

Modernity and the transformation of the Spanish national(ist) speech

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Resumen

La construcción discursiva de la identidad española ha sufrido varias transformaciones radicales a lo largo de la historia como ha sucedido en la mayor parte de los países europeos. En este artículo deseamos exponer cómo la identidad española no se puede consolidar de forma discursivo-académica en las épocas antigua y medieval ya que en el mundo premoderno el referente identitario para la mayor parte de la población de los reinos cristianos medievales e incluso modernos era la Iglesia Católica, no la nación. Las dificultades en la coexistencia con las minorías judía y musulmana son dos ejemplos claros de los resultados de dicha construcción identitaria.

Con la profunda secularización de las sociedades occidentales el discurso nacionalista español, aunque también el catalán, el vasco y el gallego, han centrado el aspecto prioritario de su identidad en el hecho lingüístico-cultural, sea este particularista o generalista. Pero la intención primaria del presente texto es exponer una detallada evolución de los problemas de las élites peninsulares en la consecución de la identidad homogénea que se creía real debido a la construcción discursiva.

Palabras clave: nacionalismo, modernidad, especificidad española, discurso, religión

Abstract

The construction of Spanish identity has suffered several radical transformations throughout its history, which has also taken place in many European countries. In this article, I seek to expose how Spanish national identity could not be seriously consolidated in Ancient and Medieval times since in the Pre-Modern World the identity referent for most of the population living in the Medieval and even Modern Christian Kingdoms was the Catholic Church, not the Nation. The difficult coexistence with the Sephardi Jew and the Sunni Muslim minorities remain two good examples of the outcomes of such identity construction.

The profound secularization of Western Societies forced the Spanish nationalist speech, but also the Catalan, the Basque, and the Galician, into a more cultural and linguistic approach to identity. However, the main aim of this text is to expose in a detailed way the evolution of the peninsular ruling class's issues in achieving a homogenous identity that was believed to be real due to an intellectual construction.

Key words: nationalism, modernity, Spanish specificity, Speech, religion.

1 The conceptual problems of identity and modernity in Europe and Spain

In our days, the most accepted formal scholar perspective on national identity is the one that relates to the complete understanding of the key role that the process of

*Entzauberung*¹ had over European peoples. The transition from pre-Modern to Modern times, with all its implications, created the need for a conceptual revolution, that is: from a more Communal perspective of life to a more Societal one. The final emergence of the Western individual, and the decay of the religious *Weltanschaaung* on the World, made unavoidable the construction of a modern interpretation on the collective identity.²

The traditional structure of the collective identity was the result of the needs of a very specific political and cultural elite – Aristocracy and High Clergy – that ruled over a pre-modern community. Nonetheless, the absence of a consolidated and extended public opinion in these communities made less relevant the necessity for a solid communication between the rulers and the ruled.³ In Spain, for instance, the loss of the continental colonies in America, in 1824, was less traumatic than the destruction of the last remnants – far more smaller in size than the previous ones – of the Spanish Colonial Empire in America and Asia in 1898 by the United States of America. In 1898 the presence of the media and, to a very important degree, the discussions held by the Spanish intelligentsia of the time turned the loss of the last colonies – Puerto Rico, Cuba and the Philippines – into a national, almost chiliastic “disaster.”⁴

This is the reason why we think that during the 19th century, with the influence of French philosophies and the destruction of the Spanish Colonial Empire, it became of the utmost importance to redefine the Spanish identity. However, this was not only due to the fact that Spain passed from being defined as an Empire since the age of the Habsburg ruler, Charles V (1519-1556), to be defined as a Nation when Nations were replacing traditional Empires, but also because the Spanish traditional opposition to Modern Western Values was no longer possible. So, Spain lost the Empire in 1898 and the country made the transition to a full-

¹ “Modern scientific and technological knowledge is a culmination of this process that Weber called intellectualization, in the course of which, the germinating grounds of human knowledge in the past, such as religion, theology, and metaphysics, were slowly pushed back to the realm of the superstitious, mystical, or simply irrational. It is only in modern Western civilization, according to Weber, that this gradual process of disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) has reached its radical conclusion.” <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/weber/> December 12, 2018.

² Just to mention some of the studies that focused on these transitions from one world to another without forgetting the importance of the emergence of new elites, cf., E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. But also, for a study on modernity and its impact on ideas and worldviews, cf., Israel, Jonathan I., *Enlightenment contested. Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

³ About the creation of the public opinion, cf., Habermas, Jürgen. *Historia y crítica de la opinión pública. La transformación estructural de la vida pública*, Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2002. And AA.VV., *State Formation, Nation-Building, and Mass Politics in Europe: The theory of Stein Rokkan*. Oxford, OUP, 1999.

⁴ For some texts on the “disaster” of 1898, cf., Comellas, José Luis, *Del 98 a la semana trágica*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2002. De Miguel, Amando & Barbeito, Roberto-Luciano, *1898-1998. El final de un siglo de pesimismo*. Barcelona: Planeta: 1998. Eslava Galán, J. & Rojano Ortega, D., *La España del 98. El fin de una Era*. Madrid: EDAF, 1997.

fledged national identity. Many other European Empires experienced the same political process. For instance, the collapse of the Austria-Hungarian Empire, or the Russian, even the Ottoman in the subsequent years after 1918 proved complicated to manage for the newly created “Nation-States.” Spain was not an exception to this complex process of modernization.

So, the replacement of political, social and economic elites, mostly aristocratic and religious, forced a transformation of the collective identity, and the people fostered the newly created identity to find a collective reference after the process of secularization and urbanization that the Spanish society was experiencing.

In light of this, I will argue that in pre-modern times the Spanish identity was based on religious criteria more than on political or cultural values, while in modern times, since the beginning of the 19th century, the Spanish identity was increasingly pegged to the Castilian identity understood as language and tradition. It was a process of *Castellanización* of the Spanish identity. This is the reason why in medieval and early modern times the authorities in the peninsula looked for a Christian process of homogenization, while in the 19th and 20th centuries the different Spanish governments looked for a cultural and linguistic uniformization.

2 The “eternal Spain” according to the pre-modern authors

Long before the scholars’ bibliographies had set some of the most relevant perspectives regarding Nationalism, some nationalist historians already claimed that the Spanish identity emerged from the fall of the Roman Empire and its institutions at the very beginning of the 5th century when the Germanic Tribe of the Visigoths conquered Barcelona around the year 414 CE. In traditional texts, the Spanish identity was the result of the melding of Hispanic elements given to Spanish people through the process known as Romanization – language, food, lifestyle and other forms of cultural practice – and the establishment and expansion of the Catholic Church in the Peninsula. Until very recently, the political elites in Madrid considered it extremely necessary to study and memorize the lists of the Visigoth kings, that ruled from Toledo, and to be very aware of the conversion of Reccared I (559-601) from Arian Christianity to Roman Catholicism in 587 CE. With that essentialist perspective of the National history, the Spanish government tried to impose a monolithic view on the construction of the national identity.⁵

It should not come as a surprise that Iberian elites used the religious composition of the peninsula to try to define what Spanish people were. In fact, the only institution that outlived the Roman empire was the Catholic Church. And to many of the leaders of the Church, the presence of Jewish people was a reality, and many saw that situation as a potential element of instability for the cohesion of the

⁵ The question of education is covered by many authors both in Europe and Spain, such as, Viñao Frago, Antonio, *La educación en el Franquismo (1936-1975)*. Educar em Revista, Curitiba, Brasil, n. 51, p. 19-35, jan./mar. 2014. Editora UFPR. For a study of an international approach to how historical discourses are created by governments to guide citizens to the ‘right’ understanding of the past, cf., Ferro, Marc. *Cómo se cuenta la historia a los niños del mundo entero*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económico. 1990.

community. The sudden change of ruling groups with the arrival of the Visigoths forced the leading classes of the Peninsula to redefine the identity of the population. Fortunately for those who needed to forge a sense of unity among the ruled, Visigoths adopted many of the Roman practices even, as mentioned before, converting to the religion of the conquered. This fact enabled those with aspirations to have a more traditional perspective of identity to justify the medieval foundation of the Spanish identity. There were at least two main ontological principles that proved this thesis right: on the one hand, the transformation of Latin into modern Castilian/Spanish; and, on the other, the existence of a solid presence of Catholicism in Spain and Portugal since the 6th century.

Continuing with this traditional view of the Spanish identity, the Muslim invasion – the word invasion, however, was biased since the very beginning – was a litmus test for this thesis since the reaction of the population in Hispania was predictable: fierce resistance. The question that remains unanswered, however, is whether the inhabitants of Spania resisted the Sunni Muslim invasion of the land, since many towns and villages offered little resistance. Although many resisted, the truth is that the conquest was fast and successful because the Muslim armies found military ways to defeat weak and unorganized gothic-Christian armies; but also, Muslims offered a very tolerant interpretation on the Quran and its principles when it came to the monotheist population of the Peninsula. This is the reason why many authors have questioned the idea of a fierce resistance.⁶

The presence of Muslims in the Peninsula became problematic with the collapse of the last Muslim Kingdom of Granada in 1492. The so-called Catholic Kings were a physical manifestation of the diversity of Kingdoms in the Peninsula, of the non-existence of a National cohesion. The wedding between Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragon, in 1466, however, put together two very important group kingdoms of the Peninsula, while others were still independent. But in my view that did not create a unified country as we understand it now, but a Composite Monarchy in the words of the British historian John H. Elliott.⁷ Legislative and linguistic diversity were still a solid reality – the existence of Catalonia, Valencia or Mallorca with their own specific narrative histories testify to this – but also, within the Castiles, the idea of a unique, ontological and conclusive Spanish identity was a chimera.

The only element that unified people of these two kingdoms was religion. The Catholic faith was prevalent and, by 1492, it seemed eternal, as if it has always been there. Muslims were forced to convert and accept Christian beliefs if they were to stay. Along with the Muslims, Sephardi Jews were a problem to the idealized unity under the Christian leaders. Not surprisingly, the expulsion of the Sephardi Jews from the lands of Isabel and Fernando took place in 1492.

⁶ For a very interesting and updated account of the Muslim presence in the Peninsula and the Muslim World, cf., Ruiz Mata, José, *Al-Ándalus, la historia que no nos contaron*. Córdoba: Almuzara, 2018.

⁷ J.H. Elliott. *The Revolt of the Catalans. A Study in the Decline of Spain, 1598-1640*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

The religious reality of pre-modern times is apparent if the previous events are considered. The Nation was by no means Spanish but Christian. In 1478, the Inquisition was introduced in Castile and, three years later, in Aragon with the clear intention to prosecute New Christians. The *cristianos nuevos* – new Christians – were those Sephardic Jews who claimed that they embraced the Catholic Church. Since the authorities were not certain about the foundations of such claims, these leaders created an institution to scrutinize the behaviours of the ones converted. For instance, the *xuetes* or Jews of Mallorca were one of the communities that were systematically accused of crypto-Judaism, that is, keeping Jewish traditions despite claiming a conversion.⁸

In similar fashion, the expulsion of the last Muslims who lived in the Iberian Kingdoms began in 1609. The Habsburg king Felipe III (1578-1621), a Christian fundamentalist, ordered the expulsion of all the Muslims who stayed in Christian lands after the absorption of the Kingdom of Granada by the Christians in 1492. A possible interpretation of what may have justified such decision could be that there was a Muslim-led rebellion against the Monarchy in *Las Alpujarras* between 1568 and 1571. We cannot forget that Muslims who stayed had to convert to Christianity and it was not clear whether it was a strategy of survival or a meaningful decision. It is known, however, that most of the former Muslim population lived in Valencia and Catalonia, representing a very dynamic social group. Substantial numbers of the Muslim community had already adopted Romance languages and, if they kept Muslim practices, these rites were practiced in private. However, with the expulsion between 1609 and 1613 the religious question was over.⁹

Liberal historians in the 19th century would claim that religion was just another factor among many in the already existing Spanish identity, and that could very well be the case, however, what can be said for certain is that religious differences were perceived as more important than linguistic, cultural, dynastical or historical. In Catalonia, for instance, the prosecution of witches took place from the late Middle Ages to the late 17th century, but there was a period of intense activity in the attempt to put an end to the presence of female witches among the 'good' Christians. The period of maximum prosecution, processing and execution of witches in Catalonia occurred between 1616 and 1622, which follows nearly the same chronology of the expulsion of the *moriscos* from the different kingdoms ruled by the Habsburg Kings.¹⁰

So, what could, thus, be concluded is that religion, more than anything else, played a significant part in the construction of the identity of the people in the Peninsula. Even in Portugal, only attached to the Habsburg rule for less than a

⁸ For an introduction to the question of the Jewish population in Mallorca, cf., Porcel Pujol, Baltasar, *Els xuetes mallorquins*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 2002.

⁹ One of the most important writers of all times felt the need to defend Spain from those who attacked it for the decisions made by the government. Cf., Quevedo, *España defendida. Opúsculos festivos*. Santiago de Compostela: Porto y Co. Editores, s.f.

¹⁰ Alcobarro, Agustí. *Pirates, bandolers i bruixes a la Catalunya dels segles XVI i XVII*. Barcelona: Barcanova, 2004. VVAA. *Per bruixa i metzina*. Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 2007.

hundred years, between 1580 and 1640, religion was the key element in the constitution of the Portuguese identity. Along with the Spains *-las Españas-*, Portugal was one of the most important countries opposing the innovative and secular ideas and values of the Enlightenment until the arrival of Sebastião José de Carvalho e Mello, or Marquis of Pombal, (1699-1782), and his new plans to improve Lisbon after the earthquake and tsunami of 1755.

As stated above, religion was a key factor in the construction of medieval and modern Spanish identity. The Habsburg monarchs were contesting Protestantism since its conception by Martin Luther (1483-1546) in 1517. Charles V, ruler of Castile as Charles I, was the German Emperor by the time when the Protestant movement began to grow. Most of the conflicts occurred between Protestant rulers and the Spanish King who was advocating the unity of the Christian Church in the name of the Pope. However, since 1618 and until 1648, Castile was involved in the Thirty Years War in which, and among many other crucial factors, the faith of the European peoples was to be determined. Protestantism was persecuted in Catholic Lands, for example, in the territories of the Habsburg Dynasty and in the lands of the French Bourbons in 1572.¹¹

3 Transforming the Spanish nationalist discourse under modernity

Slowly but unequivocally the hegemonic place that the Habsburg monarchs enjoyed in the world faded. Since Charles V, the Habsburg dynasty, that controlled much of Europe and most of America, were possibly, at the time, the most powerful dynasty in the World. However, from 1492, with the Castilian discovery of America to the death of Charles II in 1700 without any descendance, the fate of the Crown was doomed. The War of Spanish Succession (1701-1714) was at the centre of a European conflict between the French Bourbons and the Austrian Habsburgs. The internal divisions in the Peninsula proved that, already at the time, there were differences in the understanding of the functioning of the Composite Monarchy. The Catalan elites and the Castilians, just to take two of them, had a different understanding of how the country should be managed. The elites in Madrid opted for the Bourbon side while the elites in Barcelona preferred to stay with the Habsburgs to preserve their power. The Habsburg understanding of power was more polycentric and faced the reality of diversity with a more federal perspective, something apparent to those who study the Imperial Austrian experience.¹²

The victory of Castilian armies in this conflict began a process of centralization towards the physical centre of the peninsula in which all the periphery was conceived as an extension of Madrid and the ruling dynasty. The religiosity of the new French King, Philip V of Spain (1683-1746), could not be questioned. But with new views on how political power works, the Spanish identity was not supposed to be just a local manifestation of the wider Catholic World, but was to be built on its

¹¹ To understand the fate of French protestant communities, also known as the Huguenots, cf., Treasure, Geoffrey, *The Huguenots*. Yale: Yale University Press, 2014.

¹² Rodríguez-Aguilera de Prat, Cesáreo, *Teoría del Estado en la España de los Austrias*, Revista de Estudios Políticos (Nueva Época) Número 36, Noviembre-Diciembre 1983.

own. It was in the 18th and the 19th centuries that the Castilian identity was systematically imposed on the rest of the peoples of the Peninsula, trying to uniformize languages, traditions and other cultural differences.¹³

Even though Spain was never a leading country of the Enlightenment and the transformation of the traditional community into a more modern society, the European values were increasingly arriving to Spain. One could even claim that most of Spanish intellectuals perceived the Enlightenment as a problem. The Napoleonic invasion of Spain was once again a demonstration of such deeply embedded views by which Spain was a Christian country. One of the first manifestations of the Spanish People in history, the opposition to Napoleon in 1808, was once more a religious resistance against the revolutionaries from France.

With the Spanish victory in 1814 against Napoleonic forces, the 19th century proved a difficult one for the Spanish people. The Spanish history in the 19th century is sensibly different from that of European core countries such as France, Britain or the Netherlands. However, it could be claimed that many Western countries in Europe experienced tensions in the 19th century. For example, Germany was unified in 1871, later than many other countries, but nowadays the German industrial power places Germany in the centre of the European power politics. In the German historiographic world, there is a perception that the German path to Modernity and unity was different from the rest of Europe; it is what German historians call the *Sonderweg* which eventually would lead Germany to Adolf Hitler in 1933.¹⁴

Maybe the very idea of a ‘unique path’ to modernity is yet again another demonstration of how modern thinkers need the public opinion to find a unifying criterion for their identity. Since many Western countries experienced modernization crises that questioned their social reality and their national unity, perhaps Modernity was not so easily achieved. Germany is one of these countries where authors and experts investigate the depths of history to find differential elements to understand the nazi *Machtergreifung*. Similarly, in Spain, authors try to understand why Spain had a different path to Modernity. Why did Spain not develop like many other countries? Once at this point, I must admit that the idealization of other people’s achieving success is usually the result of poor judgement rather than proper evaluation of events, since many countries went through different crises and tensions. The French way to Modernity, often idealized among Spanish intellectuals, was paved with revolutions, wars and instability, which indicates that trying to follow the allegedly ideal, often idealized, French path may not be the best option.

¹³ On the topic of Castile, cf., Escolar A. y Escolar, I., *La nación inventada. Una historia diferente de Castilla*, Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 2010; Morales Moya, Antonio; Esteban de la Vega, Mariano, eds., *¿Alma de España? Castilla en las interpretaciones del pasado español*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2005, and Hina, Horst, *Castilla y Cataluña en el debate cultural, 1714-1939*. Barcelona: Península, 1986.

¹⁴ One of the most important authors in this direction is: Wehler, Hans-Ulrich, *The German Empire, 1871-1918*, Oxford: Berg, 1997.

Many of the problems that Spanish intellectuals perceived as solely Spanish were in fact multi-faceted and each country experienced them in different shapes. What appears to be relevant is that Spanish intellectuals and writers claimed since the 19th century that there was a deeply, almost metaphysical 'Spanish Problem.' According to that thesis, Spanish people had two problems: the first one was associated with the inability of the Spanish people to become Europeans, the second, with their incapacity to find common ground, the most essential foundations required for a national identity.

"Las dos Españas" or *The Two Spains* were there to stay.¹⁵ Spanish Liberals deeply marked by the French, and Spanish Conservatives considering any foreign idea as a threat or even 'anti-Spanish' made coexistence complicated. The preservation of the eternal Spanish values was of utmost importance to these conservative authors, such as Juan Donoso Cortés (1809-1853). To the liberals of the 19th century, including the historian Modesto Lafuente (1806-1866), the Spanish inefficacy to import and adapt to the National life these modern ideas was the reason why Spain was being left behind by other countries.¹⁶

In fact, the defeat of the Spanish armies by the US army was seen by both groups as a national disaster. In 1898, Spain lost Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines fighting the USA and its involvement in these independence processes. The perspective taken by both sides proves how hermeneutics plays a determinant role in existence. To the conservatives, the defeat in Cuba was no more than the last manifestation of the consequences of Spain's trying to embrace ideas that were essentially alien to the national character.¹⁷ With a completely different understanding of the events that occurred in the former colonies, liberals perceived the defeat as an opportunity to modernize Spain, since the problem was not the excess of foreign ideas but the lack of them.

It was during that time of moral crisis that the intellectuals and professors revisited the expulsion of the Jews. The polygraph and erudite, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo (1856-1912), and the philologist and expert on the Spanish Golden Century, Américo Castro (1885-1972), were two of the intellectuals who comprehended the Spanish past in very different ways.¹⁸ For the latter, the

¹⁵ Two complete examples in this direction are Juliá, Santos, *Historia de las dos Españas*, Madrid: Taurus, 2004. Premio Nacional de Historia de España, 2004 and Varela, Javier, *La novela de España: los intelectuales y el problema español*, Madrid: Taurus Ediciones, 1999.

¹⁶ Schmidt, B., *El Problema español de Quevedo a Manuel Azaña*, Madrid: EDICUSA, 1976.

¹⁷ Laín Entralgo, Pedro & Seco Serrano, Carlos (eds.), *España en 1898*, Barcelona: RBA, 2005.

¹⁸ Gómez Martínez, J.L., *Américo Castro y el origen de los españoles: historia de una polémica*. Madrid: Gredos, 1975. Laín Entralgo, Pedro, *Estudios sobre la obra de Américo Castro*. Madrid: Taurus, 1971; Asensio, E., *La España imaginada de Américo Castro*. Barcelona, Ediciones el Albir, 1976; Castro, Américo, *España en su historia*, (3 volumes). Madrid: Trotta, 2004; Castro, A., *Espanoles al margen*, Madrid: Ediciones Jucar, 1973; Sánchez Albornoz, Claudio, *Orígenes de la nación española. El reino de Asturias*. Madrid: Sarpe, 1986; Sánchez Albornoz, Claudio, *Espanoles ante la historia*, Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada, 1958; Sánchez Albornoz, Claudio, *Orígenes y destino de Navarra. Trayectoria histórica de Vasconia*, Barcelona: Planeta, 1984. Almeida, Julio, *El problema de España en Américo Castro*, Córdoba: Servicio de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Córdoba, 1993.

expulsion of the Sephardi Jews was one of the seminal Spanish problems facing diversity; whereas, for Menéndez Pelayo, the expulsion by itself might be horrendous in terms of the suffering it produced, but, at the same time, it was a necessity in the process of Spanish National construction. These two authors and their books marked the origin of two long-lasting historiographic interpretations of the Spanish past and the ways to approach Spanish diversity.

4 The Spanish nationalist speech in times of peripheral nationalisms

The emergence of alternative national identities in Spain during the 19th century posed a new impediment to the appeasement of the academia and the first mass media. The already tense intellectual discussion on what Spanish people were, or should be, at the time, became worse when other identities challenged the Spanish hegemonic project. Catalan cultural and political nationalism since the 19th century, Basque nationalism under the shadow of the creator of the Basque Nationalist Party, Sabino Arana Goiri (1865-1903), and, finally, the emergence of a Galician identity, all of them posed a threat to the Spanish unity understood as a monolithic group of people speaking Castilian, being Christian, and monarchical.

It is already a *topos* to consider Modernity as totalitarian, but Modernity also sought to replace pre-Modern ideas with Modern concepts that should at least be as solid as the pre-Modern.¹⁹ Modernity did not end the necessity for a solid identity but, on the contrary, it reinforced the tendency towards a more epistemological definition of identity. The will to power that characterizes Modernity and its will to identify, label and manage the various aspects of existence made the national question even harder to handle.

With the progressive construction of a modern Catalan identity, the Spanish intelligentsia had no other option but to reformulate the principles of 'Spanishness' to oppose the emergence of this novel idea. The secularization of the Spanish Society has been profound in the last fifty years.²⁰ But the reality is that even if people did not attend Church service or cared less about the foundational principles of the Church, Spanish people were still culturally Catholic. The immanent idea of unity in the Catholic world is hard to overcome when it comes to accept the presence of diversity in a country. In the Catholic world there is a habit of accepting only one book, one interpretation and one Pope, while in the Protestant world the commonly accepted premise is one book, many interpretations and several religious leaders.

While the 'generation of 1898' was profoundly divided among those who were liberal, and those who were conservative, the 'generation of 1914' was essentially progressive in spirit.²¹ Although this generation fought against the backwardness of

¹⁹ White, Stephen K., *Burke on Politics, Aesthetics, and the Dangers of Modernity*, in *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 3, (Aug., 1993), pp. 507-527.

²⁰ For a good short introduction to the transformation of the Spanish society, cf., Magone, José M., *Contemporary Spanish Politics*, London: Routledge, 2009. [pp. 280-310].

²¹ A solid introduction to this generation is M. Menéndez Alzadora, *La Generación del 14*, Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2006.

the Spanish countryside, nonetheless it had a very limited approach to the question of diversity. While the generation, led by the madrilian philosopher José Ortega y Gasset, was taking its shape, the Catalans received its first decentralized government. Even if it was very limited in scope, the *Mancomunitat* was the first experiment in decentralization since the times of Philip V of Spain in 1714.²²

Looking at the Spanish situation with Catalonia from an international perspective, we can see how Scotland lost its independence to create the United Kingdom with England in 1707; Catalonia lost its institutions in 1714. And when Ireland was fighting one of the most important battles for its independence in 1916, Catalans were restoring their autonomy. Suddenly, the Spanish specificity disappeared, if one looked at a wider European frame taking into consideration larger historical processes. With an even wider lens turned to Europe, one could also see Finland's Declaration of Independence in 1917.²³ And lastly, at the end of World War I in 1918, many of the countries we know from Central Europe came into existence. So, it can be concluded that the Spanish specificity is only possible to sustain if it is compared to the French experience that Spanish intellectuals praise. Despite the perception of Spain as being unique, the French also experienced diversity in their country as Eugene Weber argues in his seminal work.²⁴

The Catalan autonomist period finished in 1923 when the Spanish General Miguel Primo de Rivera (1870-1930) imposed a Nationalist Dictatorship (1923-1930).²⁵ This was the first experiment, not the last one, to impose modern Spanish nationalism based upon Castilian characteristics onto other peoples in the Peninsula. So, the denial of specific regional elements in Spain became a key element of its structurally nationalist understanding of the Spanish reality. Diversity was understood as a problem to a monolithic discourse in which there was no space for the diverse territorial specificities of the Spanish people. Speaking Catalan or Basque or Galician was perceived as a threat to the national unity. Religiosity was no longer the key factor of the Spanish identity. In a sense, the consolidation of a francophone vision of Spain was becoming real since the vision by which all the French should speak in French and not in Occitan, Basque or Breton, was being applied to Spain. All the regional languages of Spain would become *patois*.

The will to put an end to the use of the Catalan language, for instance, is manifest when we analyse the Spanish legislation and the use of this local language in public. Catalan was forbidden to be used on the telephone in 1898, the Spanish catechism was only allowed in Spain in 1902, education was only permitted in Spanish since 1923 and Antoni Gaudí was arrested when he declined speaking in Spanish to

²² García Cárcel, Ricardo, *Felipe V y los españoles: una visión periférica del Problema de España*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 2002; A. Alcoberro (dir.), *Catalunya durant la Guerra de Successió*, Barcelona: Ara Llibres, 2006; J. Albareda y J. Esculies, *1714. La Guerra de Successió*, Barcelona: Pòrtic, 2008.

²³ Hina, Horst, *Castilla y Cataluña en el debate cultural, 1714-1939*, Barcelona: Península, 1986.

²⁴ Weber, Eugene. *From peasants into Frenchmen. The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 1976.

²⁵ To study the involvement of the Spanish military in the Spanish problem, cf., Abellán, José L., *El "Problema de España" y la cuestión military*. Madrid: Dykinson, 2005.

policemen in 1924. These, among many other examples, testify to the fact that the intention was to dismantle the use of Catalan in Spain.²⁶

The Second Spanish Republic, 1931-1939, will take a different approach to the identity question. The possibility of a mild decentralization was discussed and Catalonia, one more time, was the territory spearheading this possibility. But during the Parliamentary discussions about granting a Home-rule to the Catalans in 1931 and 1932, one of the leaders of the 'generation of 1914,' and possibly the most influential Spanish philosopher of the 20th century, José Ortega y Gasset (1883-1955), claimed that the Home-rule was not the solution.²⁷ According to Ortega, Spain and Catalonia are doomed to carry on the problem among them; there is apparently no solution to this difficult diversity.

The Catalan and Basque experiences with home-rules that decentralized political power in these two regions was over when the *generalísimo* Francisco Franco (1892-1975) won the war in 1939. The new State, to use the words of one of the most important intellectuals of the Francoist regime, "disliked diversity in all possible levels of life."²⁸ There was only one possible type of family and that was the one that came from the Scriptures; there was only one type of Capitalism, the one that provided aid to those vulnerable in the name of the Spanish National unity; there was only one type of Spanish citizen and that was the one that respected tradition and the national character.²⁹

The process of *castellanización* (Castilianization) was intense and all the possible steps taken into acknowledging the diversity of Spain were undone. Only some exceptions were introduced to this monolithic interpretation: first, the Spanish national dance became Flamenco which was not Castilian but Andalusian; and second, the National dish became *la Paella*, which is Valencian. But for the rest, the national construction of the Spanish self under Francoism was clear: Castilian language, traditional catholic values, fierce antisemitism, certain monarchism and rejection of the evils of Modernity, considering them to be Capitalist or Communist.

But even in this authoritarianism under Franco, the different factions that fuelled the *coup d'État* of 1936 began a discursive struggle against the monopoly on the construction of the Spanish Character. The best example of such a struggle is the one represented by the fascist, politically modern and secular, Pedro Laín Entralgo (1908-2011), and the politically traditional and Catholic fundamentalist, Rafael Calvo Serer (1916-1988).³⁰

²⁶ Mir, Conxita, *The Francoist Repression in the Catalan Countries*. Catalan Historical Review, 1: 133-147 (2008) Institut d'Estudis Catalans, Barcelona DOI: 10.2436/20.1000.01.9 · ISSN: 2013-407X <http://revistes.iec.cat/chr/>

²⁷ For two good introductions to the importance of Ortega Gasset in Spain, cf., Morán, Gregorio, *El maestro en el erial. Ortega y Gasset y la cultura del franquismo*. Barcelona: Tusquets, 1998; and, Puerta, Antonio Martín, *Ortega y Unamuno en la España de Franco*. Madrid: Ediciones Encuentro, 2009.

²⁸ F.J. Conde, *Introducción a la teoría del Nuevo Estado*. Barcelona: Bosch, 1940.

²⁹ Saz Campos, Ismael, *España contra España*. Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2003.

³⁰ D. Gracia, *Voluntad de comprensión. La aventura intelectual de Pedro Laín Entralgo*. Madrid: Editorial Triacastela, 2010. O. Hernández, Calvo Serer y el grupo Arbor. Valencia: PUV, 2008.

In the latter part of the 1940s, there was a tension within the Francoist elites to shape the future of the regime. Nobody knew whether the regime would survive the dire economic conditions of the country and its exclusion from the Marshall Plan (1948). Besides, the meetings between Francisco Franco and the king in exile, Juan de Borbón y Battenberg (1913-1993), made some of the members of the Francoist coalition forces distrust the future orientation of the regime.³¹

Among those who were increasingly concerned with the orientation of the system, there was a young man called Laín Entralgo who joined the Fascist Falange Española to fight the Republic, and because of the style and rhythm of his written word, he became a fundamental tool for the fascist propaganda. But Laín Entralgo desired a new type of political and social regime that he was not certain was going to take place.³² Laín stressed language, culture and a national phalangist mission to unify the different peoples of Spain.

This statist view of the country gave no space to linguistic minorities such as the Galicians, the Asturians, the Aragonese, the Catalans or the Basques. The national unity is the result of the assimilation of those who are different. Clearly, the text written by Laín Entralgo,³³ addressing the difficulties of the Spanish identity and the Spanish question, was influenced by the spirit of the times and the Fascist environment of Europe.³⁴ This totalitarian view of the country and its significance makes Laín a very modern author while his intellectual rivals may think of the past with nostalgia.

Laín Entralgo's nemesis was the publisher and member of the *Opus Dei*, Calvo Serer, who stressed the religious factor over the linguistic one. To Calvo the problems of Spain were not only linguistic but also, and, above all, religious. To the Valencian, the European problem is the lack of religious values. The Modern Fascist movement of Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) and Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) was just a reflection of the problems of Modernity. So, the problem could not be

³¹ G. Redondo, *Política, Cultura y sociedad en la España de Franco*, 2 vols. Pamplona: EUNSA, 1999. A. Ferrary, *El Franquismo: minorías políticas y conflictos ideológicos 1936-1956*. Pamplona: EUNSA, 1993.

³² For a text with most explicit fascist implications, cf., Laín Entralgo, Pedro. *Los valores morales del nacionalsindicalismo*. Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1941.

³³ “Esta misma convicción puede penetrar, y de hecho ha penetrado en la conciencia de muchas personas reales: si hemos podido ver a un Kronprinz de Habsburgo al servicio, no sólo de la Alemania actual, sino de su mismo Régimen ‘monárquico’ – ¿qué Monarquía más perfecta, en cuanto Monarquía, que la de Adolfo Hitler? – no creo que en tal hecho haya causa diferente de la expuesta, miradas las cosas en su centro. Laín Entralgo, Pedro. *España como problema*. Madrid: Seminario de Problemas Hispano-americanos, 1949, p.59.

“This very same belief can penetrate, and, in fact, has already penetrated the conscience of many people: if we have seen a Kronprinz of Habsburg in the service, not only of Germany, but also of its current ‘autocratic’ regime – which Monarchy could be best suited but the one represented by Adolf Hitler? – I do not think that in such event there is a different cause than the one presented, having considered all the things at their core” (my translation).

³⁴ Another Spanish Fascist, possibly one of the most important of them maintained in *La conquista del Estado*, positions close to totalitarian fascism. *La conquista del Estado*. 14 de agosto de 1931, n.º 1.

fixed by adopting totalitarian solutions, the Italian or the German, but by becoming even more traditional, Spanish and Catholic or *Nacional-Católico*.³⁵ Laín represents a new type of intellectual, the fascist author who looks to the future with hope, while Calvo Serer saw in Modernity the source of all evils.³⁶ Hence, it is possible to argue that even during the harshest and most authoritarian years of Francoism, two contradictory forces were struggling to clarify what type of country Spain should be.

5 Conclusions

As I have tried to demonstrate, the construction of a national identity in Spain is a recent event. Prior to the consolidation of certain elements of the Western *Entzauberung*, the alleged Spanish identity in pre-Modern times is the result of an *a posteriori* narrative. Before the 19th century the Spanish identity was essentially a religious construction set up against the minorities perceived as threats, such as Sephardi Jews, Sunni Muslims, Protestants and other confessions. There was, however, an allegiance to the Crown in the person of the King but the idea that deterministic historians argue or the fact that Spaniards were already who they are today is just a teleological construction.

The Spanish traumatic modernization process made many Spanish intellectuals aware of the 'Spanish problem', that is, the inability to consolidate a peaceful transition from tradition to modernity without tensions. But as I have tried to argue in this text, the process by which countries are modernized is never easy; there are always conflictual processes that operate in that transition. Spain was, then, no exception to the troublesome modernization of Europe.

However, there were two ways in which Spanish intellectuals structured the elements of the national identity. The problem was that both these two theses excluded each other. One group, the conservative, praised and mourned for what they saw as the peaceful and harmonic past in which religion provided stability and unity, whereas the liberals saw the past as the root to the present-day Spanish problem. According to the left-wing intellectuals, the lack of modern ideas created a backward, anti-European Spain. This, however, could be said about many countries in the West; that is, in all countries, there are always tensions between those who embrace what is to come and those who reject the future and who look to the past with nostalgia.

And as we have seen, with Modernity and the dissolution of the Christian community, the desire for national unity used language and culture to construct a solid, monolithic and stable Spain. The problem was that other peninsular cultural and economic elites also created nationalist – although regional in scope within Spain – discourses that tried to create another solid and monolithic group of people.

³⁵ The best manifestation of his views on Spain is to be found in Calvo Serer, Rafael, *España, sin problema*. Madrid: Biblioteca del Pensamiento Actual, 1949.

³⁶ For a very solid study in the different groups or families within Francoism, cf., Redondo, Gonzalo, *Política, Cultura y sociedad en la España de Franco*, 2 vols. Pamplona: EUNSA, 1999.

The most important of these groups were the Catalans, the Basques and the Galicians, who created what in Spain is called peripheral nationalisms.

This is the problem of Spain today, how to accommodate the diverse cultural minorities within the wider frame of a collective Constitution. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, in 1991, and the rise of identity politics in the 1990s, the national question is again on the table in the Spanish agenda. In a globalizing world, it is more urgent than ever to find a solid identity anchor somewhere close. Spain is no exception to these global processes that challenge national unities, witnessed in the independence movements of the former Soviet Republics, Czech Republic and Slovakia, Eritrea, or South Sudan, the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the referendum in Scotland, or the rise of both State and Stateless Nationalisms in Europe and America.

While conservative intellectuals in Spain continue to try to assimilate and, if possible, acculturate these minorities using a typically modern rhetoric, liberals try to redefine the Spanish identity within the frame of postmodern principles of our times, as exemplified with the use of concepts such as fluidity by the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman.³⁷ Nowadays, we see how the main principles and intellectual constructions of Modernity begin to crumble, facing the end of Space-Time as we socially understand it because of an unprecedented technological revolution.

We will see if a new redefinition of the supposed Spanish *being* will suffice to keep the territorial integrity of the State, or if the monolithic, almost sacrosanct perspective of identity will start another process of independence, as it already occurred in 1898. The Spanish clash of identities is yet another example of identity politics in the 21st century.³⁸

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³⁷ Bauman, Zygmunt, *Liquid Modernity*, London: Polity, 2000.

³⁸ For a short introduction to some of the national issues in the 21st century, cf., Greer, Scott, *Nationalism and Self-Government. The Politics of Autonomy in Scotland and Catalonia*. State University of New York, Albany, 2007; Friend, Julius, *Stateless Nations. Western European Regional Nationalisms and the Old Nations*. London. Palgrave Macmilland. 2012.; Lecours, André, *Basque Nationalism and the Spanish State*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2007; Pérez Agote, Alfonso, *The Social Roots of Basque Nationalism*. Reno: University of Nevada Press. 2006; Craith, Máiréad Nic, *Culture and Identity Politics in Northern Ireland*. Palgrave: New York, 2003.

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