

Catalan Independence: Research and Personal Observations

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INTRODUCTION

A look into the current struggle for independence in the Spanish region of Catalonia requires, first, a more comprehensive understanding of nationalism, along with its history and evolution, before we can begin to put the Catalan independence movement into its proper perspective. After a brief discussion of nationalism, this paper seeks to describe the historical and cultural context surrounding Spain and Catalonia, enumerating some key examples that discuss important pillars in the Spanish national identity and crucial influencers on the cry for independence. Through the research of acclaimed Catalan scholars and my own perceptions in my brief time in the region, I hope to show examples of how my experiences both align with and dispute the prevailing outlook stated in the Catalan literature.

NATIONALISM

The Complexity of Nationalism

As a resident of the United States, my perception of nationalism has been substantially interrelated with the idea of passion for our state, or government's boundaries. In the US, we use the term *state* to define the 50 regions within our *country*, and the term *nation* can be regularly heard in the place of the term *country*. This, however, is not always the case in the world. In international terms, the United States should be classified as our *state*, but the *nation* cannot so easily be defined. The question that should be asked is: "What is our nation?" If the response is "The United States," I would refute that response asking the follow up question, "What about the Cherokee

Nation?" This Native American tribe would identify with a different nation, yet they lie within the borders of the United States, so geography cannot be the sole identifier for a nationality. The Kurds in the Middle East would identify themselves as a nation, yet they have no state with internationally recognized borders. The Jewish and Muslim Nations are fighting over land in present day Israel, both with religious ties as their driving force to occupation of these lands, yet the current state borders do not reflect their desires, and both nations are also spread around the world with practitioners of both religions under many other political states. A nation has, therefore, much more opaque rules surrounding its correct usage. Nationalism is socially constructed and meets the parameters deemed correct by its self-identifying population. One can be a part of many nations, or possibly none, based on their understanding and the consensus of the nation as a group.

My friend Abdullah, for example, was born in the United Arab Emirates, a state without birthright citizenship, to Sudanese parents. He was not granted the nationality of the state in which he was born and was declared a member of a state he had never lived in. Scotland, though a part of Great Britain, generally prefers to be referred to as separate from their English counterparts. The two ethnicities in Belgium, the Flemish and the Walloon, have historically been at odds with each other and would be offended to be grouped together, even though they share a state. The Catalans, the Basques, and the Galicians all identify as their own nations within the state of Spain.

So, what creates a nation? The underlying essence can come from many sources. A national identity can be created through a shared state, language, place, religion, race, ethnicity, history, or other shared cultural phenomenon. In a nation, people look to group

themselves with those similar to them. National identities carry the negative trait, whereby defining a nation means one is also defining what it is not. The nation of Black Americans groups themselves based on a shared race and place of origin, generally pointing to roots in Africa, however irreparably blurred by slavery. Some Americans will tell you they are Italian, even though they cannot speak the language, have never been to Italy, know little of its history, and practice none of the local cultural customs. The customs they grapple to in their Italian identity are merely based on ethnic origin, and the few family cuisines passed down. At the same time, this person could tell you they are American and be completely confident in their dual national identification as an Italian-American. Their American Nationality comes from state of origin. This Italian-American could have a child who, after years of living outside of their parents' house no longer cooks the family recipes and, with one more generation of separation from their immigrating ancestors, loses the inclination to call his or herself Italian, dropping his or her national identity to merely American. National identities are complex, not mutually exclusive, and ever-changing.

The Evolution of Nationalism

The history of nationalism has two dominant stages, starting out with Liberal Nationalism and moving towards Conservative Nationalism (Raja-i-Vich, 2018). With the Age of Enlightenment beginning in Europe in the eighteenth century, many people were beginning to become more involved with state-specific national identities. This Liberal Nationalism is best understood through the American and French revolutions. Liberal

Nationalism focuses on ideals of equality, self-identification, and removal of a distant controlling power (Raja-i-Vich, 2018). In America, the British rule from across the Atlantic was geographically distant, and the demand from independence was linked to eliminating their rule. The well-known American saying “no taxation without representation” demonstrates this tension with a higher class, distant ruler. Liberal Nationalism is the cry of the working class for equality, and just representation of their voice. In France, the ruling class was not geographically distant but rather socioeconomically distant. Like the American Revolution, the working class is demanding a voice and ability to self-identify. Liberal Nationalism is encapsulated by oppressed individuals wanting justice.

Nationalism took a turn in the twentieth century and beyond away from the liberation of oppressed voices towards the more powerful groups conservation lifestyles. Shown in current day US, in recent Brazilian elections, in Brexit tensions, in French elections, and in the Catalanian independence movement, Conservative Nationalism is based on retention of status. Conservative Nationalistic trends stem from the now well-established middle class (Raja-i-Vich, 2018). When outside forces come in to alter the way things have typically been, Conservative Nationalists work to eradicate these new ideologies and foreign pressures. Both forms of nationalism are somewhat combative, working to separate from some outside power, but Conservative Nationalism is typically driven by powerful groups eliminating those with less power. In the United States, President Trump has leveraged this phenomenon with prejudice and a goal of returning to the past, when things supposedly operated better than they do today.

In Catalonia, the self-identification issue has been present since they lost independence on September 11th, 1714. Today, with the economic leverage the region holds, nationalistic ideas are rising to the public eye. A great example is the self-identifying referendum Catalonia performed on October 1, 2017 to vote for independence from Spain (Dewan, Cotovio, and Clarke, 2017). This illegal motion was not acknowledged by the Spanish state but shows the revitalization of Catalan Nationalism. The wealthier region now has fiscal power over poorer parts of the Spanish state. One of the main issues, similar to the American Revolution, is the over-taxation with little to no representation in the central government. Catalonia's taxes aid many other parts of Spain, and if they were to separate, many believe this would allow taxes to be retained and reinserted for local benefit. Brexit has had a main focus on immigration reform. British voters are interested in retaining their current situation and uninterested in letting the European Union decide who can be admitted into their country.

One of the most jarring examples of Conservative Nationalism is the rise of the Nazi party in twentieth century Germany. Nazi sympathizers hoped to eliminate the influence Jewish people had on their culture and went to extremes to preserve their territory, status, and life style. All forms of Nationalism are based in an identity crisis, where individuals group together on common ground. This grouping, however, can be dangerous because it inherently determines who is not a part of the community. When the American Revolution determined a corrupt, distant King was no longer a part of their identification, the world looks on with sympathy. However, in more recent history, when the White House sets plans to build a wall between the US and Mexico, the world may no

longer be so understanding. Professor Antoni Raja-i-Vich, Professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona in an interview on October 18, 2018 stated “Nationalism, in any form, is very dangerous,” (Raja-i-Vich, 2018). Whether a nationality is dividing itself from an oppressive power or an incoming minority group, too much nationalism can cause contempt for those outside of one’s own nation, causing a multitude of issues.

THE CATALAN ISSUE

A Brief History

Looking at the current events in Spain, one might think the demand for independence in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia is a new concept, but it is actually a long-standing issue. Catalans reference the fall of Barcelona on September 11, 1714 during the War of Spanish Succession as the time when independence was lost to the Spanish crown. Cries for independence, therefore, are not unfamiliar to Catalan ears. During my time in Barcelona, many Catalans would remind me of the long and rich history Catalonia had before the unification of crowns in Spain connected them to the rest of the Iberian Peninsula. I heard stories of Catalan Dictionaries found from early Middle Ages, and stories of heroes dying for preservation of Catalonia. One specific warrior of old is the legend Wilfred I the Hairy who, after dying in battle, had his shield painted with his blood as King Charles the Bald drew his four bloody fingers down Wilfred’s gold shield and created the symbol used in the Catalan Flag today (Costa, 2003). The flag of Catalonia, the *Senyera*, with its four red stripes on a gold background represent Wilfred’s death in the year 897 fighting to protect Barcelona (Costa, 2003).

These pre-renaissance roots prove as crucial evidence documenting Catalonia's distinct history from the Castilian Spain and give validity to their representation as a unique nation. Before 1137, Catalonia operated as its own nation, but after the marriage of Ramon Berenguer IV to Queen Petronila of Aragon, it was united with the Crown of Aragon, with the city of Barcelona remaining the centerpiece of the new rule (Salrach, 2004). As typical in the Middle Ages, rulers married into adjacent dynasties to enlarge their scope of power. Under the Aragon Crown, Catalan culture continued to dominate locally, and the lands this new crown controlled were still confined to the northeast corner of the Iberian Peninsula (Petit-Dutaillis, 2013). Only when Aragon united with Castile in 1469 did the ruling family inhabit a more centrally located capital, near present day Madrid. This unification under *los reyes católicos*, the Catholic Monarchs, came by the marriage of Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon (Raja-i-Vich, 2018). This new region eventually became what we know today as Spain, making *los reyes católicos* its first official rulers. Ferdinand and Isabela brought Spain together under three pillars of the Spanish identity: the Catholic Faith, the Castilian Spanish Language, and the now united Crown of Castile and Aragon (Raja-i-Vich, 2018). At this time the Catalan language had already been officially spoken for over 500 years, with its origins dating back even further to a "Vulgar Latin" dialect, just like the many other romance languages spoken around Europe (Costa, 2003). Speaking the Catalan language is notably not a pillar of true Spanish Identity. In these times, the flow of information was much slower, making the unification of crowns under *los reyes católicos* of little direct influence in the local

culture and day-to-day life in peripheral lands like the Basque Country and Catalonia (Petit-Dutaillis, 2013).

Through the transition out of the Middle Ages and into the Renaissance, many city-states around Europe were consolidating into the countries we know today. The current boundaries of the state of Spain reflect a generally similar area as was covered by the Catholic Monarchs Ferdinand and Isabela, but the history of these regions inside Spain developed far before the political boundaries. This phenomenon of supranationalism was replicated throughout the whole of Europe, as Medieval era regional powers were joined and molded into one Renaissance era political entity. The Catalan language and culture, therefore, were created before the Kingdom of Spain.

While in Madrid, I heard Pro-Spanish individuals call Spain a “Nation of Nations,” in hopes to represent the diversity within Spain, while also highlight the unified nature of these nations under Spanish rule. This viewpoint will be expanded upon further in the description of Spanish and Catalan discourses present today. Catalonia hears this term “Nation of Nations” with a grimace as it remembers the repression faced under the Spanish dictator Francisco Franco. Unification with regional uniqueness could have been the story of Spain, if its history was not littered with strict guidelines of what was Spanish and what was not. Franco, in hopes of bringing together the diverse Spanish state latched onto the prevailing Castilian culture and language. With his emphasis on the Castilian language he directly oppressed those smaller nationalities present and mandated they join the Castilian way. It was common during the rule of Franco for the Castilian language to be referred to as “speaking Catholic,” further enumerating the ties this language and

the Catholic faith had with being a true Spaniard (Raja-i-Vich, 2018). Franco's 36 year reign as dictator and *caudillo* of Spain is one of the most important factors affecting Spanish society today and his reign acts as a crucible for many of Catalonia's most pressing challenges in their relations with the Spanish state. With the understanding of Catalan history pre-dating the Spanish empire, Spanish collectivist efforts beginning with the Catholic Monarchs, and oppression from the Franco era, one can begin to understand the historical lens through which current tensions should be examined.

The Economic Presence of Catalonia

One main topic supplying validity to the Catalan independence movement I have decided to highlight is the Catalan economy. The region brings massive aid to the rest of Spain, primarily through its regional capital, Barcelona. With any discussion of the economies of Spain and Catalonia, one can quickly see how dependent the whole of Spain is on Catalonia's inputs. The populations of Spain and Catalonia in 2017 were 46.53 million and 7.441 million, making Catalonia about 16% of Spain's population (O'Leary, 2017). However, Spain's GDP in 2017 sat at US\$1.311 Trillion and Catalonia was responsible for US\$343 Billion of those revenues (Eurostat, 2019). This 16% of the population brought in 26.2% of the GDP.

Unemployment is also consistently lower in Catalonia than in the rest of Spain. In the third quarter of 2010, following the global financial crisis, Spain's unemployment reached 20.4%, where in that same period Catalonia only recorded a rate of 16.53% (OECD, n.d.). By third quarter of 2018, Catalonia had decreased their unemployment to

11.75%, one of the lowest rates in the country. At that same time the Autonomous Communities of Andalusia and Extremadura, both in the south of Spain, had rates of 21.38% and 31.10% respectively and Spain was averaging out at 14.45% unemployed (OECD, n.d.). Catalonia is bringing in more economic stimulus and employing more of their population to do so.

On top of a greater labor participation rate, Catalonia is also the center of commerce in the country. Barcelona is the third largest port city in Spain but is currently going through massive renovations that will double the port's size (AAPA, 2008). One of the ports in Spain that is larger than Barcelona's is the port of Valencia, which does not lie within the current borders of Catalonia but has historically been a part of Catalonia in past borders. Valencians also speak Catalan, although with the current heated political climate they decide to differentiate their dialect from Catalonia as "Valencian" as to not choose a side in the Catalan crisis (Raja-i-Vich, 2018).

Taxation practices further infuriate Catalans as they not only employ a larger percent of their population and contribute unequally large amounts to the GDP, but they also are taxed more than any other region in the European Union (Raja-i-Vich, 2018). Elizabeth O'Leary, in her article "Factbook: How Catalan autonomy stacks up against other regions" on October 2, 2017 available on Reuters.com stated that "Each year, [Catalonia] pays about 10 billion euros (\$12 billion) more in taxes to Madrid than it gets back, or around five percent of regional economic output, according to Spanish Treasury data," (O'Leary, 2017). Larger amounts of taxes naturally flow out of wealthier regions, but this phenomenon is happening at an alarming rate in Catalonia. Only about half of all taxes

from Catalonia are returned to the region, and Catalonia contributes 19.49% of the central government's tax revenue but only receives 14.03% of central government's spending (O'Leary, 2017) (Abend, 2012). Taxes from Catalonia are redistributed to struggling regions where unemployment is also higher. Finally, taxation is not uniform throughout the minority nationalities in Spain as the Basque Country is allowed to determine their own tax regulations and has become the only region not paying taxes to the central government (Raja-i-Vich, 2018).

Linguistic Differences

As Catalonia developed separately from Castile until their unification in 1469, Catalonia's native language, Catalan, has natural differences from the prevailing Castilian Spanish Language. I experienced the Catalan language as a strong source of Catalan pride in the region. I believe this pride has been enlarged by the oppression under the Franco era Spain. During Franco's rule it was illegal to speak languages other than Castilian Spanish. Catalan was banned in schools and public arenas but lived on in the household (Burgen, 2012).

Now with the ban lifted, Catalonia has embraced their mother tongue and promoted the use in almost every sphere. Education in Catalonia is exclusively in Catalan, with Castilian Spanish taught as a foreign language. Conversation between locals is typically done in Catalan, but when necessary Castilian is used with those from other parts of Spain, or English with tourists and other visitors. Movies are dubbed with Catalan audio, a costly but prideful custom. Local government is conducted in the mother tongue and, in

Barcelona, all street signs, bus stops, and other information of the like are in Catalan, with smaller text in Spanish and English in some cases. The Catalan Language has around 10 million speakers, so its utility in an international city like Barcelona is limited, but its statement of national pride is unlimited (InformeCAT, 2018).

The national identity in Catalonia is mainly focused on the linguistic uniformity of its people, with secondary emphases on place of birth and unique cultural practices common among Catalans (Raja-i-Vich, 2018). It is important to note that without an independent political state, Catalans focus on their language as the primary identifier. Language is quite powerful, as written and verbal media are the main methods of communication. By prioritizing the local language over the standardized state language, Catalans are able to hold tight to their own culture and stand out from that of the prevailing Castilian.

CATALAN RESEARCH AND PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS

In this section I will discuss three specific pieces of research I have read surrounding Catalonia, its history, and its culture. Issues I will highlight focus on three major subjects. As the dictatorship of Francisco Franco has had a massive impact on all areas of life throughout the country, I will focus on its effects on the region of Catalonia. This topic is covered by *The Francoist Repression in the Catalan Countries* by Conxita Mir-i-Curcó. My second topic examines the resurgence of Catalan Culture after the oppression of Franco's regime, the so called "*Falange*," and the challenges that come with restarting a culture that was nearly dead. The publication, *A Cultural Mapping of Catalonia*, by Teresa

M. Vilarós will go over this issue. Finally, I will dissect the four discourses of Spain and Catalonia supplied by Fernando León Solís in his 2003 book, *Negotiating Spain and Catalonia* and demonstrate their continued importance in understanding the ways people approach the relationship between Spain and Catalonia. Since these pieces are written by Catalans, I hope to add in my personal observations to confirm or oppose the potentially biased viewpoints enumerated.

Oppression Under Franco

Conxita Mir-i-Curcó, professor of Contemporary History at Universitat de Lleida and author of “The Francoist Repression in the Catalan Countries” explains the impacts of the 36 year Franco regime on the region of Catalonia. Her study focuses on the time period from the Spanish Civil War until the first decade after the dictatorship. Fascism originated in Spain as a reactionary effort to protect Europe from Soviet influence and strived to return Spain to its roots by focusing on the pillars of order, religion, and harmony (Mir-i-Curcó, 2008). Many sides emerged in this civil war with Monarchists in agreement with the old political system, Liberal Republicans calling to move past the monarchy form of government and establish a republic, Catholic Conservatives, Communist Anarchists, Regional Nationalists (both Basque and Catalan), and Falangists (those in support of the Franco Dictatorship). The Pro-Franco regime is commonly referred to as the Fascists and the *Falange*. Mir-i-Curcó’s writings also refer to them as “rebels” due to their coup of the Spanish government. Liberal fronts joined forces and won elections in 1936, causing the Falangist army to revolt (Mir-i-Curcó, 2008). The military

coup was less successful in Catalonia and the Catalan Nationalists started a revolution of their own, against the Spanish Nationalist *Falange* group. International intentions to not interfere with Franco's Dictatorship from the United States, Britain, and France freed the *Falange* to act more swiftly and with less checks and balances. With infighting between the Anti-Franco Communist and Republican parties in Catalonia, a unified front was not established, and *Falange* troops were able to conquer the region.

During this time Mir-i-Curcó notes hundreds of arbitrary executions in the region, with journalists, teachers, left-wing leaders, and labor organizations specifically identified as targets (Mir-i-Curcó, 2008). In the Summer of 1936 alone, between one to two thousand were murdered with only a small fraction seeing a courtroom before their execution (Mir-i-Curcó, 2008). The main points the author focuses on throughout her historical review were the disrespect of women, the inheritance of parents' crimes by children, the quick and unlawful trials, and the deaths of noncombatants; all cases involve *Falange* members oppressing Anti-Franco Catalans.

Many accounts of atrocities against Catalan women during the Civil War and first decade of the Franco era involved sexual assault (Mir-i-Curcó, 2008). Rape, infanticide, and forced abortions were commonplace during these times as judicial and governmental authorities abused local women. The terrors continued as many of these women were tried for prostitution and crimes of the like and subsequently imprisoned for being raped by these officials. Their children were either put in prison with these women or were adopted by Pro-Falange individuals (Mir-i-Curcó, 2008).

This is one of the most common horror stories I came into contact with during my time in Barcelona. There were many accounts of women giving birth, and their babies being moved immediately to another room. Women were then told their babies died soon after birth, but babies were actually given to Franco sympathizers to indoctrinate the next generation under the *Falange* ideals. Jerome Socolovsky, host of NPR's *Morning Edition*, in his April 1, 2009 story "Thousands of Children Stolen During Franco Rule" tells the narrative of Uxenu Ablana, a man who was abducted in early childhood by Francoists. Ablana's mother went missing and was later understood to have been tortured and murdered in their attempts to find his leftist father who opposed the Franco rebels. Socolovsky also noted that while in an orphanage "the priests starved [Ablana], sexually abused him and indoctrinated him in fascism," (Socolovsky, 2009). There are now attempts in Spain to unite parents to their previously abducted children through DNA tests, but no reunification can mend these generation-deep scars.

The second topic Mir-i-Curcó highlights in her work is the inheritance of crimes by children of liberal leaders. She cites this inherited guilt of deceased family members was penalizing descendants through decreased job opportunities or even loss of nationality (Mir-i-Curcó, 2008). The children of the deceased Catalan President appeared before a tribunal with the rest of the Catalan Autonomous Government, the *Generalitat*, to determine their guilt against the new militant regime. Many Catalans were also unlawfully caught up in the swift injustice. During the Spring of 1938 many non-combative Catalans in the region of Lleida were killed for mere perception of Republican sympathy, and in the Post-War Period there are accounts of others being forcibly investigated as Anti-Francoists

because they were too slow to voice an opinion in Favor of the *Falange* (Mir-i-Curcó, 2008). Throughout the Catalan Countries (a larger area defined by all Catalan speakers that encompasses the Autonomous Community of Catalonia, some surrounding areas in France, Aragon, and Valencia, as well as the Balearic Islands and Alghero, Italy) deaths by execution and war casualty in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War are thought to be anywhere between 500,000 and 600,000, and those Catalan Nationalists who were lucky enough to be tried before their death were charged for “armed rebellion” against the regime that just years before had their own militant coup (Mir-i-Curcó, 2008). These numbers are quite large but are subject to With the hasty and aggressive efforts to spread the *Falange* ideals, it is not surprising for Catalans to be scarred by their bloody past with the Spanish Central Government. After the death of Francisco Franco in 1975, a democracy was established in the Spanish State and with new freedoms, the Catalans ended their time of state-run oppression and began their long-awaited cultural revival.

Cultural Revival in Catalonia

The current cultural pulse in Catalonia is very active, with language and culture freely and openly expressed throughout the region. During my time in the region I observed local holidays, festivals and demonstrations all related to the Catalan cultural roots. On September 11, I experienced the annual demonstration *La Diada Nacional de Catalunya* (Catalonia National Day), where locals demand for independence lost hundreds of years ago. A few weeks later was *La Mercé*, the day of Barcelona, where Catalans come together to celebrate their Capital. The Catalan Christmas is also celebrated in a unique

way as they hold the tradition of the *Caga Tió de Nadal*, a log with a painted face who poops out presents, and celebrate *els Reis Mags* (the Three Kings) in early January who bring presents to Catalan children. These holidays represent the uniqueness of Catalonia but also represent some cultural ties to the rest of Spain. While *Caga Tió* is a very unique tradition, the Three Kings day is celebrated throughout Spain and in many former Spanish colonies. *La Diada* is obviously only celebrated by Catalan Nationalists who tend to omit Spain Day and Spanish Constitution Day from calendars, but there are many people in Catalonia who celebrate these Spanish holidays and avoid the independence demonstrations.

In the Fall of 2018, I witnessed both the peaceful independence demonstration and the more aggressive Spain Day rally. On *La Diada* hundreds of thousands of Catalans went to the streets, sang songs, chanted for independence, and conducted a human wave down the entirety of *Avinguda Diagonal*, one of the main streets intersecting Barcelona. None of the actions I observed on this day were destructive or violent. However, about a month later when the Pro-Spain groups took to the streets to celebrate their state and political views, I witnessed many aggravated individuals chanting in Castilian Spanish. These people were waving not only the Spanish flag but also many other flags. One in particular was the VOX party flag, an ultra-right party with radical views in opposition of Catalan Independence. Broken beer bottles were strewn through the streets in which we walked, and in the days after the rally multiple ATMs in neighborhoods were defaced with spray paint by anti-capitalists.

I also noticed other unique cultural practices in the region: the *Sardana* dance, the *Gegants* (“the Giants,” large figures of cultural icons), the *Castellers* (human towers), and their own Catalan National Anthem. The *Sardana* dance is a circular dance usually performed in the local city squares and plazas, and the *Gegants* are figures of typical Catholic icons brought out during festivals. The *Castellers* are cherished by Catalans as they represent unity, diversity, and teamwork. A tower is only completed through the compatibility of unique abilities brought by dozens of individuals in the community. Larger men create the base in which the tower starts. Teenagers then stand on the shoulders of these men, and younger and younger children climb higher and higher until the tower is completed. All three of these practices, the *Sardana*, *Gegants*, and *Castellers*, are unique to the thriving Catalan culture today.

The Catalan National Anthem is a curious custom which has withstood throughout the changes of time. *Els Segadors*, or “The Reapers” originated in the 17th century and describes tensions between Catalan workers and an outside power. In the chorus it calls for Catalans to “Strike with [their] sickle, defenders of the land!” and to “Drive away these people, / Who are so conceited and so arrogant.” This hostile chant seems to refer to an older Catalonia when their nationalism was more emblematic of the ‘Liberal Nationalism’ stemming from the working class, rather than their current ‘Conservative Nationalism’ currently arising from the developed middle class, wealthier populations.

With this current flourishing culture so freely displayed, one might too easily forget the oppressive past locals endured for long periods. Teresa M. Vilarós, professor of Hispanic Studies at Texas A&M University, writes on the reintroduction of the Catalan

culture after the Franco regime in her 1999 publication “A Cultural Mapping of Catalonia.” Vilarós reminds the reader that although the current language and cultural presence is quite substantial, in 1953, not very long ago did Catalan Author, Gabriel Ferrater, refer to the region saying, “*Madame se meurt,*” or Madame is dying (Vilarós, 1999). With the eradication of regional languages on the forefront of *Falange* policy, the future of the Catalan language used in any functional way was nearly lost. Vilarós explains that Ferrater announced Catalan as a dead culture and saw the language in mortal danger as it was only used in “high literature,” by regional poets and authors (Vilarós, 1999). Tragically, Ferrater committed suicide in 1972, just three years before the end of the dictatorship and the begin of the cultural revitalization.

This fear Gabriel Ferrater expressed that Catalan would no longer be useful very nearly came to fruition. I believe the only reason the Catalan language is still around is due to the pride Catalans have in their native tongue. The vast majority of Catalans also speak Castilian Spanish, 98%, which is the world recognized Spanish language due to its standardization by the Catholic Monarchs (Barcelona University, 2019). This widespread use is derived from Spanish unification efforts throughout history and the international utility of Castilian. If Catalans were to suddenly become apathetic towards the use of their mother tongue, they could easily move to speaking Castilian and the language could die on the spot. However, the crucible that was the *Falange* forced people to hold tightly to this language that was outlawed, and its now legal usage has brought about much pride.

Two months after the death of Franco, Vilarós explains that the saying “*Madame vit encore,*” (Madame is still alive) was the new sentiment in the region (Vilarós, 1999).

Beaten down, but not ruined, Catalonia began to rise from the ashes in Post-Dictatorship Spain. Adolfo Suarez, first Prime Minister of the new democracy in Spain, reinstated the previously abolished Catalan Statute of Autonomy in response to the new resurgence of Catalan Independence (Villarós, 1999). Under this structure the region had increased self-governance but was still under the central government in Madrid. This desire for differentiation politically was, in part, driven by Catalonia's interest to remain economically powerful in Europe (Villarós, 1999).

With restored governmental policies stimulating its recognition as a distinctive unit, Catalan culture followed in delineation. Revival happened through both top-down and bottom-up changes from policy and culture respectively. Where the *Llei de Normalització Lingüística* (Law of Catalan Linguistic Normalization) reestablished Catalan as the official language of the region, national identity was also reshaped by local authors, as Villarós explains prominent writers set aside differences and unified under a collective desire to bring breath back into the lungs of the Catalan language; some even took up Catalan after only writing in Castilian in the past (Villarós, 1999). Villarós quotes author Francesc Mercadé Durá when describing what it meant to be Catalan in this new era. Mercadé Durá defined the nationality saying, "Everyone who lives and works in Catalonia and has the wish to be so and feels tied to this land, is Catalan," (Mercadé Durá, 1982, as cited in Villarós, 1999). This quote is powerful in many facets.

In one sense, Mercadé Durá lists a few things that one needs to do or to be in order to be accepted by Catalans as one of their own: one must live, work, or feel ties to the land. These broad brushstrokes that paint the Catalan National Identity are so inherently

broad as a backlash, whether intentional or not, against the stringent regulations enforced by the Spanish state in the past for what it meant to be Spanish. There is no necessity of religion, linguistic ability, or even birthplace to be Catalan. The mere ties to the land could, in Mercadé Durá's definition, create someone into a Catalan. Other interpretations of who is a part of this nation are a little more refined but do not reign in the definition much further. I have heard accounts of some believing all who speak the Catalan language to be a Catalan. The *Llei de Normalització Lingüística*, backed by this quote, created this minor nation within the already present nation of Spain and reinforces the belief that Spain can be a state with many nations inside.

About twenty years later, around the turn of the century, Vilarós notes that much had changed in Catalonia as political autonomy, language normalization and cultural practices separated Catalonia from the rest of Spain, but the essence of the term "Catalan" was still very ambiguous (Vilarós, 1999). She determines that as a national identity is so abstract in nature, it can be challenging to circulate its true meaning without a more tangible foundation. Her search led to an understanding that the region's nationalism is defined more concretely by the way its symbol follows the macro-cultural waves of post-industrial modernism, to post-modernism (Vilarós, 1999). The modern era for Catalonia came around the early 1900s where industry boomed and the region identified with the worldwide romantic and realist movements (Vilarós, 1999). The industrial development supplied the major source of identification in these times. With Barcelona's urban expansion coming at a similar time to that of Chicago and Paris, realism expressed in the *Eixample* district was paired with irrational romanticism from beloved

architect Antoni Gaudí. *Eixample* has an efficient grid layout with octagonal buildings rarely seen in Europe as most cities developed organically. The district was created later in Barcelona's existence and unified multiple smaller communities. The artistic was not omitted, however, as Gaudí continued to bring vibrancy to the city through his one-of-a-kind architectural prowess.

These distant roots are what Catalonia is trying to recreate in the Post-Franco era. To be accepted on an international level, Catalonia must bring forth a legitimate claim for their significance. Through the use of new media: television, social media, local icons, etc., Catalonia has been able to showcase their current dilemma. Vilarós notes the regional TV3 television station inspired the popular acceptance of the language through airing the US based series "Dallas" in Catalan (Vilarós, 1999). The use of Catalan in media remains in practice as many TV stations, news casts, and local movie theatres operate in the local language. The 1992 Olympics in Barcelona also did its part to bolster the region's separatist declaration, with *Time* headlines leading up to the games reading "Where is Barcelona? In Catalonia, not Spain," (Vilarós, 1999). The 1994 soap opera *Poble nou* also helped to revamp the national identity as it focused on a Catalan family in an idealistic pre-war Barcelona (Vilarós, 1999). This series gave Catalans an artificial history to reminisce back to together.

Catalonia has continued on the macro-cultural wave bringing it into today's post-modern era. The widespread attitude of skepticism and rejection of modernist rationality has allowed the nation's voice to earn credibility on the world stage. Michael Keating, author of the book, *Nations against the State: The New Politics of Nationalism in Quebec*,

Catalonia, and Scotland, describes the integration of Catalonia and the current macro-cultural era as “solidarity in the face of the market,” (Keating, 1996). When the world might have been telling Catalonia to fuse to its political authority, it is now willing to question the rationality of this unification, or even question the significance of a political state in general. The interconnectedness of our globalized, post-modern world, through the help of new media, has provided a platform for Catalonia to voice its complaints but can also be the very force squashing any cultural differentiation in the world. Catalans are heard, and their assertion newly respected, but their resilience to cultural globalization must also be strong enough to remain intact. Their attempt to differentiate from Spain can easily unite them to a worldwide macro-culture, diffusing away any singularity or individuality. To fight this, Vilarós claims Catalonia must rethink their history, comprehensively understand their own culture and language, and remain united to weather the new wave of emerging post-national culture (Vilarós, 1999).

The Four Discourses of Spain and Catalonia

Within the Catalonia-Spain conflict, four sides to the discussion have arisen. Fernando León Solís in his book *Negotiating Spain and Catalonia* refers to these four sides of the conflict as the four discourses (Solís, 2003). The discourses represent both sides of the argument from both the Spanish and Catalan perspectives. The “Unitarian Conservative” Spanish discourse views Spain as one nation within the political state where the “Liberal Regenerationist” Spanish discourse recognizes regional powers within Spain (Solís, 2003). On the Catalan side, the “Differential” discourse asserts Catalonia is a part of

Spain, as a conglomerate of nations, whereas the “Disjunctive” discourse tends to hold that Catalonia and Spain are incompatible and independence is a necessity (Solís, 2003). These four stances shed light on the complexity of the issue and allow examination on the opaque issue.

Solís claims Spaniards who hold the Unitarian Conservative front tie in their argument to their imperialistic past and the predominance of the Catholic faith (Solís, 2003). They assert the “Disaster of 1898,” when Spain lost the Spanish-American War and subsequently began to lose control of their colonies, could be relived if power were divulged to the regions (Solís, 2003). The Catholic faith is a predominant factor in this camp where Spaniards, who mold their identity so tightly with Catholicism, aim to bring back spirituality to those living in materialism. This discourse holds on to the remnants of the Franco era, as *Falange* ideologies from their long, not so distant rule have lingered in the minds of many Spaniards. From my perspective, there are very few of these people in the region of Catalonia, but they are present throughout the rest of Spain. These people generally encompass older generations, where the young are more readily open to change away from Franco’s Spain.

The Liberal Regenerationist discourse in Spain leans more on the progressive side, seeing the loss of the colonies as the beginning of this train of thought (Solís, 2003). Spain’s failure at remaining modern brought about concerns for the state and opened the minds of these people to involvements with the rest of Europe, and the incorporation of science and technology into everyday life (Solís, 2003). These Spaniards, although still interested in Spanish unity, are more able to consider giving self-determination abilities to

the regional powers in Spain but would like the regions to remain a part of Spain. This encompasses the idea that Spain is a “nation of nations,” (Solís, 2003). Many of those who have moved to Catalonia from other parts of Spain could be considered to lie within this discourse as they are interested in including Catalonia in Spain, while open to allowing Catalonia to differentiate, as long as it remains a part of Spain. Solís describes the Spanish Socialist Workers Party (*Partido Socialista Obrero Español*), or the PSOE, the center-left oriented party currently in control of Spain, as the party that aligns with these ideas (Solís, 2003).

In Catalonia, those with stronger ties to their Spanish heritage fall into the Differential discourse. Here Solís describes that people want reform in Spain but are not looking to remove themselves from the state (Solís, 2003). They also hold the belief that Spain is a “nation of nations” but want more recognition for the ways in which Catalonia differs. Solís cites *Convergència i Unió* (Convergence and Union) as the political affiliation with this set of beliefs which was a national electoral alliance that has since dissolved in Catalonia (Solís, 2003). He also claims this discourse is the most popular in Catalonia (Solís, 2003). While there are some who want to continue to remain a part of Spain in Catalonia, I do not believe this is the case any longer. There is a potential the Differential discourse holds a quiet majority in the region, but since 2003, the year Solís published his work, I believe more Catalans have lost faith in the Spanish state’s ability to handle the Catalan crisis effectively. As time goes on, more young people with differential beliefs reach voting age. The Spanish government has also continued to handle their situation with Catalonia very poorly which has also decreased the Differential discourses numbers. Within the

Differential discourse, both right-wing and left-wing sects have developed, both generally looking to increase Catalonia's importance within the Spanish political structure.

In 2017, an illegal referendum was conducted in Catalonia to vote for independence from Spain. This referendum would be helpful data in determining the demographics of Catalan Independence, but there were many issues. As the vote was illegal, meaning the votes are inherently biased towards those who wanted independence. Angela Dewan, Vasco Cotovio and Hilary Clarke in their October 2, 2017 CNN article "Catalan independence referendum: What just happened?" stated 2.25 million people voted in the referendum with 90% of the votes in favor of splitting from Spain, yet this only accounts for a 42% voter turnout (Dewan, Cotovio, and Clarke, 2017). Numbers like these can spark interest in the Disjunctive discourse, the fourth described by Solís but may not fully represent the truth of the matter; Disjunctive Catalans might just be those with the louder voices. Solís writes that this discourse has had a very small following throughout history, although in the years after World War II they began to gain traction (Solís, 2003). These adherents believe there exists two histories and two national identities that do not overlap. This ideology was also quite powerful in the 1930s, just before the reign of Franco tried to stomp out all separatism. I believe in the new economic climate, where Catalonia acts as a dominant portion of the Spanish economy, this discourse has created for itself a validity that might not have been so pressing when Solís wrote his research.

CONCLUSION

The three research papers highlighted in this paper reflect sources from Catalan scholars who inherently have some bias towards their claim for independence. Hopefully my dissection of their viewpoints has enumerated my understanding of the factual evidence in their claims and also put their research into the current day context. Seamus Dean, in the introduction of *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* says, "a culture brings itself into being by an act of cultural invention that itself depends on [an] anterior legitimating nature," (Dean, 1990). Catalonia, along with its language and culture have challenged the Spanish state in their hopes to legitimize their own culture enough to warrant self-governance separate from Spain. Catalan culture, however, is not completely separate from that of Spain as decades of interaction have caused both sides to adopt practices from the other. The oppression Catalans feel from Spain has always existed, but now has materialized into a legitimate claim to secede through their unequal economic dominance. When focusing on these cultural and economic facets of Catalan Independence through the nationalism lens, one can see both Liberal and Conservative Nationalistic tendencies emerging. The controlling power is a systematic oppressor as seen in Liberal Nationalism, but Catalonia also has economic power similar to the typical Conservative Nationalist who tends to hold on to what it has as opposed to distributing to outsiders. Nationalism can very easily become dangerous, and before one takes a stance for any nation, they should first consider their motives and the repercussions that will arise from their actions.

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