THE IDENTITY POLITICS OF MULTICULTURAL NATIONALISM
A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE REGULAR PUBLIC ADDRESSES

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1. 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 during the last decades, comparatively little attention has been paid to the strategies which the nation-state uses to fend of 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 take the risk of a head-on confrontation, it can opt for what David Brown (1997; 2000 : 135-151) describes as a corporatist 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 has first of all a structural component, which normally involves granting a form of autonomy to the subgroups, and/or developing policies of preferential treatment for hitherto discriminated minorities. But there is also a component of identity politics, which is our main concern here. In Brown's view, a corporatist strategy obliges the centre to redefine the nation in multicultural terms. While the nation used to be legitimised either on the basis of civic or ethnocultural nationalism - the former involving a vision of a nation as a community of equal citizens bound by and committed to a basic contract, the latter a vision of a nation as a community of citizens sharing a common cultural heritage - the state now has to rely on an ideology of multicultural nationalism1. This means that the nation is viewed as a community of equal citizens bound by and committed to a basic contract, the latter a vision of a nation as a community of citizens sharing a common cultural heritage - the state now has to rely on an ideology of multicultural nationalism1. 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). The nation-state is thus re-legitimated as an institution that allows different cultures and ethnic groups to live together in harmony.

This policy of national reconstruction will also involve the replacement of the former assimilationist mythology of the unitary state by new myths and symbols of nationhood that epitomise the multicultural character of the nation and are perceived as ethnically neutral. One option is to redefine the nation on the basis of a number of umbrella values that can be represented as common to all the constituent cultures. To the extent that no specific values can be found with enough resonance amongst the different subgroups, multiculturalism itself can become the core value of the nation.

However, according to Brown, this corporatist strategy is inherently flawed. It implies a reification of a single ethncial categorisation - which will never be uncontested for that matter - and pre-empts the development of fluid and multiple identities in society. The ethnic conflicts thus gets even more entrenched and becomes permanently salient. In addition, the multicultural nation risks to remain an artificial, state-concocted construction lacking authenticity and emotional power, and thus failing to engender national loyalty. Conversely, the legitimacy of the nation risks to erode further as a result of the constant emphasis on its multicultural 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 the different ethnic perspectives on the history and geo-political position of the state often impede such a strategy. A final problem is that the language of multicultural nationalism is intrinsically contradictory, as it on the one hand celebrates cultural diversity as a value but on the other hand vindicates the right of any individual to be embedded within her own culture (Brown, 2000 : 48-49,130).

While Brown mainly focuses on the cases of Australia, Singapore and Canada, this paper investigates to what extent two European states, Spain and Belgium, have adopted a similar
strategy of multicultural national identity politics. During the past decades, both countries have attempted to accommodate the claims of the sub-national segments by granting them a substantial amount of territorial autonomy and by constitutionally recognising the 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.” The famous and controversial 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).

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" (art.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 (Falter, 1998 : 182).

Institutionally speaking, both the Spanish and the Belgian states have thus - more or less simultaneously - adopted a corporatist strategy to accommodate the sub-nationalist tensions and re legitimise the centre. But to what extent have they also developed the concomitant identity politics of multicultural nationalism? The present paper attempts to provide a partial answer to this question 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 Elisabeth – “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 ideology.

Given also the popularity which a monarch normally enjoys, his or her public addresses constitute a useful instrument that the elites in the centre have at their disposal to directly influence public opinion and mould the national identity of the citizens. 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 yearly address on occasion of 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 addresses of the Belgian monarch are delivered in three languages: a Dutch version of the addresses is broadcast by the Flemish public network (VRT) and a French version, with a short section in German, by the Francophone public network (RTBF). The Spanish king addresses the nation only on Christmas eve. The address, in Spanish, is broadcast by both the national and the regional public networks, with the notable exception of the Basque regional network.

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 July 31 1993 and was succeeded by his brother Albert.

The paper 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 which these authors distinguish. A first part and central part of the analysis concerns the strategy of constructing the nation as an imagined community. How is 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 nationalism? If so, how are the contradictions inherent in this ideology coped with? Secondly, 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 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. In how far is the EU conceived as an emerging nation and how does this affect the (multicultural) national identity construct?
2. 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 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).

<table>
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<tr>
<th>TABLE 1 : number of occurrences of the words “Belgium/Belgian”, “Spain/Spanish/ Spaniards” and “Europe/European” in corpus (in absolute and relative values)</th>
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*Based on the Dutch version

The latter expressions are symptomatic of an almost obsessive emphasis on the unity of Spain throughout the addresses. There is a constant tension in the discourse between on the one hand the enthusiastic endorsement of the democratic values, as laid down in the Constitution, and on the other a latent fear that political conflicts, though recognised as intrinsic to a democracy, may escalate. The frequent references to the democratic and plural character of the Spanish society are always accompanied with a fervent plea to find a common ground and to focus on what binds rather than what separates the nation. For instance, in S97, after a statement that “tensions in our life as a nation are to be interpreted as a natural reflection of political pluralism inherent in the functioning of democratic institutions” and that “differences and oppositions between political forces consolidate democracy”, it is immediately underscored that “it are the common interests that inspire politics, not individual or group interests.”

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It can easily be deduced from the addresses that 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 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. As a result, the Constitution is to a large extent reified as an immutable covenant that is beyond the reach of present-day politicians to change or adapt.

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' reign, in S95, and on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the Constitution, in 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” (art.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 and S99), each time in connection with terrorism (cf. infra).

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. It is probably in order not to get entangled in the political dispute about the nature of the federal state (cf. supra) that the monarchs hardly ever mention the different parts of Belgium by their names. And 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). 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, thus applying a kind of waffling politics but at the same time implicitly recognizing the dual nature of the country.

It is remarkable that the Belgian monarchs, while painstakingly avoiding to define the Belgian nation in an ethnocultural or essentialist way, come quite 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 which is never explicitly used with regard to Belgium as a whole. Albert even goes as far as to anthropomorphize 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 fully develop. This self-negation of the nation vis-à-vis the sub-nations is pushed to the limit in the following passage 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, i.e. 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 in 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 that there exist fundamental differences between the constituent parts of Belgium, whose inhabitants have a different language, a different view of the world and different sensibilities. But 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, i.e. his or her view on the world, his or her mentality. Throughout the royal addresses of Albert in particular, the Belgians are exhorted to do so, i.e. to become acquainted with the other community's culture by learning their language. In this way, the 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 that are inherent in the multicultural nationalist ideology. The emphasis on the right of each community to fully experience 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 thereby 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 above described notion of cultural diversity is implicitly broadened to encompass not only the constitutional regions and communities, but also the Belgians of foreign origin. However, the focus here is generally on the racist attitudes of the Belgians and less on the foreigners themselves. The latter are usually referred to as “migrants” (BN91, BN96, BC96) and only once as “foreigners” (BC98). They are never explicitly portrayed as an additional building-block of the compound nation. The issue of the integration of the immigrants and the autochthonous cultures in Belgium is largely avoided. When this delicate problem is touched upon, the monarchs only indirectly commit themselves by referring to an external authority. In BN91, Boudewijn approvingly cites from the message that a group of youngsters had prepared on occasion of his sixtieth anniversary. The message condemns racism and favours the integration of immigrants, while at the same time calling upon the immigrants to adapt themselves to "our rules and habits" and to learn the language of the “guest-community”, even though they need not renounce their own cultural identity. Similarly, in BC96, Albert seeks the moral backing of the white march (the huge manifestation in connection with 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”.

In the view of the monarchs, it is precisely the harmonious and peaceful relationship or synergy between different cultural identities that makes Belgium 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 the 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. 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”, i.e. to “show that within one political system different cultures can live together and harmoniously develop themselves”.

3. 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 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 the latter 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 looming 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 mono-cultural 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, that bear a closer scrutiny. In BN92, Boudewijn states: “We have to remain vigilant and to reject any form of overt or hidden separatism unambiguously”. Interesting, Albert uses exactly the same qualifiers in BN96, i.e. four years later. In that address, 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 this sense that it denounces not only explicit separatism, which is marginal even in Flanders, but also, indirectly, any endeavour of the regions and communities to obtain more autonomy. Because of the word “hidden”, the concept of separatism is indefinitely 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. The third explicit reference to separatism, in BN93, includes a similar though more neutral broadening qualifier: “The overwhelming majority of our compatriots insist on that [i.e. a sense of tolerance, goodwill, reconciliation and federal civic duty amongst politicians], because it is not agreeable to any form of separatism, and it does not hesitate to let this be known loud and clearly. I am glad of that.”

The latter citation is also illustrative of another feature that is common to the three explicit mentions of separatism. Each time it is attempted to marginalise the separatists and, by extension, the more radical regionalists. Those proponents are described as a tiny majority 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), “an insane nationalism” (BC91), “blind nationalism” (BC91), “extreme nationalism” (BN91, BN95, BC00), “narrow-minded and outdated nationalisms” (BN96), “a frenzied nationalism” (BC92, BN99), “certain forms of nationalism” (BN96). 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 forcefield of commonplace semantics. This use of what almost appears as a fixed epitheton 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 commonplace practice (Billig, 1995: 5; 55), nationalism is as a rule located abroad. 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 the 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 amongst 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 EU is said to be caused by “certain forms of nationalism”. In this instance, both the more neutral qualifier and the association with the 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 connected 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 being rather exceptional10, the racist threat to Belgium, just as the nationalist threat, is generally evoked by association. On various occasions, the memory of the second world war and the topos of history as a teacher are instrumental in making this link between the concepts of racism, nationalism and the defence of the
multicultural nation. On occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the end of world war II, the 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, for that matter, that world war II is the earliest event in Belgian history that is commemorated or even mentioned in the royal addresses. Given the fact that multiculturalism has become the core value of the Belgian nation, it is logical that the defeat of the racist nazi regime is now considered as 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.

While Brown is sceptical regarding the possibility that the appeal of multicultural nationalism be 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, it are obviously not the foreign cultures, that pose a threat to the nation, but the persons 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 of the nationalist narrative is reversed: the defenders of the mono-cultural national identity are transformed from heroes into villains, while the villains, i.e. the non-nationals who are traditionally considered to endanger the cultural identity, now become the heroes who shape and warrant the multicultural identity. Viewed from a broader perspective, the analysis also confirms that even the more ‘benign’ forms of nationalism are inherently reactive and involve a demarcation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Brown, 1999 : 296).

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, as concerns the former theme, this expectation is hardly borne out. Anti-nationalism is almost entirely absent from the Spanish discourse. Only a single allusion is made to bad, actually very bad, nationalism, although the word itself is not used: in S93, “national egosms” are mentioned along with “new pockets of fanaticism” and “violence” as problems that Europe faces at the very moment that it has liberated itself from oppressive and divisive systems. Apparently, it is the turmoil in the former communist countries that is hinted at here.

The theme of anti-racism is somewhat more prevalent in the Spanish addresses. Xenophobia is twice explicitly denounced. In S94 the Spanish are exhorted “to denounce and persecute manifestations of intolerance, racism and xenophobia, that directly violate human dignity.” And 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 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 theme of anti-racism and openness towards foreigners is less conspicuous in the Spanish addresses than in the Belgian ones, it can be argued that the discourse as a whole is permeated by a more friendly and warm-hearted attitude towards foreigners. The above citation from S92, 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, the foreigners are referred to as brothers and assured of the continued Spanish hospitality and solidarity. Particularly indicative of this cordiality are the instances in which the monarch directly addresses the 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 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.”

The above mentioned enemies of the Spanish nation, however, are eclipsed by one supervillain: terrorism. The monarch mentions this enemy in every single address and often enters 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 their names 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 both “an open wound”, an “ulcer” and a “scar”.

Nevertheless, in S98 - the only one delivered during the cease-fire of ETA - 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 open a perspective of conciliation with the terrorists or at least their supporters: “We Spaniards have always known 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 then 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 “the Basque society”. Interestingly, as if to immediately exorcise the separatist spectre summoned by the very word “Basque”, the monarch each time refers in one and the same breath to the rejection of terrorism in “the whole of Spain” (S97) or “the rest of Spain” (S99). These passages are illustrative of 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 already cited 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 rhetoric ploy is strongly reminiscent of the way the Belgian monarchs attempt to ban the more radical regionalists from the national ingroup by denouncing “both open and hidden separatism”, as discussed earlier.

4. Transforming the nation

The 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 EU. At first sight, the rhetoric of multicultural nationalism can easily be applied to the EU. Indeed, as already pointed out above, the Belgian monarchs repeatedly describe the Belgian multicultural nation as a model for the EU. In their view, it is the country’s vocation to prove to Europe that it is possible to let different cultures live together harmoniously within a federal institutional framework. Conversely, a failure of this endeavour, involving a split-up of Belgium, would constitute a set-back for the European unification process.

It thus appears that both themes – the construction of a multicultural Belgium and of a multicultural Europe – blend nicely and are in fact mutually reinforcing. However, on closer look, there is an inherent contradiction or at least a tension between them. As discussed above, it is recognised and indeed emphasised in the Belgian addresses that Belgium consists of different constituent parts that each have their own identity and culture. What makes Belgium special and constitutes its uniqueness as a nation is not only this cultural diversity but also the tolerance and openness of its citizens and, hence, their ability to foster this diversity and transform it into a source of material and human wealth. Therefore, Belgium can be considered as a pioneer country and as a prefiguration of a future multicultural 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 in 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).

It goes without saying that this ‘separatist’ inference is not made in the royal addresses. Still, in BN92, Boudewijn comes dangerously 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 co-operation with the Irish, the Greek, and possibly with the Fins 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 Walloon, the Brussels, 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 EU. As a further irony, this section is immediately followed by the above cited warning against “overt or hidden separatism”.

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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.” One has the impression that this passage is an intruder in the text, because it is strangely out of tune with the pro-European and federalist rhetoric developed in the rest of BN92 and also because it is not well connected to the surrounding text. 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”.

Another intriguing hint about Belgium's position in the future Europe can be found in BN98. In one of the many discussions of Belgium's exemplary role in Europe, a seemingly casual reference is made to both the enlargement issue and the issue of Brussels as the European capital: “If we want to, we can serve as an example for Europe, that is going to become ever more large, and of which Brussels, and in fact our entire country, is the capital.” Literally, the mention of Brussels and Belgium as European capital refers to the present. Nevertheless, because of the association that is being made with a future enlargement of the EU, and also given the fact that the status of Brussels as European capital is not uncontested, the text appears to evoke a vision of Belgium as a future Washington DC-like ‘capital-state’ of an enlarged EU. The suggestion is that Brussels as such will be too small to serve as capital for an indefinitely enlarged Europe. Although this might be pushing the interpretation too far, one is tempted to conclude that this notion of Belgium as ‘capital-state’ of the EU is being constructed to both guarantee and justify the survival of Belgium as a distinct entity within the multicultural European nation.

It can be concluded from the above that there is a strong parallel in the Belgian discourse between the construction of the Belgian and the European multicultural nation. 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, as for instance in BK93: “But Europe, our Europe, has to preserve its soul which has been forged, so to speak, by the age-long development of its many rich cultures.” And in BN95, the European unification process is described as both a “wonderful road”, an “epic” and an “exceptionally inspiring adventure”. This kind of quasi-patriotic and somewhat pompous language is never employed with regard to Belgium. 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. To the extent that repeatedly naming the nation is a nationalist discursive device, aimed at creating an impression that the national construct is a reality (Remis, 1986 : 13), the Belgian monarchs are to be considered European rather than Belgian nationalists.

It comes as no surprise that 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 EU 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 be prudent and not rush towards more integration.

One of the reasons for this prudence is given in S93, in which the monarch counsels the Spanish to continue the project of European integration, but at the same time warns them to do so “without giving up what is our own and merits to be defended.” And in another EU-related passage (in S91), it is pointed out that Spain participates in Europe with “an 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 EU-issue and the theme of national unity in S92, it is subtly suggested that this potential danger requires the Spanish to be more united than ever.

Still, 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. Particularly revealing in this regard is the following sentence in S99: “Three large zones continue to be the main focus of our foreign concern: Europe, Ibero-america and the Mediterranean area.” Clearly, this 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. But 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 Latin-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”, an expression which is never employed with regard to the EU-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].”

5. Discussion

As mentioned in the introduction, Brown questions the effectiveness of a neo-corporatist strategy. He argues that the 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 is lacking in emotional appeal. Nevertheless, the Belgian case appears to contradict Brown's pessimistic assessment. The Belgian monarchs manage to transcend the tensions that are inherent in the multicultural 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 state-wide emotional appeal and integrative power of the multicultural discourse is probably enhanced. On the other hand, it has also been shown that the multicultural narrative is much less convincing and consistent as concerns the position of the Belgian nation in an ever more integrated Europe.

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 amongst the multiculturally oriented citizens, which 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 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 rhetoric pendant of a neo-corporatist strategy to cope with sub-national
demands, Spain appears to be a counterexample. From an institutional point of view, the Spanish state pursues a similar neo-corporatist policy. But this is hardly reflected in the way the Spanish nation is being constructed by the centre. While some traces of a multicultural approach can be found in the royal addresses, the representation of the nation is predominantly unitary.

A first explanation for the significant difference between the Belgian and the Spanish cases concerns the extent to which the notion of a compound multi-cultural state has been accepted by the elites in the centre. In the course of the seventies and the eighties, the idea that Belgium essentially consists of different constituent cultures and thus requires a federal structure has gradually become 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. The above cited 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 delegitimise the state and eventually rekindle extreme Spanish nationalism (de Blas Guerrero, 1994). The fact that the royal discourse predominantly conveys the unitary vision of Spain, and thus clearly takes side in this debate, might be considered self-evident, given the monarch's constitutionally defined role as the symbol of Spanish unity (art. 56.1). But then, a comparable stipulation in the Belgian Constitution clearly does not prevent the Belgian monarch to fully accept and endorse the notion of Belgium as a multi-cultural state, as shown above.

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 plurilingual 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 as 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 the Spanish culture and language throughout the country. And this is obviously a second crucial difference with Belgium, whose main constituent cultures are roughly balanced. This equivalence, resulting in a symmetric federal structure, has made it easier to define Belgium as a joint venture of different cultures. The reverse is true in Spain, where the subalter position of the non-Spanish cultures and the concentration of sub-national claims in three peripheral regions have led to an asymmetric state structure. 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 multi-cultural nation.

The focus of this paper was not on monarchy as such. We merely assumed that the 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. The peculiar national self-abnegation in the Belgian addresses, coupled with the appropriation of sub-national sentiments, is somehow reminiscent of the 1969 ‘investiture’ ceremony for the Prince of Wales, as poignantly described in Tom Nairn's *The Enchanted Glass*: Welshness was patted on the head, while England was mysteriously absent (1994: 227). The mystery of monarchy, according to Nairn, 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.” (o.c.: 229) The monarchy, says Nairn (o.c.: 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 multi-national state like Britain or, we might add, Belgium and Spain.

**References**


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Notes

1. Given the notoriously elusive nature of the concept of multiculturalism, a good case could be made for using the term ‘multi-national nationalism’ instead. However, apart from the fact that it sounds rather awkward, this label would involve a needless restriction of the concept to territorially defined segments of the nation.

2. Both monarchs are formally irresponsible, in this sense that their actions have to be countersigned by a member of the government, who thereby takes the responsibility for them (Spanish Constitution, art. 56, §3 and art. 64; Belgian Constitution, art. 88 and 106). This constitutional irresponsibility of the king is not confined to the formal actions of the monarch, but extends to all his public acts. In Belgium, the royal addresses are not subject to a formal ministerial countersignature, but have to be approved by either the premier or the competent 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 the government’s policy (Molitor, 1994 : 101-105). Apart from the fictional account in Javier Mariáns’ novel Mañana en la batalla piensa en mí and the fact that it is one of the tasks of the public relations section of the royal palace to assist in preparing the royal addresses (Cremades, 1998 : 85), we did not find any information about the formal procedure followed in drafting the Spanish addresses. We assume that the addresses are subject to the same ‘implicit countersignature’ that applies to the representative acts of the monarch in the sphere of international relations (Merino Merchán, 1994 : 68, 71-73).

3. El Parlamento Vasco insta a ETB a emitir el mensaje navideño del Rey, in: El País 22/12/00.

4. 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”.

5. For practical reasons, all quoted passages are immediately translated in English. The original text of these citations is available upon request via: bart.maddens@soc.kuleuven.ac.be.

6. On one single occasion (BN96) the monarch avoids naming the parts of the country by referring to “the north and the south”.

7. In BN00 he also mentions differences in “mentality” and different “characteristics”.

8. There are only three other instances in which a typical behavioural disposition of the homo Belgicus is hinted at. In both BC93 and BN97 the “spirit of enterprise” and in BC98 the “generosity, the attitude to be solidary without much ado” are referred to as typically Belgian traits.

9. There appears to be a long tradition of associating the words “hidden” (larvé) and “separatism” or “separation” in the royal discourse. In 1932, the then king Albert I warns 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”.

10. The most explicit mention is in BC91: “In a lot of countries, including ours, racism is raising its head in an alarming way.”

11. Only BN93 contains a casual allusion to Belgium’s independence from the Netherlands. In the opening line, it is said that “the commemoration of our independence is each year again a good occasion to celebrate”.

12. This distinction between “immigrants” and “foreigners” is new. In all the other addresses, the monarch just refers to “foreigners” in general.


14. “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)

15. 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, art.91).