

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS/DISOURS PRÉSIDENTIEL

# The Life and Death of an Issue: Canadian Political Science and Quebec Politics

François Rocher\*

School of Political Studies, University of Ottawa, 120 University Private, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5

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\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [Francois.Rocher@uottawa.ca](mailto:Francois.Rocher@uottawa.ca)

## Abstract

How has English-speaking Canadian political science conceived of the relationship between Quebec and Canada? Why has an issue that has been considered central for more than three decades become less attractive, if not marginal, within the discipline? The aim is to examine, from this example, the overlapping relationship between science and politics. The intent is also to show that Canadian political science has examined the Quebec/Canada relationship from four different angles: 1) its interest in Quebec politics was part of the urgency of the moment, based on a crisis that challenged the foundations of the political system; 2) it questioned the legitimacy of the sources of the dispute, namely the compatibility between the new expressions of Quebec nationalism with the presumed principles on which the Canadian political community had been founded; 3) Quebec nationalism also encouraged a reflection on the existence (or not) of “English Canada” as a sociological and political reality; 4) the combination of the first three factors caused the prescriptions for getting out of, or resolving, the crisis to evolve over time, to the point of rendering research on this issue obsolete.

## Résumé

De quelle manière la science politique au Canada, principalement celle d'expression anglaise, a-t-elle appréhendé les rapports entre le Québec et le Canada? Il importe de

The Canadian Political Science Association is bilingual, which means that its services and communications are offered in both official languages. It also disseminates the results of political scientists' research in both languages, as we can see from attending the annual conference or reading the *Canadian Journal of Political Science*. However, for a French-speaking president who wishes to be understood by as many unilingual English-speaking political scientists as possible, the question of choosing the language of his or her speech is a no-brainer. Just as Alain Noël did in 2014, it is in “the language of travel that I ‘chose’ to present this presidential address” [my translation] (Noël, 2014: 650).

*L'Association canadienne de science politique est bilingue, ce qui signifie que ses services et ses communications sont offerts dans les deux langues officielles. Elle diffuse aussi le résultat des recherches des politologues dans les deux langues, comme nous pouvons le constater en participant au congrès annuel ou en lisant la Revue canadienne de science politique. Toutefois, pour un président francophone qui souhaite être compris du plus grand nombre constitué de politologues unilingues anglophones, la question du choix de la langue de son allocution n'en est pas une. Tout comme l'a fait Alain Noël en 2014, c'est dans « la langue du voyage, que j'ai “choisi” de présenter cette allocution présidentielle » (Noël, 2014: 650).*

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comprendre pourquoi un enjeu considéré comme central pendant trois décennies est devenu moins attrayant, voire marginal, au sein de la discipline. Il s'agit d'examiner, à partir de cet exemple, les rapports étroits entre science et politique. L'intention est aussi de montrer que la science politique canadienne s'est penchée sur les rapports Québec/Canada sous quatre angles différents: 1) son intérêt à l'endroit de la politique québécoise s'est inscrite dans l'urgence du moment, en fonction d'une crise qui remettait en question les fondements du régime politique; 2) elle s'est interrogée sur la légitimité des sources de la contestation, à savoir la compatibilité entre les nouvelles expressions du nationalisme québécois eu égard aux principes présumés qui fondent la communauté politique canadienne; 3) le nationalisme québécois a aussi nourri une réflexion sur l'existence (ou non) du « Canada anglais » comme réalité sociologique et politique; 4) la combinaison des trois premiers facteurs a fait en sorte que les prescriptions pour sortir de la crise ou la résoudre ont évolué au fil du temps, au point de rendre obsolètes les travaux portant sur cet enjeu.

**Keywords:** Canada; Quebec; political science; discipline; federalism; nationalism

## Introduction

Political science is a discipline which seeks, above all, to provide a framework for interpreting phenomena that affect human organizations in terms of standardization and the regulation of power relations, even ones of domination. The way it is undertaken derives largely from the environment and the context from which questions and issues arise. In past presidential addresses, many have indeed demonstrated that the discipline has gradually opened up to a multiplicity of epistemologies and research questions as a result of the concerns raised by groups which have been traditionally excluded (Wilson, 1993; Smith, 2009; Vickers, 2015; Abu-Laban, 2017).

While the tendency among my predecessors has been to encourage the discipline to be more attentive to new realities affecting groups which have been historically marginalized, I intend to do the opposite. I want to understand why an issue that has been considered central for more than three decades has become less attractive, if not marginal, within the discipline. In this address, I would like to shed light on how English-speaking Canadian political scientists have conceived of the relationship between Quebec and Canada. I made the deliberate choice to leave aside the many francophone voices that have also spoken out on this issue. My intent is not to compare Canadian and Quebec perspectives but rather to highlight how Quebec politics has been apprehended and perceived by those who have made a powerful contribution to analyzing Quebec outside its borders. Hence, like the subject of an anthropological study, I put myself in the shoes of the observer who observes his observer. My aim is to examine, from this example, the overlapping relationship between science and politics. Undertaking such an exercise allows us to see how “science” (the social sciences and political science, in particular) reproduces a structure of power and its representation, as well as formulates an interpretation that gives meaning and direction to social and political phenomena. Those whose profession is to think the social and the political do so on the basis of their own preconceptions. In the words of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, they are, in a way, both the bearers of a certain structure and its agents.

Put differently, political scientists, like those in other disciplines, are social agents acting through the shaping powers of a specific narrative, but it is also history itself that shapes them. While not being completely determined by it, they are the products of history. Their analyses are encoded by the logic of its production as forms of knowledge with a certain “utility”: to legitimize a political order and its rules, a particular configuration of power relations; or to question the latter from a perspective of emancipation for individuals, groups and “structures” otherwise marginalized. Political science, like sociology, must explain the nature of power relations where the stakes are first and foremost political and power driven. The logic of this story must be updated (Bourdieu, 2012: 158; Bourdieu, 1975).

We must therefore recognize, as others before us have, that intellectuals and university researchers also play both a social and a political role. They help to structure the debate, identify issues and often submit proposals for reform. Seymour Martin Lipset and Asoke Basu have identified four prototypes of intellectuals based on the way in which they interpret their society and culture (Lipset and Basu, 1975). The first is made up of those they call “guardians of the threshold.” She or he acts as a spokesperson for trends in society (progressive or conservative) and aims to identify a universal historical meaning. The second type of intellectual is the “moralist,” whose role is to examine, assess and evaluate a given circumstance in order to present herself or himself as the conscience of society, either in supporting or denouncing the system according to her or his own democratic beliefs. The third, described as the “protector,” seeks to establish and legitimize authority by contributing to the maintenance of the system and portraying the national political tradition in a positive light. The last type is the “conservative” and is associated with the intellectual who actively participates in the affairs of government, motivated by his or her commitment to improve or reform society, as envisioned by the political authorities who control the state. These prototypes do not really take into account the fact that many intellectuals do not just observe, support or challenge the established order but try to propose solutions or avenues to be followed by their fellow citizens or public authorities. From what I can gather, this typology deserves a fifth type, namely that of a “clinician”: an intellectual who, like a doctor, first seeks to examine the nature of the problem, then identifies the best remedy to reduce its symptoms—or, better yet, provides a cure.

My starting position is easy enough to express. Not only am I a researcher, I am also a political subject. Naturally, I have been influenced by space and time, by my place of birth, my socialization and my academic background. I was 12 years old when the October Crisis broke out. I saw the Canadian military in the streets of Montreal. One of my uncles, a university professor, was questioned by Royal Canadian Mounted Police officers. I am a child of the Quiet Revolution, of the first generation to have attended the public schools and pre-university colleges created in 1967. I became interested in Canadian politics when Pierre Elliott Trudeau was the Canadian prime minister and the Parti Québécois (PQ) was trying to establish itself on the provincial scene. I exercised my right to vote for the first time in the 1976 Quebec provincial election. With delight, I witnessed the adoption of the Charter of the French Language in 1977. I cast a ballot in the 1980 referendum on the PQ’s sovereignty-association proposal. I closely followed the constitutional negotiations that led to the patriation of 1982 and then the constitutional sagas

of Meech and Charlottetown. My master's thesis was entitled "For a New Interpretation of Conflicts between Levels of Government in Canada since 1960." My doctoral thesis focused on free trade between Canada and the United States and its potential impact on federal-provincial relations. I was hired in the Department of Political Science at Carleton University as a specialist in Quebec politics in 1990 and had to lecture students on Quebec's independence movement in an environment that was not always conducive to calm and rational exchanges prior to the 1995 Quebec referendum. My career has therefore been strongly influenced by the analysis of tense relations between Canada and Quebec. Our colleague Guy Laforest described our generation as that of the "Meech Lake years," to which belonged Alain-G. Gagnon, Alain Noël, Linda Cardinal, Manon Tremblay, Chantal Maillé, Daniel Salée, Stéphane Dion, Guy Lachapelle, and many others (Laforest, 2004). It succeeded that of Léon Dion, Gérard Bergeron, Vincent Lemieux, Maurice Tremblay, Robert Boily, André Bernard, to name but a few.

In short, my intellectual life was born in this crucible of profound political upheavals. This has indelibly marked my view of Canada and Quebec, as a Quebecker by birth.

The same is true for many English-speaking Canadian colleagues. Richard Simeon, who wrote the introduction to *Must Canada Fail?*, originally published in 1977 and translated into French as *Le Canada face à son destin*, pointed out that the book was based on several important assumptions. The first was that all the authors in this collection were federalists. Fuelled by the challenges posed to Canada by the election of the PQ, they were concerned about Canada's future and the preservation of its unique bilingual and multicultural nature. Despite the enormity of the task, they were looking for accommodation formulas that could satisfy Quebec within the federal system (Simeon, 1978: 4–5). In another text that surveyed studies on Canadian federalism, Simeon noted that before the Quiet Revolution, the transformation of Quebec's autonomist demands and the rise of an independence movement, Anglo-Canadian political science had shown little interest in Quebec. Perhaps the reason was the enormous influence of American political science over the emerging discipline in Canada, as Alan C. Cairns pointed out in the early 1970s (Cairns, 1974). Subsequently, as Simeon points out, "political scientists, along with many others became embroiled in often sterile debates about whether or not Quebec really is a 'nation,' and about whether the most appropriate strategic response was to more fully represent Quebec's interests within the federal government, or whether to espouse 'special status,' *deux nations*, or associate states" (Simeon, 2002: 19). (On these debates, see Trudeau, 1968; Forsey, 1970; Burns, 1972; Thorburn, 1973; Kwavnick, 1974; Cameron, 1974)

In short, while Quebec political science was interested in the nation-building process, English-Canadian political science was concentrating, again drawing on Simeon's text, on "nation-saving."

As a result, for years Canadian political science dwelled on issues that affected the survival of the Canadian state. The transformations that Quebec society experienced and the political demands that defied the Canadian political order were thus the subject of countless studies—studies that were unmistakable acts of political engagement. These are based on implicit normative conceptions that structure analytical frameworks; the methodologies used; the numerous value judgments

and the formulation of prescriptions to mitigate the uneasiness or dangers represented by the rapid transformation of Quebec society starting in the 1960s; the constitutional demands formulated by Quebec's civil society and political parties; the establishment of a strong pro-independence movement; the first election of the PQ; the holding of two referendums and the intense constitutional negotiations from the late 1960s to the early 1990s. Yet political tensions have somewhat eased since the failed 1995 referendum. By a slim majority, Quebecers decided to remain in the Canadian political regime. Today the independence movement is going through one crisis after another, and the political party that championed this option is currently undergoing a serious questioning of its life purpose. Quebec no longer represents an imminent danger to the survival of the Canadian political system.

These transformations have obviously changed the way political scientists look at the challenges facing the Canadian political system. New research themes have emerged; others have become less attractive. However, the choice of a research topic remains a first form of engagement. My intention is to show in which terms Canadian political science has examined the Quebec/Canada relationship. I would like to do this from four different angles emphasizing the fact that 1) its interest in Quebec politics was part of the urgency of the moment, based on a crisis that challenged the foundations of the political system; 2) it questioned the legitimacy of the sources of the dispute, namely the compatibility between the new expressions of Quebec nationalism with the presumed principles on which the Canadian political community had been founded; 3) Quebec nationalism also encouraged a reflection on the existence (or not) of "English Canada" as a sociological and political reality; and 4) the combination of the first three elements caused the prescriptions for getting out of, or resolving, the crisis to evolve over time, to the point of rendering research on this issue obsolete.

I argue that interest in Quebec politics has gradually faded because, first, the urgency caused by the crisis of national unity is no longer felt, and because the Canadian political space has since been consolidated, showing fewer signs of flexibility. This gradual exclusion is also explained by the fact that Canadian society is facing new challenges that are considered more urgent and morally more important to address. The restructuring of the balance of power that has defined the past decades has allowed issues to emerge that have been either overlooked or which were simply outside the scope of the interests of Canadian political scientists. Finally, it seems to me that Canadian political scientists have mainly, although not exclusively, embodied the moralist and protective intellectual prototypes—that is, their focus has mostly been to identify the normative principles that should guide the rapprochement between Canada and Quebec or, on the contrary, to seek to strengthen the Canadian political system in response to the issues raised by the Quebec political dynamics.

Above and beyond the life and death of an issue, in the case of taking into account the conflicting relationships between Canada and Quebec, our reflection appears equally pertinent in helping us think about the conditions that determine the choice of a research subject as a more or less conscious form of intellectual and societal engagement.

## Taking Stock of the Crisis

The interest in Quebec society and politics in part stems from the attention given to the grievances articulated in the 1960s, grievances that were expressed with considerable vigour in a context that led Lester B. Pearson's government to enact the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in 1963. The time had come to understand French Canada as demanding equal status in Confederation, in an understanding of Canada as a constitutive duality. This need was not without some self-criticism on the part of some Anglo-Canadian intellectuals. For example, historian Blair Neatby argued that "English Canadians should admit that in the past they have only grudgingly accepted the existence of French Canada. On many occasions we have tried to impose policies which ignored or threatened its existence" (cited in Lapointe-Gagnon, 2014: 160). In simple terms, two options are then possible. For Stanley B. Ryerson, the core of the problem is to accept or refuse that French-speaking Quebecers constitute a national community and that English Canadians also form a national community, which he saw as controlled by an English economic elite at the helm of the Canadian state. Considering Quebec francophones as an ethnic and cultural minority like any other, living in a province like any other, leads to a dead end and only reflects "the position of dominance [which] leads Canadians to think (in English) of Canada as 'their' nation-state (with 'the French' a mere linguistic minority)" (Ryerson, 1972: 217).

This impasse could not avoid a more astute understanding of the processes of transformation that were taking place in Quebec. In the introduction to *Must Canada Fail?*, Richard Simeon acknowledged that this awareness was painful. He admitted that non-Quebeckers had only really cared about Quebec when a crisis was latent, as revealed in the "Vive le Québec libre!" of General de Gaulle in 1967 or the October Crisis of 1970. He also admitted that after a brief period of concern, English Canada had tended to turn a blind eye to the situation. In 1977, he further acknowledged that he was once again caught off guard by the election of the PQ, which was portrayed as a "new crisis." In Simeon's opinion, this wilful blindness is one of its causes. He stated that the intellectuals of English Canada should no longer ignore what was happening in Quebec, especially since there was little time left, he said, to "repair the mistakes of our predecessors" (Simeon, 1978: 2).

Moreover, this political instability is reinforced by the institutional designs of the Canadian political system. Donald V. Smiley pointed out that the adaptability of a federal system can only be achieved when one or the other of the following three circumstances exist: First, if no national political party is able to have a significant presence in all regions of the country, divergent regional interests fuel much of the conflict within central institutions; accommodation procedures and compromises that should take place within a party designed to integrate demands cannot materialize. Second, the survival of the political system depends on the attitudes citizens express toward it; the federation, like all human institutions, can only survive if the people consider it legitimate. Finally, if most political actors seek to achieve their objectives exclusively, or almost exclusively, through a single order of government, the tensions between national and regional interests necessary to maintain federalism can be reduced (Smiley, 1970: 8). The Canadian political crisis that began in the 1960s is therefore reinforced by these three institutional elements, especially since



the legitimacy of Canadian federalism is being attacked head-on by the Quebec independence movement.

It is useful to note in which terms some renowned political scientists have qualified the action and actors involved. For David Milne, this was a war between federalists and separatists (Milne, 1986: 36–37). The metaphor is strong and refers to a conflict of interests of such magnitude that no reconciliation is possible. A war is lost or won; it is a political act of last resort. It can be suspended, but it ends with surrender or submission. It is not surprising that the PQ was presented in such an unfavourable light and how such antipathy toward it was highlighted. In the early 1980s, Donald V. Smiley rightly argued that English Canadians could only react emotionally to the independence project and that “the emotional commitment of a large number of Canadians to Confederation and the strength of the resistance to be overcome before Canada can be destroyed as a political community should not be underestimated” (Smiley, 1980: 261). For David Milne, the election of the PQ pitted two hostile francophone elites against each other, each entrenched in their respective bunkers. The independence movement is described as the result of the “fusion of separatist and radical nationalist groups that splintered off from the moderate nationalism fostered by Liberal Premier Jean Lesage and moved toward the goal of Quebec independence” (Milne, 1982: 34). Moreover, even the moderate nationalism of the Quebec Liberal Party from the early 1960s to the 1980s led, under the leadership of Jean Lesage and even Claude Ryan, to constitutional programs deemed “aggressive” (Milne, 1982: 20–21). Peter Russell also described the Quiet Revolution as a “surge of Quebec radicalism” undermined by the arrival of Pierre Elliott Trudeau and his political agenda to strengthen national unity (Russell, 2017: 14). What I want to emphasize here is that the way in which actors are positioned seems to me to reveal implicit preferences that can only have an impact on the type of analysis that will subsequently be put forward.

This crisis is not limited to the threat raised by Quebec’s national demands and, more specifically, the threat to Canadian unity the victory of the PQ in the 1976 election posed. Its causes are multiple and mutually reinforcing. Robert and James Laxer wrote in 1977 that “today Canadians face a serious breakdown in the functioning of the country’s economy, a growing tension about the relationship of the individual citizen to large institutions in Canadian society, and an acute threat to Canada’s survival in the movement for Quebec independence” (Laxer and Laxer, 1977: 16). There is therefore a complex relationship between the political crisis caused by the PQ’s election and the degeneration of Canada’s social fabric, the result of the country’s growing dependence on American imperial capitalism. As George Grant wrote in the foreword to the Laxers’ book, continental integration limits Canadian freedom and sovereignty (Laxer and Laxer, 1977: 9–11). The rhetoric against Quebec nationalism should not obscure the fact that the main challenges to the Canadian nation’s existence are its over-reliance on the United States and the neoliberal turn, which undermined the notions of social justice and an active state (Jenson, 1997). These phenomena reinforce each other and fuel Canada’s precariousness as a nation.

Clearly, as we can all see today, Canada still exists and has overcome the main crisis that profoundly shook the foundations of its political system and which, it seems to me, ended at the turn of the century. The work of English-Canadian

political scientists was that of the “protector” prototype. The aim was to understand the political dynamics of Quebec in order to identify the conditions for preserving the political system. The danger having been averted, at least for the time being, attention could now turn to other issues that were seen as a threat to the political order.

That being said, is it wise to abandon the study of this issue? Gregory Millard thinks not. In 2008, he writes:

Quebec has posed a fundamental challenge to Canadian institutions for the better part of four decades. This has provoked a vast scholarship that ranges from efforts to understand Quebec nationalism to hypothetical analyses of secession, systematic proposals for redrawing the Canadian order, angry polemics, attempts to theorize a Canada without Quebec, legal arguments, and historically minded studies of “what went wrong.” Whether or not relations between Quebec and the rest of Canada have stabilized in the short term, the existential traumas of the past four decades remain fertile ground for anyone interested in questions of identity, value, and ideas in Canadian politics; and especially for those interested in the problem of what might be good about being the kind of political community that we are—which is surely the most fundamental question any citizen must confront about their polity. (Millard, 2008: 4)

Millard’s approach is less that of the “protective” intellectual, as is the case of those concerned with the crisis in the Canadian political system, than that of the “moralist” intellectual. The main issue raised by Millard is the reconfiguration of the Canadian identity and, more generally, the parameters for inclusion within the Canadian political community. Is this at all possible? That is what will now be at the focus of our attention.

### On the Liberal Foundations of Quebec Nationalism

Basically, the “problem” that Quebec represents for Canada is its relationship to otherness: how to apprehend the Other and what are the relevant analytical categories to better understand it. The privileged conceptualization in understanding the problem of alterity is that of nationalism. To put it simply, it is a matter of deciphering the particularities of Quebec nationalism to see to what extent it is compatible or not with the way the Canadian political community is constituted. Moreover, Quebec nationalism has forced the “rest of Canada” to reflect on its constitutive elements—sometimes to see how they could accommodate Quebec, sometimes to justify the difficulty of finding a mutually acceptable solution, or sometimes to affirm the absolute impossibility of reaching an agreement.

A first trend looks upon Quebec from a perspective of internal colonialism. For Richard Jones, author of *Community in Crisis: French-Canadian Nationalism in Perspective*, published in 1972, French Canadians consider themselves, consciously or unconsciously, as belonging to a colonized minority. This particular image of themselves is at the root of their nationalism. He adds that for “the Anglo-Canadian, there is really nothing so very startling in this idea. It is obviously a central theme in his relations with the American. But the French Canadian is even



more aware of the tenuousness of the thread supporting his uniqueness” (Jones, 1972: 11). He goes on to say that the roots of this nationalism are deeply rooted in a minority complex and are therefore mainly of internal origin in Quebec. The national liberation movements that defined the struggles of the former European colonies in Asia and Africa fed the radical left-wing separatists but also influenced the majority of French-Canadian intellectuals. The metaphor of internal colonialism is partly taken up by James and Robert Laxer (1977: 139–40), as well as Kenneth McRoberts. The latter recalls the cultural division of labour to reflect the hierarchy of status between francophones and anglophones, although he acknowledges that “it is not clear that segmentation and hierarchy in the Quebec economy stemmed entirely from a conscious Anglophone strategy to impose and maintain economic domination” (McRoberts, 1979: 314). Like the Laxers, he attributes this reality to the structural conditions created by the Conquest, conditions challenged by the emergence of a new middle class attacking the economic power of the English-speaking elite controlling much of the Quebec economy. The thesis of the advent of this new class is well established in the literature and explains, in large part, the transformation of Quebec nationalism and its demands to increase its control over the economy, culture and the establishment of a social state similar to that found in several Canadian provinces (Jones, 1972; Laxer and Laxer, 1977; Jacobs, 1980; Coleman, 1984; McRoberts, 2019).

This reading is largely based on the Canadian school of political economy. However, there is also an ideological dimension that is related to the way in which the Quebec national community is conceived within the Canadian political community. William Coleman sums up very well this feeling which would be at the root of the modern nationalist movement but also the source of its drive for independence. For Coleman:

The movement is based upon more than the frustration of the francophone middle classes arising from their inability to hold economic power, more than the anger of intellectuals who find it increasingly difficult to find values sufficiently shared to constitute a community, and more than the despair of workers who know only of the instability of economic recession. It is also a cry of fright from the people of which these groups are a part, a people that remembers having some sense of self and of being a community and that feels that both are now virtually gone ... a sense of danger that French Canada may not survive. (Coleman, 1984: 211)

Coleman’s main point is that the fragility of this minority community in the Canadian space, especially with respect to language and culture, gets reflected in its desire to change its political status and demand an equal treatment with the other constituent community, the one subsumed under the term *English Canada*. Several studies therefore seek to reflect this new reality and describe in detail the evolution of nationalism in its political, ideological, cultural and economic dimensions (Clift, 1982; Coleman, 1984; Matthews, 1990; Conway, 1992; McRoberts, 2019), sometimes by comparing it with other national movements such as those in Ireland, Scotland or Catalonia (Keating, 1996; Stevenson, 2006; Frost, 2006; Henderson, 2007). Among the policies adopted by the Quebec government since

the late 1960s, those relating to language and immigration have received particular attention. As Coleman points out, “By the late 1960s, with the ‘reform’ of educational and social welfare institutions and the withdrawal of the church into more strictly spiritual realms, the most evident distinguishing characteristic of the French-speaking community became its language” (Coleman, 1984: 19). Thus, the struggle to preserve a distinct culture has in many cases become a struggle to preserve the use of French and make it predominant in the public sphere. While language was previously one of the many foundations of French-Canadian civilization, in the late 1960s it seemed to be the only element still shared by most people.

This change, marked by the creation of a party dedicated to achieving Quebec’s political independence, will lead many Canadian political scientists to question the compatibility between Quebec nationalism and Canadian liberalism. This conflict would extend beyond Quebec’s borders when the latter sought, in the 1960s, to amend the Canadian Constitution so that it would better reflect its aspirations. The battleground will thus become Canadianized and, in turn, force political actors to take sides. Metaphors abound, but the metaphor of a “global war” dominates. A great deal of attention is given to the analysis of Pierre Elliott Trudeau’s thought, presented as the great defender of the universal liberal conception that fuels the Canadian vision, and one which also refuses to see Quebec as the main home of francophones. Trudeau’s intention was to participate in the unification and in the consolidation of the Canadian political community based on the notion of the sovereignty of the people who are undifferentiated citizens in an open and pluralistic society (Milne, 1982: 34–35; Cairns, 1983, 1991; Ajzenstat, 1995: 128; LaSelva, 1996; McRoberts, 2019).

Robert and James Laxer clearly express how this conflict is generally depicted:

The ideological war between Canadian liberalism and French Canadian nationalism has been the most articulate philosophical dispute in Canadian history. Not surprisingly, the war has been carried on mainly within French Canada itself ... with English Canadians looking on as spectators. The war goes back to Confederation, to the place afforded French Canada in the Canadian federal state, and to the way the system evolved. On one side of the debate have been the French Canadian federalists who have argued that French Canadians should seek to survive through their individual excellence, modernization, and striving within Canada as a whole. On the other side, the nationalists have argued that French Canadian survival depended on the collective political action of French Canadians as a national entity either within a Canadian framework or within an independent Quebec. (Laxer and Laxer, 1977: 150)

The conflict is presented in a binary way. On the one hand, the Canadian liberal system conceives democracy and citizenship in individualistic terms and excludes any notion of rights attributed to national communities. This conception collides with the one put forward by Quebec social and political actors, which would give precedence to collective rights. For some, this opposition is irreconcilable. Others, however, seek to deepen their analyses and wonder whether liberal

principles and the need to protect a community from the excesses of liberal individualism are compatible.

The work of theorists and philosophers Will Kymlicka and Charles Taylor fall in this camp. For Kymlicka, it is possible to make liberalism more sensitive to cultural affiliations within the framework of a theory of justice (Kymlicka, 1989, 2001; May, 2016). Kymlicka's contribution, which has spread far beyond Canada's borders, is to have demonstrated that the rights of national minorities do not necessarily conflict with those of individuals, since substantive equality can be achieved by requiring the state to grant minorities support and recognition. The demands of a national minority to protect itself from the influence of the majority are acceptable, provided that the rights of individuals, including the right to dissent and of autonomy, can be protected within the group. Thus, his contribution reminds us that "the specific rights of groups—such as the right to territorial autonomy, the right of veto, language rights, rights of representation within central institutions or land claims—can help to redress this inequality by reducing the vulnerability of minority cultures to decisions taken by the majority" (Kymlicka, 2001: 160). Institutional autonomy, possible within a federal framework, finds here one of its justifications.

As for Charles Taylor, he also sought to find a balance between the rights of a community and individual freedoms, it being understood that freedom is always contextualized and based on communitarian foundations (Taylor, 1991, 1992, 1997; see also Gagnon, 2012). Indeed, it is misleading to think that the state is neutral; rather, it is embedded in a political tradition which is defined by a distinct culture (Tully, 1999: 5). The latter invariably promotes a certain conception of social justice, dignity, solidarity and the conditions necessary for life in society, just as it favours an institutional framework that can hardly be understood outside the dictates of liberalism's dominance. Yet Quebec's autonomist dynamic is that of a society that seeks recognition and to increase its internal capacity for self-determination. It is fundamentally democratic and forces "Canada outside of Quebec" to accept that its approach to the political community cannot be imposed on everyone. Consequently, "Dualism ... has to exist at two levels. (i) First, it meant that French had to be recognized as a language along with English in the federation. That is, French had to be given a status clearly different from that of an ethnic immigrant language, even if it was the most important among these. And (ii) second, it meant that *la nation canadienne-française*, or its major part, had to have some autonomy, some ability to act as a unit" (Taylor, 1991: 59). The philosopher maintains that the granting of special status to Quebec conflicts with the principle of equality as conceived by the rest of Canada.

Canadian political science has therefore contributed to deepening the links between liberalism and collective rights from the perspective of the sovereignty of national minorities. As Joseph Carens points out, liberal political communities can take different forms and use different political-institutional arrangements. Thus, "emphasizing shared liberal commitments does not make the challenge of Quebec nationalism disappear, and accusing Quebec nationalists of illiberalism for demanding an independent state is simply wrong" (Carens, 1995a: 4). Similarly, it is possible and morally defensible, according to Carens, that Quebec adopt a language policy that makes French the official language of the state,

since it is the language of social interaction, public life and of the integration of immigrants (Carens, 1995b: 57–58).

However, other political scientists recognize that it is particularly difficult for many English Canadians to recognize Quebec's distinct character and how it corresponds with liberal principles. The main stumbling block is how the principle of equality is understood. Samuel LaSelva attributes this difficulty to the influence of American federalism and its conception of the equality of the constituent parts within a relatively homogeneous country. In addition, the notion of equality is associated with rights that must be applied uniformly and in keeping with the principle of state neutrality and its refusal to promote or protect a certain way of life (LaSelva, 1996: 131; see also Resnick, 1997).

The difficulty in reconciling collective rights and liberalism has led a number of political scientists to simply reject any form of accommodation. In a book published in 1991 with the evocative title of *Goodbye... et bonne chance! Les adieux du Canada anglais au Québec*, David J. Bercuson and Barry Cooper proposed that Quebec should amicably separate from Canada on the grounds that Canada is a liberal democracy and that it is seriously undermined by Quebec's nationalism, one based on ethnic and cultural characteristics. The argument put forward is that Quebec's demands are simply incompatible with the maintenance of a democratic and liberal Canada and the preservation of the principles of majority rule of a neutral state, with respect to religious, ethnic or cultural preferences. Moreover, the authors argue how repeated attempts to meet Quebec's demands within Canada have jeopardized the Canadian political order and contributed significantly to its economic and social crises (Bercuson and Cooper, 1991: 22, 30–33; Cooper, 1994: 104–5). The denunciation of ethnic nationalism fuelled public debate. David Chennells argued that the conflict between Quebec and Ottawa pits Quebec's "official exclusive nationalism" against Canadian democratic liberalism, as enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Chennells, 2001). There can be no possible accommodations.

These interventions are in the vein of "moralist" political science, preoccupied with determining the conditions for the acceptability of the social and political relations that unfold before it. There is a certain empathy for Quebec's nationalist demands among those who see them as the consequence of an internal form of colonialism or, at the very least, the expression of historical frustrations toward the group perceived as dominant. This positioning has given rise to a rich literature in political thought on the different configurations required to find a balance between the need to preserve the conditions for the survival and development of national minorities with the respect for individual rights. Others came to opposite conclusions and condemned everything that seemed to be moving away from a certain reading of classical liberalism. In any case, and whatever angle is privileged, the moralist is never very far from the protector.

### On the Foundations of the Canadian Political Community

The transformation of Quebec nationalism has had the effect of challenging the way Canada has traditionally defined itself. Quebec political actors, regardless of their political allegiances, have generally built a discourse on a binary conception

which is based on the idea of a pact between two nations in building the 1867 federal project. Quebec's alter ego is the "Rest of Canada" (ROC) or the "Canada outside of Quebec" (COQ), or, more simply, Ottawa or the federal government, seen as the spokesperson for English Canada and presented as an undifferentiated group. This representation has, in a way, forced Canadians to think about who they are. Alan Cairns judiciously captures this transformation when he states that "the citizenry of ROC is induced, initially reluctantly, to see that the comfortable Canadianism natural to the majority, in which it had merged itself, indeed lost itself, is eroding under the impact of Quebec nationalism" (Cairns, 1993: 187). In response to this dynamic imposed by Quebec, the ROC began to see itself as a potentially distinct political and sociological entity. But what are its contours?

Philip Resnick reminds us that English is the lingua franca shared by the vast majority of Canadians, with the exception of Indigenous people and first-generation immigrants. Public policies, the media, the education system, cultural and sporting events reflect this reality. Therefore, it is theoretically reasonable to use the term *English Canada* to designate this national community, given that English predominates in both its public and private spheres. He does acknowledge, though, how English Canadians present themselves mainly as Canadians and that a linguistic reference is absent in spontaneous self-identification (Resnick, 1995: 85; Resnick, 1991). This designation, although satisfactory from the point of view of reason, is politically problematic, and so Resnick asks: "Is there a sufficient sense of identity as English-speaking Canadians that can allow us to build on a long-established sense of [civic] nationalism and come to terms with other national identities within the Canadian state?" (Resnick, 1997: 118). The answer to this question, first asked by Quebec, is not self-evident.

There is a price to pay when silence is broken and a conversation takes place on the foundations of the Canadian political community, when the cleverly maintained "constitutional abeyance" or misunderstandings that have allowed Canada to avoid questioning the nature of the initial arrangements are revealed and need to be clarified (Thomas, 1997). Not only is English Canada's self-understanding challenged, but it also gives rise to inextricable political and symbolic struggles. In Cairns's view:

When multiple nationalisms coexist within a single polity, transformations in the position of any particular nationalism change the environment for all the other nationalisms. This is especially the case when a political country-wide nationalism is attacked by a domestic ethnic nationalism seeking to increase its hold over its members by weakening the hold of its rival. In the Canadian case, the attacking nationalisms are the Québécois and the Aboriginal; that which is attacked is Canadian nationalism which simultaneously fights back and adapts. Pan-Canadian nationalism, devoid of linkage to a homogeneous ethnic base, has difficulty competing with the emotional force of its Quebec and Aboriginal sub-state rivals, which are driven by a more cohesive sense of national selfhood. The residual contemporary nationalism of ROC is potentially the ultimate adaptation of Canadian nationalism, the anticipatory recognition of possible future defeat. (Cairns, 1995: 18)

A new type of Canadian nationalism is emerging based on two elements: geographically, its territory is located outside Quebec; psychologically, it reproduces the image that Quebec sends back to it. For Cairns, it is, first of all, a residual nationalism that appears to be an imposed choice following Quebec's refusal to adhere to the pan-Canadian nationalism that the ROC prefers to maintain. Thus, Canadian nationalism is unfinished and constitutes a step back from the pan-Canadian vision that is faltering under the bullets of Quebec nationalism. English Canadians realize, according to Cairns, that Canadian unity will always be conditional and based on reason or the calculation of benefits, rather than on the emotion Quebecers feel toward it (Cairns, 1993).

However, this binary way of thinking about Canada raises serious problems. English Canada exists only in the imaginations of Quebec's political and intellectual elites (McRoberts, 1995: 10). In reality, it is headless and without a spokesperson. While the federal government has a mandate to govern for all of Canada, its vision can be thwarted by the provincial governments speaking for territorially defined segments of the Canadian population. The grouping of the nine provinces and three territories cannot represent a unified Canada, just as the federal government cannot claim to speak for everyone. The federal form of government is therefore an obstacle to consolidating the ROC and developing a common vision. Thus, "If Quebec remains in Canada, ROC, made conscious of its existence by the constitutional perils through which it has lived, will experience a certain lack of identity, ambiguity in its self-perception, and frustration of its political selfhood, for it will have no single lever exclusively available to promote, shape, and then preserve an identity kept indistinct by the absence of supportive cues to give it definition" (Cairns, 1993: 196).

One possible way to reconfigure Canadian identity is to adopt a pluri- or multinational conception of the political community. Multinationalism reflects the presence of what Kenneth McRoberts has described as internal nations, made manifest by the presence of the Quebec nation, but also of Indigenous peoples and, to some extent, Acadians (McRoberts, 2001, 2019). It does, however, raise a number of problems, including the reification of so-called national groups (Schertzer and Woods, 2011; Woods, 2012). Moreover, the struggles led by these internal nations jeopardize the pan-Canadianism to which a majority of English Canadians subscribe. The principles that underpin the Canadian political system, and the representations to which they give rise, namely, the equality of citizens, which is reflected in the Charter; the equality of the provinces as enshrined in the amending formula of the Constitution; and the principle of federalism, which contributes to the multiplication of spokespersons for the interests of the ROC, make it difficult, if not impossible, to transcribe multinationalism into Canadian political institutions (Cairns, 1993, 1994; Hueglin, 1995). In addition, the proliferation of nationalisms reflects, to borrow from Jeremy Webber, a certain sentiment that seems to be spreading in English Canada, namely one where "we are torn between our genuine desire to continue with this country and our suspicions that we may no longer have compatible ideas of what the country should be" (Webber, 1994: 22).

Two other responses were given to address this issue. The first is to strengthen the national identity as it has developed over the course of Canadian history. Rather than consider defeat, at a time when a majority of Quebecers see themselves as belonging to a different nation, perhaps it would be better, states Tom Flanagan,



to recognize this reality and not distort the Canadian political nationality by trying to adapt it to fundamentally different identities (Flanagan, 1997: 26). After the 1995 referendum, we heard voices that suggested Canada's national identity had suffered from this challenge—at the least, that it had been stunted in its development, perhaps even irreparably damaged. The fight against Quebec nationalism had become a self-destructive obsession, to the point of distorting the national identity of English Canadians into abandoning its own national project (Conway, 1998: 10).

Another response emphasizes the pluralistic nature of the Canadian identity and the fact that the binational approach is no longer adequate to reflect it. In fact, binational Canada implies that the political community was built on the basis of an ethnic or cultural divide, whereas the Canadian project was based on the desire to found a new political nationality where loyalties can be multiple (Smiley, 1980: 295–96). In addition, the debates go far beyond formal constitutional negotiations or issues concerning Quebec and its place in the federation. Political science is interested in new issues. Other arenas of contention, such as Indigenous issues, ethnicity, religion, and gender, emerged. They raised questions that are not unlike those that have fed the thinkers of pluralist liberalism regarding the relationship between individual and collective rights; the tension between liberalism and communitarianism; the relationship between justice, equity and equality; and the conditions for achieving real citizenship. This pluralism requires the overcoming of the traditional opposition between English and French Canada. Duality imperfectly describes the complexity of relationships between groups, many of which have been and are still more marginalized than were francophones.

In Gerald Kernerman's view, because Canadians have failed to constitute themselves as a "people," all democratic deliberations, particularly those on diversity, have the potential to become entangled in the debate on unity (Kernerman, 2005: 19–20). To get out of this dilemma, he recommends simply to cease focusing on categories that emphasize differences. Indeed, the struggles around difference are, in fact, struggles for equality. They also have the effect of reintroducing a new form of identity politics insofar as it is based on the recognition of groups (Quebec, Indigenous people, English Canada, women, racialized minorities) and leads to a form of essentialization of difference. According to Kernerman, "In response to the fundamentalist flavour of the equality discourse, the difference discourse begins to take on its own fundamental flavour" (24). This only helps to reproduce the problem. He concludes by noting that the greater the effort to find a solution to the national issue, the more Canadians are fragmented. Opposing nationalisms or identities is not the solution to the problem of Canadian unity.

In sum, Quebec's self-identification partially outside of the realm of Canadianism raises questions about the constituent elements of the Canadian political community. The reflection that ensued ironically contributed to marginalizing the concerns raised by Quebec's political elites. On the one hand, several political scientists have taken note of the political dynamics generated by the constitutional negotiations. The latter have given rise to the emergence of new voices outside the traditional categories of the two founding peoples, particularly those of ethnic groups and visible minorities, but more forcefully by Indigenous peoples who challenged the definition of Canada put forward by the two historically privileged



majorities, now recognized rights holders, having obtained some recognition through the Charter (Green, 2005; Coulthard, 2014; Borrows, 2016; McCrossan and Ladner, 2016; Ladner, 2017). As Cairns pointed out, “This ethnic/aboriginal discourse not only reveals pervasive disagreement with government definitions of community structured by federalism, but also underlines the extent to which the Canadian constitution is now embroiled in the tensions of an ethnically plural society” (Cairns, 1989: 120). The idea of a binational Canada, as conceived by the Laurendeau-Dunton Commission, died with the patriation of the Constitution and the entrenchment of the Charter. Whether or not P. E. Trudeau’s political program succeeded in appeasing Quebec does not change that it has contributed powerfully to reshaping the Canadian political community in a way that reduces the place that Quebec had thought it had historically occupied (Milne, 1982; LaSelva, 1996; Choudhry, 2009; Russell, 2009, 2013; McRoberts, 2019).

On the other hand, English Canada refused to recognize itself in the terms put forward by Quebec political actors. In other words, this national entity does not exist as a unified whole. Quebec nationalists therefore have no interlocutors with a reasonably coherent identity with which to engage. Here again, it is the prototype of the protective intellectual who seems to predominate. In such a context, the identification of the voices that have been expressed and their multiplication, as well as the validity of their claims, have received considerable attention. This has contributed to discrediting the terms of the debate as traditionally put forward by Quebec and its political spokespersons. New groups have rightly emerged as more marginalized, as have solutions to their more pressing problems than Quebec’s alleged exclusion from the Canadian Constitution.

### The Life and Death of an Issue

The evolution of the political dynamic between Quebec and the ROC, as long as such an entity exists, has largely shaped the recommendations made by Canadian political science either in resolving the crisis, in arguing that it is not so important, or, finally, in moving on to something else. In this regard, many political scientists have put on the robes of the clinician and have written prescriptions to meet the challenges brought on by the transformation of Quebec nationalism.

First, in the early 1970s, the initial reaction was to admit that the grievances formulated by Quebec nationalists were well-founded and that a thorough and complete response had to be presented: “Social grievances must be satisfied; the needs of the new middle classes will have to be met; steps will have to be taken by the government in order to remove the causes of latent discontent within a large segment of the labouring and agricultural classes” (Jones, 1972: 158). However, the dissatisfaction cannot be explained solely by economic factors. For French Canadians, the painful memory of the Conquest must fade. That is why Canada must welcome Quebec’s request for greater autonomy and ensure that the rights of French Canadians are better respected across the country.

There was another reaction against such openness. It placed greater emphasis on the effect that the granting of a special status to Quebec could have on the functioning of Canadian federalism. In a clinical analysis, Smiley explained the stability of relations between the two main national communities prior to the 1960s by the

presence of various factors, including the division of legislative powers that meant that Quebec was only concerned with language and culture while the federal government was responsible for the economy; institutional segregation; and the distrust French Canadians felt toward the state. The end of the ideology of “survival” and its replacement by that of “flourishing” had fuelled conflicts over the division of powers—the Quebec government wanting to circumscribe the spending powers of the federal government to better control its own economic development. The rise of a new middle class and the modernization of Quebec put an end to institutional segregation, so ensuring that both anglophone and francophone populations could pursue their objectives without obstruction. This new socio-political reality resulted in a desire to see the Quebec government’s capacity to manoeuvre broaden, and took shape in a quest for special status (Smiley, 1980: 219–25). This direction, which would help to increase Quebec’s autonomy, would weaken the federal government, which would be less capable of performing its responsibilities for integration and economic development. Donald V. Smiley expressed concern about the possible destruction of Canadian federalism that could ensue. This new type of cooperative federalism “will result in a situation in which the political and constitutional relationships between the people of Quebec and those of the other provinces will be so tenuous and so fragmentary—and so much mediated through the government of Quebec rather than being carried on within the institutions of the federal government—that a constitutional revolution destroying Canadian federalism will have been effected” (Smiley, 1970: 123).

In addition, at the institutional level, the Canadian Parliament would adopt legislation that would no longer affect Quebec, reducing its influence within federal institutions. This would create tensions to the extent that “it seems unlikely that English Canada will accede simultaneously to pressure for both a special status for Quebec and a more influential role for French-speaking citizens from Quebec in the institutions of the federal government” (Smiley, 1970: 124). Yet the federal government had made efforts to respond to Quebec’s demands: recognition of administrative autonomy through the signing of tax agreements, and unconditional transfers; public administration reform following the adoption of the Official Languages Act; the presence of “French power” in the federal cabinet; and increased French-language services in several provinces (Smiley, 1980: 228–36). There is no need to do more, one might think.

Nevertheless, the election of the PQ in 1976, the 1980 referendum, the 1982 repatriation, Quebec’s questioning of the legitimacy of the Constitution Act of 1982 and the failure of the constitutional negotiations that marked the early 1990s resulted in a call for new solutions. Many studies suggested that serious consideration be given to the possibility of setting up asymmetrical arrangements and to constitutionalize the distinct character of Quebec (Taylor, 1997; Conway, 1998). This would have required a break with the principles of provincial equality and undifferentiated citizenship. Jane Jenson clearly presents the political-normative dimension related to the presence of two citizenship regimes within the Canadian political space that require special arrangements:

It is not the existence of different cultural groups in and of themselves that have led the country to its current impasse. It is, rather, that Canadian and Quebec

societies, as they engaged in the construction of modern, secular and civic citizenship regimes, did not share the same understanding of the rights and belonging dimensions of citizenship. Despite sharing a strong commitment to democratic practices and to liberalism's individual rights, the Canadian and the Quebec states do not recognize their citizens in the same way, nor does each society define membership in the collectivity in the same way. The result is that they do not share a common political identity. (Jenson, 1998: 218–19)

In 1991, Alan Cairns went so far as to propose a limited or nonexistent application of the Canadian Charter in Quebec, with increased powers and constitutional recognition of its distinct character (Cairns, 1991: 88). Constitutional asymmetry would better reflect the multiplicity of forms of political allegiance to Canada. For Jeremy Webber, “Asymmetry of allegiance is therefore fundamental to the structure of Canada’s political communities and results from the autonomy of Canada’s francophone and anglophone forums for debate, filtered through Canada’s institutions” (Webber, 1994: 212). An asymmetrical constitution appears as the most compatible institutional form, considering the profoundly diverse nature of the Canadian political community, both for Quebec and the Indigenous peoples. Samuel LaSelva, like many others, wants a return to the moral principles that led to the creation of Canada. He invokes the spirit of George-Étienne Cartier, who recognized the existence of different ways of life while considering a common one. Such an image of federalism roots itself in the moral foundations of Canadian Confederation, one based on solidarity and fraternity, and institutions must adequately reflect this compact (LaSelva, 1996: 172). In this context, a federal and pluralistic Canada means the accommodation of the new Quebec nationalism and the acceptance of a certain degree of self-government for Indigenous communities. Canada’s existence requires that Canadians accept asymmetrical federalism.

Kenneth McRoberts, in the second edition of *Misconceiving Canada*, first published in 1997, pointed out that Canadian federalism and the Constitution cannot be based solely on the territorial dimension and must take into account the different national identities, its internal nations, as well as the specific reality of official language minority communities. This would reduce the frustrations and conflicts they generate and challenge the vision of the Canadian nation constitutionalized in 1982—namely, “a quite coherent conception of a Canadian identity, which has become the basis of a strong state nationalism: the nationalism of the non-nation” (McRoberts, 2019: 360).

However, after 1995, new analyses take note of the result of the second referendum where the “no” option only captured 50.6 per cent of the vote. This event had had a traumatic effect and challenged Canadian intellectuals and academics who saw their roles as including that of “guardians of the threshold” and “protectors” of the Canadian political system. Several voices now called for a tighter legal framework to establish clearer rules for both another referendum and the conditions required for the exercise of sovereignty. New rules are now required, including questioning the legality of a unilateral declaration of independence; the amending formula that should be used; the need to obtain the majority support of Indigenous nations for secession before authorizing it; possible territorial partition; the validity of the question; and what constitutes a qualified majority. In short, for many

Canadians, the rules governing the secession of Quebec were no longer to be defined by Quebecers alone (Monahan et al., 1999: 244). Some people openly welcomed the federal initiatives that are part of what will now be called Plan B, a set of legal and legislative measures designed to circumscribe the government of Quebec's ability to autonomously define the political process that can lead to Quebec's independence. For Tom Flanagan, "This is one of the most important developments in recent Canadian history because, for the last thirty years, the initiative has always lain entirely with Quebec. Now, after long and shameful procrastination, the leaders of Canada are finally taking some steps to protect the interest of Canada" (Flanagan, 1997: 21). The Supreme Court's reference on the secession of Quebec and the adoption of the Clarity Act also resulted in an abundant intellectual production which, for the most part, highlights the new room for manoeuvring available to political actors and of the innovative nature of the recognition of the right to secession of a federated entity (Tully, 2000; Choudhry and Howse, 2000; Kelly and Murphy, 2005; Cruickshank and Verrelli, 2014).

Once again, political scientists interested in constitutional dynamics and federalism now acknowledge the impasse in the process of renewing the Canadian Constitution. As Simeon pointed out, "Canada's failure to 'constitute itself as a sovereign people,' in multiple rounds of 'mega-constitution-making,' as Peter Russell put it, had produced a pronounced constitutional fatigue, even among those whose livelihood it had so well provided for" (Simeon, 2002: 27). From the late 1960s to the early 1990s, the way in which Quebec's aspirations were met was an important part of the thinking of Canadian political scientists. Starting in the mid-1990s, the challenge now is to demonstrate that the Canadian political regime, and the federal system in particular, has succeeded in providing a set of responses, considered acceptable, to Quebec's grievances. Of course, many regret that Quebec has not ratified the 1982 Constitution and note a decrease in powers for the latter (Milne, 1982; Cairns, 1993; Aizenstat, 1995; McRoberts, 2019). Smiley even sees repatriation as a breach of promises made to the Quebec electorate, even a betrayal and violation of fundamental constitutional conventions (Smiley, 1983: 78, 93). Despite this regret, many note that Quebec is somehow trapped by the way federalism works and the constitutional review process that reinforces the status quo: Quebec is a province in a structure that values the principle of their equality (Feaver, 1996: 45; Cairns, 1997: 58–59). On the other hand, after three decades of constitutional debate, not only is there some fatigue but also the fact that Quebec's quest for autonomy has deepened divisions in Canadian society. Canadian citizenship is so fragmented that it is simply impossible to attempt to define a collective identity through a mutually satisfactory constitutional language (Russell, 2013: 100).

From this double observation flows two readings of the relationship between Quebec and Canada. A first one highlights the fact that Quebec's aspirations can be met through nonconstitutional adjustments. Examples abound: the Charter has been interpreted to reflect the principles that justified the adoption of a clause recognizing Quebec's distinct character; the government of Canada consults with the government of Quebec in the process of appointing judges to the Supreme Court; Quebec obtained a veto, by legislation in 1996, with respect to any future constitutional amendment; and multiple administrative agreements have been concluded with the Quebec government, taking into account its preferences, often by de

facto accepting the principle of asymmetry (Leslie, 1991; Brock, 2008; Webber, 2018). In other words, constitutional failures have not prevented Canadian federalism from evolving in a way that respects Quebec's particularities. For Samuel LaSelva, "compromise and mutual concessions were part of a distinctive ethic of constitutionalism and evolving constitutional faith" (LaSelva, 2018: 154).

A second reading, without denying the first, argues that Quebec society has been able to develop and is even stronger today than it was when the constitutional talks began. The argument could be summarized as follows: "The proof is in the pudding." Richard Simeon summed up this way of looking at things:

After all, the federation has managed to survive over a long period. Quebec has been the central force ensuring that the Canadian federal system is in some ways the most decentralized federation in the world. Quebec has been able to use the institutional, political, and financial resources which federalism provides to build a powerful national society, and to become, in Andrew Stark's terms, "the most powerful sub-state government in the OECD." It has been able to develop distinctive economic, linguistic, and social policies, with relatively few constraints from the centre. These policies have helped to erase the economic inequality between francophone and anglophone citizens in Quebec, to erode anglophone domination of major economic institutions, and to create, with the assistance of the Quebec state, a powerful Quebecois business class, known as "Quebec Inc." Its weight in the central government has ensured national policies sensitive to Quebec aspirations, and fostered limited—and still controversial—extension of language rights and government services to francophones outside Quebec. Arguably, Quebec's economic, social, and linguistic security as a small minority on the North American continent has been stronger within the Canadian federation than it would have been as a small independent state. (Simeon, 1995: 256)

All in all, Quebecers are doing well. It is even difficult to argue that Quebec's national identity is repressed by a dominant intolerant majority (Whitaker, 1995: 206–7). Francophones in Quebec continue to participate in the Canadian political system despite the fact that they first self-identify with their province. Nevertheless, they have a strong attachment to Canada. Despite the tensions inherent in Quebec's difference, the federal system is able to adequately reconcile Quebec's aspirations with the rest of Canada. Thus, in Russell's words, "Since the final fling, the 1995 Quebec referendum, the country has settled back into the normal life of a settled constitutional democracy" (Russell, 2017: 423).

The crisis in the Canadian political system that began in the 1960s has been finally resolved. This issue is, so to speak, dead. Political science, on the other hand, is not. The same is true of the posture of the intellectual guardian of the threshold, moralist, protector or clinician. The issues surrounding the consideration of multi-ethnic diversity, the neoliberal shift and transformations of the social state, the environmental crisis, and Canada's relations with Indigenous peoples have come to occupy the same moral space as that previously occupied by Quebec-Canada relations and federal-provincial issues (Whitaker, 1995: 205–6; Simeon, 2002: 8). It is this last question which, with a few exceptions, no longer

attracts attention. This does not mean that Canadian political science ignores Quebec. It is now doing so by considering the latter as one of several “cases,” seeking to explain similarities and differences with what is happening elsewhere in Canada or abroad. Quebec nationalism is becoming one of several explanatory variables (see, for example, Mahon and Béland, 2014; Graefe, 2014; Haddow, 2015). Quebec is still there; it is the way we approach it that has changed.

## Conclusion

Political scientists are not disembodied and detached from the upheavals facing our societies. They are interested in social and political movements that challenge the established order, in the shocks that shake up the power structure, whether locally, nationally or internationally. In a nutshell, I could say that the themes of stability and order are at the heart of most scientific work. It is these concerns that fuel our view of change. The way we do this seems to me to depend on our desire to promote the sustainability of social relations and institutions, or, on the contrary, to challenge the inequality of power and representation structures. We do not do this without bias. In this regard, this overview of Canadian political science production on the relations between Quebec and Canada reveals that many have, consciously or unconsciously, not only sought to understand the transformations brought about by the challenges posed by Quebec nationalism but have reproduced their preconceptions, even their prejudices, toward Quebec. They have done so with varying degrees of generosity but most of the time with the unspoken aim of keeping the Canadian ideal to which they subscribe intact.

In an analysis focusing on repatriation, Janine Brodie recalled that important political moments do not give rise to a single story. They are configured and constituted by political imaginaries which are forged by dominant, residual or emerging interpretations (Brodie, 2015: 30–31). The interpretation in using the conception of two founding peoples belongs to the residual category. Nevertheless, it continues to feed those who, particularly in Quebec, still want to rebuild or reform Canadian federalism based on this parameter that is now considered outdated (an analysis of some of these contributions is provided by Melançon, 2017). It is the emerging dynamics, those that challenge dominant interpretations, that are now receiving attention, “groups speaking for women, the disabled, the poor, the minority religious and ethnic groups, and Aboriginal peoples” (Brodie, 2015: 37). This is how an issue lives and dies, while others emerge and lead the discipline.

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