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Prospects for an Independent Catalonia

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Abstract The aim of this paper is to examine the factors that have triggered the recent shift from devolution to secession expressed by the Catalan grassroots movement which has been consolidated in the last 5 years or so. This movement stands in favour of the so-called 'right to decide' which specifically demands the right of Catalan citizens to be considered as a 'demos' able to decide upon its political future by means of holding a referendum on the issue. Conflict has emerged as a result of the Spanish state's prohibition to allow for a referendum on that issue. The paper offers an overview of the origins of modern Catalan nationalism by tracing back its roots to Franco's dictatorship and the subsequent transition to democracy. It analyses the main arguments behind the qualitative shift from devolution to secession embodied in the rise of a novel bottom up secessionist movement supporting the idea of holding a referendum on Catalan independence from Spain; so far, strictly forbidden by the Spanish State. The paper considers the impediments to a 'referendum' on Catalan independence founded upon the Spanish Constitution. To conclude, it examines the rise of a novel grassroots civil society movement demanding the right of Catalonia to decide upon its political future.

Keywords Nationalism · Secessionism · Catalan secessionism · Referendum · Right to decide · Emancipatory nationalism

Introduction. Nation, State and Nationalism

To be or not to be recognized as a nation entails different rights for the community which claims to be one. I define the nation as 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 (Guibernau 1998, p. 14; See also Keating 2001). 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. The nation, however, cannot be viewed in isolation and it is important to establish a clear distinction between the concepts of 'state', 'nation-state' and 'nationalism'. By 'state', taking Weber's definition (Weber 1948, p. 78), I refer to 'a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use

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of physical force within a given territory' although not all states have successfully accomplished this, and some of them have not even aspired to accomplish it. The nation-state is a modern political 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 clearly demarcated territory and seeks to unite the people subject to its rule by means of cultural homogenization.

By 'nations without states' I refer to nations, which in spite of having their territories included within the boundaries of one or more states, by and large do not identify with them. The members of a nation lacking a state of their own regard the state containing them as alien, and maintain a separate sense of national identity. Self-determination is sometimes understood as political autonomy, in other cases it stops short of independence, and often involves the right to secede (Cordell and Wolff 2010; Connor 1994; Brubaker 1996; Horowitz 1985). The state may or may not recognize the status of its national minorities as nations (Kymlicka 2001). For instance, the UK recognizes Scotland and Wales as nations, while Spain does not recognize Catalonia and the Basque Country as nations. Instead, it refers to them as Autonomous Communities (AACC).

'Nationalism' is both a political ideology and a 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. It is very important to acknowledge the Janus-faced nature of nationalism as a doctrine sometimes associated with xenophobia, racism, ethnic cleansing and discrimination of the different, and which in some other circumstances stands up as a political ideology defending the right of nations to exist and evolve culturally and politically while vigorously promoting a democratic outlook and complying with human rights. Thus, nationalism, on some occasions, is associated with backward ethnic political discourses while, in others, it stands as a new progressive social movement in favour of the emancipation of peoples (Hechter 2000).

Power

In the whole process of nation-state formation, state power plays a fundamental role; it is mainly by means of state power (Breuilly 1993, p. 367) that territories become united through annexation or conquest. The power of the state stands in sharp contrast to the powerlessness of the nations included within its boundaries. Ultimately, state power determines the status and degree of recognition of national minorities. State power is also fundamental to a definition of the modern state through both its clear boundaries and its capacity to maintain them by the monopoly of violence (von Treitschke 1914, p. 39). This is exerted inside the boundaries of the nation-state, but violence is also a means to defend the nation-state's interests against those of other nation-states. The power of the state upon its citizens is exerted in several ways:

- Its capacity to impose and collect taxes.
- Establishing the rights and duties of its citizens.
- Its ability to control its citizens thanks to the development of technology. The enormous expansion of the state's scope allows for the classification of citizens according to various categories including gender, wealth, religion, age, etc. All this leads to an increasing presence of the state in everyday life. The concept of 'the normalizing society' refers to a society in which the norm of discipline and the norm of regulation intersect and, according to Foucault, these are on the advance (Foucault, [1997] 2003, p. 40).

- Its power to control the media and education as key elements in reproducing and modifying culture becomes crucial in the homogenization of its population. Gellner stresses the unprecedented importance of communication and culture in industrial societies—both key features in his theory of nationalism. In Gellner's view, culture cannot survive without its own political shell: the state (Gellner 1983, p. 143). This is a crucial argument when considering the shift from devolution to secession within Catalan society. During the transition to democracy, Catalan majority nationalism defended the idea that the 'one nation, one state' theory was not a *sine qua non* condition for a nation to reach its full development. As a result Catalan majority nationalism stood up in favour of devolution never secession. This position has changed since 2000. This paper offers an account of the key factors that have acted as a trigger for the shift from devolution to secession among Catalans.

On 'Emancipatory Nationalism'

Democracy implies popular sovereignty, and national self-determination may be regarded as its ultimate consequence (Guibernau 2013). Where nation and state are coextensive, we find that nationalism is favoured by the state as a means to homogenize and increase the degree of cohesion of its population. It is not simply that the relation of the state to its citizens is based upon a political tie, but rather that the basis of this political relation is seen as an expression of the multidimensional relation emerging from the idea of being a nation, this is, a cultural community sharing a common consciousness of forming a group with a distinctive name (The Greeks, the Flemish, the Catalans), a joint history, culture, attachment to a demarcated territory and the will to decide upon their political future.

The combination of all these attributes results in the emergence of a distinct identity (Smith 1991, p.19 and 2013, p.7) that emphasizes the specific features of the citizens of a particular nation when compared with those of others. In this process nationalism uses pre-existing elements of the culture of the nation, but it not only revives traditions, it also invents and transforms them (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983 p. 83). Where the state is coextensive with the nation, nationalism does not always display its colours. Rather, it permeates the day-to-day life of the nation-state and only appears at the forefront in specific situations in which its integrity is in danger or where there is a need to defend some interests—see, for example, the reaction of the British people to the Falklands war. The appeal to nationalist arguments is also useful when a politician tries to justify his or her policies.

Let us now turn to those Western liberal democracies in which nation and state are not coextensive with each other and where strong democratic nationalist movements have emerged, for example Catalonia, Scotland or Flanders (Guibernau 2007). These cases require a separate and objective analysis because the specific features constituting them stand as one of the most innovative phenomena of the second half of the twentieth century running into the twenty-first. These nationalisms open up a novel phase in the emancipation of peoples anchored in the ideas inspiring the French and the American revolutions of 1789 and 1786. Most recently, their claims are rooted in the Woodrow Wilson 'Fourteen Points Speech' of 8 January 1918, which included the right of peoples to Self-Determination. I refer to them as '*emancipatory nationalism*', this is a democratic type of nationalism emerging in nations included within larger states who do not identify with them, do not feel represented by the state of which they are a part and do not feel politically and culturally

recognized as nations by the state containing them. 'Emancipatory nationalism' has the following characteristics:

1. It emerges from nations or parts of nations included within larger states[1] that, throughout history, have either ignored and/or neglected internal diversity and have punished it or forbidden it. Often states have sought to implement a range of strategies with the aim of culturally and linguistically homogenizing their citizens.
2. In the West, 'emancipatory nationalism' defines itself as democratic. This is, abiding by the rule of law, respecting human rights, social justice and having the compromise to obtain legitimacy through popular sovereignty; this is by the people's consent.
3. Because of their own democratic nature, liberal democracies have come to confer various degrees of cultural and political recognition to their national minorities and it is within this environment that 'emancipatory nationalism' comes to light.
4. Differing political cultures and historical background determine the degree of political recognition of national minorities in each case. These also weight heavily when states decide how to respond to demands for greater autonomy or independence; these will vary according to the state's own nature, the strength of the 'emancipatory nationalism' and the international support this is able to secure. The state tends to regard 'resistance nationalism' as dangerous, or at least, as an uncomfortable phenomenon to deal with.
5. 'Emancipatory nationalism' is instrumental in voicing dissatisfaction with the status quo and, as such, it challenges it. It is an 'opposition movement' in search of greater political recognition for the nation it claims to represent. In so doing, it constructs its own 'alternative elites' and power structures; although these are invariably weaker than those of the state and enjoy far less resources and power.
6. 'Emancipatory nationalism', as defined here, emerges within the framework created by the European Union, since Catalonia, Scotland and Flanders—among others—do not contemplate outright independence outside the EU.
7. Probably the greatest challenge faced by 'emancipatory nationalism' is how to achieve international recognition. The official view is that 'national minority issues' are a 'state's internal affair', unless there are concerns regarding the violation of human rights, or geopolitical reasons than compel some powerful nations or political institutions to recognize a 'resistance movement' as the true representative of a people.

The democratic nationalism emerging in nations without states employs two main arguments to legitimize its discourse. The first is a political argument embedded in the ideas of the French Revolution (1789) and the US War of Independence (1776) and refers to the defence of democracy and popular sovereignty as key principles to legitimize the construction of the modern state. The second argument is cultural and it is closely connected to the principles endorsed by romantic nationalism. This argument 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.

Within this political framework, emancipatory nationalist movements demand recognition by the state in the first instance, and then by the international community, since most of them are included within the boundaries of states, which are reluctant to acknowledge their status as nations.

When faced with the inclusion of different nations or parts of nations within a single state; usually one nation predominates above the others. The problem is that what would be a theoretically plausible alternative—several nations coexisting under the rule of a single state

[1] For instance, the Basque Country expands across Spain and France.

which evenly cares for them all—tends to evolve into a situation in which the state displays varying degrees of recognition of its national minorities, or none at all.

While most of the individuals who live in the state's territory are considered 'citizens' having the same rights and duties, showing the same passport and paying the same taxes, it is still possible to identify some kind of discrimination that derives from the fact that the state, as in the first case we have analysed here—coexistence of nation and state- aims at the cultural and linguistic homogenization of its citizenry. This is so because the state, to upheld its legitimacy, seeks to create a nation coextensive with its territory.

Furthermore, it is always easier for the state to rule if it manages to create a sense of community and shared identity among the people subject to its power. But, if this is the case in many European states containing small nations or parts of nations within their territory—such as Catalonia in Spain, Scotland in Britain and Flanders in Belgium—a further point could be raised in connection with the origin of many post-colonial states—or 'state-nations'—founded upon state apparatuses originally established by the colonizers without any regard for the cultural units they included. Under these circumstances, nationalism has usually played an important part in activating social movements stimulating the transition to independent statehood. However, quite often, many problems emerge as nationalism reveals itself as a device employed by elites seeking state power while unable to provide a single 'myth of origin' endowed with traits and beliefs with which citizens—who belong to different cultures—could identify with.

When nation and state are not coextensive, there are two potential outcomes. First, the state may be successful in its attempt and assimilate the different nations existing within its territory. This involves the total or practical annihilation of national minority cultures and their integration into the state's official culture allowing for the formation of a coextensive nation-state.

Second, if the state fails to assimilate its national minorities, and they perceive the state as 'alien', the 'estrangement' from the state implies a profound sense of emotional detachment. The individual feels as a 'stranger' and thus can easily develop a strong sense of community with those members of the national minority determined to oppose the homogenizing processes initiated by the state. In opposition to the majority nationalism instilled by the state, emerges a novel resistance nationalism defending the right of national minorities to decide upon their political future. This nationalism has as its main task the rejection of the power of the 'alien state' through the political emancipation of citizens.

In what follows I examine the rise of secessionism in Catalonia, exploring the main arguments invoked by Catalans to explain the reasons that have prompted a fundamental shift from devolution to secession. To begin with I offer a brief outline of the origins of Catalonia as a nation and of the events regarded as crucial in the rise of modern Catalonia.

The Historical Roots of Catalan Nationalism

Until the early eighteenth century Catalonia enjoyed a good deal of autonomy. The union with Aragon in 1137 recognized separate political identities including their territorial integrity, laws, institutions and rulers. This was enshrined in the Catalan *Usatges* of 1150 whose very title (the *uses* and established customs and practices) demonstrates that the document proclaimed had already been in existence for a long time. During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Catalonia built up a powerful Mediterranean empire of a primarily commercial character. When Martin the Humane (*Martí l'Humà*) died without a successor in 1410, Fernando de Antequera (*Fernando I*) from the Castilian family of the Trastámara was elected to the throne (Compromise of Casp, 1412).

The joint rule of Isabel, Queen of Castile, and Fernando, King of the Crown of Aragon, (referred to as Reyes Católicos), over their territories from 1479, placed two very different nations under the same monarchs (Elliott 1963, p. 7). Thus, apart from sharing common sovereigns, neither Castile nor the Crown of Aragon underwent any radical institutional alteration. However, Castile by sponsoring Columbus journey to the Americas soon came to overshadow the other territories. A radical change in the Castilian policy towards Catalonia took place when Philip IV appointed the Count Duke of Olivares as chief minister in March 1621. His objective was to create a powerful absolutist state. In 1640, the increasing tension between Castile and Catalonia reached its climax in the Revolt of the Reapers, treated by scholars of Catalan history as one of the first nationalist revolutions in Europe (Elliott 1963, p.45; Vilar, P. Història de Catalunya, Vol. III, by C. Batlle 1987, p. 217).

In the Spanish War of Succession, Catalonia supported the Austrians against the Bourbon claimant Philip V. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) confirmed Philip V as king of Spain and the Catalans found themselves on the side of the defeated candidate. After a massive Franco-Spanish attack that followed a siège of fourteen months, Barcelona surrendered on 11th September 1714. Philip V ordered the dissolution of Catalan political institutions and set up a regime of occupation. Catalan was forbidden and Castilian (Spanish) was proclaimed as the official language, although the majority of the population could not understand it.

The industrialization of Catalonia and the Basque country generated a scenario in which the most economically developed parts of the state were politically subject to an anachronistic and backwards Castile (Vilar 1977). By the end of the nineteenth century and influenced by German Romanticism, the *Renaixença*—a movement for national and cultural renaissance—prompted demands for Catalan autonomy, first in the form of regionalism and later in demands for a federal state.

Catalan nationalism did not emerge as a unified phenomenon. Rather diverse political ideologies and cultural influences gave rise to different types of nationalism, from the conservative nationalism of Jaume Balmes, to the federalism of Francisco Pi i Margall, the Catholic nationalism of Josep Torres i Bages, or the Catalan Marxism of Andreu Nin, among many others (Balcells, 1996). Only in the early twentieth century did a pro-independence Catalan nationalist party managed to obtain significant electoral support.[2]

From Dictatorship to Democracy

Franco's coup d'état against the legitimate government of the II Spanish Republic (18th July 1936) and his subsequent victory after the Civil War (1936–1939) led to the suppression of Catalan political institutions, the banning of the Catalan language and the proscription of all the symbolic elements of Catalan identity, from the flag (the *senyera*) to the national anthem (*Els Segadors*; Benet, J. Catalunya Sota el Règim Franquista 1973; Guibernau 2004). After the Civil War, the most important representatives of the democratic political parties banned by the regime went into exile, were imprisoned or executed (Preston 2012, p. 466ff). The authoritarian state designed by Franco did not accept dissent and used brute power in relation to the historical nations included within its territory. The regime's aim was to annihilate them as nations.

In February 1939, the institutions of the *Generalitat* (*Catalan government*) went into exile (Ferré 1977).[3] In 1940 the Gestapo arrested the President of the *Generalitat*, Lluís Companys, and handed him over to the Spanish authorities. In Madrid, he was interrogated and tortured,

[2] This refers to *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (Catalan Republican Left).

[3] For a detailed version of the activities of the *Generalitat* in exile illustrated with key documents from that period, see Ferré, M. (1977) *La Generalitat de Catalunya a l'exili*, Aymà, Barcelona.

and subsequently sent to Barcelona, where he was court-martialled and executed in Montjuïc castle on 15 October 1940.

The allied countries did not take any action to overthrow the Francoist dictatorship (Díaz Esculíes 1983, pp 129–135) with the exception of two United Nations resolutions. The first (12 December 1946) recommended withdrawing ambassadors from Spain, and the second (17 November 1947) denounced the Franco regime because it had been created with the collaboration of the Axis powers. The disappointment of the Catalan resistance emphasized the political discrepancies between the firm defenders of the re-establishment of the Republic—ERC (*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* or Catalonia's Republican Left) and the PSUC (*Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya* or Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia)—and those who proposed beginning a provisional period of reflection to discuss the future organization of the state and the status of Catalonia (De Riquer and Culla, J.B. El franquisme i la transició democràtica 1939, p. 153). The threat of a foreign intervention to restore democracy in Spain evaporated and it was not long before Franco received economic support from the USA (1951) and signed the Concordat with the Vatican (1953).

From 1959, with the awareness that the future of Francoism (Preston 2012; Guibernau 2004) was guaranteed, a widening gap between most of Catalan society and the regime emerged. Only those members of the bourgeoisie who had renounced their national identity to protect their status and defend their class interests were still satisfied (Riera 1998; Aracil, 1999; Cabana, 2000). In this new stage, the homogenizing policies imposed by the dictatorship encountered the opposition of those who wanted to recover democracy and protect Catalan identity. As a threatened national minority, the Catalans devised several kinds of counter-strategies aimed at rejecting the uniformity dictated by the regime.

Armed struggle did not take root among the anti-Franco opposition in Catalonia, which preferred using non-violent tactics. The only exception was the *maquis*, approximately 12,000 armed men who operated mainly in the Pyrenees and were active primarily in the 1950s.

On 7 November 1971 about three hundred people representing different political, social and professional sectors of Catalonia founded the *Assembly of Catalonia*, a clandestine organization that soon became the broadest and most important unitary Catalan movement since the Civil War. No similar unitary movement, in view of its scope and its relevance, was created in any other part of Spain. The Assembly, initially founded by the socialists and, in particular, the communists, received the economic support of the group led by Jordi Pujol, whom subsequently joined it. The MSC (Catalonia's Socialist Movement) and the PSUC won over the support of significant sectors of the working class and of a high number of Castilian-speaking immigrants. They all voiced the need to bring together democracy, left-wing policies and autonomy for Catalonia. The mobilizing action of the Assembly continued until the first democratic parliamentary election held on 15 June 1977. The unity of the democratic front was now replaced by competing 'images' of Catalonia, including its status within Spain.

Cultural resistance, which is the use of all kinds of symbols of Catalan identity in both the public and the private sphere, evolved from the performance of isolated risky actions to the achievement of numerous activities enlisting mass support. Resistance actions culminated in the September 11, 1977, when one million demonstrators demanded a Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia. The Catalans, through this display of strength, manifested their outright rejection of a simple administrative decentralization of the state and demanded political autonomy within a democratic Spain. Franco was dead (1975) and an overwhelming majority of Spaniards had already ratified the political reform proposed by Adolfo Suárez, then Prime Minister of Spain, in a referendum held 15th December 1976.

The 1978 Spanish Constitution

The 1978 Spanish Constitution resulted from the consensus reached by the main political parties emerging from the first democratic election after the Civil War. The need to obtain the support of both Francoist reformists and anti-Francoist groups provoked continuous arguments and generated very tense situations while drafting the Constitution. Such discrepancies were reflected in the lack of precision and coherence evident in some parts of the constitutional text. The radically conservative and centralist character of the brand of Spanish nationalism promoted by the Franco regime was questioned by the 1978 Constitution, which not only aspired to transform Spain into a democratic state, but also recognized the existence of nationalities and regions within its territory.

The preamble to the Constitution proclaims the desire of the Spanish nation to 'Protect all Spaniards and the peoples of Spain on exercising their human rights, their cultures and traditions, languages and institutions' (Spanish Constitution, Preamble). *Article Two*, probably the most controversial, reveals the tension between defending the unity of Spain and the social pressure for the historical nationalities of Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country to be recognized: '*The Constitution is based 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 that make it up and solidarity between all of them*' (Spanish Constitution, Article 2). Even more important, though, is the outright rejection of the centralist model imposed by Francoism embodied in this Article, which at the same time endeavours to reconcile the two ideas of the Spanish nation at stake during the Civil War. Article Two declares that 'unity' has to be preserved, although it could be argued that 'unity' is somehow questioned by the recognition of 'nationalities and regions' at the heart of Spain. As Colomer states, this involves the recognition of 'differentiated group consciousnesses' formed historically (Colomer 1984, p. 351). According to Solé Tura, it is very controversial and legally ambiguous to emphasize the unity of a 'nation' while recognizing the existence of 'nationalities' within it (Solé Tura 1985, p. 101).

Although Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia, which during the Second Republic had held plebiscites in favour of their own statutes of autonomy, and which in 1978 were enjoying recently restored provisional autonomous regimes, immediately gained 'full autonomy', other communities had to undergo a 5-year period of 'restricted autonomy' before doing so (Article 143 versus Article 151 of the Constitution). Once full autonomy has been achieved, however, the Constitution makes no distinction between the different communities; rather it places nationalities with a strong distinctive identity embedded in a common culture, language and past on the same level as artificially created 'communities', lacking any previous sense of identity (Articles 143 and 144).

According to Enric Fossas, the Constitution limits itself to establishing principles and procedures leading to a territorial reorganization of power, which could result in different political models. In his opinion, the so-called 'autonomous model' is a 'pre-constitutional' model because the 'provisional' regimes of autonomy granted to various 'communities' prior to the Constitution determined its own drafting and its subsequent development. And it is also 'sub-constitutional' because the Constitution did not create the Autonomous Communities System; it did not create the autonomous communities, nor did it define their territories, determine their organization, or set up their powers.

The Magna Carta restricts itself to determining 'procedures' in which the key figures are local representatives, who have to declare their desire for autonomy, and central state institutions, in particular the parliament, through the development of the so-called 'Constitutional block' (including statutes of autonomy and laws delimiting their devolved

powers), and the Spanish Constitutional Court, as the supreme interpreter of the constitutional text through its jurisprudence.

It should be stressed that the Autonomous Communities System has evolved from an initial 'differentiating' interpretation, which granted a special regime to Catalonia, the Basque Country and Galicia (Transitional Provision Two, in relation to Article 152 of the Constitution), unlike that of the rest of the autonomous communities, toward a 'homogenizing' interpretation—resulting from the first Autonomous Agreements (1981) and the second Autonomous Agreements (1992)—the objective of which was to reduce the scope of the *principio dispositivo* (see Fossas 1999, p. 288).

Originally the Autonomous Communities System endeavoured to respond to the nationalist demands of the Basque Country and Catalonia, which had been severely repressed and threatened with cultural extinction during francoism. Both communities believed that they were entitled to self-determination, and that they had the power to press for a political solution to their claims. However, what some saw as a fair demand, did others regard as a threat to the unity of the 'Spanish nation' conceived as a unitary state. Large conservative sections of the army and the civil service, as well as former Francoists, were hostile to the recognition of nationalities and of regions within Spain. Even today there is no agreement concerning the meaning of the term 'nationality'.

The 1979 Statute of Autonomy

Catalonia enjoyed some autonomy under the administrative government of the *Mancomunitat* (1913–1923). This was halted in 1923 by the *coup d'état* of General Miguel Primo de Rivera. Autonomy was granted again during the II Spanish Republic (1931–1938) to be abolished by general Francisco Franco's decree of 5 April 1938 after the *coup d'état* of 1936 which initiated the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939).

After almost 40 years of Franco's dictatorship, Catalonia recovered its autonomous government, *Generalitat*, in 1977 and sanctioned a new Statute of Autonomy in 1979.

The Preliminary Section of the Statute defines Catalonia as a nationality which 'in order to accede to self-government, constitutes itself as a Self-Governing Community in accordance with the Constitution and with this Statute' (Article 1.1) (it should be underlined that the sovereignty of Catalonia is implied in this declaration) and the *Generalitat* as 'the institution around which the self-government of Catalonia is politically organized' (Article 1.2). The powers of the *Generalitat* 'emanate from the Constitution, this Statute and the people' (Article 1.3). These provisions make clear that the Constitution defines the extent and number of devolved powers. 'The people' (the Catalans) stand in third place. This point stresses the existence of a single sovereign *demos* in Spanish democracy, constituted by all Spaniards, including the Catalans, which on ratifying the Constitution made the autonomy of Catalonia possible. This interpretation considers the Catalan people to be a 'sub-group' of the *demos* formed by all the citizens of Spain.

We could infer, in accordance with this reasoning present in the Constitution and in the Statute, that access to political power (*kratos*) by the Catalan people is determined by a *demos* of which the Catalan people form a part, and not by the specific free will of the Catalans constituted as a 'sovereign *demos*' (Requejo, 2000, pp. 108–114). This implies that even if the majority of Catalans was to defend a specific option, because they are a minority within Spain, they have no possibility of moving forward unless specifically allowed by the Spanish state. For instance, the Catalan's will to hold a referendum on independence is faced with gridlock unless the Spanish state permits it. In Spain, national minorities have voice—access to

Congress and the Senate—however, they have no veto power, and only acquire distinctive relevance whenever one of the main political parties is short of a majority and needs their votes to form a government. Then suddenly, minorities become crucial, as it was the case in 1993 and 2000.

Spain can be cited as an example of majoritarian democracy in so far as decisions are taken according to the principle of majority rule, identified as the institutional context within which the populist-patriotic drift can degenerate (Conversi 2012, p. 794).

According to the Constitution, Spain is a single 'demos' formed by 'all Spaniards'; the Catalans are regarded as a part of that single 'demos' and this automatically deems any attempts to hold a referendum on self-determination in Catalonia illegal unless allowed by the state. In turn, Article 2 of the Constitution argues that 'the Constitution is based upon the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, common and indivisible patria of all Spaniards', and Article 8 states that 'the Army's mission is to guarantee the sovereignty and independence of Spain, to defend its territorial integrity and the constitutional set up'.

The president of the Catalan government in exile, Josep Tarradellas, returned from France (1977). Jordi Pujol, leader of the Convergence and Union coalition (*Convergència i Unió* or CiU), became the first president of the *Generalitat* after the first democratic Catalan election (1980), he was re-elected several times and governed the country until 2003, when he decided not to stand for office. Pujol led the CiU, a social-democratic nationalist party, and played a key role in building Catalan institutions, language and culture after 40 years of repression.

Modern Catalan nationalism emerged in the 1960s as a progressive social movement defending democracy and freedom against Franco's dictatorship, demanding a Statute of autonomy for Catalonia and amnesty for the regime's political prisoners. Franco's death in 1975 allowed a transition to democracy led by members of his own regime. At the time Catalonia played a key role in the democratization of Spain by strongly supporting EU membership, providing economic and industrial leadership and being committed to solidarity towards Spain. Vitally, Catalan nationalism was instrumental in overcoming the 1993 crisis and strongly supported Spain to fulfil the conditions to join the Euro. However, it was felt by many that Catalan loyalty and support did not pay off as Spain reinforced centralism.

By and large, the Catalan nationalist movement had never been overwhelmingly secessionist. Since its inception in the late nineteenth century, secession from Spain had not been the objective of its leaders, instead, different alternative options—ranging from federation to political autonomy—have embodied the main Catalan nationalist projects.

Radical political change was initiated after the 16 November 2003 Catalan election when the new PSC(PSC-PSOE)-ERC-ICV[4] government, under the leadership of the socialist Pasqual Maragall, ended 23 years of CiU's government at the Generalitat.[5]

Once in power, Maragall was to propound the drafting of a new Statute of Autonomy for Catalonia; an updated much more ambitious statute than that of 1979. However, this turned out to be a much more complicated business than initially expected. Conflict and differences emerged among Catalan political forces, which finally managed to agree on a draft to be

[4] PSC—Socialist Party of Catalonia, federated with the PSOE; PSOE—Spanish Socialists Workers Party; ERC—Catalan Republican Left; ICV—Greens.

[5] At the election, the PSC (PSC-PSOE)-CpC obtained 42 seats, corresponding to 31.17 % of the vote. Against all predictions, the CiU, with its new leader Artur Mas, managed to obtain 30.93 % of the vote, which corresponded to 46 seats. As well as the PSC, it had also lost 10 seats when compared to 1999. The key to political change in Catalonia was then in the hands of the ERC which obtained a record 23 seats corresponding to 16.47 % of the vote. In the 1999 election, it had obtained 8.7 % of the vote corresponding to 12 seats. The ICV achieved a significant recovery, obtaining 9 seats (it had 5 previously), and the PP obtained 15 seats, 3 more than in 1999.

submitted to the Spanish Parliament, where Mr. Rodriguez-Zapatero—the socialist Primer Minister of Spain—had the majority.

A socialist prime minister in Spain and a socialist president of Catalonia might have been expected to smooth out the sanctioning of the new Statute. But, this was not the case; on the contrary, profound discrepancies emerged between Maragall and some sectors of the PSOE, as well as between him and some sectors of the Catalan Socialists of whom he was the leader. The process culminating in the referendum that voted 'yes' to the 2006 Statute was long and acrimonious and Catalan society, its political forces and Maragall himself were to pay for it.

Instability generated by differences among members of the three-party government coalition ruling Catalonia since December 2003 forced early elections. Maragall was prevented from standing as leader by the pro PSOE sector in his own party and his successor, José Montilla, became president of the Generalitat after repeating the coalition with ERC and ICV. Again, the election had been won by the CiU—twelve more seats in the Catalan Parliament—than the second party (the PSC), but they were outnumbered by the three-party coalition formed by the PSC, the ERC and ICV.

Why is Secessionism Currently Growing in Catalonia?

Three main factors explain the recent rise of secessionism in Catalan society. First, the José María Aznar's government (2000–2004) lack of response to demands for greater autonomy for Catalonia -at a time when secession was not even mentioned-. Second, the legal challenging of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy and its subsequent trimming after it had already been sanctioned by the Catalan Parliament, and both the Spanish Congres and the Senate, as well as by the Catalan people in a referendum. Third, increasing awareness of the impact of accumulating an annual deficit of 8 % of Catalonia's GDP due to the financial arrangements established by the Spanish state. The latter economic argument has acquired higher relevance as Catalan society endures a harsh economic crisis. In January 2013, Catalonia has reached a record 23.9 % unemployment and Spain has reached 26.2 % (or 5.965.400 million unemployed).[6] Let us analyse these factors in greater detail because the emotions they have triggered are closely connected with the rise of secessionism in Catalonia.

Lack of Response to Demands for Greater Autonomy

Soon after the 2000 landslide victory of José M. Aznar's conservative Popular Party (PP), sympathy and understanding towards Catalan's demands for further autonomy and recognition were replaced by hostility embedded in a neo-centralist, conservative and neo-liberal political discourse. The Popular Party became dismissive of claims for greater autonomy for the historical nationalities (Catalonia, Galicia and the Basque Country). In 2005 a *boicot* against Catalan products—in particular 'cava' (sparkling wine)—developed in Spain.

In Catalonia, growing dissatisfaction with the Aznar government guaranteed strong support for J.L. Rodriguez Zapatero, the leader of the Socialists Workers Party (PSOE) in the 2004 election. However, once in government he proved unable, or unwilling, to stand up by his promise to support the new Statute of Autonomy to emerge from the Catalan Parliament.

[6] *La Vanguardia*, 24th January 2013, *Catalan News Agency*, 24the January 2013.

The Spanish High Court of Justice Suspended Parts of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia After it had Been Already Sanctioned

Initially, the Catalan Parliament ratified the Statute of Autonomy—90 % of MPs voted in favour. The Statute was subsequently revised and modified by the Spanish Parliament in Madrid to fully comply with the Constitution and it was finally sanctioned in a referendum (18th June 2006) by the Catalan people.

Immediately after being sanctioned, the 2006 Statute of Autonomy was challenged in the Spanish High Court of Justice—arguing that some of its content did not comply with the Spanish Constitution. This generated a sense of outrage among Catalans who could not understand how the newly approved Statute—after following all the procedures and modifications as requested by Spanish political institutions and the Constitution—could still be challenged.

After 4 years, the Spanish High Court finally issued its verdict 28th June 2010.

The Spanish High Court Sentence Against the 2006 Statute of Autonomy

The main points to be removed from the 2006 Statute of Autonomy and declared non-constitutional according the Spanish High Court of Justice were:

1. The Spanish Constitution acknowledges the existence of a single Spanish nation within Spain. The sentence accepts the use of the term 'nation' applied to Catalonia as legitimate *only* if this is interpreted as void of juridical value. The term ought to be strictly employed in an ideological, historical or cultural context. The sentence emphasizes quite a few times the 'indissoluble unity of Spain' as stated in the Constitution.
2. The expression 'national symbols' employed in the 2006 Statute of Autonomy is to be interpreted as 'symbols of a nationality', so that there is no contradiction with the symbols of the Spanish nation, the only ones to be properly considered as 'national'.
3. It is deemed unconstitutional to confer a preferential status to the Catalan language within the Catalan Public Administration. Catalan is confirmed in its status as a preferential language in the Catalan education system. Students have the duty and the right to speak and write in Catalan as well as Castilian (Spanish) after completing their compulsory education.
4. The duty to be competent in Catalan in Catalonia is not considered as having the same meaning/importance/legal status as the duty to be competent in Castilian (Spanish) included in the Spanish Constitution.
5. The verdict rejects the attempt of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy to protect matters already devolved to the Catalan autonomous government from the constant legislation of the Spanish State concerning these areas. The State appeals to the need to guarantee uniformity within the State to justify its measures.
6. The 2006 Statute sought to eliminate the Catalan economic deficit generated by the endemic imbalance between Catalan contributions to Spanish coffers and State funding received by Catalonia. To avoid that, the Statute established that Catalonia's contribution to the so called 'solidarity fund' should be made conditional to a similar fiscal effort being made by other Autonomous Communities (AACC). With this measure, Catalonia was trying to avoid that a AACC in need of a high percentage of funds from the 'solidarity fund' could afford to lower down its taxes as an electoral strategy, while the other AACC had to pay for its needs. This has been deemed non-constitutional.
7. The 2006 Statute established that the Catalan Government could set up its own taxes at local level. This has been deemed non-constitutional.

8. The 2006 Statute established that the State's investment in Catalonia should be on a level with the percentage of Catalan GDP in relation to the overall Spanish GDP. The Spanish High Court accepts this, if and only if, 'it does not entail an 'economic privilege' for Catalonia and remains without 'binding effect for the State'.[7]
9. Articles setting up a Catalan Council of Justice, establishing the exclusivity of the Catalan Ombudsman concerning the Catalan Administration, and the status and role of the president of the Catalan High Court of Justice, as the representative of the judicial power in Catalonia nominated by the King, were all deemed non-constitutional.[8]

Catalonia's Fiscal Deficit with the Central Administration

With 23.85 % unemployment (rising to 53.88 % among under 25 years old)[9] in Catalonia, the deepening of the economic crisis is hitting hard. Resentment against the Spanish government economic policies and dissatisfaction with politics prevail: In Catalan society, those who are 'little satisfied with democracy' rose to 56 % and those 'totally dissatisfied with democracy' rose to 26.7 % in July 2013. Catalonia, a traditionally prosperous region, sees its wealth and status downgraded as it loses competitiveness and lacks resources and saving for infrastructure while accumulating annual deficit of 8 % of GDP due to the financial arrangements imposed by the Spanish state. In this context, support for Catalan fiscal autonomy (*Pacte Fiscal*) is rising fast and secession, for the first time in Catalan history, appears as a legitimate option.

According to the latest available data Catalonia's average contribution to the Spanish Central Administration and Social Security corresponds to 19.40 % of the total. In contrast, Catalonia receives 14.03 %. After contributing to Spain's Solidarity Fund, Catalonia is worse off than those autonomous communities subsidized by the Fund and finds itself below average in per capita spending.[10]

The 2012 Budget presented by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy did not contemplate the State paying back its pending debts to Catalonia. According to the Statute these include, €759 million for 2008 and €219 million for 2009. In addition, the State's investment in infrastructure in Catalonia has been reduced by 45 %, and now stands at 11 % of the total, far from the 18.6 % that would be an equal share for Catalonia.[11]

Civil Society at Work

The origin of the pro-secessionist movement can be traced back to 13th December 2009. On that day, with the support of 15,000 volunteers, 166 Catalan towns and cities held referendums on Catalonia's independence. The referendums were not legally binding, but they were infused with an important symbolic meaning, in particular since the Spanish state forbids the holding of a legally binding or consultative referendum in Catalonia. Participation amounted to 27 %, and 94.71 % voted in favour of Catalonia's independence.

[7] *El País*, Madrid 9th July 2010. 'La Constitución no conoce otra nación que la Espanola'. Accessed 27.09.2010 http://www.elpais.com/articulo/espana/Constitucion.
[8] *El País*, Madrid 28th June 2010. 'Los artículos considerados inconstitucionales'. Accessed 27.09.2010 http://www.elpais.com/articulo/espana/Constitucion.
[9] EPA Catalonia, Semester 2, 2013. http://www.datosmacro.com/paro-epa/ccaa/cataluna
[10] *El País*, 11th May 2008. See also, *Las Balanzas fiscales de las CC.AA. espanolas con las AA. Públicas centrales* 2005. Ministerio de economía y hacienda, Madrid 15th July 2008, p. 19.
[11] *La Vanguardia*, 4th April 2012. Accessed 04.04.2012 http://lavanguardia.com/politica

On July 10, 2010—6 months later—over one million people demonstrated in Barcelona against the Spanish High Court decision to suppress 14 articles of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy and modified a further 30. The civil society association Omnium Cultural led by its president, Muriel Casals, organized the demonstration led by the motto: 'We are a nation. We decide'.

The Rise of Secessionism: DATA from Barcelona

In 2011, 42.9 % of Catalans stood in favour of independence to the question 'if tomorrow there was a referendum to decide on Catalan independence, how would you vote?' In December 2012 support for independence rose to 57 % (CEO, 2012). In June 2013, there was a slight decline; 55.6 % indicated that they would cast a 'yes' vote for Catalan independence. At the same time, 23.4 % said that they would vote against and 15.3 % would abstain or would not vote (CEO, June 2013).

According to the latest available data (CEO, June 2013), 4.6 % of Catalans consider that they have too much autonomy, 19.1 % are satisfied with the current level and 72.5 % feel frustrated by insufficient autonomy. The percentage of Catalans considering that they have too much autonomy has dropped from 4.4 % (March 2012) to 3.6 % (June 2013). Those satisfied with the current level have dropped from 23.9 % (March 2012) to 19.1 % (June 2013) and, while 65.7 % felt frustrated by insufficient autonomy in March 2012, their number has rose to 72.5 % in June 2013.[12]

When questioned about what should be the type of relationship between Catalonia and Spain, we are able to identify a descent in the number of people maintaining that 'Catalonia should be a Spanish region' from 5.2 % in March 2012 to 4.6 % in June 2013. In the same period the percentage of people considering that Catalonia should be a Spanish Autonomous Community has dropped from 27.8 % to 22.8 % while the percentage saying that Catalonia should be a state within a federal Spain has dropped from 30.8 % to 21.2 %. In 2012, 44.3 % of Catalans stood in favour of Catalonia becoming an independent state, in June 2013 47.0 % stood in favour or Catalonia becoming an independent state.[13]

The Rise of Secessionism: DATA from Madrid

Spain's main radio station, *Cadena Ser*, published an opinion poll 11th September 2013 (Catalonia's national day) indicating that 52.3 % of Catalans would vote 'yes' in an independence referendum, while 24.1 % would vote against. It also showed that 80.5 % of Catalans are in favour of holding a referendum on self-determination, so far forbidden by the Spanish Government. It is also important to note that, according to the Cadena Ser poll, 59.7 % of Catalans would still cast their vote if the referendum was declared illegal by the Spanish Government. A new and revealing piece of information emerging from the poll indicates that 46.8 % of Catalans are prepared to continue supporting independence even is the Spanish Government were to agree to a much improved fiscal arrangement for Catalonia; one similar to that of the Basque Country. In contrast, 27 % would stand against independence if that were to be the case.

In May 2013, the CIS (Spanish Council of Sociological Research) which is the Spanish Government's public opinion survey institute based in Madrid released the results of a CIS

[12] Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, CEO, Political Opinion Barometer, 2nd wave 2013.
[13] CEO, Political Opinion Barometer, 2nd wave 2013.

survey indicating that 55.1 % of Catalans stand in favour of a Catalan state, as either independent from Spain (33.7 %) or within a federal Spain (21.4 %).

According to the report by the CIS (Madrid) in December 2012, 24.6 of Spaniards stood in favour of Spain being a unitary state with a central government and without autonomous communities. At present 23.2 % support this view (*CIS Estudio no*. 2993 *Barometer July 2013*, *question 21*).

The percentage of those in favour of a state with fewer devolved powers for the AACC has slightly risen from 12.3 % in December 2012 to 13.3 % in July 2013. At 32.5 %, there has been practically no change regarding support of the current model of state with AACC which has reached 32.6 % in 2013. And a mere 9.4 % support the right of the AACC to become independent states. The differing views of Catalans and Spaniards reveal a clear opposition between the two.

The following table illustrates the rise of secessionism from 42.9 % in June 2011 to 55.6 % in June 2013.

Independence

If a referendum on Catalan independence was to be held tomorrow, how would you vote?

The main argument raised by those supporting independence is the desire for fiscal autonomy (34.8 %) followed by the wish for greater prosperity and freedom (21.4 %; Table 1). No ethnic connotations are invoked. Currently all taxes are collected in Catalonia and sent to the central administration in Madrid to be distributed. As a consequence of lower returns, Catalonia accumulates an annual deficit of 8.5 % of its GDP. Among Catalans growing discontent about this practice has been rising as secessionism gains strength.

In turn, among those against Catalan independence 45.6 % refer to their willingness 'to preserve Spanish unity' as their main argument. This is a statement reflecting the idea of Spain as a single nation; Catalonia is a part of Spain, regardless of whether the Catalans entertain aspirations for greater devolution or secession. The main motivation against independence is that it would break the integrity of the Spanish nation (Table 2).

Much has been written about the role of identity in determining individual political options and stance for or against devolution and secession. The most recent data on these issues reveals that, in Catalonia the percentage of people who feel 'only Spanish' has risen to 3.6 % (July 2013). In turn, the number of those feeling 'more Spanish than Catalan' has risen from 2.4 % to 2.6 %.

A significant change has occurred regarding those feeling 'as Spanish as Catalan' dropping from 42.4 % (March 2012) to 35.6 % (July 2013). Meanwhile, the percentage of those feeling

Table 1 Independence

Independence, 'I would vote'	June 2011, %	November 2011, %	March 2012, %	June 2012, %	November 2012, %	February to June 2013, %
In favour	42.9	45.4	44.6	51.1	57	54.7 55.6
I would vote against	28.2	24.7	24.7	21.1	20.5	20.7 23.4
I would abstain	23.3	23.8	24.2	21.1	14.3	17.0 15.3
Other	0.5	0.6	1.0	1.0	0.6	1.1 0.6
Don't know	4.4	4.6	4.6	4.7	6.2	5.4 3.8
No answer	0.8	1.0	0.9	1.1	1.5	1.0 1.3

Source: I have elaborated this table by collating data from CEO

Table 2 Which of the following sentences better reflects your identity?

Identity	March 2012 %	November 2012 %	July 2013 %
Only Spanish	3.4	2.0	3.6
More Spanish than Catalan	2.4	2.5	2.6
As Spanish as Catalan	42.4	35	35.6
More Catalan than Spanish	28.2	28.7	25.7
Only Catalan	21.1	29.6	31.0
Don't know	0.6	0.7	0.6
No answer	1.9	1.6	0.8

Source: CEO, 2012

'more Catalan than Spanish' has declined to 25.7 % (July 2013). A more significant shift has taken place among those who feel 'Only Catalan', rising from 21.1 % (March 2012) to 29.6 % (Nov. 2012) and to 31 % in July 2013. This confirms that, although the majority of Catalans feel 'as Spanish as Catalan' (35.6 %)—and the other questions about dual identity offer small variations—there is a significant increment in the percentage of those who feel 'only Catalan'—single identity—thus indicating a retreat in dual identity.[14]

The Catalan Way

On 11th September 2012, 1.5 million people demonstrated in the streets of Barcelona confirming the strength of the secessionist movement. The president of Catalonia, Artur Mas, called a snap election on 25th November 2012 and, if successful, he promised to hold a referendum on self-determination. The pro-sovereignty parties won the Catalan election; they obtained 71 seats out of a total of a135 in the Catalan Parliament. However, the result was lower than initially predicted and weakened the leadership of Artur Mas.[15] To strengthen his position and obtain a reasonable majority Mas signed an agreement with the leader of the Catalan Republican Left (ERC), Oriol Junqueras, who also supports a referendum on Catalan independence. However, Junqueras is not willing to enter into a coalition with the CiU.

In November 2012 three key factors contributed to alter the 2012 election forecast by generating a complex situation in the Catalan Parliament, these are:

> First, participation reached a record 69.56 %—over 10 points above that registered in the last election (58.78 %).
> Second, the Spanish government was much more pro-active than in previous regional elections and launched an effective campaign highlighting the perils of secession and taking a strong stance against the political parties defending the sovereignty option. Third, repeatedly Article 2 of the Constitution was invoked to remind people that the Spanish Constitution prevents any direct vote on the issue and that a referendum on that matter was ruled out. In turn, Article 2 of the Constitution argues that 'the Constitution is based upon the indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation, common and indivisible *patria* of all

[14] CEO. CEO, Political Opinion Barometer, 2nd wave July 2013.
[15] CiU, has won the Catalan election by obtaining 50 seats, having received 30.68 % of the vote corresponding to 1.112.341 million votes. However, CiU has lost 12 seats. On this election, the biggest winner is the Catalan Republican Left (ERC)—a party in favour of independence founded in 1931. ERC has moved from having 10 seats to 21, thus obtaining 13.68 % of the vote equivalent to 496.292 seats.

Spaniards', and Article 8 states that 'the Army's mission is to guarantee the sovereignty and independence of Spain'.

In Barcelona, the civil society movement in favour of Catalan independence constituted itself into the Catalan National Assembly at a meeting in April 2011. Its main objective is: The re-establishment of Catalonia's political independence by creating a Catalan state within the European Union.[16] Since then, the ANC (Catalan National Assembly) has been pro-active in promoting secessionism by organizing a range of peaceful, democratic initiatives across Catalonia.

In line with the objectives set up by the new legislature, on 23 January 2013, the Catalan Parliament approved a declaration proclaiming the Catalan people a 'sovereign political and legal entity' and calling for a referendum on Catalan independence. The declaration was subsequently deemed unconstitutional by the Spanish Constitutional Court (8th May 2013).

On 11th September 2013—Catalonia's national day—Catalans created a 400-km-long human chain linking Catalonia's territory from north to south with participants joining hands together in their demand for Catalan independence. The demonstration gathered 1.6 million people and was inspired by the 1989 'Baltic Way' in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Conclusion

This paper refers to 'emancipatory nationalism' as a novel type of democratic nationalism rising in some Western liberal democratic states where nation and state are not coextensive with each other; for example in Catalonia, Scotland and Flanders. At present, 'emancipatory nationalism' includes the quest for independence within the European Union as one of its novel and distinctive features.

Currently public political distrust of and resentment towards politicians and the political system is combined with unhappiness regarding long-lasting limitations to demands for greater political autonomy, the recognition of Catalonia as a nation and a fairer fiscal arrangement with the Spanish state. Cultural and identity issues feature prominently among their demands.

In my view the origin of the shift from devolution to secession in Catalonia results from the combination of two interconnected parallel processes. First, after almost 40 years of Franco's dictatorship—imposed by means of a coup d'état—democracy was introduced to Spain. The transition to democracy did not run smooth and the country experienced a number of coup d'état and coup d'état attempts, which could be redressed, the most important took place in 1981 and 1982. However the consolidation of democracy moved forward and has permitted Spanish citizens to express their political aspirations without fear—this is new to a society that endured almost 40 years of dictatorship—while regarding them as legitimate.

In Catalonia, new generations brought up within democratic Spain are convinced of the legitimacy of their claims, among them, the right to decide upon their political future by means of a referendum, as it will be the case in other European democracies, for example in Scotland.

Second, the Spanish state has mostly been unsympathetic to recognizing Catalonia as a nation and to demands for greater devolution, while defending a centralist view of the state shared by both conservatives and socialists. When interviewing in Catalonia, people with different political allegiances would once and again cite the lack of response to demands for greater autonomy for Catalonia (never secession, at the time), they would also point at the suspension of parts of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy after it had already been adjusted to fully

[16] *Declaration of the National Conference for the constitution of a Catalan State*. Barcelona, 30th April 2011.

comply with the Constitution and sanctioned in a referendum (18th June 2006) and to Catalonia's fiscal deficit with the Central Administration in Madrid. These arguments are loaded with a potent emotional content in which feelings of resentment emerge out of the three distinct processes of comparison, frustration and oppression (T.H. Marshall, 1987 [1964] p. 168) that have prompted the rise of a grassroots secessionist movement cutting across gender, class, origin and ethnicity.

The so-called 'Edinburgh Agreement' between the British Prime Minister and First Minister of Scotland to allow a binding referendum on Scottish independence stands in sharp contrast with the Spanish government's outright opposition to allowing a similar vote in Catalonia. This highlights the distance between different conceptions of democracy coexisting within the European Union and which are rooted in the diverse political cultures of nations with different historical backgrounds.

At the time of writing Prime Minister Rajoy has rejected a request by the President of Catalonia to allow for a legal/binding referendum on Catalan independence. The Catalan President Atur Mas has indicated that if Spain does not allow for a referendum to be held in 2014, he will consider calling a 'plebiscite election' in 2016—the end of his current term in office. At the bottom of these differences it is possible to identify a significant gap between attitudes towards democratic practices.

Three main issues emerge from the current situation in Catalonia. First, in terms of *the role of the Constitution*, the Spanish government is treating the Constitution as static and unable to adapt to different political environments when, for example, the American Constitution has been amended on numerous occasions to redress some situations originally considered 'normal' and later recognized as 'unjust': among them the prohibition of female voting, the practice of slavery—particularly in the South—and voting rights for Blacks and Native Americans.

Second, *democracy* requires a constant dialogic process based upon popular sovereignty. Referendums are instruments to bring democracy closer to the citizens. Legitimacy emanates from them.

Last, *the European Union* is a democratic intergovernmental institution committed to the protection of diversity. It is also an institution funded and run by nation-states. Nevertheless, even if Scotland does not win the referendum on independence, it is expected that David Cameron and Alex Salmond will engage in a negotiation that will result in a significant increment regarding the power and status of Scotland within the UK. This position will further expose the rigid position of Spain regarding Catalan demands, in particular if these remain peaceful, democratic and well organized as they have been up to now. Power is crucial to unlock this situation, but it is not the only factor and less so in a global world.

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