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The government of Quebec has made public its proposal to negotiate a new agreement with the rest of Canada, based on the equality of nations; This agreement would enable Quebec to acquire the exclusive power to make its laws, administer its taxes and establish relations abroad – in other words, sovereignty – and at the same time, to maintain with Canada an economic association including a common currency; Any change in political status resulting from these negotiations will be submitted to the people through a referendum; On these terms, do you agree to give the government of Quebec a mandate to negotiate the proposed agreement between Quebec and Canada?

December 20, 1979 announcement by the Quebec government of a referendum on political sovereignty for Quebec.

The sun shone brightly throughout most of Quebec on May 20, 1980, warming long lines of voters waiting throughout the day to cast their ballots in a historic referendum on sovereignty-association. The heavy turnout among the province’s 4.3 million voters had been foreshadowed by a record level of voting in advance polls the previous Friday and Saturday. At the end of the day, 59.5 percent of those voting had said “no” to the Parti Québécois government’s proposal that it be given a mandate by the people of Quebec to enter into negotiations with the government of Canada for a new status for Quebec – political sovereignty coupled with an economic association with the rest of Canada.

Although the outcome of the referendum gave the Canadian federal union a new lease on life, the leaders of both sides of the bitterly contested five-week campaign predicted that this was not the end, that fundamental constitutional changes must occur – and quickly. In fact, during the debate on the referendum Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau already had offered the Quebec electorate a “renewed” federal system if the proposal were defeated. In return for voting no, Trudeau promised that the British North America Act, the written segment of the Canadian constitution, would be patriated from Great Britain, a formal amending procedure would be established, and a Charter of Rights and Freedoms would be added to it.
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After the referendum’s defeat the prime minister began to put his promises into effect. However, eight of the ten provincial governments balked at his threat to proceed unilaterally if agreement could not be reached on an amending procedure. The governments of Quebec, Manitoba, and Newfoundland appealed to the Supreme Court to prevent the federal government from acting unilaterally. In a September 1981 decision the Court stated that the federal government could unilaterally patriate the British North America Act, establish a formal amending procedure and add to it a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. However, it went on to assert that although the federal government was legally entitled to do so, such an action would seriously contravene constitutional convention. As a consequence, in November 1981 a First Ministers Conference was held, at which a compromise agreement was reached between the federal government and all the provinces, except Quebec, concerning an amending formula and a “notwithstanding” provision (Section 33) for the proposed Charter.

Quebec remained opposed and refused to sign the constitutional accord, but the process continued, culminating on April 17, 1982 with the Queen’s signature on a British House of Commons bill ceding formal control over the Constitution to Canada.1 Because of possible problems, the Equality of Rights provision in the Charter did not take effect until 1985. During that year the Parti Québécois was defeated in a Quebec provincial election and replaced by the Liberal government headed by Robert Bourassa, a change that helped pave the way for the Meech Lake constitutional accord reached by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney and the ten provincial premiers at two meetings at a federal government retreat at Meech Lake on April 30, 1987 and June 3, 1987.

The Meech Lake Accord dealt with the constitutional status of Quebec, the Senate, immigration, the Supreme Court, compensation to provinces by the federal government for shared-cost social programs in areas of provincial jurisdiction but in which a province did not wish to participate, and provisions for the amendment of the constitution through annual federal–provincial conferences.2 The most contentious issues were the first two,

1 Quebec refused to sign the 1982 agreement largely because it was refused a veto over the amending formula. For accounts of the process by which the constitutional accord was reached and discussions of its impact on Canadian politics see Banting and Simeon (1983); Romanow, White, and Leeson (1984).

2 Under Meech Lake, the regional distribution of Senate seats would have remained unchanged, i.e., there would have been twenty-four Senators each for Ontario and Quebec, ten each for New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, four for Prince Edward Island, six for Newfoundland, and six for each of the four Western provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia. The Yukon and Northwest Territories each would continue to have one Senator. With regard to the immigration provision, since 1971 there has been an agreement between Quebec and the federal government to ensure a role for Quebec in choosing potential immigrants. Since that time only Ontario, Manitoba, and British Col-
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recognition of Quebec as a “distinct society,” and reform of the Senate. Supporters of the distinct society clause argued that it merely reflected current social and political realities in Quebec. Critics contended that the legal implications of the concept of a distinct society were unclear, and it could facilitate the ability of the Quebec government to override minority language rights. The Senate provision called for nominations for the Senate to be made by provincial governments, but with the actual appointment power to be retained by the federal cabinet. The Accord also called for Senate reform to be a topic on the agenda of future constitutional conferences. It fell far short, however, of the demand made by Western provincial premiers for a popularly elected Senate with equal representation from each of the ten provinces.

Although the Accord was eventually signed by the Prime Minister and the ten provincial premiers, it failed to be ratified by the Manitoba and Newfoundland provincial legislatures within the prescribed three-year period that ended on June 22, 1990. The failure to ratify sparked a constitutional crisis that many observers believe jeopardizes the viability of the national political community. Stark (1990), for example, contends that the crisis “poses a potentially far greater threat to national survival than the sovereignty-association referendum.” Whatever the immediate threat Meech Lake poses, the acrimonious disputes it has generated vividly illustrate the continuing problematic nature of political support in Canada.

Canada is not the only Western democracy to have encountered problems of political support in the past two decades. Britain, Switzerland, Spain, Holland, Italy, and France come immediately to mind as countries that have experienced national integration problems of varying severity because of cultural, ethnolinguistic, or economic particularisms. Like Canada, they also have been concerned with complex social and economic issues and intergenerational value differences. As a consequence, Jean François Revel was moved to complain that, “The third quarter of the twentieth century, the period when they grew richest and most free, was
also the period in which the industrial democracies became increasingly unstable, explosive and ungovernable” (Revel, 1984:18). However, despite the gloomy assessments by Revel and others and their pessimism about the future, all of the Western European and Anglo-American democracies are still with us. As the 1980s ended, it was the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe that collapsed rather than any of the Western democracies, with former Soviet satellites such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the German Democratic Republic beginning rapid transitions toward democracy. Indeed, the Soviet Union itself has begun a very painful and fitful journey along that road.

This is not to argue that the problems of Western democracies, particularly the economic ones they have faced since the early 1970s, either have been minor ones or are unlikely to recur. Economic distress, including accelerating inflation and unemployment, high interest rates, sluggish growth, and large budgetary deficits may trouble them again – not only in the 1990s but also in the next century. Although a number of Western countries have been troubled by integration problems, those confronting Canada have been more severe. To date, however, despite the simultaneity and severity of the difficulties Canada encountered during the 1970s and 1980s and the ones it currently faces, the country remains intact. Because it is, one might argue that the genius of Canadian democracy is that the system is able to adapt to and surmount the problems that periodically threaten to undo it. With equal force, however, one might contend that the Meech Lake constitutional crisis that began in the spring of 1990 is yet another illustration of the fact that although Canada long has been a state it still is not a nation.

Because both optimistic and pessimistic scenarios about the country’s future are plausible and because the sociopolitical and economic problems it continues to experience can be regarded as more extreme examples of difficulties that in less acute and complex form have vexed other democracies, Canada constitutes an ideal setting for studying factors that influence political support. Thus, although our study focuses on Canada, and the great bulk of our data were collected in Canada, a systematic analysis of these data – of how Canadians have perceived themselves, their country, their political leaders, and their key political institutions and processes during an era of turmoil and travail – can help illuminate the conditions under which democracies are able to sustain themselves. Equally significant, it may help us to better comprehend the conditions under which they could founder. The purpose of this book is to conduct such an analysis.

3 Some scholars have disputed the “crisis of democracy” thesis. Schmitter (1981), for example, claims that arguments advanced by theorists such as Crozier, Huntington, and Watanab8i (1975) and Revel (1984) constitute unwarranted extrapolations of short-term trends or overreactions to idiosyncratic incidents that are part and parcel of the politics of Western democracies.
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THE EMERGENCE OF REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACIES

Similar to a number of other contemporary democracies, Canada’s emergence as an independent political system is coincidental with the wave of nationalism that arose in the late eighteenth century and swept Western countries during the nineteenth century. The critique of a neutral state based on contractual rights and reason and the turn toward a nationalism based on mores and the spirit or genius of a people was sharply stated in the writings of Johannes Herder. Herder hated the impersonal, centralized state and held that a nation is a community based on kinship, common history, cultural affinity, and bound most strongly by language, because “without its own language, a Volk is an absurdity, a contradiction in terms” (Barnard, 1965:57).

For his part, Hans Kohn, one of the leading twentieth-century students of nationalism, noted that although objective factors such as common descent, language, religion, territory, and customs and traditions clearly were necessary, they were not sufficient conditions for the emergence of a nation-state. The sufficient condition, in his view, was a conscious decision on the part of a large majority of a people to be a part of such a state. In his words, “nationalism is a state of mind, permeating a large majority of a people and claiming to permeate all its members; it recognizes the nation-state as the ideal form of political organization and nationalism as the source of all creative cultural energy and of economic well-being” (Kohn, 1961:21). Like Ranke, Kohn believed there was a symbiotic relationship between nationalism and the modern state; nationalism requires the state, with its varying institutions and structures, to integrate large groups of people into political life, whereas the state requires nationalism to strengthen the bonds that sustain it. Kohn observed that nationalism engenders fundamental changes in the relationship of the masses to a state. The masses come to believe that their cultural and political survival as well as their economic prosperity are inextricably linked with the fate of the state. These conditions “gave the new feeling of nationality a permanent intensity which soon made it appear as the expression of something ‘natural,’ of something which had always existed and always would exist” (Kohn, 1961:21).

Representative democracies, it can be argued, are a special breed of

4 The modern state developed in the late Middle Ages as a centralized administrative unit modeled on the Roman Empire and the Catholic Church. Early states such as England and France were characterized by a degree of cultural and linguistic homogeneity. Others such as Austria embraced peoples with many different languages, customs, and traditions. Even in the early modern period, however, there was a sense of the need for a more fundamental social and cultural affinity.

5 Ranke’s view was that a common culture, religion, and more fundamentally, a common history were required to convert an otherwise empty state apparatus into a true nation-state that was a home for a people. See Krieger (1977:20).
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political system, resting as they do upon the concept of individual freedom. Unlike most historical political systems and many current ones, representative democracies depend upon the freely given consent of their citizens and not on systematic coercion or intensive indoctrination to sustain themselves. All states periodically have recourse to coercive measures and, in extremes, so do democracies. However, the continued use of armed force or even of institutions such as schools, churches, and the mass media to indoctrinate large segments of the population undermines the institutions that characterize representative democracies and can be regarded as a gross violation of their fundamental democratic norms.

Democracies do occasionally threaten or actually use force to maintain social and political order, and to protect their citizens from invading armies, sectarian fanatics, and even simple criminals. The maintenance of security, especially internal security, is not a requirement unique to democracies, but it does pose a significant problem for them. Other regimes can squelch internal disruptions and attendant violence with heavy-handed coercive measures but democracies that employ such means, even temporarily, abandon their essential character.

Although security is a problematic prerequisite of all regimes, the peculiar affection of citizens for democracies is not solely dependent upon the government’s ability to preserve lives and property. Perhaps even more important are a host of other functions. Democratic theory prescribes that political systems are legitimate only if they guarantee citizens justice, help to secure prosperity, maintain a distinction between the concept of political regime and political authorities, provide opportunities for citizens to participate in periodic constitutionally sanctioned elections, and exercise influence over the content of public policies in the interim between elections (e.g., Mayo, 1960; Dahl, 1971; Macpherson, 1977; Barber, 1984).

Representative democratic government is understood to be fundamentally limited by the antecedent rights of the people. Indeed, a government’s principal task, according to democratic theory, is to preserve those rights. Although historically there have been differences among them concerning the appropriate scope of governmental activity, all representative democracies recognize that certain areas of human activity are “off limits” to government. Democratic regimes protect rights such as freedom of speech and assembly, freedom of religion, freedom to live where one pleases, freedom of employment, and, within certain limits, freedom to acquire and dispose of personal property.

Such rights are recognized as being limited by the overriding need to preserve public peace and thus are not absolute. Indeed, democratic governments are expected to restrain those who might exercise their rights in ways that could injure others. Rights are thus both protected and limited in democratic regimes by combinations of written constitutions and bills of rights, and unwritten but powerful conventions and precedents. Public
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support for a democratic regime is influenced by perceptions of its record as a guarantor of citizen rights.

Support also is dependent upon citizens' perceptions that they are being treated fairly and equitably by government. Citizens expect to receive equal treatment before and from the law, and that the government will extract costs and confer benefits on them in an equitable and fair fashion. However, because democratic government is limited government, the political consequences of equity–fairness judgments are limited as well. Many decisions and actions that might lead people to think they were being either fairly or unfairly treated are made not by their governments, but rather in the economic marketplace.

The existence of a large private sector allocating goods and services by market mechanisms is widely accepted in democratic systems. However, during the past half century a broad consensus has arisen that the market cannot be allowed to operate in an unrestrained fashion, and that some degree of regulation is necessary if economies are to operate efficiently and serve the public interest. Accordingly, some two generations of candidates for elected office have tried to "sell" themselves (and asked to be judged by their constituents) on the basis of their competence as economic managers. In fact, their competing claims about who can best administer economies have become the fulcrum around which interparty electoral competition typically revolves.

One of the principal reasons political candidates make claims to being effective economic managers is that a healthy and vibrant economy has become a sine qua non for funding welfare state programs that have grown almost continuously in cost and number in the post-World War II era (e.g., Flora and Heidenheimer, 1981; Dogan, 1988; Thomas, 1989). During this period public acceptance of and enthusiasm for many of these programs have grown substantially. People believe that they improve the quality of their lives, narrow economic differences, and provide a "security net" to ensure that basic needs are met. At least some such programs now are widely viewed as "rights" or "entitlements," and they have effectively added social and economic dimensions to traditional political conceptions of citizenship in representative democracies (Marshall, 1965). Social programs thus are seen as important vehicles for guaranteeing justice for all citizens; they are linked with expectations of receiving "fair shares" of economic prosperity; indeed, these are so closely linked as to virtually become two sides of the same coin.

This is not to say that the welfare state is universally popular, that its support has not varied over time, or that under certain conditions both the

6 For excellent reviews of empirical studies of the impact of economic conditions on support for political parties and party leaders see Asher (1983); Monroe (1984); Miller (1989). For a more general, theoretically oriented overview see Keech, Bates, and Lange (1989).
members of upper and lower socioeconomic strata will not withdraw their support for it. By way of illustration, income transfers may be unpopular among or regarded as unfair and unjust by donor groups. Also, because there is almost always a disjunction between the stated goals of a social program and its results, the welfare state also has been attacked at times from the right (e.g., Niskanen, 1971; Buchanan and Wagner, 1977; Brittan, 1978, 1983) and at times from the left (Habermas, 1973; O’Connor, 1973, 1986; Offe, 1972, 1984) as being inefficient, ineffective, too expensive, inflationary, not going far enough in dealing with basic social and economic inequalities, or going too far and posing a threat to freedom and democracy itself.

One reason for such varied criticisms is that during periods of economic boom people can lose sight of the circumstances that created the need for a welfare state (Dryzek and Goodin, 1986; Smith, Kornberg, and Nevitte, 1988). In contrast, during periods of economic decline, tax bases erode, government income contracts sharply, and the funds necessary to pay for social programs are severely diminished (Rose and Peters, 1978). Indeed, even the prospects of economic adversity can diminish support for expansion of welfare state programs.

A second, perhaps more important, criticism concerns the mechanism through which the welfare state is implemented. Although varying in specifics, the welfare state system in each country calls for the great majority of adults to contribute continuously to its funding, whereas at any point in time only a minority of persons are direct recipients of its benefits. Because there are long periods when an individual’s only obvious relationship to a welfare state is as a financial contributor, the system depends upon citizens’ generosity and good will, and the belief that someday they too will be beneficiaries. Such attitudes and beliefs are more likely to be manifested in good or improving economic conditions than in bad or declining ones.

The economic adversity and instability in Western countries that followed in the wake of the 1973 Arab oil embargo generated a climate of opinion receptive to proposals to halt the continuing expansion of the welfare state, and paved the way for the resurgence of ideologically conservative parties in several of them. The electoral victories of right-of-center parties in the late 1970s and early 1980s provided an opportunity for leading conservative politicians and thinkers to press their attack on specific social programs, and to reopen debate concerning the economic, social, and political goals and values served by the welfare state. Conservative electoral successes have not been paralleled by a general erosion of public support for existing social programs, however. Survey evidence shows that enthusiasm for many of these programs remains widespread (Clarke, Stewart, and Zuk, 1988; Crewe and Searing, 1988).

As noted, representative democracies are special because they emphasize the distinction between support for political authorities, on the one
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hand, and support for the political regime and community, on the other. According to Easton (1965:177) the members of a political community are a group of persons "bound together by a political division of labor." A political regime consists of formal structures and procedures and norms that define how both will be used (Easton, 1965:194). Authorities are occupants of governmental positions who have the primary responsibility and the discretion to make key binding decisions for the political system (Easton, 1965:213). Democratic theory emphasizes that authorities come and go, but the regime and community, except under extraordinary circumstances, stay on.

Democracies vary, however, in the extent to which the distinction between the "government-of-the-day," (the authorities) and "government" per se (the regime) is clear cut in the minds of their citizens. In countries with Westminster-model parliamentary systems, incumbent governments are formed on the basis of being able to secure majority support in parliament and they must retain that support to remain in office. Cabinet ministers are members of parliament and they customarily are held responsible to parliament (and hence to the people) not only for the policies and programs of their departments, but also for the actions of bureaucratic subordinates who administer them (e.g., Campbell and Szabowski, 1979:19). This fusion of executive and legislative powers enhances the probability that average citizens will blur the distinction between government qua regime and government-of-the-day. This is especially likely when one party or a coalition of parties has been in office for an extended time.

Notwithstanding this difficulty, the authorities-regime-community separation, characteristic of all democracies is a critically important one to maintain. Public grievances or criticisms which otherwise could have deleterious consequences for regime and community support are focused on the government-of-the-day, i.e., incumbent political authorities. And, because they are assumed to be merely temporary occupants of their positions, democracies have elaborate procedures for selecting, replacing, and (if necessary) removing them. Indeed, it has been argued that a genius, perhaps the genius, of democracies is that they have institutionalized "rules of the game" that make possible periodic peaceful transitions of power between competing groups of political elites through the mechanism of free, competitive elections. Moreover, these kinds of elections are periodic, dramatic demonstrations of the fact that the system is indeed democratic, and therefore worthy of citizen support, without which any political system, but especially a democratic one, could not be sustained.

Democracies also have developed procedures to help legitimate the actions political authorities take on behalf of citizens and to temper public unhappiness with what authorities do in the interim between elections. These include procedures that are intended to assure citizens that the policies and programs a government adopts are in the "public interest"; that
individuals and organized interest groups can consult with and influence authorities; and that both individuals and groups have opportunities to be involved in the processes through which public officials are held accountable for their actions. These mechanisms of public involvement help generate feelings of trust in political leaders; make citizens feel they are capable of making both the leaders and the system respond to their needs and demands; enhance political interest and participation; and, thereby, give people a stake in and reasons to support the political regime and community.

Contemporary representative democracies are, at least formally, open systems and, in contrast to authoritarian countries, anyone who wishes to participate is ostensibly free to do so. The principal institutional vehicles of participation are political parties and interest groups. In addition to the interest articulation, aggregation, and conflict management activities that parties and interest groups are supposed to perform, the impact of parties is magnified because of the psychological attachments to them that many people develop. Party identifications have affective and cognitive components that help orient people to the political world by affecting the development of important political attitudes, beliefs, and values, and facilitating the management of a potentially overwhelming flow of information. Political parties are also the principal structural means through which elections are organized; elections not only legitimize subsequent actions by public officials but, as we will demonstrate, they also provide psychically gratifying, constitutionally sanctioned opportunities for citizens to affirm and reaffirm support for the regime and its institutions and processes. In subsequent chapters we will demonstrate that citizens’ judgments about elections, and the governments that result from them, are key components of one of the pillars on which public support for representative democracies rests.

Because this is both a study of political support in Canada and in democracies more generally, note that Canada is similar to other mature democracies in that it is a free society whose citizens are not subjected to either continuous coercion or systematic indoctrination. Canadians enjoy a full complement of civil rights and civil liberties. They not only are free to participate in regular, competitive, constitutionally sanctioned elections, they also can engage in various political activities that are intended to influence the content and administration of public policy in the interim between elections. They have a market-oriented economy and are subject to the economic fallout associated with such an economy. However, they also

7 The classic exposition of the concept of party identification is Campbell et al. (1960:chs. 5, 6). See also Campbell et al. (1966). Since its introduction numerous critiques and reformulations of the concept have been offered. Among the most important are Budge, Crewe, and Farlie (1976); Fiorina (1981).