Violent Separatism and Academic Silence: The Case of Corsica

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SUM-UP (english) – This paper focuses on the not well-known case of Corsica. It proposes a sum up of its contemporary political history, searches the reason of the academic silence on the region, proposes a brief review on the available literature and finally present the current administrative reform process.

RESUME (français) – Ce papier se concentre sur le cas méconnu de la Corse. Il propose un résumé de son histoire politique contemporaine, cherche les raisons du silence académique sur la région, propose une bref revue de la littérature disponible et finalement, présente l’actuel processus de réforme administrative.

RIASSUNTO (italiano) – Questo paper si concentra sul caso pocco conosciuto della Corsica. Propone un riassunto della sua storia politica contemporanea, cerca le ragioni del silenzio accademico sulla regione, propone una breve rassegna della letteratura disponibile e finalmente presenta l’attuale processo di riforma amministrativa.
This paper aims to present the political situation in contemporary Corsica, the scientific analysis given to it and the current reform process started in 1999. Even if the comparative perspective is always fruitful to understand better any political phenomenon, the interest of such a brief case study seems to us obvious for several reasons. First, as a general feature, Corsica is the region which has expressed the most solid contestation to French centralism for these last thirty years; it is an illustration – in the case of France – of the rise of regional nationalism in Western Europe since the 1970s. Second, Corsica is the only case of long-running violent separatism with Ulster and Euskadi. But despite this originality it has grabbed very little attention in the academic field in France as in international audience. We will attempt to present the factual situation, then to present the analyses of political science and the reasons why there are not numerous, and conclude by introducing the past and present accommodation policies led by the French state.

1. The historical background of the "Corsican question"

This paragraph only aims to give a brief historical overview on Corsican contemporary political history. It might not be useless given the fact that this region is not so well known in the literature. Those who know a little bit the island can go directly to paragraph 2.

Corsica was a Genoese colony until the eighteenth century. From 1729 to 1769 the island has known a "Revolution", as historians say. Local and sporadic protests against fiscal pressure were progressively transformed into a political attempt to create a genuine nation-state under the rule of Pasquale Paoli (1725-1807). The leader of the Corsican nation declared the independence (1755-1769) and established a true modern Constitution which was said to have had influence on the American one. This episode has retained the attention of historians in France (Coppolani & Coppolani 1978; Avon-Soletti 1998) but also in the United States (Hall 1970; Trasher 1970), in the United Kingdom (Carrontin 1973) or in Italy (Venturi 1974; Bordini 1979).

But the Republic of Genoa asked France to help it to reestablish order and to defeat the Corsican rebels. France accepted but refused to give the island back to its former masters: as claimed by the 1768 treaty of Versailles, Corsica was a gage promised to France if Genoa would not be able to refund all the money spent to take care of French soldiers. The official incorporation of the island to France was proclaimed in 1789. From this moment a slow process of cultural, economical and political integration started, following the features well presented by Eugen Weber (1976). But this integration was quite ambiguous because first it laid on the

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1 An notable exception can be found in the overview performed by F. Letamendia (2000).
mediation of local politicians between center and periphery, using patronage with the tacit acceptance of the French state, and second from the end of the nineteenth century it laid on a constant Corsican emigration, mainly in public administration in mainland France and in the colonies. The situation in the island was quite difficult, especially at the economic point of view. France did a lot for Corsicans but few for Corsica.

As elsewhere in Europe, a cultural and then political regionalist protest progressively raised from the end of the nineteenth-century; the first autonomist party, the Partitu Corsu d’Azione, was created in 1920 and became the Partitu Corsu Autonomistu in 1927. This party contested electoral fraud and clientelism, economic backwardness and cultural alienation. But it refused to participate to elections, had a very reduced social basis and its main leaders sustained Italian fascist irredentism (Pomponi 1977). That is why the idea of regional autonomy was without legitimacy after the Second World War.

A second wave of regionalism raised in the late 1950s. It was only a question of socio-economical protest at the beginning, a regional lobbying rather than a nationalist movement. But from the early 1960s a series of local autonomist groups develop the idea of a threat against the "Corsican ethnie", while others in mainland France were constituting their own movement. The autonomist movement was structured in the late 1960s. In 1975 in Aleria a group of autonomists occupied a cave to denounce traffics in the vineyard sector. The police assaulted them, one Corsican activist is injured, one policeman is killed. For the first time the Corsican question is known at the national level. This is the crucial episode for the transformation of the local politics into a national issue. One year after the National Front of Liberation of Corsica (FLNC) is created: it corresponds to the effective birth of violent separatism. It rejected the autonomist claims as too shy and inefficient. It proclaims the National Liberation Struggle against the French State. Most of its actions consist in bombing building – 4141 between 1 January 1980 and 31 December 1989 according to M. Lefèbvre (2000: 11) – even if some people are killed (Crettiez 1999b). In 1990 the separatist movement is victim of an internal scission into three rival groups which will fought each other before concluding a farewell to arms by 1998. Only a smaller organization – Armata Corsa – has stayed outside this movement of unification.

But the nationalist movement, even if it is in a situation of minority, is not marginal anymore, as shown by its electoral results (see table 1).

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2 The complete list of Corsican nationalist movements (public and clandestine) is very difficult to draw. For a recent overview see Dominici (2002).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lists</strong></td>
<td>PPC, UPC, Charles Santoni</td>
<td>UPC, PPC</td>
<td>MCA</td>
<td>CN, MPA</td>
<td>CN</td>
<td>CN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of votes</strong></td>
<td>14 502 (UPC) 3 287 (Charles Santoni) 2 886 (PPC)</td>
<td>8 484 (PPC) 7146 (UPC)</td>
<td>13 997</td>
<td>21 872 (CN) 10 360 (MPA)</td>
<td>12 233</td>
<td>20 076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Percentage</strong></td>
<td>6,19 2,40 2,11</td>
<td>5,21</td>
<td>8,97</td>
<td>16,85 7,98</td>
<td>9,86</td>
<td>16,77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>16,13 11,41</td>
<td>8,97</td>
<td>24,84</td>
<td>9,86</td>
<td>16,77</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of seats</strong></td>
<td>7+1+1=9</td>
<td>3+3=6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9+4=13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Electoral results of the Corsican nationalist movement at the regional elections (1982-2002).

**Source**: Le Roux (2001: 17).

**Notes.** (i) Names of the lists
UPC: Union du Peuple Corse [Union of the Corsican People]
PPC: Parti du Peuple Corse [Corsican People Party]
MCA: Mouvement Corse pour l'Autodétermination [Corsican Movement for the Self-Determination, leaded by Pierre Poggioli]
MPA: Mouvement Pour l'Autodétermination [Movement For the Self-Determination, leaded by Alain Orsoni]
CN: Corsica Nazione

(ii) Frequency of the elections.
The regional assembly is elected for 6 years. But there were three dissolutions in 1984, 1986 and 1999.

2. The "academic silence": searching for explanations

After such a description, one cannot deny that Corsica can be described as a relevant fieldwork to political science analyses, especially for the scholars who study nationalism, ethnicity, multiculturalism, etc. But it is not so. Why such an academic silence, as we proposed to call it in the title of this paper? Four responses may be given.

The first one can be said to be the importance of stereotypes on Corsica. The island is still seen as the land of banditry, violence, vendettas and tradition. Once described as "a piece of Middle Ages in the heart of the Mediterranean" by a French journalist at the beginning of the twentieth century, the vision of the island as a land of tradition has led to a logic monopole of historians in the scientific discourse about the region. As a matter of fact, the last chapters of the "History of Corsica" books have been for a long time the only source of academic reflection (Antonetti 1973; Pomponi 1979; Arrighi & Olivesi 1990; Vergé-Franceschini 1996). It has been prolonged by the interest of geography, which has performed useful informative studies (Tafani 1986; Lefèbvre 2000) but without really going beyond description.

The second reason can be found in the relatively parochial level of the study of ethnicity and nationalism in France comparing to other countries, especially in the Anglo-Saxon community (Llobera 1998). This was problematic for Corsica because as a French territory it has been only studied by French people (and almost exclusively by Corsicans). Not only the
theoretical tools were not spread within the whole French academic community, but there was also a strong ethic reluctance to study "ethnicity" as if it were a danger for social order, a potential recognition of the existence of ethnic diversity among the French nation. From the 1990s things have changed: nationalism has been taken into account as a respectable, even still minor, field of research in France (Delannoi & Taguieff 1991; AA.VV. 1995; Hermet 1996; Birnbaum 1997; Busekist 1998; Delannoi 1999), like ethnicity (Poutignat & Streiff-Fénart 1995; Martiniello 1995). And this movement was accompanied by critics on the ethical position according to which to talk about ethnicity is to recognize its existence against the current Jacobin nation (Cahen 1997; Otayek 2000).

The third reason, developed by J.-L. Fabiani (2001), may take into account the situation of violence in the island which may dissuade Corsican intellectuals to express their view and their analyses: it would prevent the establishment of a true public sphere where conceptions and analyses about the situation and the future of the island can be discussed.

The fourth reason might be found in the nature of political violence in Corsica. It is true that it is a long-lasting phenomenon since it began in 1973 and is still present. To this respect, Corsica can be compared to Northern Ireland and the Basque Country. But what distinguishes the French region is the qualitative level of violence: relatively few persons are killed, and most of them are nationalist which were engaged in a fratricide struggle for ideological positions and financial means. Most of the actions consist in bombing buildings which represent whether the presence of the central government in the island or "stranger" land occupation by tourists or "continental" people. The recent works of Xavier Crettiez (1999a) have shown that Corsican separatism is finally moderately violent (see table 2). From 1974 to 1995, 31 people were killed by the FLNC: 7 members of police or gendarmerie, one high civil servant, 9 anti-nationalist activists, 11 people suspected to have links with criminality (Crettiez 1999b: 207).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Banks</th>
<th>Administrations</th>
<th>Police</th>
<th>Villas</th>
<th>Tourism</th>
<th>Commerce</th>
<th>Trade unions and political parties</th>
<th>Non political</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>423</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>999</td>
<td>357</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion in all the actions</strong></td>
<td>7,6%</td>
<td>10,15%</td>
<td>3,5%</td>
<td>18,1%</td>
<td>6,5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1,15%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Proportion in all the political actions</strong></td>
<td>12,5%</td>
<td>16,7%</td>
<td>5,6%</td>
<td>29,7%</td>
<td>10,6%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>1,9%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2. Targets of the FLNC (1980-1995).** Source: Crettiez (1999a: 110)
3. The content of the analysis: a unique paradigm

In spite of these sources of academic inhibitions, some books and articles have been written on Corsica, especially in these last years (Roux 2001). We propose here to perform a brief review of literature which is part of a work in progress; it may not be exhaustive.

In spite of the importance of Corsican in the French political actuality, very few studies have been made on Corsica. In particular political science has been for a long time in a situation of backwardness comparing to history, geography, anthropology, sociology and law. It has been necessary to wait 1987 to read the first true political analysis of the Corsican question thanks to John Loughlin (1989), and ten years more to read the first French ones by Jean-Louis Briquet (1997) and, at a less developed level, Emmanuel Bernabeu-Casanova (1997). They have been completed by Xavier Crettiez (1999) on political violence two years after.

Generally speaking, two kinds of complementary approaches have been developed on Corsica in social sciences. The first one has focused on the way local politics function, with a particular emphasis on the traditional clan structure and political clientelism. This has been the case in history (Pomponi 1978), anthropology (Ravis-Giordani 1978, Lenclud 1988) and political science (Olivesi 1983; Briquet 1997). As shown by historians, this is an old feature of Corsican political culture which is far from being exceptional in the Mediterranean. Corsica was organized mainly in rural communities ruled by notables which took their power from their socio-economic dominance and their privileged relationships with Genoa (Graziani 1997). The incorporation to France did not change such a situation: the rulers were different (French bureaucrats instituting a rational-legal system instead of Genoese colons) but the position of mediators between center and periphery was unchanged (Pomponi 1978). After a period of uncertainty until the First Empire (Emmanuelli 1989), France decided to integrate effectively the island. This movement actually started from the Second Empire and strongly developed during the Third Republic (Pomponi 1978; Ravis-Giordani 1978; Briquet 1997): the gap that may exist between French bureaucratic projects of cultural, economical and political assimilation and Corsican inherited reality was filled in by the mediation of the local ruling class. Two main characteristics can be attributed to the Corsican notables: in the island they are members of powerful families within which the electoral mandate is transmitted, not rarely from the father to the son; in Paris they are inserted in the state bureaucracy, in general as member of Parliament elected in Corsica.

3 As a matter of fact, this study is an application of Miroslav Hroch's model (2000) of genesis of nationalism to the case of Corsica. It only indicates when it is possible to locate the phases "A", "B" and "C", without really going the descriptive step.
The second approach has focused on the emergence of a territorial protest against the French center which has changed progressively from territorial defense to regionalism, claim for autonomy and finally violent separatism (Dottelonde 1984). This second approach is more interesting for the topic proposed in this workshop. As a synthesis, we can put that the Corsican question:
- has been expressed in the 1960s with the rise of regionalist claims, even if it has older roots;
- reflects an interactive process between the Parisian center and the Corsican periphery (Rokkan & Urwin 1983);
- has been analyzed through a unique paradigm: social change provoked by the economic growth imploied by the regional development policies; this situation has been the source of the crisis of mediation between center and periphery and traditionally performed by the local ruling class (Dressler-Holohan 1981, Loughlin 1989; Benedetti 1990; Briquet 1997). This is synthesized in the schema 1.

**Schema 1.** The main explicative scheme of the rise of Corsican regionalism in contemporary social sciences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Regional development policies</th>
<th>Economic growth</th>
<th>Social change</th>
<th>Crisis of the mediation center/periphery</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rise of Corsican regionalism</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Let’s focus on this last analysis. As a matter of fact it contains two elements. The first one is the study of economic development through the regional policies imploed by the French government from the 1950s (Guigue 1965). The economic underdevelopment of the island is acknowledged with the observation that very few has been done before. As a reaction a Regional Action Plan is voted in 1957; its main goal is to reduce the difference that exists between Corsica and mainland France within the framework of a general planning which aims to homogenize the whole French territory. Concretely the project wants to promote tourism and agriculture, even if the second will receive more funds (concentrated on the oriental plain) than the first. This has a certain efficiency on the economic landscape, as noted by J. Loughlin: "The Corsican Regional Action Plan produced some spectacular results. The number of tourists arriving on the island rocketed. A modern, industrialized type of agriculture was introduced and developed by pieds-noirs repatriates from Algeria who were given large amounts of land on Corsica’s oriental plain at cheap prices" (1985: 16). The local politicians cooperated to the implementation of the plan and the period from the immediate post-war period to the 1970s corresponds to the transition of a traditional society to a modern one (Renucci 1974). This includes deep social changes, in particular the desertification of the inside in favor of the littoral while the population got always older.
The second element is the political level, i.e. the fact that the main actors of this economic growth were not Corsicans but repatriates from previous North-African colonies. Such a situation lets grow a feeling of deprivation among Corsicans which was expressed by regionalist groups, first in terms of socio-economic claims (as a regional lobby coming from civil society) and then as an autonomist mobilization denouncing the clientelist practices of the local politicians in complicity with the French state, the threat against the existence itself of the Corsican ethnic group confronted to the arrival of the repatriates and, above all, his exclusion from the participation to the leading economic activities of the island. As commented by Loughlin, "this rapid development of some sectors of the Corsican economy threatened to accelerate the break-up of the traditional society and excluded large numbers of Corsicans, such as small hoteliers, peasants over whom the pieds-noirs were given priority, shopkeepers and businessmen outside of the areas zoned for expansion. This (…) was directly responsible for sparking off the potential conflict of the cultural element and led to a radical questioning of the traditional structures within Corsican society and between it and the state" (1985: 16). The excluded groups were heterogeneous but found in the autonomist claim a common political project.

The traditional French reluctance to recognize within the public sphere any source of particularism and the repression of autonomist claims in the late 1970s, the incoherent behavior of the successive governments from 1981 (which switch from severe repression to secret negotiations with clandestine groups), and the division of the nationalist movement (Vallée 1997; Olivesi 1998) led to a radicalization of the nationalist claims and the persistence to the Corsican question, now completely expressed in term of an identity issue.

4. The accommodation policies

In the various attempts to bring a solution to the Corsican question, the institutional reform has been the main one. The "proto-reforms" in the 1970s have led to separate Corsica from the future region PACA (Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur) and to become a bi-départementale entity. Corsica has been a départementale entity from 1790 to 1982 (single département from 1790 to 1796 and 1811 to 1795, set of two départements from 1796 to 1811 and from 1975 to nowadays). It became a French region in 1982 when these institutions were created. The recognition of a certain ethno-cultural difference of the island with respects to mainland France leads to a succession of special administrative status.

4 The official statistics estimate at 17,000 the numbers of repatriates in Corsica from the 1960s while the regional population was estimated at only 250,000 people (Dressler-Holohan 1981: 149).
The Corsican "particular status", imagined by the Socialist Party from 1976 and foreseen by the laws of 2 March and 30 July 1982, was not really different from the common rule. It anticipated the 1986 common status (that is why it has been "particular" only for four years). Without entering into all the institutional details, the main creations were a regional assembly of 61 members elected at the universal suffrage, an executive power devoted to its president, three "public establishments of intervention" (for agricultural development, hydraulic furniture, and transports), and two consultative councils (one for economic and social matters, the other for cultural and educational issues). But progressively the clanist politicians succeeded in taking the control of the new institutions: even if they were against the regional reform at the beginning, they became dominant in a very unstable assembly and imposed their way to work. The administrative institutions were little activated while the political ones, with direct control on regional resources (which were necessary to keep clienteles), were always at work. The consultative councils were marginal, the cultural one with a strong autonomist ideology and the socio-economic one dominated by socio-professional representatives. The collaboration with the regional services of central government was weakly developed. Finally, the Corsican assembly looks like a third conseil général. So the institutional reform did not change the previous habitudes (Dressler-Holohan 1985; Michalon 1986). And the nationalist protest was not satisfied: there was no recognition of the Corsican people nor of the Corsican language, as asked by them and then by the whole Corsican assembly in 1988.

That is why the "statut Joxe" (1991) marked a real attempt to recognize the Corsican particularism (Olivesi 1991; Michalon 1991). Imagined from 1988, it offered extended powers to the region, called "territorial collectivity of Corsica". However the main change was the official (i.e. juridical) recognition of the Corsican people, as put by article 1 of the draft of 31 October 1990:

"The French Republic recognizes to the living historical and cultural community that is constituted by the Corsican people, component of the French people, the rights to the preservation of its cultural identity and the defense of its specific economic and social interests. These rights, linked to insularity, are enjoyed in the respect of national unity within the framework of the Constitution, the laws of the Republic and the present status."

But the French Constitutional Council declared that this article was unconstitutional in its decision of 9 May 1991:

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6 The Conseil général is the local assembly which corresponds to the département.
"Considering that France is, as claimed by article 2 of the 1958 Constitution, an indivisible, secular, democratic and social Republic which guarantees the equality of the law for all the citizens whatever origin they have; that now the mention done by the legislator of "Corsican people, component of the French people" is contrary to the Constitution, which knows only the French people, composed by all the French citizens without any distinction of origin, race or religion."

If the dichotomy ethnic/civic has been often criticized, its ideological reality was embodied by this controversy. The commentators of the new status estimated that there were two distinct elements in the legislative text: the administrative ones which concerned the juridical aspects of power, and the political one expressed by the controversy on the recognition of the Corsican people. As a matter of fact, lawyers have shown that the Constitutional Council might have accepted this recognition from a strictly technical point of view (Favoreu 1991).

But, more discreetly, this status tried to increase the responsibility of the local ruling class. It instituted a quasi parliamentary system with a collegial regional executive power responsible in front of the Corsican assembly (but without having the right of dissolution). It was a way for the central government to escape from the classical accusation of excessive centralism as unique reason of the blocked situation.

But, in the same manner, if more power was conceded to Corsican representatives, the rules of the political game did not change and it was the same traditional politicians who were able to stay at the power in the island (Briquet 1997), while the nationalist groups were in crisis: the fall of autonomist groups and the logic of mortal struggle within the separatist groups, now accused of using also clientelism (Molas 2000) were the main indicators.

The current "Matignon process" (1999-2004) (see table 3) seems to be more audacious. In rupture with the policy led after the assassination of the prefect Clause Erignac on 6 February 1998, the socialist government of Lionel Jospin decided from 1999 and the affair of the paillotes to organize a round-table in Paris with all Corsican regional councilors to reflect about a reform of the 1991 status in the sense of a greater autonomy. At the difference of the 1982 and 1991 status, all the members of the Corsican assembly – including the separatist members of the coalition Corsica Nazione – were associated to the preparation of the new text. This confirms the will of a growing responsibility given to the Corsican representatives in order to satisfy the claims of devolution as to free central government from the accusation of being the only responsible of the Corsican problems.

The main features of the bill were:

7 The paillotes are little beach restaurants exploited during the touristy season. They were considered as illegal because their presence was violating the rules of environment law. In April 1999, a commando of gendarmes burned one near Ajaccio. The chief of gendarmerie and the prefect were immediately incarcerated.
- a devolution of powers from central government to Corsica in order to enable the island to adapt national laws to their own specificities (that is why a Constitutional reform should be done in 2004 after an evaluation of the experiences performed between 2002 and 2004);
- the recognition of the Corsican cultural specificities, especially for linguistic issues. The text proposes to integrate Corsican lessons within the normal program and to allow pupils – actually their parents – who do not want to follow them to have the faculty to do so;
- to promote the economic development of the island but also to return to the common rule in term of fiscal dispositions.

It is also important to note that for the first time since the entry of nationalist representatives in the Corsican assembly an alliance has been concluded between the separatist coalition led by J.-G. Talamoni and the liberal right-wing party Démocratie Libérale led by J. Rossi.

But after more than two years of work, the final result is not at the level of the expectations. First because the Senate (right-wing majority) has been more restrictive than the National Assembly (left-wing majority from 1997) in granting extended powers to the Corsican region. Second because the Constitutional Council has estimated that one of the major disposition – namely the partial devolution of legislative power from the Parliament to the Corsican Assembly in given and limited conditions – was unconstitutional. As a matter of fact, the bill included in its article 1:

"Lorsque l'Assemblée de Corse estime que les dispositions législatives en vigueur ou en cours d'élaboration présentent pour l'exercice des compétences de la collectivité territoriale des difficultés d'application liées aux spécificités de l'île, elle peut demander au Gouvernement que le législateur lui ouvre la possibilité de procéder à des expérimentations législatives comportant le cas échéant des dérogations aux règles en vigueur, en vue de l'adoption ultérieure par le Parlement de dispositions législatives appropriées.

La demande prévue à l'alinea précédent est faite par délibération motivée de l'Assemblée de Corse.

La loi fixe la nature et la portée de ces expérimentations ainsi que les cas, conditions et délais dans lesquels la collectivité territoriale pourra faire application de ces dispositions (...).

Les mesures prises à titre expérimetal par la collectivité territoriale de Corse cessent de produire leur effet au terme du délai fixé si la Parlement, au vu du rapport d'évaluation qui lui a été fourni, n'a pas procédé à leur adoption." (bill of 18 December 2001)

This article dealt with a clearly limited devolution under the control of the French Parliament. But the Constitutional Council has decided that according to the current letter of the French Constitution this was contrary to the established rule. This is only a confirmation of the particularity of the French text: if it is true that most of the European great islands have a particular status linked to the insularity – in particular the examples of the Balearic islands, Sicily
and Sardinia were often mentioned, it is also true that this particularity is explicitly recognized
within the Constitution. That is why it will be interesting to wait an eventual Constitutional
reform in 2004 to see if there is still a French reluctance to recognize officially the ethno-national
diversity or if there is a normalization of the norms within the framework of European
harmonization.

However, it must be noticed that article 7 which guarantees the teaching of the Corsican
language has been accepted if the right to dispense pupils from following them is guaranteed
itself. Above all, during the preparation of the law, the MP's realized that it was a right already in
practice for almost 80% of young Corsicans within the framework of the current laws – and the
missing 20% were caused by financial problems to pay teachers, and not by political opposition
against cultural rights.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 March 2000</td>
<td>First deliberations of the Corsican assembly in Ajaccio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 April 2000</td>
<td>Second meeting in Matignon.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 July 2000</td>
<td>First governmental conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 July 2000</td>
<td>Conference of the presidents of the political groups in the Corsican Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 July 2000</td>
<td>Last meeting of the working group and publication of the final governmental conclusions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 July 2000</td>
<td>Approval of the governmental conclusions by the Corsican Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 December 2000</td>
<td>Avis by the Corsican assembly on the draft of the bill of law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 February 2001</td>
<td>Avis of the Conseil d’Etat on the governmental draft: &quot;it might be declared unconstitutional&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-22 February 2001</td>
<td>Approval by the government of the draft and sending to the National Assembly in Paris.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 May 2001</td>
<td>Discussion, modification and approval of the bill in the first lecture by the National Assembly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-8 November 2001</td>
<td>Discussion and approval of a modified version by the Senate.</td>
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<td>21, 27 and 28 November, 4 December 2001</td>
<td>Second discussion and approval of a second version by the National Assembly.</td>
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<td>17 January 2002</td>
<td>Control by the French Constitutional Council and declaration of partial unconstitutionality.</td>
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Table 3. The main steps of the Matignon process (1999-2002).

Conclusion

As a conclusion, we can see that Corsica has been a blind spot territory in political research despite of being a relevant fieldwork for the problematic of ethno-national diversity. In a certain sense, we can say that political science has discovered the island recently. This paper
hopes to contribute to make political scientists pay a greater attention to this region, especially when a comparative perspective is required – as proposed by L. De Winter & H. Türsan recently.

And beyond the particular case, it seems to us very interesting to study the accommodation policies led by France in a context in which Jacobin conception of the nation meets European trends to more decentralization and subsidiarity. The next great step for France and the Corsican question is 2004; let us hope that the observers will be numerous.

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