

Montserrat Guibernau  
Politics Department  
Faculty of Social Sciences  
The Open University  
Walton Hall  
Milton Keynes  
MK7 6AA  
[m.guibernau@open.ac.uk](mailto:m.guibernau@open.ac.uk)

**Between autonomy and secession:  
the accommodation of Catalonia  
within the new democratic Spain**

Montserrat Guibernau

Working Paper 48/02

The ESRC “One Europe or Several” Programme publishes Working Papers to make research results, accounts of work in progress and background information available to those concerned with contemporary European issues. The Programme also publishes Policy Papers (ISSN1468-4152) listed at the end of this publication.

The Programme does not express opinions of its own; the views expressed in this publication are the responsibility of the author/s.

Working Paper 48/02  
First published in 2002  
by the ESRC “One Europe or Several?” Programme  
Sussex European Institute  
University of Sussex  
Arts A Building  
Falmer, Brighton, BN1 9SH  
Phone: +44/01273 678 560  
Fax: +44/01273 678 571  
Email: [oneeurope@sussex.ac.uk](mailto:oneeurope@sussex.ac.uk)  
Website: <http://www.one-europe.ac.uk>

## ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to analyze the different phases in the accommodation of Catalonia within Spain since the start of the democratization process in 1976.

The paper is divided into two parts. First it offers a theoretical introduction in which the terms nation, state, nation-state and nationalism are defined. It then introduces the concept of nations without states and considers the grounds for their current re-emergence.

The second part analyses the opposing conceptions of the state and the nation in the Spanish civil war (1936-1939). It also studies the national question and the creation of the Autonomous Communities System in the new democratic Spain. The paper moves on to examine the role and principles of the non-secessionist Catalan nationalism exemplified by the CiU, in government since 1980.

To conclude, the paper investigates the novel political scenario generated by the combination of renewed Catalan demands for greater autonomy, the consolidation of a new democratic Spanish identity, and the rise of a conservative Spanish nationalism fostered by the Popular Party.

# **BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND SECESSION: THE ACCOMMODATION OF CATALONIA WITHIN THE NEW DEMOCRATIC SPAIN<sup>1</sup>.**

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The nation has become one of the most contested concepts of our times. The multifarious definitions of the nation focus on cultural, political, psychological, territorial, ethnic and sociological principles according to different scholars, politicians and political activists willing to shed some light into such a disputed term. Their lack of agreement suggests a major difficulty in dealing with such a complex phenomenon. The crux of the matter probably resides close to the link which has been established between nation and state, and to the common practice of using the nation as a source of political legitimacy. To be or not to be recognized as a nation entails different rights for the community which claims to be one, since being a nation usually implies the attachment to a particular territory, a shared culture and history and the vindication of the right to self-determination. To define a specific community as a nation involves the more or less explicit acceptance of the legitimacy of the state which claims to represent it, or if the nation does not possess a state of its own, it then implicitly acknowledges the nation's right to self-government involving some degree of political autonomy which may or may not lead to a claim for independence.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper results from the project 'Regional Identity and European Citizenship' funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, under its 'One Europe or Several?' Programme, grant number L213 25 22031

## 2. STATE, NATION AND NATIONALISM

The nation, however, cannot be viewed in isolation; I argue that a clear-cut distinction needs to be drawn between four main concepts: state, nation, nation-state and nationalism. By 'state', taking Weber's definition, I refer to 'a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory'(Weber 1991:78), although not all states have successfully accomplished this, and some of them have not even aspired to accomplish it. By 'nation', I refer to a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future, and claiming the right to rule itself. This definition attributes five dimensions to the nation: psychological (consciousness of forming a group), cultural, territorial, political and historical. But still another term needs to be defined and distinguished from the ones I have just mentioned: the nation-state. The nation-state is a modern institution, characterized by the formation of a kind of state which has the monopoly of what it claims to be the legitimate use of force within a demarcated territory and seeks to unite the people subject to its rule by means of cultural homogenization. Finally, by 'nationalism' I mean the sentiment of belonging to a community whose members identify with a set of symbols, beliefs and ways of life, and have the will to decide upon their common political destiny (Guibernau 1996:47).

Nation, state and nationalism form a triad defined by a constant tension between its three components. Hence, changes in the definition of one of the constituents have the capacity to influence and, to some extent, even alter the definitions of the other two. For instance, if belonging to a nation is defined in terms of common descent, the definition of the state and with it that of citizenship, as an attribute conferred upon its members, will have to include descent as a *sine qua non* condition for membership. Consequently, any nationalist movement emerging in these specific circumstances will focus upon common descent as a requisite for exclusion and inclusion in the nation they want to defend and promote. In other cases, where common ancestry is replaced by territory or by the will to be a member of a particular nation as the primary condition for membership of a particular state, the definition of the nation and the character of nationalism are altered accordingly.

This example refers to conditions for membership, that is, to elements which are considered to be indispensable to establish a distinction between those who belong and those who do not belong to the nation. But, modifications in the definitions of nation, state and nationalism, are not restricted to conditions for belonging or criteria for membership.

The state's self-definition as a unitary, a federal or even a multinational political institution holds significant consequences for the peoples living within its boundaries. Once one of these self-definitions is adopted by a specific state, it has the capacity to influence the definition of the nation. This is particularly evident in the case of being confronted with a state that declares itself to be multinational, thus assuming the coexistence of more than one nation within its territory. Such a position entails an automatic distinction between nation and state which challenges the commonly accepted coincidence between the two. A multinational state explicitly acknowledges its internal diversity and, in so doing, influences the various definitions of nationalism that may emerge within its territory. First, in these cases the nationalism instilled by the state will necessarily involve the acceptance of the nations included within its borders. This type of nationalism tends to focus on shared constitutional rights and principles as elements able to hold together an otherwise diverse citizenry. Second, the nationalism emerging from some of the national minorities included within the state is strongly influenced by the state's recognition of their status as nations. The minorities' nationalism is bound to focus upon demands for greater power and resources, which will allow them to further the degree of self-government they enjoy, assuming that they are already entitled to some political autonomy.

In a similar manner, variations in the definition of nationalism also have the power to impact upon the definitions of both the state and the nation. Therefore, a nationalist discourse based upon the rejection, dehumanization and portrayal of those who do not belong to the nation as 'enemies' and as a 'threat', will feed xenophobia and ethnic hatred. This type of nationalism is likely to foster a narrow definition of the nation based upon the exclusion of the different and the belief in the superiority of one's own nation above all others. A state endorsing this sort of nationalism is likely to base its policy on the marginalization or sometimes even the elimination of 'others' within its territory and/or the pursuit of a consistent assimilation policy. This type of state often engages in conflicts with other states as a result of an aggressive economic and/or territorial expansionist policy.

So far I have offered some examples showing how differences in the nature and definition of one of the constituents of the triad motivate substantial variations in the definitions of the other two. A further consideration suggests that different definitions of nation, state and nationalism coexist simultaneously in different parts of the globe. Hence, the relation between the three components of the triad can be analysed by focusing upon two different levels. The first, as I have shown above, involves the study of how changes in the definition of one of the constituents affect the other two. The second moves on to consider the eventual emergence of external factors capable of altering the very nature of the triad

by shifting the balance of power between its members and even threatening to undermine one of them at the expense of another. Here we are confronted with radical transformations able to break the more or less stable equilibrium existing within the triad by affecting their relationship at a structural level, well above the particular situations considered when analysing individual cases.

At present, the main challenge to the relationship between the elements of the triad concerns the radical and rapid transformations affecting the traditional nature of the state. The proliferation of supranational institutions, the increasing number of multinational corporations and the emergence of sub-state nationalist movements, contrive a novel political scenario in which the traditional role of the state is being undermined in a fundamental way. The signs of this have already become apparent: the radicalization of state nationalism, the proliferation of ethnic and national conflicts and the state's resistance to give up substantial aspects of its sovereignty, represent but a few examples which hint at the state's current recasting of its nature. This, far from announcing the nation-state's demise, should be understood as a novel process by means of which the state is gaining strength and power. At the same time, and illustrating once again the complex and sometimes intrinsic contradictory nature of late modernity, we are witnessing the rise of what I call 'nations without states'. These are emerging as potential new political actors able to capture and promote sentiments of loyalty, solidarity and community, among individuals who seem to have developed a growing need for identity. Sound political and economic arguments may also be invoked in trying to account for the relevance that nations without states may acquire in the foreseeable future.

### 3. NATIONS WITHOUT STATES

A nation without state is based upon the existence of a cultural community endowed with a stable but dynamic core containing a set of elements which have generated the emergence of a specific national identity. The state, that is, the political institution with which the nation should ideally identify, is missing. This generates a political scenario in which the 'cultural unit' lacks the corresponding 'political institution' regarded as legitimate by the members of the nation.

The members of a stateless nation regard the state containing them as alien, and maintain a separate sense of national identity generally based upon a common culture, history, attachment to a particular territory and the explicit wish to rule themselves. Self-determination is sometimes understood as political autonomy and stops short of independence; in other cases it involves the right to secede. Catalonia, Quebec, Scotland, the Basque Country and Flanders represent but a few nations without states currently demanding further autonomy. It could be argued that some of these nations do have some kind of state of their own since a substantial number of powers have been devolved to their regional parliaments. But, in my view political autonomy or even federation fall short of independence since they tend to exclude foreign and economic policy, defence and constitutional matters, and this is why it continues to make sense to refer to them as nations without states.

The main attributes of the nation-state, which somehow favoured the assimilation of otherwise culturally diverse citizens, were: its power to confer rights and duties upon its citizens; its ability to provide for their basic needs - a function which since the Second World War materialized in the establishment of various types of welfare systems; and its power to maintain order in society while controlling the economy, defence, immigration and foreign policy, education and communication systems.

The relationship between nation and state seems to have shifted from a time around the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century in which the state and its role in nation-building was given pre-eminence. In contrast, since the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we are confronted with the re-emergence of nationalism in nations without states. This involves the use of 'state-building' strategies being applied by stateless nations seeking to construct their own state or, at least, their own 'quasi state'.

The rise of nations without states is closely connected to two interrelated factors: the intensification of globalization processes and the transformations affecting the nation-state.

The nation-state has traditionally based its legitimacy upon the idea that it represents the nation, in spite of the fact that, often, the state once created had to engage in nation-building processes aiming at the forced assimilation of its citizens. It now becomes apparent that, in many cases, these processes have largely failed; the re-emergence of nationalist movements in nations without states proves it.

Most so-called nation-states are not constituted by a single nation which is coextensive with the state, internal diversity is the rule. The nation-state, after a long process of consolidation which has involved the construction of a symbolic image of the community endowed with a particular language and culture, and the creation of symbols and rituals destined to emphasize its unique character and the fixing of territorial borders, is being forced to respond to challenges from within.

The nations or parts of nations included within a single state do not share similar levels of national awareness. What is more, while some will define themselves as nations, others will be happy to be referred to as provinces or regions. Nations are not unique and fixed, and throughout history it is possible to record the disintegration of some nations which have played a prominent role during a particular period and the creation of new ones.

The state has a strong tendency to absorb functions and a great reluctance to delegate control over any of the tasks it considers as an integral part of its sovereignty. The argument for state centralization is closely connected to the idea of state sovereignty, understood as full control over all matters concerning the social, political and economic life of the citizens living within its boundaries. The increasing number of international organizations, multinational companies, supranational social movements and the technical sophistication of modern warfare, are currently challenging this classic concept of state sovereignty. The state is exposed to pressure from above, while at the same time it lays itself open to increasing internal strain to modify its traditional centralist nature and acknowledge the existence of territorially circumscribed cultural communities within itself which show a varying degree of national self-consciousness and put forward different socio-political demands. The origin of most of these communities can be traced back to an era previous to the founding moment of the nation-state, when diversity was generally diluted under the centralist and homogenizing practices of a then incipient nation-state.

#### 4. THE QUEST FOR RECOGNITION

The nationalism of nations without states currently employs two major sets of arguments to legitimize its discourse.

First, a political argument stemming from the French and American Revolutions; it concerns the endorsement of democracy and popular sovereignty as leading principles to legitimize the construction of the modern state. In late eighteenth century France sovereignty was taken away from the king and the aristocracy and placed in the hands of the nation which should involve the 'whole people', even though in the first instance it was assumed that the most educated and enlightened citizens would have to guide the people and bring them gradually into political life.

Second, a cultural argument closely related to the principles subscribed by Romantic nationalism. It refers to the value of cultural and linguistic diversity together with the relevance of the different identities which now attain a new and unprecedented salience.

The combination of political and cultural arguments in the articulation of nationalist discourses in nations without states possesses a proven capacity to challenge the nation-state's legitimacy at a time when it finds itself enmeshed in a process of profound change. Hence, the progressive transformation of the state sharply contrasts with the renewed relevance acquired by the nation.

The nationalism of nations without states often clashes with the ignorance, neglect or lack of will on behalf of the state which tends to resist pressure to grant the right to self-determination to national minorities living within its borders. In most cases, nations without states have memories of a past in which they enjoyed their own autonomous institutions. The processes which brought that time to an end are not free from conflict and experiences of oppression. Berlin defines nationalism as 'the result of wounds inflicted by someone or something, on the natural feelings of a society, or of artificial barriers to its normal development' (Berlin 1996:248). In the nationalist discourses of nations without states which are currently seeking recognition it is common to find a detailed list of grievances against the state. In Berlin's words: 'Nationalism springs, as often as not, from a wounded or outraged sense of human dignity, the desire for recognition' (Berlin 1996:252). The struggle for recognition entails the desire to be regarded and treated as an

equal, as someone who has a voice and is able to participate in the political processes affecting his or her future. Recognition involves many dimensions which sometimes overlap. There are moral, social, political and even financial consequences for a state which decides to acknowledge the existence of different nations within its territory. In the process of recognition, pride and moral sentiment take precedence over economic compensation. Berlin writes,

*Recognition is demanded by individuals, by groups, by classes, by nations, by States, by vast conglomerations of mankind united by a common feeling of grievance against those who (they rightly or wrongly suppose) have wounded or humiliated them, have denied them the minimum demanded by human dignity, have caused, or tried to cause, them to fall in their own estimation in a manner that they cannot tolerate. The nationalism of the last two hundred years is shot through with this feeling (Berlin 1996:256).*

The nationalism of nations without states seeks to halt a relationship with the state which is often marked by: (1) political dependence; (2) limited or frequently non-existent access to power and resources; (3) restricted or even absent financial powers, and (4) in many cases, a restrained capacity to develop and promote one's own culture and language. Nations without states claim the right to be recognized as political actors and have a say in different fora, entrance to which has been up to now restricted to nation-states. Some may argue that the recognition of nations without states adds a further complexity to current international structures, they may add that this might lead to increasing fragmentation and is opposed to the advancement of internationalism.

I argue that such positions ignore the right of peoples to preserve and develop their cultures and decide on their political future. Contemporary democratic nationalist movements in nations without states invoke the right to self-determination, a principle advanced by Woodrow Wilson after 1918. It involved, at first, 'equating the popular principle of sovereignty with the attack on the remaining dynastic empires in Europe, and later with anti-colonialism generally. Secondly, it involved abandoning the constitutional mode of settling disputed claims in favour of political settlements' (Mayall 1992:50). In Mayall's view, the historical fate of the principle of national self-determination is doubly ironic: it has tended to legitimize the state and only the state; and it has elevated and institutionalized the progressive view of human affairs by attempting to freeze the political map in a way in which has never been previously attempted (Mayall 1992:56). He points at two major challenges to the internal order: irredentism as the main essentialist challenge, and secession as the main rationalist challenge. Irredentism, in modern political usage has come to mean any territorial claim generally based on historical and/or ethnic

arguments made by a sovereign state to lands within another. Secession refers to the creation of an independent state out of a territory previously included within another state from which it has now separated. The term is also often employed to describe unsuccessful separatist rebellions against the state, which may or may not involve the use of violence.

A crucial distinction between irredentism and secession concerns the level at which they both take place and originate. Irredentism is usually instilled by state elites and emerges within the existing system of inter-state power rivalries. 'Secession', as stressed by Mayall, 'depends on group sentiment and loyalty not just on a disputed title to land or a doctrine of prescriptive right' (Mayall 1992:61). Secession constitutes a standing challenge to an international order based on the sovereign state.

*It does so because, on the one hand, it belongs to the modern "rationalist" world in which the right to self-determination is held to be a fundamental human right, while, on the other, aggressive war, and therefore the possibility of acquiring title by conquest, is proscribed under the United Nations Charter. The only way out of this impasse is to resort to the conventional interpretation of national self-determination as reflected in the existing state order. This is so obviously a fiction that it must in turn constitute a provocative invitation to secessionist nationalists (Mayall 1992:63).*

In my view, the recognition of nations without states as global political actors does not necessarily involve them becoming independent. My argument is that while some nations without states may secede, most of them are likely to achieve greater political autonomy within the political institutions which are currently being developed. In what follows I examine the accommodation of Catalonia within the new democratic Spain as an example which illustrates some of the tensions between political autonomy and secession.

## 5. BETWEEN AUTONOMY AND SECESSION: THE CATALAN CASE

Opposing conceptions of the state and the nation were at stake in the Spanish Civil War. Franco defended a highly centralized and uniform image of Spain, which rejected the progressive government of the Second Spanish Republic (1931-1938) and abhorred the process of decentralization initiated by it. During the Second Republic, statutes of autonomy were sanctioned in Catalonia (1932), the Basque Country (1933) and Galicia (1936), although only in Catalonia the Statute had been implemented at the time of Franco's rising (See Preston, 1986).

The Francoist victory resulted in the suppression of all regional political institutions and laws, but also in the prohibition of the Catalan and Basque (*Euskera*) languages and all sorts of symbolic elements (flags, anthems) of the Catalan and Basque identities (See Benet, 1973).

The Francoists, 'nationals', fought to impose a closed 'image' of Spain, an image that emphasized unity and condemned all forms of diversity. Their nationalism emerged as a reaction against modern ideologies such as socialism and anarchism which, in their view, were threatening the traditional socio-political structure of Spain. Francoism developed a form of nationalism build upon a conservative, centralist, and Castilian based ideology to stop the path towards modernization initiated by republican Spain and sustained the traditional structures defended by large Conservative Catholic sectors.

The transition to democracy that began after Franco's death can be seen as an attempt by the political class of Francoism to disentangle the problem of synchronizing Francoist institutions with the requirements of a modern society. During the seventies, a profound dislocation between the social and the political spheres became increasingly alarming and highlighted the political system's inability to solve the multiple problems facing Spanish society. Yet, although Francoism endorsed significant changes in trying to adapt to the new scenario, it proved obsolete and ill suited to run a society that had experienced dramatic transformations since 1939. With one million unemployed and inflation standing at 30 per cent in 1975, the inadequacy of Francoist policies became patently clear (See Solé Tura, 1985).

Spain was no longer a rural country. Heavy industrial zones were concentrated in Catalonia and the Basque Country. A demographic explosion took place in the sixties and, together with great internal migrations, this led to the growth of urban areas. A new middle

class emerged and some sectors of the bourgeoisie that had once supported Franco now pushed for reforms. With the Spanish economy practically isolated, these new sectors pressed for the integration of Spain into the then European Community. Illiteracy substantially decreased from 50 per cent in 1931, to 11 per cent in 1981 (Tezanos *et al.*, 1989, 106). Furthermore, the conservative Catholicism, which acted as one of the main pillars of Franco's regime from its early stages, had entered an irreversible decline which was already giving rise to a new secular society. All these changes have to be seen in the context of a new international political scenario within which Spain could only be fully accepted if it adhered to Western democratic values. In such context, it became urgent to generate a novel political system based upon democratic principles capable of replacing Spain's image as a backward, homogeneous and Conservative country.

Rupture or reform were the two options faced by Spaniards after Franco's death in 1975. The political establishment opted for reform, but as Cebrián points out, the outcome was a democratic break with the past (Cebrián, 1982, 13-24). In the light of the Francoist law, the regime prompted its own historical suicide by opening the way to democratic rule. The break was initiated from above. As a result, a peculiar situation arose: although the Francoist regime had disappeared, the public administration and institutions of the state remained intact. In Solé Tura's view, the transition to democracy could only succeed by a combination of three factors (1985, 80). First, institutional stability arising from the leading role played by King Juan Carlos I in backing the reforms. Second, the attitude of the various political factions engaged in attempting to reach a consensus over the terms under which the transition should be made, once the political reform was sanctioned by the Spanish people and the first democratic elections held in 1977. Finally, the active mobilization of large social sectors of the population in favour of the democratization of Spain, in contrast to the primarily restrained attitude of the Catholic Church and the Army. A process of disentanglement of what according to Franco's political last will was 'tied up and well tied down', reached a turning point in 1978 when Spaniards ratified the new democratic Constitution. It was at this moment when the need to replace a 'culture of resistance' with a 'culture for democracy' emerged (Abellán, 1982, 33).

## 6. THE NATIONAL QUESTION IN THE NEW DEMOCRATIC SPAIN

Probably, the most dangerous legacy of Francoism was the intensification of the national minorities question, an issue embittered by the inexorable centralism of the regime. After almost forty years of division and resentment between the 'winners' and the 'losers' of the Civil War, there was growing pressure for what the Left and some progressive Catholic groups called 'national reconciliation'.

The 1978 Spanish Constitution was the product of the consensus achieved between the main political parties that emerged from the first democratic elections. The need to obtain the support of both Francoist reformists and anti-Francoists generated endless discussions in the writing of the Constitution and even contributed to a lack of precision and incoherence in some parts of the text. Nevertheless, for the first time Spain would have a Constitution that was not the consequence of the opposition of one single political force against the others, and although there were some limits and deficiencies, the political model advanced by the Constitution 'was not exclusive or divisive, but an integration model' (Solé Tura, 1985, 84). The radically conservative character of the Spanish nationalism defended by Francoism was undermined by the 1978 Constitution. It not only aimed at the transformation of Spain into a democratic state, but also acknowledged the existence of national minorities within its territory.

The Preamble to the Spanish Constitution acknowledges the will of the 'Spanish nation to protect all Spaniards and all the peoples of Spain in the exercise of human rights, their cultures and traditions, languages and institutions' (*Constitución Española: edición comentada*, 1979, 19). Article Two, probably the most controversial in the whole text, exemplifies the tension between the unity of Spain and the social pressure to recognize historic nations such as Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country:

*'The Constitution is founded upon the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, the common and indivisible patria of all Spaniards, and recognizes and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions integrated in it and the solidarity among them'* (*Constitución Española: edición comentada*, 1979, 26).

By emphasizing the indissoluble unity of Spain, while recognizing and guaranteeing the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions, the Constitution advanced a fundamentally new model of the state that rejected Francoist centralism. It sought to reconcile unity and diversity within the Spanish state, described as a single nation

containing 'nationalities and regions'<sup>2</sup>; however, 'nationalities' and 'regions' are not defined in the Constitution.

### **The Spanish Autonomous System**

During the Francoist regime (1939-75), nationalism and democracy stood together as part and parcel of the Catalan demands for the transformation of Spain into a democratic state, able to recognize diversity within itself and prepared to alter its recalcitrant centralist nature. The makers of the Constitution opted for a model based upon the symmetric decentralization of Spain which was referred to as 'coffee for everyone' (*café para todos*). Hence, instead of directly responding to the nationalist demands of Catalonia<sup>3</sup> and the Basque Country as nations, they decided to divide the territory of Spain into seventeen autonomous communities, some historically and culturally distinct - Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia - others artificially created - La Rioja and Madrid, among many others.

Yet, while the so called 'historical nationalities', this is, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, could immediately initiate the process towards full autonomy, other regions had to fulfill a five-year 'restricted autonomy' period before commencing it. Once full autonomy is achieved, however, the Constitution makes no distinction amongst communities.

During the early stages of the Autonomous Communities System, substantially greater powers were devolved to the historical nationalities. This provoked a double outcome; it contributed to fulfil the nationalist demands of Catalans and Basques and, in some cases, it generated resentment amongst other communities enjoying fewer devolved powers.

In spite of varying powers being devolved to different communities, it is important to emphasize that all communities are structured in a similar manner. Hence, each community has a regional legislative assembly consisting of a single chamber. Deputies are elected on the basis of proportional representation and usually the leader of the majority party or coalition assumes the presidency of the Community. A President heads a regional executive of ministers in charge of departments which mostly, but not always, follow the Spanish state's pattern - this depends, to a certain extent, on the number of powers devolved to each autonomous community.

---

<sup>2</sup> As Solé Tura notes (1985, 101), it is highly controversial and juridically ambiguous to stress the unity of a 'nation' at the same time as recognising the existence of 'nationalities' within it.

<sup>3</sup> For an analysis of Catalan nationalism during the Spanish transition to democracy see, Guibernau, 1997 and 2002.

In many respects, the Autonomous Governments act as states, at least they do so in what concerns most of the powers that have been devolved. The Catalan and Basque governments, for example, provide services in education, health, culture, housing, local transport, agriculture and they have even gained control of their Autonomous police force (in addition to the Spanish Police Force and the Guardia Civil). The Spanish Government holds exclusive jurisdiction over defense, the administration of justice, international relations and general economic planning. A Compensation Fund administered by the government allocates special resources to poorer regions and is intended to promote equilibrium and solidarity among them.

## 7. CATALONIA: A NON-SECESSIONIST NATIONALISM?

Does regional nationalism pose a threat to the governance of Spain? Does decentralization contribute to the generation of an unstable central government? The analysis of the role played by the main Catalan nationalist party, Convergence and Union, in government since 1980, and its contribution to the governance of Spain should shed some light onto responding to these questions.

The tension between the acceptance of Catalonia as a part of Spain and the desire to extend its degree of autonomy lies at the core of the Convergence and Union coalition's (Convergència i Unió, or CiU) nationalist discourse. Its leader, Jordi Pujol, has been re-elected six times as president of Catalonia. The CiU defines Catalonia as a nation but does not question Spanish unity. The CiU supported the Socialist government (1993-95) when it lost its majority in the Spanish Parliament, and supported the conservative Popular Party, also short of a parliamentary majority, between 1996 and 2000. This illustrates Pujol's idea of Catalan nationalism as a non-secessionist movement. In his view, it is feasible to be a Catalan nationalist and, at the same time, to contribute to the governance of Spain. Pujol granted support to the PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers Party) in a climate fraught with constant political corruption scandals affecting socialist leaders. During this period he attained a substantial development of the Catalan Statute of Autonomy. The right to retain 15 per cent of the taxes collected in Catalonia was probably his greatest achievement. From 1997, and after negotiations with the Popular Party, the Catalan Government (*Generalitat*) retains 30 per cent of the taxes.

In Catalonia, so far, decentralization has not bred pro-independence nationalism. The only Catalan party standing for a Catalan independent republic to be achieved by democratic means is the Republican Left of Catalonia party (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* or, ERC) which has generally obtained around 8.5 percent of the vote in regional elections since 1980. From the late 1990s onwards, the ERC has been increasing its influence in Catalan politics due to fundamental transformations in its structure and political ideology (1988) and a decisive leadership change which took place in 1996.

After almost twenty years of autonomy, Catalans and Basques are not fully satisfied with their current status and want to be recognized as nations within Spain. They demand special treatment and show increasing reluctance to a blind acceptance of the 'coffee for everyone' option set up in the 1978 *magna carta*. An eventual asymmetric decentralization of Spain is regarded as an arrangement that would reflect the Spanish reality in a more

accurate manner. References to the decentralization of Britain, where Scotland and Wales are being granted substantially different degrees of political autonomy according to the intensity of their nationalist claims and national identity, are usually referred to as a model that Spain should follow. Two recent initiatives, the 1998 Declaration of Barcelona and the 2001 Catalan Self-Government Report, exemplify the growing demand for greater autonomy in Catalonia.

### **The 1998 Declaration of Barcelona**

In July 1998, the main nationalist parties in Galicia, the Basque Country and Catalonia, these are: the Galician Nationalist Bloc (*Bloque Nacionalista Galego*, or BNG), the Basque Nationalist Party (*Eusko Alderdi Jeltzalea-Partido Nacionalista Vasco*, or EAJ-PNV) and the Convergence and Union Coalition (*Convergència i Unió*, or CiU) signed a joined declaration in which they demand Spain to be defined as a multilingual, multicultural and multinational state. In their view, after twenty years of democracy Spain continues to have a unitary character and has not resolved the national question. In their own words:

*During this period we have endured a lack of juridical and political recognition, and even social and cultural recognition of the specificity of our national realities within the Spanish state.*

*This recognition, which if fair and democratic, is absolutely essential in the context of a Europe enmeshed in the process of political and economic re-structuration which in the medium term will involve the redistribution of political power amongst its different layers of government. A Europe whose union should be based upon respect for and the structuring of its different peoples and cultures.*(Declaració de Barcelona, 1998, 1)

The main demand of the nationalist parties subscribing to the Declaration of Barcelona is that Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country should be recognized as nations within the Spanish state. At this point it is worth bearing in mind that, according to the 1978 Constitution, Spain is formed by a single nation containing some 'nationalities and regions' which were never accurately defined within the Spanish Magna Carta (*Constitución Española* 1978, Título Preliminar, Artículo 2). The consequences of the recognition of Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia as nations would be twofold. First, it would imply a substantial change to the 1978 Constitution which acknowledges the existence of a single Spanish nation. Second, it would involve accepting that Spain can be defined, at least, as a 'nation of nations'.

The Declaration of Barcelona has obtained a negative response amongst the representatives of the main Spanish parties, the Popular Party (PP) and the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (PSOE).

### **The 2001 Catalan Self-Government Report**

In December 2001, the main political parties of the Catalan Left, the Catalan Socialists Party (*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya* or PSC(PSC-PSOE), the Citizens for Change civic association (*Ciutadans pel Canvi* or CpC), the ERC and the Initiative for Catalonia-Greens (*Iniciativa per Catalunya-Verds*, or IC-V), launched the Catalan Self-Government Report.

The great novelty of this Report stems from it being the first collective proposal advanced by the Catalan left in over 21 years of political autonomy. The drafting and publication of the Report coincided with the announcement that Catalan president Jordi Pujol would not stand for re-election in the forthcoming (2003) Catalan contest. Pujol's statement triggered an already heated debate about both his succession and the future of the CiU coalition, since then turned into a federation led by Artur Mas, nominated as the future CiU's candidate to the presidency of Catalonia. The Report came to light amid a centralist conservative campaign launched by the Popular Party.

The Catalan Self-Government Report contains over 90 specific proposals to strengthen Catalan's self-government and endorses the reform of the 1979 Catalan Statute of Autonomy and the 1978 Spanish Constitution. Its main demands are the redefinition of Spain as a plurinational state and for Catalonia to be granted the right to have an institutional presence within the EU and other international organizations.

## 8. TOWARDS A RADICALIZATION OF CATALAN NATIONALISM?

In spite of current criticism and increasing pressure to modify the Autonomous System by granting a special status to Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, the current Spanish decentralization model deserves a positive evaluation as a tool which facilitated the peaceful accommodation of regional nationalism after 40 years of dictatorship.

The decentralization of Spain, however, has not been free from conflict and tension between regional and central governments. For instance, the demand for further resources to be allocated to the autonomous institutions, and for greater powers to be devolved, has characterized most of the relations between the *Generalitat* - Catalan government - and the central government in Madrid. Conflict arose when discussing the percentage of taxes collected in Catalonia, which should be retained by the *Generalitat* without having to wait for them to be sent to Madrid and then redistributed. Conflict came to the fore again when different laws concerning the use and promotion of the Catalan language issued by the *Generalitat* were challenged by the central government and subsequently examined by the Spanish Constitutional Court (*Tribunal Constitucional*), which ratified their constitutional nature. Further confrontation has emerged whenever some autonomous communities, usually 'non historical', have complained about what they perceive as a better treatment from the state received by the 'historical' communities.

For over 20 years, the majority of the Catalan population has supported the brand of Catalan nationalism represented by the CiU. A non-secessionist nationalism based upon the definition of Catalonia as a nation with a specific history, language, culture, and a strong desire for self-government. But, could matters change in the near future? Are there any new variables that could trigger the rise of pro-independence nationalism in Catalonia?

Since 1993, Pujol's coalition has accounted for its support to the PSOE and later to the PP as an action contributing to the governance of Spain and also beneficial to Catalonia. In particular, Pujol sought to appease the alienation felt by many of CiU's supporters from the CiU-PP agreement (1996-2000) by appealing to the economic advantages Catalonia obtained in return.

The socio-political landscape was fundamentally transformed after 12 March 2000, when the PP obtained an overwhelming majority in the Spanish general election which, among other things, annihilated the bargaining power of CiU. While CiU's support was needed in

Madrid, the PP had adopted a sympathetic attitude versus Catalan claims. Soon after the 2000 election, sympathy and understanding were somehow replaced by a neo-centralist political discourse charged with conservative overtones. Since then, the PP has been dismissive of claims for greater autonomy for the historical nationalities and has adopted an arrogant attitude towards former political allies.

Heretofore, it has become increasingly difficult and almost unpalatable for Pujol to account for CiU's continuous, and now unnecessary, support for the PP in Madrid in return for the PP's needed support to CiU in the Catalan parliament. A significant number of CiU's voters have become very critical of this policy and would prefer the nationalist coalition to seek the support of a Catalan party, such as the ERC, rather than rely on the PP.

By defending the notion of 'postnationalism' based upon a vulgarized concept of Habermas' 'constitutional patriotism', Spanish political pundits defend the unchanging nature of the 1978 Constitution. In their view, the Constitution exemplifies and guarantees civic consensus and, for this reason, should remain untouched (for instance this is the position of the Prime Minister, José María Aznar, who had opposed the Constitution on nationalistic grounds when it came up for popular ratification). They define the Magna Carta as a rigid document, 'the problem with this representation arises when the document is not understood as a flexible frame for the evolving nature of social coexistence but as a fetish that freezes the moment of its mythical foundation' (Resina 2002). The conservative national majority, the so-called "constitutionalists", defends this position. Opposed to them are the "nationalists", who are, in practice, neither more nationalist nor less constitutionalist than the former. The "nationalists" represent national minorities and defend the idea that constitutions are intrinsically adaptable to new historical circumstances. In particular, they seek to amend the 1978 Constitution in order to rectify partialities and selective constraints that are bound up with its origin.

The Spanish media has fully adopted this false dichotomy between "constitutionalists" and "nationalists" without questioning the strong Spanish nationalism espoused by the "constitutionalists". The media often defends the 'sentinels of a sealed constitution' and demonizes the advocates of revisiting the social contract under less urgent conditions than obtained at its drafting, after Franco's death and in a climate of great tension about whether a peaceful transition to democracy would be possible.

Further to this, the PP is currently engaged in a strategy to promote a new brand of Spanish identity, somehow initially fostered by previous Socialist governments. This new identity defines Spain as a modern, industrialized, decentralized, pro-European and

secular society, which under the PP's ascendancy, is also conservative and hostile to Spain's internal diversity often referred to as a 'nuisance', a remnant of the past and a threat to the unity of Spain. In the mist of the ascendancy of Spanish conservatism, it has emerged that the PP government has been funding the so called Franco's Foundation, this is a private institution presided by the dictator's daughter, Carmen Franco, which holds over 27,000 official documents of the former dictator.<sup>4</sup>

What are the consequences for Catalonia of such radicalization of Spanish conservative and centralist nationalism?

First, if pursued, the centralism of the PP threatens to alienate large sectors of Spanish society, especially in the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia. The delicate equilibrium amongst various political tendencies which enabled a successful transition to democracy could suffer under the renaissance of attitudes more akin to previous political periods. The democratic nature of Spain might be tarnished by temptations to restrict dialogue between its constituent parts, or the temptation to rule by acquiring a concentration of forces so great that it might ruin any balancing of the state by social forces leading to what Alexis de Tocqueville called a 'tyranny of the majority'.

Second, recent developments in Spanish politics are contributing to a re-examination of Catalan nationalism. In particular, they have fostered an open debate about whether Catalans should be content with current arrangements or whether, on the contrary, they should embrace claims for greater autonomy, federalism or even independence. The 1998 Declaration of Barcelona and the 2001 Self-Government Report illustrate the desire for greater autonomy, at least amongst the Catalan political elite. This debate, however, is by no means exhausted by discussions about the relation between Catalonia and Spain, it also concerns careful thought about the ideal status of Catalonia within an expanding European Union engaged in a process of political integration and enlargement.

Traditionally, in Catalonia only a small minority has supported secession. At present this minority is growing. According to a recent poll conducted by the *Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas* (2001) in Madrid, 35.9 per cent of Catalans are in favour of Catalonia's independence, while 48.1 per cent are against, and the ERC stands as the party

---

<sup>4</sup> 'According to the Foundation's web-site, its objectives include "the dissemination of Francisco Franco's human, political and military dimensions, as well as the achievements of his political regime'. *La Vanguardia*, 20<sup>th</sup> September 2002. <http://www.lavanguardia.es/web/20020920/31870067.html>

perceived as having improved more during the last year. To understand such a significant change in public opinion, it is worth considering:

- (1) the progressive erosion of the CiU after 20 years in government and its alliance with the conservative PP;
- (2) the conservative neo-centralist policies of the PP government and;
- (3) the inability, so far, of the Catalan Socialists to present themselves as an autonomous party and not as an appendix of the PSOE.

In this novel political scenario, the ERC's secessionist discourse may attract greater support. This could lead to the ERC's consolidation as Catalonia's third political force thus placing it in a key position, particularly if neither the CiU nor the Catalan Socialists, were to achieve the majority in the forthcoming 2003 Catalan election.

## 9. CONCLUSION

Current Catalan demands for greater autonomy, and in particular claims for the recognition of Catalonia as a nation within Spain, reflect the different meaning attributed to the triad formed by the nation, the state and nationalism analyzed at the beginning of this paper. Thus while the Conservative Popular Party focuses on the 'indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, the common and indivisible patria of all Spaniards' (Constitution 1979, 26), the main Catalan political parties through the Declaration of Barcelona and the 2001 Self-Government Report argue in favour of recognizing Catalonia as a nation within Spain. In so doing they invoke the reference made in the Constitution to 'the nationalities and regions forming Spain' (1979, 26).

The ambiguous nature of the Constitution confers legitimacy to both claims, however, the prevailing restrictive interpretation of the government in office frustrates the demands of those that support greater decentralization and stand for a redefinition of Spain as a multinational state. The PP understands Spain as a state formed by a single nation. Political parties in Catalonia define the community they represent as a nation and regard the Spanish state as multinational. Conflict between these, so far, unreconciled positions feeds the renewal of a brand of Spanish centralist nationalism focused on the Castilian language and culture and charged with conservative overtones. It also fosters Catalan nationalism and contributes to a rising distrust on the 'good will' once attributed to the new Spanish democratic political parties when dealing with Catalan demands. It is worth noting that such demands have not involved secession. Instead of that Catalan nationalism has traditionally involved the claim for greater decentralization within Spain.

Attitudes towards Catalonia's status within Spain are currently far more conservative and restrictive than those exhibited at the time when the 1978 Constitution was ratified. The danger in pursuing such attitudes lies in the progressive radicalization of Spanish as well as Catalan nationalism. This development threatens to gradually reverse the inclusive nature once attributed to a Constitution expected to be applied and interpreted in a generous manner by peoples, such as the Catalans, who had endured forty years of political, cultural and economic oppression during the Francoist regime.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the European Institute of the London School of Economics, and in particular Prof. Anthony Smith, Prof. Paul Preston and Prof. Sebastian Balfour, for welcoming me as a Visiting Fellow during the time spent working on this ESRC project.

## REFERENCES

Abellán, J. L. (1982) 'La función del pensamiento en la transición política' in Cagigao, J. L. et altri. *España 1975-1980: Conflictos y logros de la democracia*, Editorial J. Porrúa Turanzas, S.A., Madrid.

Benet, J. (1973) *Catalunya sota el règim franquista*, Edicions Catalanes de París, París.

Berlin, I. (1996) *The Sense of Reality*, Pimlico, London.

Cebrián, J. L. (1982) 'La experiencia del período constituyente' in Cagigao, J. L. et altri. *España 1975-1980: Conflictos y logros de la democracia*, Editorial J. Porrúa Turanzas, S.A., Madrid.

Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (2001) Estudio no. 2410. *Situación social y política de Catalunya*, marzo 2001.

*Constitución Española: edición comentada* (1979) Centro de estudios constitucionales, Madrid.

*Declaració de Barcelona* (1998) BNG, EAJ-PNV, CiU, CiU, Barcelona.

Elliott, J. H. (1963) *The Revolt of the Catalans: a study in the decline of Spain (1598-1640)*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Giner, S. (dir.) (1998) *La Societat Catalana*, Institut d'Estadística de Catalunya, Barcelona.

Guibernau, M. (1996) *Nationalisms*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Guibernau, M. (1997) "Images of Catalonia" in *Nations and Nationalism*, 3 (1), pp. 89-111.

Guibernau, M. (1999) *Nations without States: political communities in the global age*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Guibernau, M. (2002) *Nacionalisme Català: Franquisme, Transició I Democràcia*, Pòrtic, Barcelona.

ICPS, *Sondeig d'opinió* (1996) *Catalunya*, vols 1989-1995.

Mayall, J. (1992 [1990]) *Nationalism and international society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Preston, P. (1986) *The triumph of democracy in Spain*, Routledge, London.

Resina, J. R. (2002) 'Postnational Spain? Post-Spanish Spain?' in *Nations and Nationalism*, (forthcoming).

Solé Tura, J. (1985) *Nacionalidades y nacionalismos en España: Autonomía, Federalismo, Autodeterminación*, Alianza Editorial, Madrid.

Tezanos, J. F. (1989) 'Modernización y cambio social en España' in Tezanos, J. F. et altri (eds.) *La Transición Democrática Española*, Editorial Sistema, Madrid.

Vilar, P. (1977) *La Catalogne dans l'Espagne moderne*, Flammarion, Paris.

Weber, M. (1991 [1948]) *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Gerth, H. H. and Wright Mills (Eds.), Routledge, London.