

# The Rise and Fall of a ‘Europe of the Regions’

The Territorial Strategies of Substate Political Parties 1979-2006

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## ABSTRACT

This paper unpacks the diverse ways in which substate parties responded to, interpreted, and used the imagery of a ‘Europe of the Regions’ to advance their claims for autonomy. Changes in state and European structures have led to a greater emphasis on territorial interests and identities and in response, parties have been forced to take a position on how they want their territory to fit into the newly emerging European order. However, parties have not taken consistent positions on Europe. Rather, they have exhibited a cyclical quality, moving back and forth on Europe. This is due to a combination of local and statewide factors. But their positions also changed over time, in response to perceived opportunities for regional action in Europe. Whilst many substate parties were cautious of Europe in the late 1970s, by the early 1990s parties enthusiastically supported autonomy in a ‘Europe of the Regions’. This goal won support across the political spectrum, causing independence-seeking parties to moderate their claims and regional branches of statewide parties to strengthen their territorial demands. However, the convergence of autonomy goals was not to last: it soon gave way to doubt and concern as regional interests were repeatedly ignored in Europe. Parties began to change tactics in the late 1990s, with many reverting back to previous goals or adopting more Eurosceptical positions. This raises the question of how ‘Europeanised’ parties are, and forces us to re-think how parties understood European integration in the first place. The Europe of the Regions debate is reviewed here through the study of three substate territories – Scotland, Bavaria and Sardinia – over a period of a quarter century. It examines how the imagery of a Europe of the Regions was used to support a variety of party goals, ranging from independence, to accessing European structural funds, to rolling back European competences.

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## **Introduction**

In the early 1990s, a group of scholars from a variety of disciplines began questioning state-centred account of politics in Europe. They pointed to the occurrence of two processes of structural change to substantiate their claims: European integration and regionalisation. Both processes appeared to undermine the authority and competences of the state. More importantly, there seemed to be links between the two: the European Union had begun to bring regions into its decision-making processes, whilst regions had begun to emphasise the need to access European institutions to advance territorial interests. What re-emerged from this analysis, in both academic and political circles, was a concept that had been around for a number of years (De Rougemont 1966) but which dominated the field of territorial politics throughout the 1990s: that of a 'Europe of the Regions'. However, the interpretation of this concept amongst scholars differed significantly from what was being sought by substate political parties. On one hand, scholars argued that regional participation in European affairs represented a 'third level' of decision-making, and used this concept to confront intergovernmental and neo-functional approaches to European integration, both of which were concerned with the way in which EU decision-making operated at the state and European levels. Meanwhile, political parties at the regional level understood the concept of a 'Europe of the Regions', not as a uniform theory or pattern of regional engagement in Europe, but as a political, constitutional or economic goal that enabled the realisation of their specific territorial interests.

Drawing on case studies in Scotland, Bavaria and Sardinia, this paper unpacks the diverse ways in which substate parties responded to, interpreted, and used the imagery of a 'Europe of the Regions' to advance their claims for autonomy and policy capacity in the face of deepening European integration. The paper proceeds in four steps. The first section examines the literature on regionalism, Europeanisation and multi-level governance in the 1990s, and poses three hypotheses on the impact and uses of a 'Europe of the Regions' by substate political actors. The second section offers case study analyses of how parties in Scotland, Bavaria and Sardinia interpreted, and responded to, claims for a Europe of the Regions 1979-2005. The third section compares the impact of Europe on territorial strategies across the cases, and summarises the main findings. The final part focuses on the 'movement' of parties on the territorial and European dimensions, highlighting the rise and fall of a Europe of the Regions in three consecutive stages.

## **Regionalism and Multilevel Governance in Europe**

It has been widely argued that the transformation of state and European structures, leading to decentralisation and supranational integration, has created new political and economic spaces in which territorial actors operate (Hooghe 1995; Lynch 1996; Keating 2001; De Winter 2001). European integration has opened up new possibilities to pursue territorial interests that were once 'closed' by the expansion of the nation-state (Bartolini 2005) and regions have gained a new political role in federalising and regionalising states. Aspects of the new assertiveness of regions at the European level is indicated by the proliferation of transregional organisations, the establishment of regional lobbies in Brussels, and regional engagement in European networks and the practice of 'paradiplomacy' (Aldecoa and Keating 1999). Furthermore, the creation of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in 1994 by the Maastricht Treaty provided a political arena for voicing regional demands. The CoR, which remains a weak advisory body, nevertheless created the first formal recognition of substate governments in the EU. For Sturm and Dieringer (2005: 28), 'resistance to and support for a political role of regions are plausible outcomes of Europeanization'.

To account for the new role of these regional institutions, the notion of a 'third' or 'meso' level was introduced in studies of regionalism (Bullman 1994; Hooghe 1995; Jeffery 1997). In the stronger sense, a third level was indicative of the development of a regional level of political decision-making in Europe as a whole, whereby a uniform regional tier of government with legislative powers was established alongside state and European institutions. In the weaker sense, a third level was characterised by new forms of territorial engagement in European institutions,

networks and lobbying organisations and the creation of associational structures across regions (Hooghe 1995; De Winter 2001). Both of these interpretations were associated with a theme that was emerging in party political circles in Europe: that of a regionalised Europe. But whilst political scientists were talking about identifiable interactions and processes of regional engagement in European networks and institutions, political parties evoked the imagery of a Europe of the Regions to refer to an aspiration, or an idea, in which European structures were fundamentally altered to meet the specific territorial needs of the party. How did the two interpretations sit together? Was the political mobilisation of regions a top-down outcome of European integration processes? Or were parties using Europe to get what they wanted?

Much of the literature on Europeanisation focuses on how Europe affects politics at the *state* level (Hix and Lord 1997; Featherstone and Radaelli 2003). As Mair (2006: 3) points out, Europeanisation is usually perceived to occur when ‘something in national political systems is affected by something European’. There remains a notable lack of systematic accounts of how political actors project their demands upwards in Europe. Moreover, most analyses ignore the effects of Europe at the substate level and, equally, how regional actors perceive and use Europe for their own projects. Those that do consider the substate level often neglect the role of parties. For instance, Hooghe and Marks (2001) emphasise the open and flexible nature of the new European system of ‘multi-level governance’ that allows room for non-state actors to become involved in decision-making across multiple levels. Their analysis focuses on how regional tiers of government were brought into the ambit of European decision-making. However, this overplays ‘the significance of central state-EU interactions in catalysing sub-national mobilisation’ (Jeffery 2000: 3), and leaves the question of how regional actors mobilise demands for EU access unanswered.

As Deschouwer (2003: 213) states, MLG is ‘very much a party-free zone’. His own research attempts to fill this gap by examining general patterns of party activity in different electoral arenas; what he calls ‘multi-layered systems’. Of these, the regional and European electoral arenas have increased in importance, and have warranted new strategies from political parties previously concerned with only state electoral competition. Parties now operate in complex systems in which their regional, state and European components influence each other in ‘three-way interactions’ of a horizontal or vertical nature. In a similar vein, Dardanelli (2005) focuses on the relationship between the regional and European levels. Instead of considering Europeanisation to be a top-down process, he identifies ‘bottom-up’ aspects of Europeanisation, whereby political actors seek to shape the direction of European integration as a means of achieving their own aims. The main focus should be on the opportunities, incentives and constraints that this presents for territorial actors.

Attempts have been to link substate parties with European integration, but these are almost exclusively limited to ‘ethnoregionalist parties’ (Lynch 1996; De Winter and Tursan 1998; Elias 2006). For instance, De Winter and Gomez-Reino (2002) conducted empirical research on the ways in which Europe influences goals and strategies of these parties, examining their adaptation to European issues and their involvement in transnational alliances. Whilst this analysis advances our understanding of the impact of Europe on regionalist party interests and identities, it is unable to provide an overall view of the effects of Europe on the substate party politics in general. Nationalist parties are not the only ones to pursue territorial projects or to claim to be bearer of the territorial project. Statewide parties also compete in aggregating, articulating and pursuing territorial interests. This necessitates an examination of how Europe, and territory, has played out across the regional party system as a whole. How have other parties at the substate level adapted to Europeanisation? And has Europe become an important point of competition between substate parties – be they nationalist, regionalist, socialist, liberal, conservative, or green?

### **Territorial Strategies and Regional Engagement in Europe**

During the period of ‘regionalisation’ in Europe, regional actors soon began to project their interests into European arenas. Parties began to search for new forms of autonomy in Europe that amounted

to something less than secession, such as a Europe of the Regions, Peoples or Small States (Hepburn 2004). But territorial strategies have also included more substantive policy demands, such as greater representation in state and European bodies, the ability to engage in European networks and more control over resources. Increasing policy capacity for some parties entails increased access *to* the state rather than autonomy *from* it – a trade-off considered below.

This paper will focus on the impact of European integration on substate territorial strategies, and the way in which parties use and interpret a Europe of the Regions. The main hypothesis is that substate political parties have redefined their territorial as a result of the opportunities presented by Europe. The ‘impacts’ of Europe are indicated through programmatic change, party relations, and rhetoric. Regarding the first indicator, I hypothesise that integration causes regional branches of statewide parties to develop stronger demands for autonomy in the context of a Europe of the Regions, whilst causing nationalist parties to moderate their demands for statehood and engage in regionalist debates as a gradualist strategy. For the second indicator, it is hypothesised that integration has encouraged the ‘territorialisation’ of statewide parties, including the decentralisation of programmatic and organisational autonomy to regional branches. The third hypothesis concerns rhetoric: European integration encourages substate parties to ‘Europeanise’ their demands by endorsing themes such as diversity and free trade. The period under analysis begins with the introduction of direct elections to the European Parliament in 1979 up until the rejection of the draft European Constitution by Dutch and French voters in 2005 – a period which covers major changes in the architecture of the European Community/European Union, as well as significant changes within the territorial structures of member states.

### **Substate Party Responses to a Europe of the Regions**

Scotland, Bavaria and Sardinia are geographically, economically and politically three of the most diverse substate entities in Western Europe. The first is considered a ‘nation’ in a devolved political system, the second a ‘free state’ in a federalised system, and the third a ‘special region’ in a decentralising system. Moreover, each has varying levels of economic power: whilst Bavaria is one of the richest regions in Europe, Sardinia is one of the poorest (with Scotland somewhere in between). What ties them together is emergence of political parties in each case that place the interests and identity of the territory at the heart of their political discourse, the existence of more than one political party vying for the representation of territorial interests, and the fact that the constitutional issue is open and contested in each territory. The choice of examining dissimilar regions allows us to explore the uneven effects of European integration in different places, to examine why some parties have used Europe to advance their territorial projects whilst others have not. Let us now consider how the domestic constitutional issue has been correlated to a ‘Europe of the Regions’ in substate territories, which in Scotland was linked to devolution, in Bavaria the defence of the German Länder, and in Sardinia it was linked to economic modernisation.

#### *Scotland and Devolution*

Scottish parties, with the exception of the LibDems, have not had a consistent line on Europe (Hepburn 2006). Both Labour and the SNP opposed European integration during the early 1980s, as it was viewed as a Tory free-market project. With a new emphasis on the social and political dimensions of European integration from the late 1980s, social-democratic parties (the SNP included) began to view Europe as a socially progressive political arena in which regions and small states could play a full role, in a sense replacing the British ‘union’, which was then associated with the Thatcherite agenda, with a European ‘union’ that was more in tune with Scottish values. The EU became attractive to parties seeking constitutional reform, such as Labour and the Liberals who viewed subsidiarity as a vital aspect of increased Scottish autonomy, as well as the SNP, who began to view the EU as an alternative framework for security and trading opportunities that could replace the ‘external’ structure of the UK state (SNP 1992). Moreover, Labour made a strong association

between constitutional change in Scotland and Europe by arguing that an ‘enlarged democratic Europe of the Regions’ would connect ‘devolved economic and democratic structures at national and regional level [to] a more democratic European Community’ (Martin 1988: 83). In its 1997 election manifesto, Labour promised that Scotland would have direct power in Europe, including direct access to the Council of Ministers and a Scottish Minister of European Affairs.

The primary motivation behind these proposals was to undermine support for the Scottish National Party’s goal of independence in Europe, and to demonstrate how influential Scotland could be without seceding from the UK. But even the SNP had a temporary flirtation with a regionalised Europe in 1994, which revealed a rift within the party, as well as highlighting various contradictions in their policy and strategies. Meanwhile, a number of smaller parties have begun to criticise the European project, such as the Greens and Socialists, who advocated a new form of independence outside Europe (SGP 1994; SSP 2004). Interestingly, a strain of Euroscepticism appears to have re-infiltrated the SNP, who threatened to oppose the draft European Constitution in order to protect Scotland’s national interests from European encroachment in areas such as fishing and agriculture. To justify this scepticism, former SNP leader John Swinney maintained that in the early stages of integration, the SNP were naïve of the workings of Europe, and would accept anything put on their plate unquestioningly: now, one ‘shouldn’t always say yes to everything in Europe. There are some lines that we won’t cross’.<sup>1</sup> The belief in Europe as an opportunity structure for stateless nations gave way in the late 1990s to greater caution and scepticism about what regions could actually achieve in Europe, in constitutional terms as well as for obtaining resources. This was spurred by the failure of the CoR to constitute anything more than a ‘talking-shop’, the failure of Scotland and other regions to obtain guarantees for a stronger regional role in the draft European Constitution, and the continuing centralisation of powers at the state level in the Council of Ministers.

#### *Bavaria and the Defence of the Lander*

In Bavaria, whilst all parties are unquestionably pro-European, this masks a growth of scepticism about what Europe can do for Bavarians, and where its limits should be drawn. Territorial debates since the late 1980s have been dominated by a ‘Europe of the Regions’. The rationale behind this concept was the fear that European integration was encroaching on Länder competences. In response, the CSU proposed that European integration must go hand-in-hand with the protection of regional rights, and used the concept to push for the establishment of a regional committee in Europe, and increased representation in European institutions. Initially, these efforts were warmly welcomed by parties across the Bavarian political spectrum, who have all endorsed the Europe of the Regions concept. However, in practice, the way in which the opposition parties interpret this concept differs considerably from the CSU’s version, which has evolved to mean a ‘Europe of the Citizens’ for the Liberals, and a ‘Europe of the Communes’ for the Greens and SPD. Bavaria’s main opposition parties have criticised the centralisation of power at the Bavarian level by arguing for greater decentralisation to levels beneath the region (Die Gruenen 2003; BayernSD 1994). This would constitute a ‘true’ application of subsidiarity, bringing power to the lowest level possible. In contrast, the small nationalist *Bayernpartei* perceived a Europe of the Regions to underpin its demands for independence. Party interpretations of a Europe of the Regions were linked to how they constructed the Bavarian nation. For the CSU, Bavaria has a right to national self-determination, for the SPD Bavaria’s distinct character should be recognised, the FDP oppose regional ‘eccentricity’, the Bavarian Party seeks to maintain a closed society free from European, and the Greens want a multicultural Europeanised Bavaria (see Hepburn 2007b—forthcoming).

Yet since the late 1990s the CSU also appears to have lost its faith in the possibility of a regionalised Europe. It began to replace demands for a Europe of the Regions with a Europe of the Citizens in party literature (see CSU 1999). Moreover, its new territorial strategy is to increase its

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with John Swinney, Edinburgh February 2005.

powers within the German federal state, whereby the central guiding philosophy has been: if you protect the 'hard shell' of the member state, you also protect the Länder (Jeffrey 2004). This re-positioning has been accompanied by an increasingly Eurosceptical view. The CSU argues that Europe should be kept out of the areas of Bavaria's economy and society where it is not welcome, and this applies especially to the question of immigration (Hepburn 2007a). This may be partly to outflank anti-EU parties, such as *die Republikaner*, which made electoral leaps in the *Freistaat* in the late 1980s and early 1990s, thus reflecting the general malaise towards European integration among the Bavarian populace. But since the late 1990s, some federal parties have even expressed more critical attitudes towards integration processes. For instance, the Greens disapprove of the centralising aspects of EU, and their support for a Europe of the Regions highlights the importance of bringing power to the citizens at the lowest level possible, somewhat similar to the SPD.

### *Sardinia and Economic Modernisation*

In Sardinia, political parties moved from viewing European integration as a threat to their economy and society in the early 1980s to seeing it as a possibility reform. Changes in the structural funds in the late 1980s qualified Sardinia for 'Objective One' status and parties such as the Sardinian Party of Action (Psd'Az) and Christian Democrats began linking economic modernisation to a renewed autonomy for the island in a Europe of the Peoples. Mario Melis (1994), former President of the Region and Psd'Az MEP during the 1980s, emphasised the importance of European political integration for regional empowerment, and passionately advocated a Europe of the Regions. However, this idea did not take hold due to a number of reasons. First, the EU was seen by political parties as a distant and bureaucratic structure demanding adherence to its laws and regulations, not as an opportunity to advance political projects. Second, Sardinia's interests in Europe were primarily economic. The EU was viewed as a cash cow, giving Sardinia money and resources where it was needed. Third, there was no direct representation of Sardinia in Europe owing to the European Parliament electoral law in Italy. Sardinia shares a constituency with the much larger Sicilian region. This means that European elections are low-profile affairs as Sardinian politicians assume they have little chance of winning the seat, and European issues are neglected. And fourth, parties advocating a Europe of the Regions faced the challenge of overcoming popular disillusionment about what 'autonomy' could actually offer. The cosmetic nature of the autonomy measures granted to Sardinia in 1948 and the failure of successive economic 'plans of rebirth' meant that the language of autonomy became sullied and associated with Sardinia's economic and political dependence on Rome. For the Sardinian electorate, obtaining more autonomy was less important than improving standards of living; so substantive economic goals were prioritised over constitutional change.

As a result of all these factors, the demands for the renewal of Sardinian autonomy were only loosely linked to processes of integration and regionalisation in Europe, unlike the other two cases. Whilst the Psd'Az's goal of a Europe of the Peoples gained only marginal support, the new wave of Sardinian nationalism, represented by ex-Psd'Az pro-independence break-away parties *Sardegna Nazione* and *Indipendentzia Repubrica Sardegna*, was highly critical of the European project and advocates independence outside Europe (SN 1996; IRS 2003). Yet there has been a change in the perception of autonomy with the election of the Sardinian Project (PS) coalition in 2004, headed by media baron Renato Soru. The PS has sought to strengthen Sardinia's voice in Italy, and wrest control of the island from Roman politicians. However, the Project's interests lie primarily in reforming Sardinia's relations with the Italian state, in addition to developing linkages in the Mediterranean basin. It is hoped that Sardinia could act as a 'bridge' between Europe and Northern Africa (Psd'Az 2003; Sardegna Insieme 2004). Opportunities to act in the Mediterranean appear to be more tangible to the Sardinian Project government and other Sard parties than trying to increase Sardinia's voice in the distant centres of European decision-making or edging its way into the economic spaces that are already monopolised by the wealthy regions of the northern Europe.

## **Impacts of Europe on Territorial Strategies**

The case findings show that European integration has forced substate parties to take a stronger stance to protect, as well as advance, territorial interests, though this has been for differing motives. Scottish and Sardinian parties were initially hostile to the supranational project, which was viewed as another distant, elitist structure. Parties in both regions feared the exacerbation of economic inequalities and their further peripheralisation from the new economic and political centres. They also sought to fight the Common Agricultural Policy and European fisheries policies in order to protect traditional ways of life and local economies. Yet these positions changed the following decade when the European structural funds were reformed. Jacques Delors' vision of a social Europe won the hearts and minds of the Left, and some provisions were made for the protection of minority languages and cultures. However, the u-turn in party attitudes towards Europe was spurred by different motivations in each territory. Whilst in Scotland parties sympathetic to constitutional reform looked on Europe as providing an arena in which to continue the social-democratic project, Sardinian parties focussed on taking advantage of structural funds (Casula 2005). And whilst Scottish parties sought greater regional representation in European decision-making structures, Sardinian parties largely left political questions about Europe to be dealt with by party HQs.

In contrast, due to the robust state of Bavaria's economy, Bavarian parties were enthused about the possibilities of increasing trade with the single market. Bavarian parties were also more positive about the principle of European integration, whereby the future of Bavaria, as well as the development of federalism in Germany, was linked to the European project. However, the debates surrounding the deepening of European integration from the late 1980s acquired a different tone. Länder governments began to view European integration as a threat to regional competences and united to lobby for the implementation of laws to protect their rights in the German federation. The CSU-led Bavarian government was at the forefront of such efforts, and linked the need to protect and maintain Länder autonomy to the possibility of creating a Europe of the Regions. But unlike in Scotland, where this concept was viewed as a method for achieving greater autonomy for regions, for the CSU it was designed to safeguard the already considerable autonomy of the Länder.

### *A new context for autonomy claims*

In each of the cases studied, the European level constituted a new focus of demands for autonomy during the initial period of deepening integration. These were defined in different ways by substate parties and included a Europe of the Regions, a Europe of the Peoples, a Europe of the Citizens, and a Federal Europe. More specifically, nationalist parties in all regions moderated their constitutional goals in the face of new possibilities for autonomy in Europe, whilst regional branches of statewide parties adopted stronger territorial demands. However, this was for a limited period only. Although independence-seeking parties in Scotland, Bavaria and Sardinia did modify their demands to include a 'Europe of the Regions' to sit alongside long-term goals, in some cases this was only a temporary measure. The SNP quickly deserted its support for a regionalised Europe in 1994, almost immediately after it had used the slogan. The Bavarian Party also incorporated the concept into its literature, but this was secondary to its main goal of independence. In particular, the problem for nationalist parties adopting 'lesser' constitutional demands was that they were forced onto the same ground as statewide parties, and support for a Europe of the Regions reintroduced divisions within parties about how to achieve their constitutional goals. For the SNP, Europe highlighted the divide between 'fundamentalists' and 'gradualists', the former arguing for statehood nothing less, whilst gradualists supported regionalisation measures as a step towards independence; whilst the Sardinian nationalist movement splintered into pro-independence and pro-federalist parties, the former (IRS and SN) arguing for a confederal Europe, the latter (Psd'Az) arguing for a federal 'Europe of the Peoples'. The Psd'Az was the only party to move from a pro-independence position to a post-sovereignty, pro-Europe of the Regions position and stay there.

Regarding the strategies of regional branches of statewide parties, there was a ‘meeting of minds’ on certain policies in the 1990s. In Scotland and Sardinia, parties demanded stronger regional representation in state delegations to Europe, more access to European decision-making, and greater control over territorial issues affected by EU directives, whilst in Bavaria, opposition parties supported the CSU’s government’s efforts to bolster Bavaria’s international reputation and increase direct participation in European networks and institutions. But as we have seen, after temporarily supporting the empowerment of regions in Europe, the SPD, Greens and FDP all moved to a position that prioritised the strengthening of the communes in Germany and Europe, whilst parties in Scotland began to re-emphasise the intergovernmental aspects of Europe and the need for a statewide ‘united front’ in state delegations. Like the nationalist parties, then, whilst there was a convergence of demands for a Europe of the Regions amongst regional branches of statewide parties in the early 1990s, parties moved away from this position at the end of that decade.

### *The territorialisation of statewide parties*

Regional branches of statewide parties have gone through a process of ‘territorialisation’. This has a number of dimensions. First, regional branches of statewide parties have taken on a stronger regional identity. Many have pledged to constitute *the* party of the nation/region and have made various vows to fight for territorial interests. Here we think particularly of Scottish Labour, the CSU and the Sardinian Project. Second, statewide parties have offered constitutional alternatives to independence to defuse support for nationalist parties. Regional branches of parties that have centralising platforms on the state level, such as *Forza Italia Sarda* (FI), *Alleanza Nazionale* (AN) and *Partito della Rifondazione Comunista della Sardegna* (PRC) have adopted autonomist or federalist platforms. The same can be said for Scotland. The Scottish Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Socialists, Greens and Conservatives all support devolution, and with the exception of Labour parties have sought to increase Scotland’s devolved competences.

In the 1990s, demands for a ‘Europe of the Regions’ won high support across the political board. This idea was touted by social democrats (the Scottish Labour Party, the Sardinian Democrats of the Left, the Bavarian SPD), Christian democrats (the Sardinian Union of Christian Democrats—UDC, the Bavarian CSU) liberal democrats (the FDP in Bavaria, the Scottish Liberal Party) and green parties (Alliance ’90/The Greens in Bavaria). In particular, the concept gained support amongst regional government leaders, who had actively participated in European debates and institutions, and were in touch with the new concepts and rhetoric in Europe. Thus, branches of statewide parties with little or no previous claims to autonomy began to support a regionalised Europe, which defused support for nationalist parties and offered an alternative to secession for those addressing the need for territorial recognition. The desire to achieve both programmatic and organisational autonomy from the centre was evident in all three cases, affecting centre-left, centre-right, Liberal Democrat and Green parties. The territorialisation of statewide parties in response to multilevel politics has also become a general trend across Europe (Detterbeck and Hepburn 2007).

### *A new European discourse*

Some scholars have argued that one effect of European integration on nationalist parties is their adoption of civic and inclusive criteria for territorial membership, and the need to emphasise their progressive pro-European credentials (Lynch 1996; Keating 2003). It has become important for minority nationalists to ‘play’ the European ideological ‘game’, which has been shaped by political dialogue at the EU level. This was evident in the discourse of the SNP and Psd’Az, both members of the European Free Alliance. These parties advocate principles and themes common to those of the EU – such as support for free trade, diversity and multiculturalism – and a pro-European ideology is important for them to be perceived as credible. However, as these cases have shown, it is certainly not the case for all parties. We have examined how *Indipendentzia Republica de Sardigna*, *Sardignia Natzione* and the Scottish Socialist Party (not strictly a minority nationalist

party, but seeking independence) have used the language of anti-colonialism to frame their claims for independence, and have strongly objected to the perceived neoliberal policies of the EU. In a different vein, the *Bayernpartei* has shunned all attempts to ‘internationalise’ its language, indeed, its vision of the Bavarian *Heimat* is closed, homogenous and xenophobic. Finally, the CSU, which is not considered to form part of the ‘minority nationalist’ family, but who nevertheless has articulated a nationalist vision of society and maximum autonomy for the nation, has escaped pressures to advance a civic nationalist discourse. For the CSU, membership of the Bavarian *Heimat* is based on ethnic or ascriptive criteria, which excludes immigrants and foreigners. These findings therefore falsify the hypothesis that substate parties will become more ‘Euro-friendly’ as parties gain greater participation in European affairs and networks, as some clearly continue to have closed visions of the nation, whilst others oppose free trade.

### **The Rise and Fall of a Europe of the Regions**

The preceding argument indicates that substate party responses to Europe not only diverge across cases, but also across time. The next section attempts to explain why the potency of a Europe of the Regions came and went during the 1990s. Three stages in the evolution of substate party goals in Europe are identified: 1979-87, a period characterised by nationalist and left-wing animosity to the European project and a focus on the state as the ‘giver’ of autonomy; 1988-95 when the idea of a regionalised Europe led to a convergence of party demands for autonomy *in* Europe; and 1996-2005, when the failure of the Europe of the Regions caused parties to revert back to state-focused strategies, but this time seeking more autonomy *from* Europe.

In the first period, from 1979 to 1987, parties became more involved in European issues owing to the introduction of direct elections to European Parliament. At this point, the constitutional goals of parties were not yet tied to project of European integration. Instead, territorial demands were channelled to the state. At the same time, regional elites were involved in striking bargains with the centre to achieve more influence over state and regional policy-making. Here, the focus was on trading off autonomy for more access to, and resources from the state. This state-centred focus was to change with the deepening of European integration and the rising popularity of a ‘Europe of the Regions’.

In the second period, from 1987-1995, the growing trend towards decentralisation began to satisfy constitutional demands for regional autonomy. At the same time, it appeared that an alternative form of autonomy was available to political parties previously seeking independence, which amounted to a special place in a ‘Europe of the Regions’. The regionalisation debates in Europe also encouraged a response from other parties in substate political systems – those federalist or pro-centralist parties with little or no previous claims to autonomy. The opportunities presented by Europe seemed to offer a third way between independence and centralism. Parties viewed Europe not only as a new context for exercising autonomy, but also a centre from which to secure resources, in particular the structural funds. The overriding philosophy at this point was ‘let us in’. But this reasoning, and the strategies that accompanied it, was unsustainable.

During the last period, from 1996 to 2005, parties began to question whether their territorial strategies could be met in Europe, particularly due to the continuing weakness of the CoR and their failure to obtain guarantees for regional recognition in the European constitution. The apparent ‘closing’ of opportunities for regions to act in Europe put an end to cross-party consensus on pursuing regional autonomy in Europe, with many nationalist parties reverting back to previous positions. As opportunities appeared to dwindle away, some parties began to fall back on state channels, whilst others began taking more Eurosceptical positions, such as the SNP, CSU and the new wave of Sardinian nationalist parties. The ‘closing’ of opportunities for regional action in Europe caused parties to revert back to previous state-centred positions: seeking more access to, resources from, or protection by the state in order to ward off unwanted European influences.

### Mapping Autonomy Strategies

We may now construct three typologies that plot the autonomy strategies of substate parties in relation to domestic constitutional change against their attitudes towards European integration. During the first period, from 1979-87 (Figure 1) nationalist parties in Scotland and Bavaria both adopted anti-EU positions, seeking independence outside Europe. The Psd'Az is the exception: in 1979 it was both pro-independence and pro-European. The FDP supported state federalism within an overarching federal European structure, whilst the Scottish LibDems, the UDC and the CSU supported a more decentralised type of European federalism, which would recognise regional identities and allow for divergence amongst regions. The Bavarian Greens were the first supporters of a 'Europe of the Regions' in 1979, based on the grounds of stateless nations' rights to recognition. Finally, both centre-left and centre-right parties in Scotland and Sardinia were unsympathetic to demands for either regionalisation or federalism during this time. Where they differ is that whilst the Left (the PCI, PSI and SLP) were sceptical of European integration, the Right (the Scottish Conservatives and *Movimento Sociale Italiano*—predecessor of the AN) were pro-European integration, primarily viewing integration in an economic sense.

**Figure 1. Substate Party Domestic and European Constitutional Demands 1979-87**

Autonomy Strategies	<b>independence</b>	Psd'Az			SNP, BP
	<b>federalism (decentralised)</b>	SLD, DC CSU	Bav Greens		
	<b>federalism (centralised)</b>	FDP			SPD
	<b>devolution</b>				
	<b>unionism/ state integration</b>			Scottish Cons MSI	SLP, PCI/PSI
		<b>supranational Europe</b>	<b>regionalised Europe</b>	<b>intergov. Europe</b>	<b>no/anti-EU</b>
		Desired European Construct			

The most striking issue in the period 1988-95 (Figure 2) was the clustering of demands for a Europe of the Regions, which was put forward by Christian Democrat, left-wing, Green and Liberal parties. Thus, the Left adopted a pro-autonomy and pro-European position simultaneously. At the same time, support for a Europe of the Regions was most strongly associated with devolution by the Labour Party in Scotland, and with decentralising federalism by the CSU and the UDC and Psd'Az in Sardinia. But whilst the Psd'Az fully embraced the idea of a federal Europe of the Peoples, other nationalist parties, namely the SNP and BP, only briefly flirted with the idea of a regionalised Europe. Instead, their positions were more strongly characterised by their repositioning as more pro-European parties and their adoption of the policy of independence *in* Europe. The Bavarian Greens at this point began to drop their commitment to a Europe of the Regions, in response to the CSU's monopolisation of the term, and reverted back to demands for a decentralised federal Europe

that did not have a specifically ‘regionalist’ dimension. Meanwhile, the regional Right remained committed to state integration of the territory, or unionism, within a state-dominated Europe.

**Figure 2. Substate Party Domestic and European Constitutional Demands 1988-95**

Autonomy Strategies	<b>independence</b>			SNP*, BP*	
	<b>federalism (decentralised)</b>		CSU, (U)DC Psd' Az FDP		
	<b>federalism (centralised)</b>		Bav Greens SPD, PCI— DS/RC		
	<b>devolution</b>		SLP, SLD		
	<b>unionism/ state integration</b>			FI/AN, Scottish Cons	
		<b>supranational Europe</b>	<b>regionalised Europe</b>	<b>intergov. Europe</b>	<b>no/anti-EU</b>

Desired European Construct

In this final period, party families splintered unevenly across a range of dimensions. The Scottish Conservatives moved to a pro-devolution position. The Italian Left abandoned its commitment to unitarism, and split into groups supporting either a centralised federal Italy within a regionalised or intergovernmental Europe. In particular, both the Sardinian Project and the DS favoured cooperative federalism in Italy based on grounds of social solidarity. Meanwhile, the RC’s desired European construct was more similar to that of the Psd’ Az: it sought a regionalised Europe (a ‘Europe of the Peoples’) that recognised the Sard identity. But as for the structure of the Italian state within a regionalised Europe, the RC sided with other centre-left parties in Italy in arguing for a form of cooperative federalism, whilst the Psd’ Az – like the CSU – favoured greater policy divergence for regions in Europe. Meanwhile, the Italian Right advanced proposals for ‘devolution’, but this actually meant continuing regional structural dependence on state finances for the Sardinian branches. The AN, whilst officially endorsing ‘devolution’ remained sceptical of decentralising more powers to the regions, and has elsewhere reconfirmed its commitment to national unity and state integration; the FI, however, does endorse a competitive federalism that allows for regional divergence. Bavarian opposition parties meanwhile dropped the concept of a Europe of the Regions and reverted to supporting a supranational Europe, which was part of their strategy of opposing Bavarian centralisation, and their new emphasis on communal decentralisation. The CSU also dropped the idea of a Europe of the Regions, and instead concentrated on winning a clear demarcation of competences between Europe, the states and the Länder in a decentralised competitive Europe. To protect its competences, though, the CSU argued for a strengthening of the states in Europe, rather than strengthening of the regions in Europe (thus it moved to supporting an intergovernmental Europe, though this also means strengthening the regions *within* the state). One can also identify a clustering of old and new socialist, green and nationalist independence-seeking parties against Europe during the last period, which is mainly due to their frustration with the limitations for regional action in Europe.

**Figure 3. Substate Party Domestic and European Constitutional Demands 1996-2005**

Autonomy Strategies	<b>independence</b>			SNP, BP	SN*, IRS*, SSP, Scot Greens*
	<b>federalism (decentralised)</b>	FDP, SLD Bav Greens	Psd'Az	CSU, (U)DC	
	<b>federalism (centralised)</b>	SPD	RC	Sardinian Project, DS	
	<b>devolution</b>			SLP, FI/AN*, Scottish Cons	
	<b>unionism/ state integration</b>			AN*	
		<b>supranational Europe</b>	<b>regionalised Europe</b>	<b>intergov. Europe</b>	<b>no/anti-EU</b>

Desired European Construct

These figures indicate a number of important developments in territorial responses to Europe. They show the negative response of minority nationalist parties to the closing of opportunities for regional action, many of whom have adopted pro-independence and Eurosceptical positions, whilst the CSU (as a Christian Democrat, but also an autonomist party) also became jaded with the possibilities of direct participation in Europe, and reverted back to lobbying within the state for more Land powers and protection. It is evident that the regional Left during the last period has lost its cohesiveness as a party family, with regional socialist and social-democratic parties taking up a range of positions from independence outside Europe, to more fiscal autonomy in a federal or regional Europe, to a Europe of the Communes. Likewise, the regional Right adopted a variety of positions, endorsing federalism, devolution and fiscal autonomy. The LibDems have been consistent in demands for a federal Europe, though there are differences between parties on the type of federalism sought, and the rights and recognition the regions should have. Finally, whilst the Greens in Bavaria moved from support to a Europe of the Regions that recognised the rights of minority nations to opposing regional centralisation, the Scottish Greens contrarily support the goal of independence for Scotland, to be exercised outside Europe until EU structures are reformed.

### **Explaining Variation**

Based on the case analyses, we can also identify a number of spatial variables that have affected parties' territorial strategies in Europe. These are categorised as: (1) access to European institutions and organisations, (2) local party competition, (3) economic resources and (4) constraints of state structures. With regard to the first variable, whilst Scottish and Bavarian parties have relatively strong representation in Europe, in terms of their seats in the European Parliament, CoR, and involvement in RegLeg, Sardinia is unable to elect its own MEP. Parties ability to access European institutions directly affects their ability to affect the development of agendas at the European level. The second variable is economic resources. Parties operating in rich regions can mobilise the population around programmes that increase the region's autonomy to act in European markets

without fear of losing economic protection by the state. In particular, for parties seeking independence in Europe, it is important that they make their projects economically viable. This is a problem in poorer regions, whereby the territory's dependence on state resources may undermine demands for independence. The SNP only began its electoral rise after it was able to mount an economic case for independence, based on North Sea oil revenues, whilst the Pds'Az was unable to mount such a case in Sardinia. Third, local party competition affects territorial strategies. Electorally and politically significant parties have been able to set the territorial agenda in the region, and other parties must respond to this. This has been the case for the CSU and the SNP, who both adopted strong European platforms. But if there's no strong nationalist party in the territory, the territorial dimension of party competition will be determined by statewide parties, which has been the case in Sardinia. Finally, the development and pursuit of territorial strategies in Europe is affected by state constraints. Regions have different capacities to legislate and to influence state policy on Europe. For instance, the Bavarian government has access to Germany's European policy-making through the Bundesrat; the Scottish Executive contributes to the UK negotiating line in Europe through intergovernmental channels, and the Sardinian Junta has been pressing for greater regional representation in Italian intra-state institutions, though this has been slow in coming.

### **Conclusions**

To conclude, during the mid-1990s, almost all of the parties examined in these three cases adopted the goal of a Europe of the Regions, which was used to support a variety of territorial projects, including constitutional goals (being linked to federalism, devolution and independence), socioeconomic goals (access to European structural funding) and protectionism (pushing back European competences). Thus, despite facing similar opportunities and challenges in Europe, regional responses to European integration varied widely. Whilst some regional parties viewed Europe as an alternative framework to the state for advancing their autonomy, others perceived integration as a threat, and sought to strengthen the state to prevent Europe from encroaching on their competences. Moreover, substate parties have advanced diverse understandings of 'Europe', either as a set of opportunity structures or constraints for territorial interests.

But the most striking aspect of this case study analysis is that parties have almost continuously changed their positions on Europe, in particular, becoming more Eurosceptical when they believed their demands were not being met. The increasing sense of Euro-scepticism surrounding the draft European Constitution, evident especially in Scotland and Bavaria, indicates that parties have loosened the ties between autonomy claims and the evolving regionalisation project, and have moved back to more Eurosceptical positions. This demonstrates the instrumental nature of substate party support for integration. The adoption of these 'European' terms by substate parties was often tactical, as was the adoption of a 'pro-European' attitude more generally – for some parties it was clearly motivated by the desire to receive resources, increase influence and to be accepted into European party families, rather than demonstrating long-term attitudinal change. To that end, Europeanisation can be understood as a strategy by parties to manipulate the dimensions of a given political issue – be it autonomy, economic resources or protectionism – at the local, state or European levels. This is evident in the discourse of nationalist parties, which have become more critical of European integration, owing to the realisation that some European directives threaten territorial interests, whilst regional branches of statewide parties have begun to re-emphasise the benefits of state unity. This means that the decade just passed may end up being remembered as a fleeting phase of cross-party convergence regarding the aims of autonomy in a Europe of the Regions, amidst a general era when the constitutional aims of substate parties were clearer – with those seeking independence and other forms of self-determination on one side and the rest devising strategies to prevent this from happening on the other.

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