

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL CORE VALUES: CROATIA AND BELGIUM

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Author deals with the problem of constructing national identity based on work of Jasna Čapo about researching of ethnic identity. He trays to speculate about ethnic and national values through three elements: constitution law, values in elections and value research in Belgia and Croatia.

Introduction

In the Contribution 'Croatian Ethnology, the science of peoples or the science of Culture?', Jasna Čapo (1991) analyses the theoretical writings of Milovan Gavazzi and Branimir Bratanić. She criticizes Gavazzi because he does not reveal what is specific for the Croatian people. On the one hand, he describes existing cultures, and so divides the Croatian reality in three areas: the pannonian, the adriatic and the dinarian each show their own specificity. But it is not clear what exactly makes them 'Croatian'. It poses the whole question of the Croatian integration, a process described by Mirjana Gross (1984) in slightly different terms from an historical point of view and focusing on five regions. How can both approaches be reconciled? On the other hand, Milovan Gavazzi argues common characteristics of his three regions can be discovered by a culturalgenetic analysis. However, as Čapo rightly observes, he falls back on general SouthSlavic or protoslavic features. They do not answer the question what is specific for Croatia, if anything.

Branimir Bratanić, on the other side, enhances the theoretical viewpoint that borders and differences are primordial to reveal the specificity of a (group of) people. He did not really apply this approach in his ethnological work. Čapo argues that the focus in anthropological research has to be redirected to differential value analysis. This will only be possible when attention is redirected from an analysis of the material culture to Croatian culture as distinctive from other cultures.

Without claiming the rightness of this point of view, we will follow this line of thought and explore its fruitfulness. We formulate some proposals for a comparative analysis of the national core values of Belgian and Croatian culture.

From the start on, we have to stress that this is an exercise in speculative construction. We do not really claim that we observe or discover the proposed picture. Our method is speculative and tries only to formulate some hypothetical statements, making use of the existing literature on national values. More specific methods could be devised to test some of these hypotheses. At once, what strikes is the highly contingent character of this approach. Perhaps, the contrastive nature of the analysis will somewhat temper our choices. But as Čapo mentions, the Croatian or Belgian reality could just be a chimera, a selfconstructed image that does not correspond to any reality.

Recent research into the nationality question exactly stresses the constructive nature of the enterprise. To some extent, we intent to follow the perspective designed by Löfgren (1991). The approach takes some distance from the older romantic view on nationbuilding, developed from Herder's ideas on the existing of a *Volksgeist* within peoples. On the other hand, some shared history and culture and a view on a common destiny are presupposed. Along with this selfimagined identity, it supposes an institutional framework supporting and developing this selfimage.

Crucial in this are the laws and especially the constitution. Highly instrumental in creating and preserving this image is the educational system.

Again, Löfgren stresses in his analysis the contrastive approach: one's identity is best perceived by contrast to another one. Another important question is the normative dimension of the nationality picture. And we may add: how desirable are national (nationalistic?) values? Are they really to be shared and what are the degrees of freedom for the citizens in rejecting the national(istic) project?

Core values of the constitutions

In order to study comparatively the officially declared core values of the two countries, we first should have to analyze the main characteristics of the constitutions. We do not try to make explicit all main values, but concentrate a few striking differences which may characterize their basic conception.

There were numerous reforms of the Belgian constitution in its almost two centuries existence. These reforms were quite substantial in terms of the effects on the organization of the country and its power structure. Belgium was gradually reformed from a national unitarian state into a federation of three communities and three regions.¹

Similarly, the same can be said of some significant adaptations of the Croatian constitution in its relatively short lifetime. This is especially true in the field of the regulations concerning the protection of minorities and mostly performed on advice of international legal bodies.

We will narrow then to a great extent our scope on constitutional reform of the Belgian and recent adaptation of the Croatian constitution. We try to explain the character of the changes by a general historical considerations.

¹See a.o. Wils (1992) and Baeteman (1994).

How can the Belgian constitution promulgated in 1830 be characterized and which values stood behind its conception? Why Belgium has been created? In 1815, a buffer zone had to be created between Germany and France; a union between the Netherlands and the later Belgium was set up under a Dutch Crown. The southern part, that contained linguistically both a French and a Dutch part. The interventionist economic policy of the Dutch Crown was rejected, especially by the French speaking liberal bourgeoisie in Brabant and Brussels.

In 1830, the revolt of these Belgian liberals was crowned with success and got the recognition of the international powers. The constitution created a national Belgian unitary state in the form of a parliamentary democracy, ideologically based on progressive liberal principles. 'All citizens are equal and free', 'there is press liberty', 'liberty of meeting', and so on. The basic concepts of the constitution supplied for all fundamental liberal freedoms of the citizen.² Civil right was inspired by the French model, as far as it had not already been earlier introduced e.g. by the Napoleonic Code. On the other hand, the Belgian national character of the state was further strengthened by the careful selfinterested services of the Belgian monarchy. The unitary national organization, dominated by a French speaking liberal bourgeoisie was not fundamentally questioned until the First World War.³ As a consequence of the First World War, a Flemish Movement came into being. From then on, the struggle for the Flemish emancipation set in, first concentrating on language questions and gradually encompassing all aspects of economic and political life. The first results were obtained in the field of education, as the university of Ghent now was obliged to introduce the Dutch language, whereas courses had been given only in French until then. During the thirties, the Flemish movement came under the fascination of the German nazis, a brother nation with a mother language. Some important Flemish nationalist leaders ended up in the collaboration. After defeat in the Second World War, the Flemish Movement went more or less underground until the 1960's. In the mean time, Flemish economic development had outgrown the stagnation of the southern French speaking part. The Flemish now claimed their legitimate role in the management of economic and political life, and it was this general movement that pushed the Belgian legislator on the way to federalization of the country. In Flanders, the political landscape during the sixties and seventies was still dominated by the christiandemocratic forces. In the French speaking Walloon part of the country, the socialists ruled. The monarchy and the liberal bourgeoisie of Brussels/Brabant still represented the heavy national lobby, but both north and south began to push for more autonomy. Extremist factions demanded even independence. A compromise was found in a so called regionalisation, i.e. gradual but irreversible federalization. It took more or less twenty years to devise the new structure, that held the middle between a federation and a confederation. In this

² Of course, progressive legislation is one thing, the realisation of the rights in reality and daily practice another. Laws were ostentably made by a momentary revolutionary force in society; the existing power distribution in society however did not significantly alter in the short run.

³ Though Belgium was also ruled for a long time by a catholic homogenous government, this does not really alter the above statement.

sense, one can say the national Belgian state had nearly deceased and Belgians were a minority in their country. Especially the Flemish 'national' consciousness has steadily grown. However not to the point that the Flemish Minister-president should not have to complain about the lack of it in the broad strata of the Flemish population.⁴

It seems that the Flemish and the Belgian population in general now has leaped into a postmodern apolitical attitude.⁵ The indifference and even distrust of politics has been used by an extreme Flemish party ("Vlaams Blok") to attract a large part of the votes. Its program is highly nationalistic and discriminatory to immigrants and foreigners.

The most hotly debated and not wholly resolved question concerns the rights of linguistic minorities. There are permanent controversies on the right delineation of the language frontier and the facilities 'foreign' language speakers should obtain along this frontier.⁶

What in contrast could now be typical for the Croatian constitution? We don't need here to remind the reader of all the particularities of recent history.⁷ I limit myself to two observations.

First, the fundamental principles that underlie the Croatian constitution can be identified as political democracy, economic liberalism and a state of law guaranteeing human rights and minority rights.⁸ Political democracy has to be guaranteed by multiparty elections in a semipresidential parliamentary system; economic liberalism implies privatisation of the state sector; and the protection of rights of minorities are to be guaranteed by appropriate legislation and the establishing of a court for human rights.

Second, on the one hand, Croatia was defined as a community of free and equal citizens. But on the other hand, Croatia is defined as the land of the Croats. In the preamble of the Constitution, the historical foundations for this conception are summed up. The population of the state is thus divided by Croats, who are the constitutive people of Croatia, and minorities. To remedy this, the Badinter and other commissions recommended Croatia to revise its legislation on the protection of rights of minorities. Anyhow, it remains that Croatia fell into the trap of constitutional nationalism (Hayden, 1992). It created an unfavourable climate in which the reconciliation of all its citizens would be more difficult, and these nationalistic formula's were clearly in contradiction with other parts of the constitution.

⁴ See the reference to Kerkhofs (1992) on regional self-identification cited below.

⁵ See also the section on nationalism.

For the interpretation of the recent succes of the extreme nationalistic forces (Vlaams Blok), see Swyngedouw (1992).

⁶ More than one Belgian government fell on the 'language' question. There was first the linguistic problem of the university of Leuven/Louvain. Endemic to the Belgian system are the discussions around the linguistic statutes of the communities 'Komen' and especially 'Voeren'.

More fundamental is the ongoing discussion on the federalization of the social security. The most recent demand of the Flemish Minister-president concerns the federalization of the National Institute of Statistics. (Tegenbos, Guy. "Vlaamse overheid eist 'statistisch federalisme'. De Standaard, 2.11.95, p. 1).

⁷ On the history of the conception of the new constution for the Croatia, see Kregar (1991), p. 210-214.

⁸ See a.o. Kregar (1991), p. 219.

Where the Belgian constitution fundamentally uses the territorial principle to give all its citizens the same rights, the Croatian constitution implicitly uses the notion of the history of Croatia and the people of the Croats in a way as to allow Croats a preferential position in the new state.

From a moral point of view, a most distressing fact was then the decision of the Sabor on the temporary inapplicability of certain regulations of the Constitutional Law on human rights and the rights of ethnic and national minorities.⁹ So the regulations which the Badinter commission had advised to insert in the Constitution in order to bring Croatian legislation on the level of the European standard are now at least temporarily out of force.¹⁰

Values in elections

A second important source of value analysis is the interpretation of election choices. In elections, the real value choices of the population can come into the open. Especially the changes in time of the voting behaviour can give us an indication of the changes in values in large segments of the population.

Elections in Belgium at the late eighties and the beginning of the nineties show one main trend. Traditional ideologically oriented parties (liberals, socialists and Catholics) fell back in favour of both an environmentally oriented party (Agalev) and a so-called apolitical, but right-oriented Flemish nationalist party ("Vlaams Blok"). Swyngedouw (1992) explains the trend as a new postmaterialistic orientation. The green party points to the dangers of a purely materialistic evolution of the world. Alternatively, the progress of the manifestly apolitical 'Vlaams Blok' shows another manifestation of the postmodern phenomenon: people do not believe any more in great ideologies and projects as socialism, liberalism or Catholicism. They fall back on the interests of the self and the own people, here and now. The progress of the Flemish nationalist movement will be further discussed in our section on nationalism.

Elections in Croatia have of course a much more emotional and symbolic character. Siber (1992) points to the impact of nationalism on the multiparty elections of 1990 in Croatia. He first sets up a hierarchy of values, using an interview technique where "each voter was permitted to cite up to three values which were important to them" in the election campaign. The result is reproduced in table 1 (See next section). Three big clusters can be observed. In order of importance, first come general human and contemporary themes: peace and security, and a return to Europe as a symbol for

⁹ The opposition tried to reverse the situation, but without result. (Galić, G. "Oporba predlaže ustavnom sudu ukidanje tri zakona."

Novi list, 12.10.95, p. 5.) On the other side, Hrvoje Sarinic, highest representative of the presidential office, declared Croatia was always ready to sustain any international investigation on human rights. ("Postivanje ljudskih prava - u interesu je svih." Novi List, 13.10.95, p. 3.)

¹⁰ It remains an open question in which way the formation of a government of an own Flemish community did not exactly the same. Of course, it depends on the competences of this government. Some federal ties and rights still exist for all citizens, Flemish and 'foreigners' alike. Especially in language questions, latent and sometimes manifest nationalism has been displayed.

development and modernity. The second cluster concerns the relationship toward Yugoslavia and the creation of an own state. The third cluster is more heterogeneous and includes many of more traditional values. However, the translation of values in voting behaviour is not straightforward. The author has to conclude that the voting itself was rather "skewed to react to one's ethnic identification and view of one's ethnicnational interest."

Value research

A third source of information are interviews and opinion polls on the basic values of nationals or larger groups of the population of a country. We are not familiar with most of the ongoing research in this field in Croatia. As a shortcut, we continue to reproduce for Croatia broader value research results obtained on occasion of elections. First follows the already cited table of Siber (1992) on a value hierarchy of the electorate of 1990.¹¹

Table 1: Value Hierarchy of the Electorate (in %, total 300%)

I. 1. Peace and security	56
2. European orientation	43
II. 3. Ethnic equality	34
4. Yugoslav community	33
5. Croatian autonomy	29
III. 6. Individual freedom	23
7. Social security	21
8. Environmental protection	15
9. Private enterprise	14
10. Social justice	11
11. Social equality	10
12. National interest	7
13. Solidarity	4

Source: Siber (1992), table 7.4.

¹¹ Siber (1992), table 7.4, p. 147.

Second, Kasapović (1992) distinguished between social and political values and obtains the following rankings¹²:

Table 2: Hierarchy of Social and Political Values

Social value (Citizens)

1. Work
2. Freedom
3. Equality
4. Security
5. Justice

Political value

1. Europeanism
2. Croatianism
3. Yugoslavism
4. Socialism
5. Individualism

Source: Kasapović (1992), table 2.2.

As a base for comparison¹³, we present some results of an important research project in Belgium.¹⁴ The research has been conducted in the framework of a international comparative European project, the European Values Study (EVS).

The interviews opened with a question on the relative importance of six valuearea's. The following hierarchy could be deduced.

Table 3: Important values adhered to by Belgian citizens (in %)

1. Family	83
2. Work	58
3. Friends	46
4. Free Time	40
5. Religion	15
6. Politics	6

Source: Kerkhofs (1992), Fig. 1.

¹² Kasapović (1992), table 2.2, p. 38. has also rankings for the political party's. While the rankings for social values for both citizens and parties are similar, it is striking that citizens rank individualism among the political values only at the last place, even preceded by Yugoslavism and Socialism, while these two values are of course rejected by Croatian political parties. The research was conducted in the Spring of 1990. The respondents could chose among eight political values (i.e., individualism, collectivism, Croatian autonomy, Yugoslav community, European orientation, national autonomy of minorities in the republic, socialism and capitalism) and eight social values (i.e, work, equality, security, freedom, solidarity, morality, private property, justice). Again, the political values will not be very relevant in the comparison with Belgian values.

¹³ Some values of the Siber table, as the European orientation or the relation to the Yugoslav state, are of course not relevant for the choices of a Belgian public.

¹⁴ The study of Kerkhofs (1992) questioned 2792 respondents in during 1990 and 1991.

When we would compare now, we see the values defined here are so general that we cannot speak of any typical Croatian or Belgian/Flemish value, if not explicitly connected to the values 'own identity' or 'nationalism'. We suggest that pure nationalism as a value is selfreferential. The next section develops this notion of 'poorness' of nationalism and considers the strategies that have been used by 'nationalists' to overcome that.

As a measure of the selfcentredness of the Belgian population, we reproduce the following data from table 4 of Kerkhofs (1992). It gives us the ranking of geographic identification (first choice in %): village or commune of living (45%), country (21), region/community (14%), the world (10), Europe (7). Local identification is highest, the identification with Belgium is still higher than with the community Flanders, and Belgians are slightly more cosmopolite than European minded.¹⁵

On weak nationalism. One stop to far?

Given the overwhelming role of nationalism as a core value especially in Croatian politics, but also observed in the growing election successes of Flemish nationalists, we resume some explanations of this phenomenon and we present conditional evaluative statements.

Let us take as a starting point the definition of nationalism by Gellner (1994). Nationalism is the striving of a people with a national consciousness to create or preserve its own territory in the form of nationstate. His concept of nationalism is based on the congruence between a existing people and a state. It presupposes of course that the people can be well defined, for example by its national consciousness, language, common history or traditions, as well by the common will to live together in the future.

Many authors have pointed to the fact that nationalism is a complex phenomenon, that has a lot of different manifestations. We will only present two classifications that seem most fruitful for our concerns.

Boehm (1995) among others¹⁶ made a distinction between repressive and liberating nationalism. The first has to be rejected a priori as it discriminates and represses other groups in the nation. The second can be justified, however not without caution. As it may easily degenerate in the former, it is crucial to know if and when the transition from a valuable to a negative social process takes place. This has to be decided on in every concrete case.

As far as the Belgian situation concerns, I think the eventual liberating potential of Flemish nationalism has now been played down. I think more extreme forms of nationalism, as incorporated by the political program of the 'Vlaams Blok', are not characterized by emancipatory traits, as the exclusion of emigrants and others is one of its most outspoken features.

¹⁵ Kerkhofs (1992), p. 14.

¹⁶ The Belgian politician Hendrik de Man formulated in 1931 a similar distinction (Boehm, 1995). The same dichotomy between progressive and retrograde nationalism was used in the discussion between Bauman, Hobsbawm and Karol (1995).

The Croatian reader is best placed to evaluate he himself the liberating or oppressive nature of Croatian nationalism.

Nationalism thus in any case implies a dangerous choice, but should not be rejected a priori. However, the author proceeds by pointing to the fact that nationalism has been endorsed mostly as a form of compensation, the need of which is greater in more difficult circumstances. Moreover, he finds its narcissist component the most remarkable fact of nationalism. In a world of strangling environment problems and third world poverty, nationalism is for him only a secondary annoyance.

As an alternative classification, one can distinguish between hard and soft nationalism. The first openly rejects any foreign and has to be rejected as being totalitarian and discriminating. We don't enter here the discussion into whether Croatia and Belgium/Flanders are both or one of them of the first type. There are strong indications that Croatia indeed fits the qualification of hard nationalism, given its attitude towards the Serb minority. But even if so, we are more interested in the weak form of nationalism, as it easy to see that in any way Croatia qualifies as such, given its constitution and the political choices of the majority of its population. This second and weak form of nationalism fully endorses the statement that there exists an own natural or historical people carrying a righteous claim on an own territory. But this weak form of nationalism programmatically would not imply a discriminating or even hostile attitude to others living on the same territory. In fact, legislation could even protect the rights of minorities and guarantee them the same rights as the 'nationals'. In this form, the definition of nationalism also seems appropriate to the Flemish situation. Our main concern is now: do we have to reject even this so-called weak form of nationalism?

Wils (1990) thinks that nationalism as a pure and single value option is much too poor. Founding this conclusion on an extensive study of the history of the dynamics of Flemish nationalism, he observes pure nationalism has permanently absorbed other values in its concrete historic manifestations. Nationalism seems only to be vital and fruitful when it connected itself to some other values. Perhaps this could also be one of the explanations for the flirting of Tudman's HDZ with christian values and the European christian democratic parties.

This 'poorness' of nationalism has been elaborated on by some other Belgian scholars. De Wachter (1994) thinks nationalism itself has no real message or ideology. It all ends in pure narcissism, perhaps suitable to a postmodernist environment. Great stories are rejected, what remains is endlessly pointing to oneself and 'our' people, without really presenting a bigger project or ideology. In a similar analysis, another writer metaphorically points to this lack of imagination as 'an empty place.' On the other side, there is the world of the differences (Lyotard: *Le Différend*). Here differences are accepted; it is the world of pluralism. It seems to me that the whole problem of ethnic cleansing is immediately related to this problem of nationalism. Even the soft nationalism that anyhow stresses the own identity implies at least philosophically the danger of favouritism of the own and the exclusion of the other. So,

it would be preferable to leave the nationalistic premises, fully admit differences and to articulate interests on equal footing, devising institutions and structures to handle conflicts openly, if necessary. This devise seems to be much more equitable and just. It corresponds in fact to the multinational or pluralist way of organising a territory. Rights are not given according to the fact that one should belong to a certain people entitled to a certain territory, they are just distributed as a civil right of all citizens living in a given state. In the limit, divisions between states should theoretically have to disappear, and there should be no restrictions on the rights distribution. Practically states could be useful in order to organise the protection of the rights of the citizens. Perhaps all this sounds a little bit strange to people of a country in war, that struggles to restore its so-called territorial integrity. But if in the long run, a definite and just solution has to be devised, even weak nationalism seems to be left to the darkness of history. This is exactly the opinion of the philosopher Stephen Toulmin (1994). Perhaps, he himself goes one step too far when he pleads for a total 'historic amnesia'.

Is there then still a place for a national Belgian, Flemish or Croatian ethnology or has it to stay 'empty'? Of course, there is still respectable scientific work to do, as far as one has to accept differences and one should like to know them, how they function and how they could be explained. Moreover, in so far as people really feel comfortable in some own cultural and historical environment, and they feel their achievements are connected to that stratum, all this should be considered as legitimate, even if one could see it as an expression of nationalistic values.¹⁷ But these differences, however, should never entitle one to a preferential treatment. It should also be the task of Croatian ethnology to describe the interactions between the different groups in society. The comparative approach should take the centre of ethnology.

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¹⁷For an intelligent Flemish-nationalist defence, see Peeters (1995). However, in our opinion, his discourse does defeat our arguments against weak nationalism.

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KOMPARATIVNA ANALIZA NACIONALNIH VRIJEDNOSTI: HRVATSKA I BELGIJA

Sažetak

Nakon objavljenog rada Jasne Čapo *Hrvatska etnologija, znanost o narodu ili o kulturi*, u kojem se pokušava etablirati metodologija istraživanja razlika između različitih etnika i nacija, može se pokušati pronaći ta razlikovnost unutar osnovnih nacionalnih vrijednosti Hrvata i Belgijanaca. Kako se istraživanje nacionalnosti premjestilo od romantizma i narodnog duha prema konstrukciji nacionalnog identiteta osobito su bitna za istraživanje institucije koje takav sustav podržavaju primjerice ustavni zakon i školski sustav. Istraživanje se može provesti kroz analizu triju izvora: ustava svake države u smislu vrijednosti koje one sadržavaju, vrijednosti koje se simbolički izražavaju u periodu političkih izbora i istraživanja koje se bave vrijednosnim stavovima obaju nacija. No, takvo istraživanje dovodi do otkrivanja samo generalnih vrijednosnih sustava koji nisu tipično hrvatski ili belgijski. To samo potvrđuje tezu nekih teoretičara nacionalizma prema kojima je nacionalistička ideologija "siromašna" jer ne prezentira neki posebni sustav vrijednosti ili neku poruku i viziju već se neprestano referira ne već poznate sustave koji su obično široko rašireni i poznati.