand, the unilingual character of the addresses can also be interpreted simply to reflect the dominant position of Spanish culture and language throughout the country. This is obviously a second crucial difference with Belgium, whose main constituent cultures are roughly balanced. This equivalence, resulting in a symmetric federal structure with regard to the competences of the federated entities, has made it easier to define Belgium as a joint venture of different cultures. The reverse is true in Spain,

where the subaltern position of the non-Spanish cultures and the concentration of sub-national claims in three peripheral regions have led to a more asymmetric state structure (Agranoff 1999). The reform initially set the 'historical nationalities' with an own language and nationalist tradition apart from the regions with an ordinary autonomy status. In addition, some of these lesser *autonomías* were mere *ad hoc* creations that did not correspond to historical regions (Moreno 1997: 81–82) and that therefore can hardly be considered as co-constituents of a compound multicultural or multinational nation.

The focus of this article was not on monarchy as such. We merely assumed that royal addresses are a powerful instrument of national identity politics, given the popularity of the monarch and the intimate connection between monarchy and nationhood. Yet, one might wonder whether it actually takes a monarch to deliver the addresses analysed above. As far as the Belgian case is concerned, it probably does. Nairn (1994) points to a similar tendency towards national self-abnegation, coupled to the appropriation of sub-national sentiments, in the British monarchy. In Nairn's view, this is inherent in the mystery of monarchy, which resides precisely in this a-nationalist patriotism 'that passes directly from individuals straight on to a God-like plane where all narrow group affiliations seem equally irrelevant. In this act of transcendence the entire vulgar and somehow foreign word of mere "-ismic" nationality is somehow annulled' (Nairn 1994: 229). The monarchy, says Nairn (1994: 233), thus provides precisely the kind of national identity – based on a 'non-national (even in some degree an anti-national) version of nationalism' – that is required in a multinational state like Britain or, we might add, Belgium and Spain.

## Acknowledgments

A first version of this paper was presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions, 6–11 April 2001, Grenoble (Workshop 19: Identity Politics). The authors would like to thank the participants in the workshop, as well as Jan Beyers, David Brown, Christian De Paepe, Christiane Stallaert, Peter Venmans and the anonymous EJPR reviewers for their critical comments and helpful suggestions.

## Notes

1. In Belgium there is a strong link between high esteem for the monarch as a person and support for the monarchy as an institution (Maddens 1991). In Spain, on the other hand, it appears that the immense popularity of the present monarch does not automatically

- translate into an unqualified acceptance of the monarchy as an institution (Cazorla Pérez 1990: 277–278; García del Soto 1999: 130, 208–209).
2. Both monarchs are formally irresponsible, in the sense that their actions have to be countersigned by a member of the government, who thereby takes the responsibility for them (Spanish Constitution, Article 56, §3 and Article 64; Belgian Constitution, Articles 88, 106). This constitutional irresponsibility of the king is not confined to the formal actions of the monarch, but extends to all his public acts, including his addresses. In Belgium, the royal addresses are not subject to a formal ministerial countersignature, but have to be approved by either the premier (which is the case with the regular addresses analysed here) or the relevant minister. Still, it is assumed that the monarch can to a certain extent vent his own views and concerns, as long as they do not run counter to government policy (Molitor 1994: 101–105; Monette 2002: 54–56, 94–95). The Spanish practice is very similar, in the sense that the monarch has a considerable leeway to determine the content of the addresses, even though constitutional practice requires them to be approved by the prime minister (Tenorio Sánchez & Gonzalo González 2000: 633–637). While the Spanish monarch claims to write the addresses personally (De Villalonga 1993: 248–249), the Belgian royal addresses are normally drafted by the monarch's *chef de cabinet* (Liebaers 1998: 61).
  3. In Spain, the average viewer density during the period 1992–2000 was 25.5% (Source: Televisión Española). In the Flemish part of Belgium, the average viewer density during the period 1990–2000 was 17.8% (Source: Vlaamse Radio en Televisie), while in the Francophone part the average viewer density during the period 1995–2000 was 19.5% (Source: Radio et Télévision Belge de la Communauté Française; Radio et Télévision Luxembourgeoise–Télévision Indépendante). Contrary to Spain, the Belgian addresses are broadcast at different times by the various networks. Viewers who watch repeatedly are included in the figures cited above.
  4. The Spanish addresses are published in *Discursos de SM el Rey* (1999). The most recent Spanish addresses were obtained from the Spanish Embassy in Brussels. The addresses delivered by Boudewijn are published in Neels 1996. The addresses delivered by Albert since 1993 are available online at: <http://www.monarchie.be>.
  5. Boudewijn used to strike a patriotic note by addressing his audience as 'my dear compatriots'. Albert immediately changed this form of address to the more prosaic 'to all of you who live in Belgium' (BC93) and from BN94 on to 'ladies and gentlemen'.
  6. For practical reasons, all quoted passages were immediately translated into English by the authors. The original text of these citations is available upon request at: [bart.maddens@soc.kuleuven.ac.be](mailto:bart.maddens@soc.kuleuven.ac.be).
  7. On one single occasion (BN96), the monarch avoided naming the parts of the country by referring to 'the north and the south'.
  8. In BN00, he also mentions differences in 'mentality' and different 'characteristics'.
  9. There are only three other instances in which a typical behavioural disposition of the *homo Belgicus* is hinted at. The 'spirit of enterprise' (BC93, BN97) and the 'generosity, the attitude to solidarity without much ado' (BC98) are both referred to as typically Belgian traits.
  10. There appears to be a long tradition of associating the words 'hidden' (*larvé*) and 'separatism' or 'separation' in royal discourse. In 1932, the then king, Albert I, warned his prime minister that a proposed law in connection with the use of languages in the administration might lead to a 'more or less hidden administrative separation of the country' (*'une séparation administrative plus ou moins larvée du pays'*) (Stengers 1996: 127–128).

And in the 1988 national holiday address, in which the notion of a federal Belgium is explicitly endorsed for the first time, separatism is denounced with the very same words that are used both in BN92 and BN96: 'This is a federalism . . . that rejects any form of open or hidden separatism.'

11. The most explicit mention is in BC91: 'In a lot of countries, including ours, racism is raising its head in an alarming way.'
12. Only BN93 contains a casual allusion to Belgium's independence from the Netherlands. The opening line says that 'the commemoration of our independence is each year again a good occasion to celebrate'.
13. This distinction between 'immigrants' and 'foreigners' is new. In all the other addresses, the monarch just refers to 'foreigners' in general.
14. This ceasefire lasted from 18 September 1998 to 28 November 1999.
15. 'Belonging to Europe enriches our national identity. But precisely this national identity may not evaporate or be reduced, but must become stronger, so that we are able to show and propagate it, solid and unified, without fragmentations and divisions, showing an integrity which has to be translated in all the senses of this word and this idea. Being European has to be rooted in the essence of being Spanish, and the future generations will thank us for this decision' (S92).
16. This might be considered self-evident, given the monarch's constitutionally defined role as the symbol of Spanish unity (Article 56.1). However, a comparable stipulation in the Belgian Constitution clearly does not prevent the Belgian monarch from fully accepting and endorsing the notion of Belgium as a multicultural state, as shown above. The Belgian king may accede to the throne only after having taken the following oath: 'I swear to observe the Constitution and the laws of the Belgian people, to preserve our national independence and our territorial integrity' (Belgian Constitution, Article 91).

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