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Migration, Regionalism, and National Identity Conflicts in Contemporary Spain (2019)

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Migration, Regionalism, and National Identity Conflicts in Contemporary Spain

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Abstract

The creation of a centralized national identity becomes a challenge when a nation faces strong, alternative identities that conflict or do not clearly align with the socio-cultural norms of the national one. In the case of Spain, these alternative identities include both *regional identities* and *external national identities.* This project directly looks at the Catalan independence referendum of 2017, the shifting immigration demographics and patterns in Spain, and Spanish citizens' willingness to accept alternative identities into the national framework in order to better understand the current challenges to the consolidation of a Spanish national identity. This paper will argue that Spain does not have the ability to establish a cohesive national identity because its long history of internal division and exclusion of both internal and external "others" has created a separation between individuals with alternative identities and the Spanish state. Rather than embracing these distinct identities and establishing Spain as a multicultural state, it chooses to prioritize assimilation and create a culture of exclusion that is unwelcoming to alternative identities.

Key Words: Immigration, National Identity, Regionalism, Multiculturalism, Integration, Otherization

I. Introduction

"It is only when you meet someone of a different culture from yourself that you begin to realize what your own beliefs really are." - George Orwell

All nations in today's globalized world face the profound challenge of integrating a multitude of new ideas, beliefs, people, goods, and histories into their own cultural and social framework. Today, a nation's ability to adapt to a world constantly in dynamic change is central to its survival and advancement in the international arena. As such, the topic of migration and its role in carrying culture around the globe is at the forefront of international conversations. Host nations must choose how they will integrate these new people and perspectives into the fabric of their society. Furthermore, many nations also face the distinct challenge of reconciling multiple regional or ethnic identities within their own nation to establish cohesion of identity at the national level. Through the greater exchange and visibility of alternative or dissenting ideas and beliefs in the modern day, a state is forced to reassess what makes up its own national identity and either choose to adapt to and embrace the changing culture of identity or resist it.

This project will study the 2017 Catalan referendum, as a reflection of a contemporary Spanish national identity conflict, and recent immigration trends in Spain to address the question: How do shifts in immigration patterns and expressions of regionalism affect the way Spanish citizens view and understand their central national identity? More specifically, can one identify rises in immigration, or the perceived rise in immigration, and the entrenched history of regional diversity as root causes of national identity conflicts in Spain? This research will show that national identity conflicts occur, in part, in response to shifts in the ethno-cultural demographics of a given state and in the challenging of its socio-cultural norms. Both the Catalan separatist movement and shifting demographic patterns in immigration to Spain can be seen then as challenges, or even threats, to the central Spanish identity, because they exemplify what it means to exist in the Spanish state while adhering to different beliefs and

values from those which the state claims are inherent. Both regionalism and immigration, therefore, challenge the socio-cultural standard of the nation and provoke strong reactions from those who believe in an assimilationist approach to building and maintaining national identity. Basing this study in the belief that national identity is defined by socio-cultural assimilation and uniformity, recent shifting opinions among Spanish nationals regarding the importance of immigrant assimilation as well as recent surges in regionalism have prioritized self-definition and regional autonomy over a single, unifying national identity.

II. Literature Review

A. National Identity

National identity can be a difficult term to define because it varies among disciplines and among individual scholars. In a single journal alone, one can find multiple scholars' definitions of national identity. In "The Construction of National Identity in Modern Times: Theoretical Perspective", Gilroy grounds national identity in the concepts of the status quo, assimilation, and uniformity, viewing it as "a melting pot which has the assimilating character by depending on the notions of citizenship and patriotism" (İnaç and Ünal, 2013, p.229). On the other hand, Kymlicka views national identity formation as rooted in culture and social influences and believes it has an "inclusive character by respecting cultural differences" (İnaç and Ünal, 2013, p.229). Others, including Anderson, Güvenç, and Yurdusev, have a constructivist perspective and see it as a result of nation building processes, politicization, and/or socialization. These definitions, among others, establish national identity as created through individual and societal interpretations of what a given group identifies as the qualities of its national identity. For the purposes of this study, national identity will be interpreted as the social and cultural factors that interact to define a people's understanding of themselves as part of a given nation. Here it is also important to recognize that the term "nation" refers to a group of people with a shared identification, whereas a "state" refers to a sovereign governed territory. Therefore, national identity is challenging to

understand because it can exist at various levels outside of the state's interpretation of identity. This will become clearer in a later discussion of Spanish regionalism.

B. Social Identity Theory

In general, all the research regarding the connection between identity and immigration, scholars cite political psychologist Henri Tajvel's Social Identity Theory, primarily referencing the core concept of the "us/them" mentality. "Social identity theory assumes that individuals tend to identify more strongly with their in-group compared to the out-group, and that strong in-group identification is associated with positive in-group stereotyping"; in the context of migration, immigrants are assumed to exist in an uncertain balance of in-group and outgroup, given neither their home nor their destination country fits either mold entirely (Tartakovsky, 2009, p.656). Similarly, regional groups can fit into either category as within a dominant nation regionalists might be categorized as the outliers while within their own regional groups they will be considered insiders.

Alternatively, Social Identity Theory also is reflected in the attitudes of nationals of the receiving nation. According to Tajvel's theory, "groups perceived as threatening [to] a nation's distinctive identity are likely to elicit hostility. Opposition to immigration stems just as much from who the migrants are, especially their ethnic and cultural characteristics: if they are perceived as a threat to national identity" (Cea D'Ancona, 2016, p.570). Likewise, regional identities pose a threat to national identity, eliciting opposition and even hostility from those who desire to maintain a central national identity. Based on public reactions towards immigrants and regionalists, we can come to the understanding that a national identity conflict occurs when a nation experiences threats to what it claims to be its distinctive identity. Though this identity is rarely clearly defined and agreed upon on a national scale, national identity conflicts are often

reflected as disruptions or variations in the traditional ethno-cultural, and sometimes religious, status quo.

C. Globalization and Identity

The challenge of determining a nation's cohesive ethno-cultural identity is complicated by the extensive global histories of colonialism and is presently complicated by the forces of globalization. More often than not, a nation defines its cultural identity through the histories of the colonizers, ignoring the variety of cultural influences that often built many of these nations.[1] Spain has an extensive imperial history of domination and appropriation of other nations and ethnic groups, but has formed its central national identity separate from the groups from which they took land and culture.[2] Spain finds the roots of much of its identity in Arabic and African culture, and yet the "Spanish identity" continually is exclusionary towards migrants coming from these lands. For example, despite the central role of Islamic culture in the development of modern Spain, many Spanish cities implemented burqa bans in the late 2000s, contributing to a larger conversation surrounding multiculturalism that categorized a large Muslim population "as those traditionally perceived as 'less integratable' into Western societies" (Cea D'Ancona, 2016, p.579). In other words, Spain has attempted to distinguish its identity from its imperialist past to the extent that those groups who contributed most distinctly to the creation of this culture are now excluded from it. As Spain continues to ground its socio-cultural identity in its colonial past,

[1] The United States, for example, "claims to be 'a nation of immigrants' open to 'the huddled masses'" but generally views itself as a result of European descent and influence (Johnson et. all, 2005, n.p.). As such, to those who view social cohesion as maintaining the status quo, the American ethno-cultural identity was lost in the civil rights era when Eurocentric power structures were challenged and those traditionally on the margins of US culture were allowed into the mainstream (Johnson et. all, 2005).

[2] Building out of this understanding of identity as rooted in imperialism, it is crucial to ground research in the concepts of "post-colonialism" and neo-imperialism to investigate whether or not national identity can be seen as an extension of imperialism. According to Linda Tuhiwai-Smith, from an indigenous perspective, "globalization is substituted for the word imperialism" (Smith, 2013, p.25) so when we look at identity formation and its impacts on immigration as global processes, we must also critically look at how they reinforce the imperial world system in which "the institutions and legacy of colonialism have remained" (Smith, 2013, p.101).

it will inevitably continue to exclude immigrants and regionalists of diverse backgrounds from the dominant Spanish society.

D. Integration vs. Multiculturalism

This idea that integration lies in an immigrant's ability to "blend in" to the dominant socio-cultural framework (i.e. the national identity) of a society emphasizes the important role national identity has in creating a culture of either acceptance or rejection of others. In a study gauging discrimination against immigrants in Spain, "the accelerated growth of immigration" as well as "the role of cultural factors from the country of origin" are cited as the primary root causes of discrimination against immigrants (Agudelo-Suarez, 2009, p.1869). Most notably, this includes discrimination against certain groups based on religion, culture, and language, implying that those with cultures most similar to the traditional Spanish culture will have an easier time integrating and those most dissimilar will be excluded. The immigrants studied in this case claimed that "there are clear differences between social groups, and certain nationalities are more discriminated against than others" and that the discrimination they individually and collectively experience is attributed to the "intercultural relationship between natives and immigrants" (Agudelo-Suarez, 2009, p.1870). Ultimately, this ability to distance oneself from the distinct features of one's home country and adopt one's host society becomes one of the most important factors to acceptance in a society, such as Spain, that values assimilation and subscription to cultural norms as the standard for social cohesion.

These concepts of identity and immigration are unified by this conversation surrounding integration policies. In other words, the ways a nation chooses to integrate "outsiders" into its societal structure are "understood as platforms that reflect (along with being constituted and conditioned by) host-communities' definitions and re-definitions of collective self-identity, as well as (re)identification with the 'other'" (Alkopher, 2015, p.430). Political psychologist Tal Alkopher posits this conversation in a security context and claims that immigration is often seen as one of

the most prominent threats to societal security because it is “something that can change the receiving society’s identity by shifting the composition of the population” (Alkopher, 2015, p.431). When contextualized this way, it becomes clear that the way a nation defines its own identity is indelibly tied to immigration politics, as immigration becomes the “problem” or “threat” that challenges societal norms and the fundamental understandings of identity. As was previously discussed, some see this threat as vitally important to address, as they see national identity and what Alkopher refers to as “societal security” as static and homogenous. These individuals view the “other” as abjectly different and in order for them to no longer be a threat, they must first assimilate to “the dominant traditional national values and perceived common identity” of their new nation (Alkopher, 2015, p.433). Through this model and perspective, a society can achieve collective security through complete assimilation and integration or, alternatively, exclude outsiders altogether if they are perceived to be unintegratable. This model creates the idea that uncertainty surrounding identity can be eliminated if everyone in a society subscribes to the same norms and beliefs, customs, and traditions (Alkopher, 2015).

An alternate perspective on societal securitization comes through a belief in multiculturalism. Multiculturalists view national identity as something that is dynamic. They believe that ethnic identities are important factors in shaping the socio-political makeup of a nation, but not that political identities should be definitively determined by “the receiving society’s collective identity of its cultural and ethnic content” (Alkopher, 2015, p.434). Rather, they value and respect a diversity of identities and believe that they can exist in harmony with the dominant identity. This perspective views immigration practically and pragmatically and believes fundamentally that “a flexible conception of the collective self-identity enables the framing of diversity and immigrants not as an existential threat but rather as something that can be enriching, in terms of culture, economics, or other” (Alkopher, 2015, p.437). Multiculturalists would simultaneously hold a positive opinion towards regional diversity within a nation and would propose that a central national identity does not necessarily need to co opt distinct

regional identities, but rather that they could exist in harmony with the national one. Overall, multiculturalists fundamentally do not view the “other” as a threat but rather view alternative beliefs and identities as enriching and beneficial to maintaining a healthy and cohesive society. Moreover, as the world continues to globalize through cross-cultural interactions and transglobal migration, this viewpoint becomes essential given these enriching interactions between people and cultures will not stop in the foreseeable future.

E. Identity Politics

Finally, the recent rise in identity politics poses a challenge to national identity formation both in the context of immigration and regionalism. Though there are many definitions of identity politics in literature, its modern iteration can most clearly be seen as “a form of critical pedagogy that links social structure with the insights of poststructuralism regarding the nature of subjectivity, while incorporating a Marxist commitment to politics” (Bernstein, 2005, p.47). The identity politics of today include the use of identity as a determinant of social structure and definitively links this social structure with political practice. As such, political action can no longer be viewed without the lens of identity. Therefore, finding a collective and cohesive national identity, something that could already be seen as a challenge prior to this trend, becomes all the more difficult as people continue to tie their own individual identities with political belief. As a result, national identity becomes somewhat undefinable and “nothing so disorients an individual or a people as an identity undefined, threatened, in flux” (Ventura, 2008, n.p.). Here emerges a space ripe for a national identity crisis, or what Ventura refers to as “a panic of identity”. The individualization of politics and the rising trans-global interactions of the modern globalized world will inevitably challenge the residual ethno-cultural definitions of identity left over from the imperial world and force the adaptation to a new, irreversible social order that is defined by individual and regional identity.

III. Research and Findings

A. Research Design & Methodology

This is a project built primarily on secondary research of both quantitative and qualitative data regarding immigration, regionalism, and national identity in Spain. With an initial understanding of national identity formation processes and the ways they are affected by the processes of immigration and regional division, one can more closely analyze the development of a national identity conflict in the context of otherization and exclusion. Ultimately, however, this project must be understood as a case study and therefore its methods may be replicable in order to study and compare other nations, but its conclusions may not be generalizable to apply to all nations experiencing similar phenomena. The global case study method is particularly useful to this project as immigration, regionalism, and national identity are issues that have permeated the political and social agendas of many nations around the world. Though this paper will be analyzing the effects of immigration and regionalism on national identity specifically in the case of Spain, a similar study could be conducted on multiple other nations to better understand how a seemingly local, or in this case state, level phenomenon has implications for the rest of the world. One of the central foci of the global case study method is its ability to connect abstract global trends to their local, real life effects and vice versa (Darian-Smith and McCarty, 2017). As such, this paper will look closely at the local impacts of the global trends of migration and regional division on folks living in Spain, including but not limited to natural born citizens, naturalized and non-naturalized migrants, and those who claim a regional identity in place of the Spanish identity, and will specifically look at the way global trends impact the way localized individuals view and understand their own national identity.

B. Creating a "Spanish Identity": Historical Context of Regionalism and Conflicting Identities

Developing an awareness of Spanish history, its unique relationship with regionalism, and the formation of a "Spanish identity" is essential to understanding its many national identity challenges in recent decades. With the final collapse of the Spanish empire at the end of the 19th century, many Spanish citizens found themselves in a crisis of identity as their nation's historic global power was called into question. Many intellectuals at the time began to scrutinize the decadence and despotism that led to the ultimate fall of the Spanish empire and investigate what it really meant to be "Spanish". This historic period of transition called for a redefinition of the Spanish identity: one promoted by the state and centered in Castilian[3] culture (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009).

Throughout the 20th century, Spanish national identity came to be refined and consolidated by the dictatorships of Primo de Rivera and Francisco Franco. Franco, specifically, centralized national identity along with political power and created a "true Spain" that was indisputably Catholic, traditional, and Castilian (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009, p.49). Throughout his regime, Franco emphasized centralization at the expense of regional diversity, with one school book at the time even claiming "that all Spain's ills have stemmed from lack of unity" (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009, p.50). All other identities, particularly the "historic Nationalities" (i.e. The Basque Country, Catalonia, and Galicia) which had already developed their own regional identities and institutions, were rejected and often brutally repressed by the central government (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009, p.51). Many of the more modern regional movements, including the Catalan separatist movement of 2017, find their roots in this period of Spanish identity formation and centralization that ultimately resulted in their own repression and exclusion.

[3] Castilians are descendents of the Kingdom of Castile that originally combined with that of Aragon to create the Spanish state. The Castilian language (modern day standard Spanish) came to dominate Spain following the consolidation of kingdoms due to their far reaching presence throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Castilian culture, specifically the norms of Roman-Catholicism and the Castilian language, were so pervasive and influential that they have come to define Spanish culture today.

Regionalism[4] today, though certainly more accepted than during Franco's regime, is still treated with great caution in Spanish society. And yet, regionalism in Spain is unavoidable as it is rooted deeply in Spanish history and part of the core identity of many Spanish citizens. Though political power had been centralized in Madrid since the seventeenth century, the first areas to experience economic and social modernization in the early nineteenth century were those on the periphery of the nation, the Basque Country and Catalonia, both areas with distinct cultural and linguistic identities from the rest of Spain (Balfour, 2011). These diverse regions called for greater autonomy from the Spanish state and have since experienced various grantings and withholdings of autonomy from the Spanish central government, which has caused great tension and uncertainty in the relationship between these powers. The current relationship between the central government and autonomous regions is grounded in the Constitution of 7 December 1978, which declared the "indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, common and indivisible *patria* of all Spaniards," but also "recognizes and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions that compose it and the solidarity among them all"[5] (Constitución de 7 diciembre 1978, artículo 2).

These various fluxes in regional autonomous control have contributed to the strengthening of regional identities, causing many to question whether or not Spain should be considered a nation in and of itself, or, rather, a set of many distinct sub-nations combined under a single name (Boyd, 1997). To make matters even more complicated, the dueling forces of identification with a specific region and a simultaneous relationship with the overarching Spanish nation causes many different understandings of identity among the individuals living in these regions. A 1981 survey conducted by the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas in

[4] Regionalism here refers to the fact that Spain is made up of multiple regions that each maintain their own individual national identities. The Spanish government is relatively decentralized because many of these regions are semi-autonomous and semi-independent.

[5] Original Spanish translation: "La Constitución se fundamenta en la indisoluble unidad de la Nación española, patria común e indivisible de todos los españoles, y reconoce y garantiza el derecho a la autonomía de las nacionalidades y regiones que la integran y la solidaridad entre todas ellas" (Constitucion de 7 diciembre 1978, artículo 2).

Madrid revealed, rather unsurprisingly, that each identity subgroup studied tended to characterize themselves more positively than others, thus strengthening Tajvel's theory that positive stereotyping occurs in relation to the "in-group" rather than the "out-group" (Boyd, 1997). However, the more surprising results of this study showed how few, and in many cases no, overlaps existed between the self-identified characteristics of regional identities and the national Spanish identity (Boyd, 1997). Moreover, many of the qualities applied to the Spanish identity were negative, with the only positive trait shared between all groups being *amantes de su tierra*, or lovers of their homeland (Boyd, 1997). Affinity for a homeland then becomes a reflection of the ties Spaniards feel to their local identities, while their application of negative stereotypes to the Spanish identity suggesting that they "define themselves in opposition to the identity promoted by the regime: the *caballero cristiano*[6]" (Boyd, 1997, p.305).

Although this study was conducted nearly forty years ago, scholars suspect a survey today would produce similar results. In fact, regular studies have been conducted specifically regarding Catalan identity in reference to Spanish identity. These studies have shown that the Catalan and the Spanish identity are almost always considered distinct from one another, but that they are not mutually exclusive. Many citizens, approximately 72% according to a 2003 study, dual identify with Catalonia and Spain, although to varying degrees. Of this 72%, "only 40% identified equally strong with Catalan and Spanish identity, whereas 24% felt more Catalan than Spanish and 8% more Spanish than Catalan" (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009, p.78). The remaining 30% of citizens view themselves either as exclusively Catalan or exclusively Spanish, with the ratio tilted slightly in favor of the former (Figure 1, Kleiner-Liebau, 2009, p.78). This nuance between the regional and national identity creates an interesting dynamic in which multiple identities can be seen either in cooperation or in conflict, and it is when identities find themselves in conflict that a national identity crisis begins to take hold.

[6] "Christian gentleman"

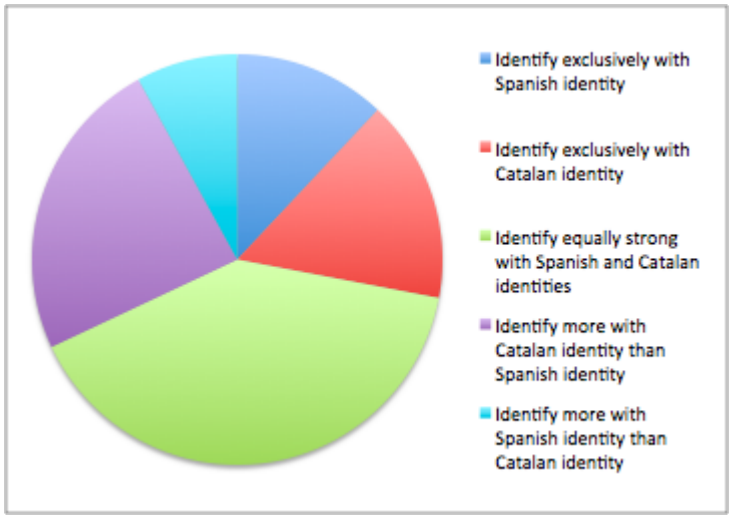

Figure 1: Identification with Spanish and/or Catalan Identities among Catalan citizens (data sourced from Kleiner-Liebau, 2009, p.78)

If national identity formation is to be understood through Social Identity Theory, or through an "us vs. them" dynamic, then this distinction between regional identity and national identity can be viewed as its own manifestation of in-group vs. out-group identity formation. By positing themselves in relation to two distinct identities, the regional and the national, Spanish citizens can find themselves in ideological conflict. Those who maintain attachment to both identities find themselves stuck in the middle, while those who hold a stronger attachment to one identity or the other often find themselves reverting to the "us vs. them" mentality which creates the dueling nature between distinct identities. Carolyn Boyd claims that "the oppositional character inherent to the formation of national identity (the us-versus-them phenomenon) raises serious questions about the viability of "Spain" as an "imagined community"' (Boyd, 1997, p.305). It becomes rather ironic, then, that regionalism is perhaps the most distinct feature of the Spanish national identity. If regional difference is inherent to Spanish society, or one could even go so far as to say the foundation of Spanish society, then potentially the only way to create cohesion and unity in the Spanish state is to respect and acknowledge difference through a multicultural approach to identity formation.

C. The Internal Other: Regional Division in the Case of Catalonia

Through this historical background, it is clear how the Catalan separatist movement developed, in part, out of many years of feeling repressed and undervalued by the Spanish state. To many in Catalonia, this movement is centrally rooted in a fundamental feeling of difference from the values and traits of the Spanish state, claiming that they are "part of a distinct, proud nation with its own language, history, culture and flag" (Debating Europe, 2019, n.p.). Additionally, they claim that this identity is not respected by the Spanish national government and that they fear that the government will seek to absorb this identity into the national one (Debating Europe, 2019). To the Catalan people, maintaining an individual identity and autonomous power is central to who they are, and this is traditionally something the central government has either resisted or completely repressed. Franco's regime resulted in the severe repression of regional autonomy and identification, inflicting what is described as a "cultural genocide on Catalonia, dismantling institutions and associations tied to Catalan identity and driving the Catalan language into the private sphere" (Balfour, 2017, n.p.). In response to this period of authoritarianism, Spain's process of democratization following Franco's death in 1975 prioritized supporting regional autonomy. In fact, in 1979 the autonomy of Catalonia was officially recognized by the Spanish state, Catalan is recognized as a "nationality", and Catalan becomes the official language of Catalonia, along with Spanish (Figure 2, Debating Europe)[7].

Briefly, and due to this successful process of democratization, identification with the Spanish identity within peripheral regions became somewhat more common as the nation grew

[7] The Franco regime's elimination of the Catalan language was arguably one of the most impactful incidents of repression throughout Spain's period of authoritarian rule. According to Boix-Fuster and Sanz in *Bilingualism and Identity: Spanish at the crossroads with other languages*, "language use allows people to identify others; and in cases of language contact between majority and minority groups, language choice defines their own identity" (Boix-Fuster and Sanz, 2008, p.87). In historical context, Catalonia is considered a minoritized society due to the subordination of its language and culture by Spain. Where more than one language exist, such as in Catalonia, the choice of which language to use is powerful and indicative of social/national identification. Therefore, the repression of one of these language by an outside force, such as during the Franco regime, becomes a statement of power and oppression and can cause further division in terms of regional identification with the greater state.

in international wealth and power and as a relatively decentralized but stable parliamentary democracy was established (Alvarez Junto, 2002). However, as the government in Madrid has become more conservative in recent years[8], it has begun to roll back some of the advancements made in regional autonomy since 1975[9] (Debating Europe, 2019). Especially following the violence that took place between voters and national police forces on the day of the Catalan referendum, many Catalonians have claimed that the government is reverting back to the fascist, repressive tendencies of Franco's dictatorship (Balfour, 2017). This was further solidified when the central government stripped Catalonia's autonomous government of its power following the referendum and decided to pursue legal action against the region's president, Carles Puigdemont[10]. As a result, many Catalans "do not want to live in a centralised Spanish state under a monarchy for whom they have little affection" (Debating Europe, 2019, n.p.). Part of the Catalan identity is grounded in its autonomous status, so stripping these powers poses a great threat to Catalonia's fundamental regional identity. Therefore, if Spain desires to create a national identity rooted in the values of the central government, it faces deep-seated resentment among many Catalans born out of an extensive history of repression and fears of a current uptick in oppressive behavior.

[8] The prime minister of Spain at the time of the Catalan Referendum, Mariano Rajoy, opposed and later declared unconstitutional Catalonia's 1979 statute demanding greater autonomy and fiscal responsibility than was originally granted in the 1978 constitution (Balfour, 2017). Therefore, his role as the head of the Spanish government does not inspire faith among Catalonian citizens that the government will support their rights and independence.

[9] The Spanish government changed the status of Catalan autonomy in 2010 after four years of debate on the new Statute of Autonomy. Since these discussions began, there have been more public independence rallies and movements throughout the region (Castro, 2016).

[10] Prime Minister Rajoy invoked Article 155, which allows the central government to strip regional governments of their autonomy. He claimed he was not revoking the regions autonomy, but simultaneously removed from power Catalonia's governing bodies and transferred their power to the central government. This was seen as a betrayal of their constitutional autonomous rights by many Catalonians but was supported as a strengthening of rule of law by much of the rest of Spain (Abend, 2017)

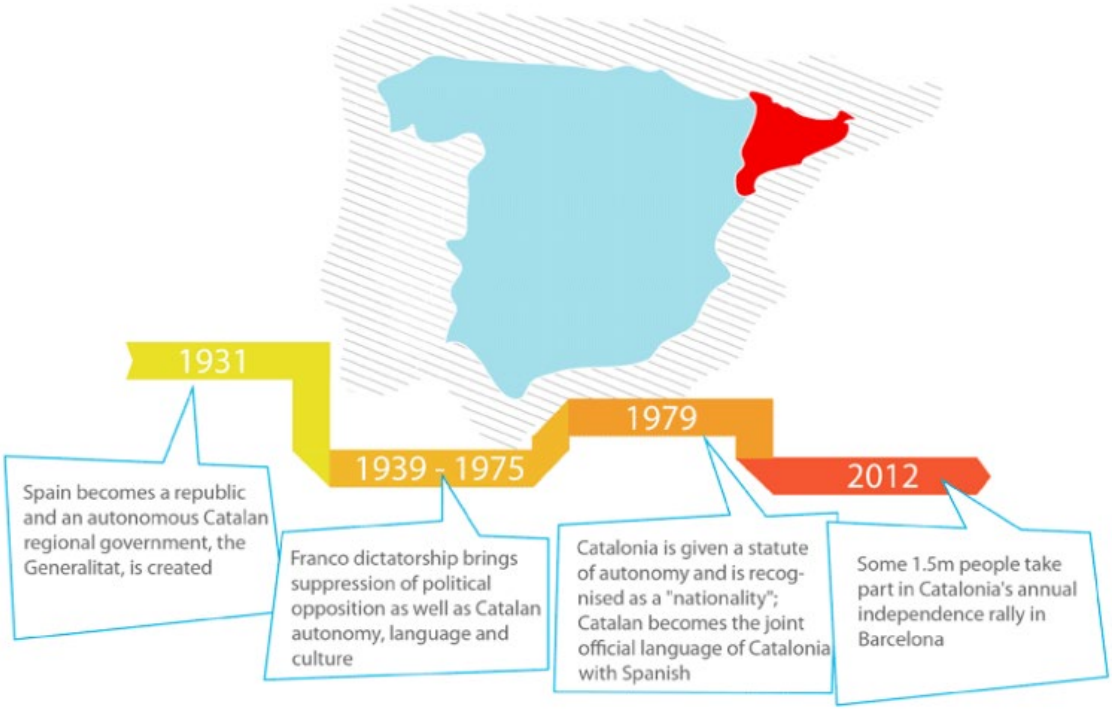

Figure 2: Debating Europe - Arguments for and against Catalonia Independence

This movement is not exclusively grounded in identity, but is also spurred in great part by economic factors. At the time of the initial transition from empire to democracy at the end of the 19th century, both Catalonia and the Basque Country had already begun the process of economic modernization while the rest of Spain lagged behind. Their economic development caused increased support for independence among Catalonians but also increased skepticism from the Spanish state, who feared that their separation would prove economically disastrous for the state. This exact dynamic continues to today and is a driving force in the current separatist movement. Catalonia is one of the wealthiest regions in Spain and produces 25.6% of Spanish exports and 19% of Spain's GDP despite only 16% of the national population living in the region (Catalonia crisis in 300 words, 2018). Additionally, Catalonians believe that there is an imbalanced relationship in economics and that Catalonia's wealth is being taken by the Spanish state in excessive taxes, resulting in Catalonia not being able to adequately provide for

its citizens (Debating Europe, 2019). Independence, therefore, would allow Catalonia to take control of its finances, emerge from debt, and sever the dependent relationship between the fiscal power of Catalonia and its obligations to support the rest of the Spanish state. Although this economic reasoning plays a large part in the Catalan separatist movement, it does not weaken the argument that uncertain national identity is one of its central forces. These economic arguments are as deeply rooted in the Spanish history of regional division as those of regional identity. The various degrees of economic development and dependency between the different regions in Spain and the central government itself has fueled greater mistrust and power imbalances within the nation and has driven many to ascribe more directly to a regional identity rather than place trust in the Spanish state.

Image 1: Referendum day in Madrid (2017). Image by author.[11]

D. The External Other: Immigration to Spain in the 21st Century

Shifting immigration patterns throughout the 21st century have also brought immigration to the forefront of many conversations in all member states of the European Union. Spain has historically been seen as one of the most welcoming nations to migrants since the 1970s and

[11] Nationalist responses to the Catalan referendum have been pronounced in many parts of Spain. Madrid, in particular, had many pro-Spain and anti-independence rallies in the weeks surrounding the referendum. Surges in national pride during times of national identity conflicts will be further analyzed as this project develops in the coming months.

remains exceptional among other EU states in public attitudes and perceptions towards migrants. While other EU nations, including Germany and France, have notoriously witnessed surges in anti-immigrant movements in response to new waves of non-EU migration, Spain has traditionally avoided such political backlash (Arango, 2013). However, this phenomenon has begun to shift within the last ten years as anti-immigrant groups and parties become more vocal and powerful throughout the nation, with their most recent advancements coming through the far-right, staunchly anti-immigrant party Vox gaining 24 seats in parliament in the 2019 Spanish general election (Clarke and Gutiérrez, 2019). While some view this exclusionary trend in light of economic insecurity as a legacy of the 2008 global financial crisis, others view these changing sentiments towards non-EU migrants in light of a general rising tide of nationalism and right-wing politics throughout Europe. Regardless, Spain's unique history and its currently shifting relationship with immigration makes it a unique case study of the impact of migration and integration policies and their overarching affect on national identity formation and conflicts.

Prior to the mid-1970s, Spain was a nation of emigrants rather than immigrants[12] (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009). As this trend reversed in the 70s, Spain began receiving a large number of immigrants from elsewhere in the EU. However, at the same time many European nations began to enact stricter immigration laws and tighten their borders, thus enabling southern European nations like Spain and Italy to become the *puerta trasera*[13] to the rest of Europe (Calavita, 2006). Spain, on the other hand, did not implement its first immigration law until 1985 with the Ley de Extranjería, a law which began a general trend in immigration policy of regulating immigration from the 'Third World' (Calavita, 2006)[14]. This law served as a response

[12] An emigrant refers to an individual who is migrating out of their home country while immigrant refers to a person who has left their home country and is entering into a host country. Throughout the process of migration, a migrant is both an emigrant and an immigrant as these terms operate along a spectrum of migration.

[13] "Back door"

[14] This law is a fascinating reflection of both inclusion and exclusion, as its enactment facilitated the inclusion of Spain into the EU while also promoting the exclusion of immigrants from Europe itself. As was previously discussed, Spain's identity formation in the context of Europe has been its own challenging

to the strengthening of the EU itself as it sought to create stronger external borders as internal borders weakened (Calavita, 2006). More importantly, the 1985 law set a standard within Spain of defining immigrants as “others”. By establishing what constituted a ‘legal’ migrant, it also subsequently created an ‘illegal’ migrant, a concept which would allow for the systematic otherization of migrants throughout contemporary Spanish history.

This process of institutionalizing otherness has become all the more relevant throughout the 21st century. Beginning in 2000, migration patterns in Spain once again began to shift. As one of the most distinct gateways to Europe from the African continent, Spain receives thousands of migrants moving northward each year, along with large numbers of Romanian migrants coming from the east and Ecuadorian migrants coming from South America (Agudelo-Suarez, 2009). This multitude of ethnic and cultural identities has challenged the central Spanish identity and provoked differing reactions regarding immigration policy and integration methods among Spanish citizens and the central government, particularly based on the nations of origin of the migrants. Though many Spanish nationals have adjusted to and accepted the presence of immigrants in daily life (Eurobarometer, 2018), discrimination against migrants, particularly those from non-Spanish speaking countries, still persists and there still exists disagreement on the proper way to integrate migrants into Spanish society (Agudelo-Suarez, 2009). Though Spain is considered one of the most welcoming nations in Europe to migrants, immigration remains consistently as one of the top two most important “issues” in Spanish society and attitudes towards migrants are shifting often with the changing economic and social conditions of the state (Cea D’ancona, 2016).

The population of foreign-born nationals living in Spain more than quadrupled in size, from 1.5 million to over 6.5 million, over a period of nine years beginning in 2000 (Cea D’ancona, 2016). Although this rate of increase in migration has slowed down and dropped

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process and the fact that Spain was tasked with maintaining this European identity through the exclusion of others prompts an interesting discussion of national identity, and even supranational identity.

overall since 2010, foreign-born nationals still make up nearly 10% of the Spanish population (4.66 million) and the number of migrants living in Spain has once again begun to rise since 2017 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España). In the first quarter of 2018, foreign-born migrants that entered Spain totalled 248,716 individuals and the overall number of foreign born individuals living in Spain was rising at a rate of 2.1% (Figure 3, Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España). Since 2000, Spain has received more non-EU immigration than immigration from other EU states (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009). Immigrants tend to settle in 4 of the 17 autonomous communities in Spain, including Catalonia and Madrid where most non-EU migrants reside due to needs in the labor force (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009). In the first quarter of 2018, 56,720 immigrants were living in Catalonia alone (Figure 4: Instituto Estadística Nacional de España). It is also worth noting that in reality these numbers are likely higher than reported due to the fact that many choose not to claim their immigration status due to the uncertainty of legal repurcussions (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009).

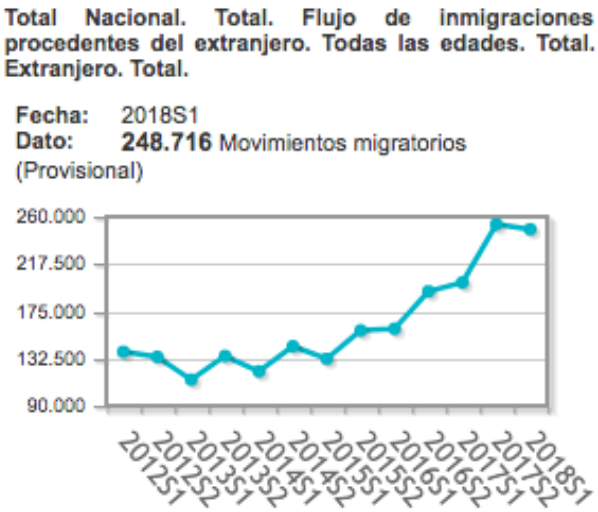

Figure 3 : Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España

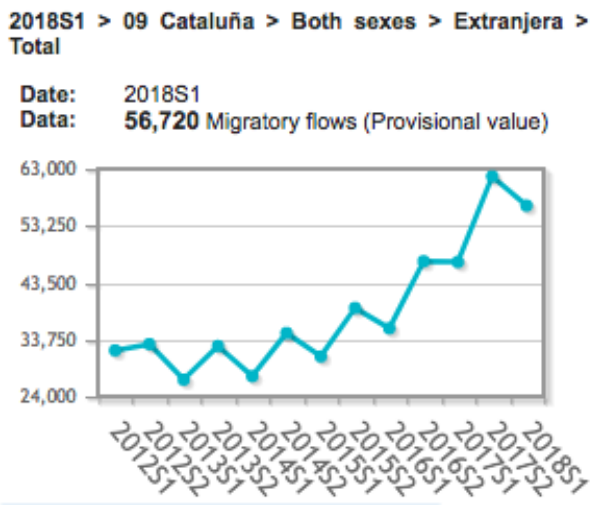

Figure 4: Instituto Nacional de Estadística de España

E. Immigration and Identity: The Security of National Identity

Kleiner-Liebau argues that “in the case of nationalist movements this “Other” can be both, an internal “Other”, such as competing national identities or minority nationalisms, or an external “Other”, such as other nations or supranational institutions” (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009, p.34). In the case of Spain during the Catalan separatist movement, both the patriotic response by much of the Spanish state that emerged in response to Catalonia’s threats of separation as well as the separatist movement itself, if under the assumption that regional pride is its own form of nationalism, constitute nationalist movements. Immigrants − who often serve as reflections or representatives, however unintentionally, of their home country − would fall into this “external Other” category (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009). In a qualitative study on discrimination towards immigrants in Spain, many of the participants mentioned the role one’s home country plays in finding acceptance in Spain, claiming that “stereotypes created around certain cultures or nationalities, for example, the characteristics of Muslim religion, the political and social problems of Colombia, the education level and the language of the Africans, or previous experiences in the Spanish-born population with Romanian or other groups that they associate with criminal or terrorist groups” affect the way they are treated in Spanish society and affect their access to

institutional services that would ultimately help them integrate more easily (Agudelo-Suarez, 2009).

On the other hand, Spain is considered to be, overall, one of the most accepting countries to immigrants in the European Union, with 83% of Spanish respondents to the 2017 Eurobarometer assessment on immigration claiming they would be comfortable having social relations of any type with immigrants (Figure 5, Eurobarometer, 2018). However, this number is somewhat misleading since in the majority of subdivisions of this category (friend, neighbor, work colleague, doctor, family member, manager), Spain ranks lower among other European nations and averages closer to 60% of respondents feeling “totally comfortable” with immigrants in these categories (Figures 6,7,8).

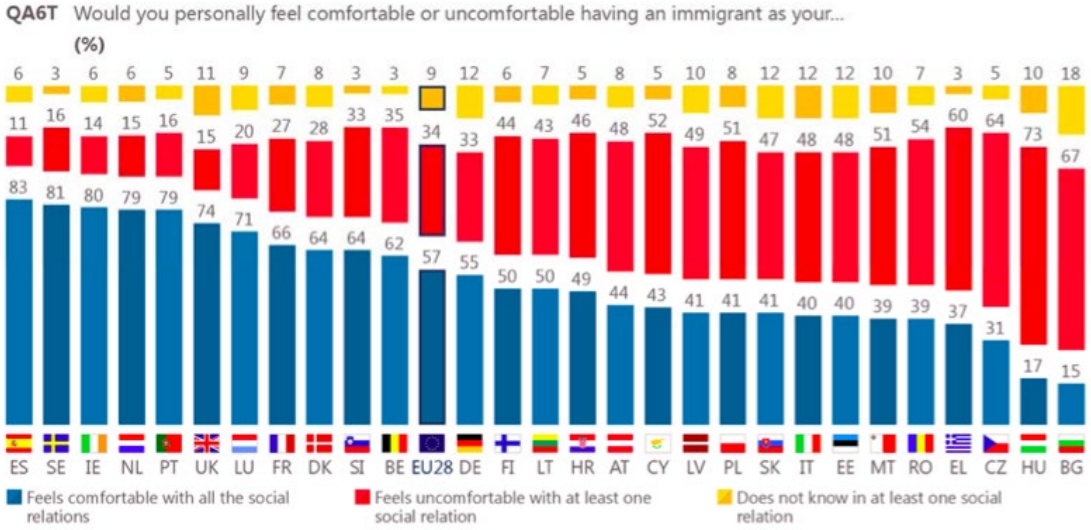

Figure 5: Eurobarometer Report: Integration of Immigrants in the European Union

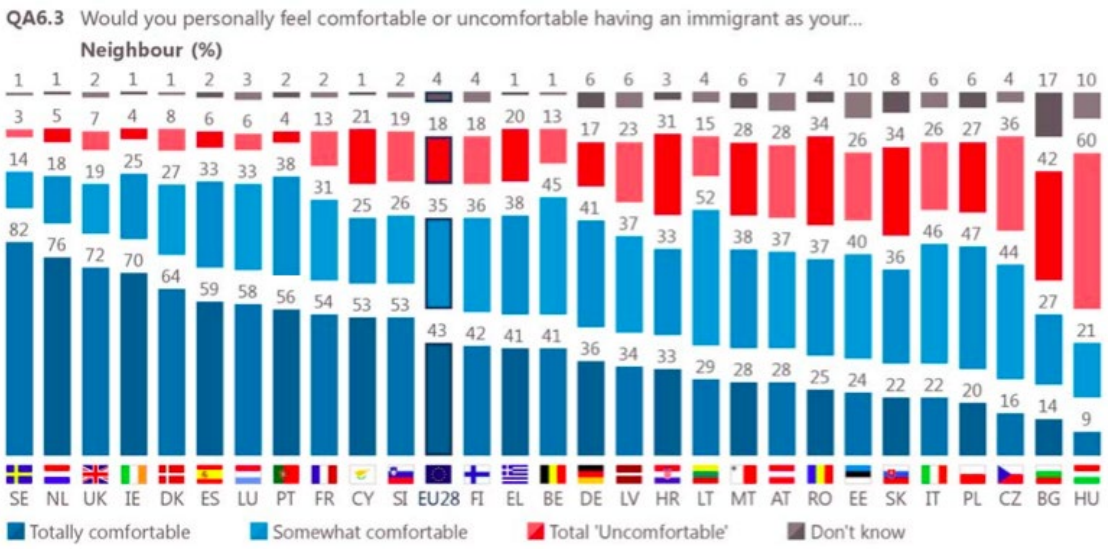

Figure 6: Eurobarometer Report: Integration of Immigrants in the European Union

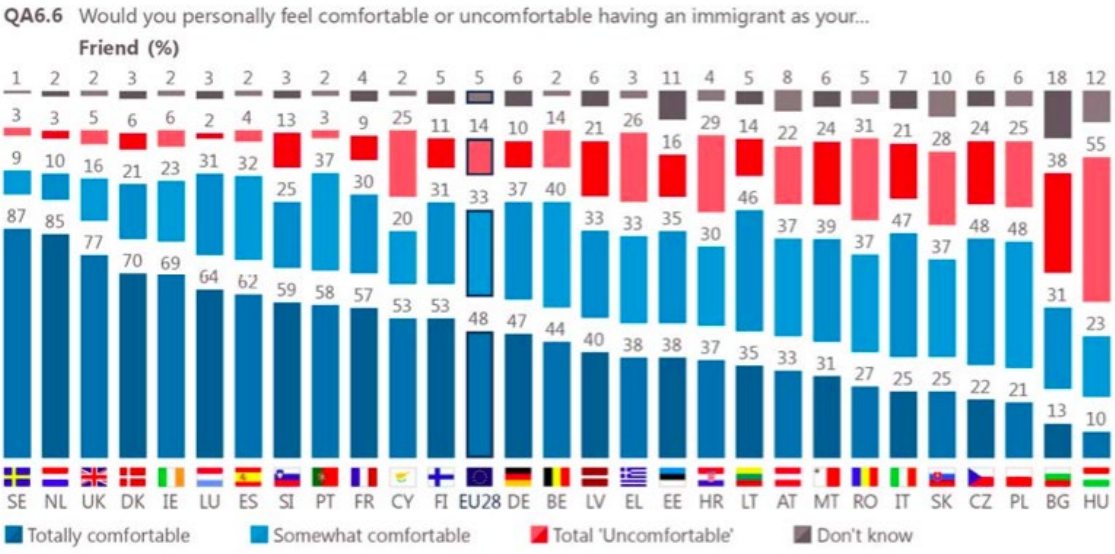

Figure 7: Eurobarometer Report: Integration of Immigrants in the European Union

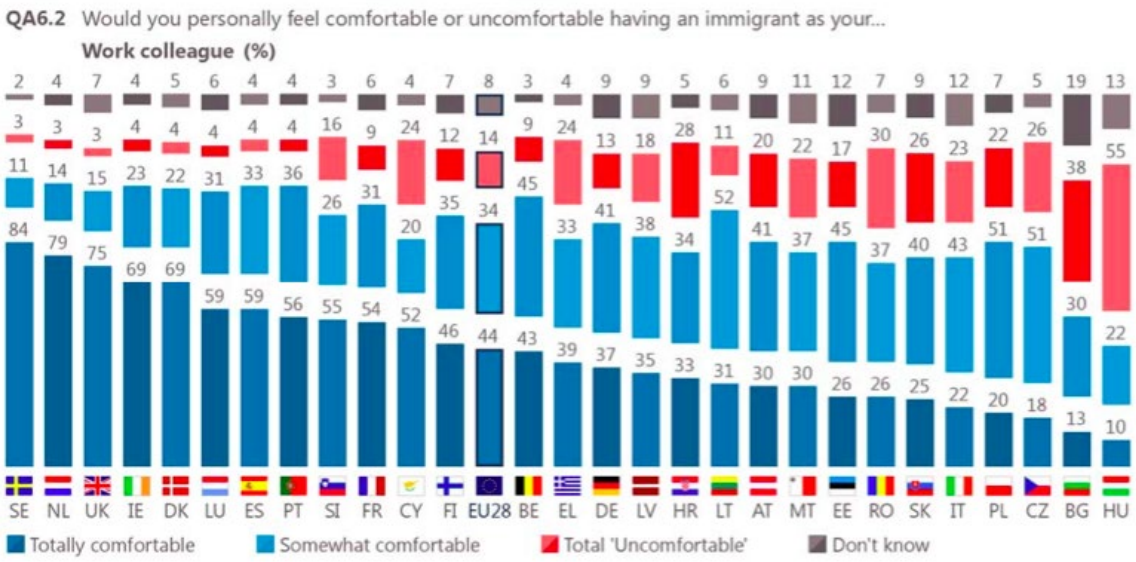

Figure 8: Eurobarometer Report: Integration of Immigrants in the European Union

Additionally, this study tracks European perceptions of immigration to each individual country. It specifically notes what Spanish respondents believe is the proportion of illegal to legal migration taking place in their country as well as the level to which respondents under or over estimate immigration levels. Spain (38%), along with multiple other Mediterranean and EU border nations, tends to have a high level of respondents who believe that there is a greater number of immigrants staying illegally than legally, despite the fact that according to Eurostat data, “during 2016, 984,000 third-country nationals were found to be illegally present in the EU, while 21.6 million third-country nationals were legally residing in the EU on 1 January 2017” (Eurobarometer, 2018). The fact that border nations hold a high percentage of citizens who overestimate the amount of illegal migration is most interesting when we note that “those [nations] with more positive perceptions of the impact of immigrants on society tend to overestimate less the percentage of immigrants in their countries,” and vice versa (Eurobarometer, 2018). Although Spanish citizens might claim to be “comfortable” with

immigrants, it does not necessarily mean they are accepting or that they believe they will have a positive impact on Spanish society.

Today, attitudes towards immigrants in Spain remain divided. The 2017 Eurobarometer assessment discovered that equal numbers of Spanish citizens (26% of the overall population) view immigration as either a problem or an opportunity, while 33% of the population sees immigration as both (Eurobarometer, 2018). When compared with the earlier discussion of comfortability with immigrants in Spain, those who believe immigration to be more of an opportunity than a problem are more likely to be comfortable having social relations with immigrants (Figure 9). In this regard, Spain falls below other European nations that hold a high level of comfortability with migrants in its categorization of immigration as either a problem or an opportunity (Figure 9).

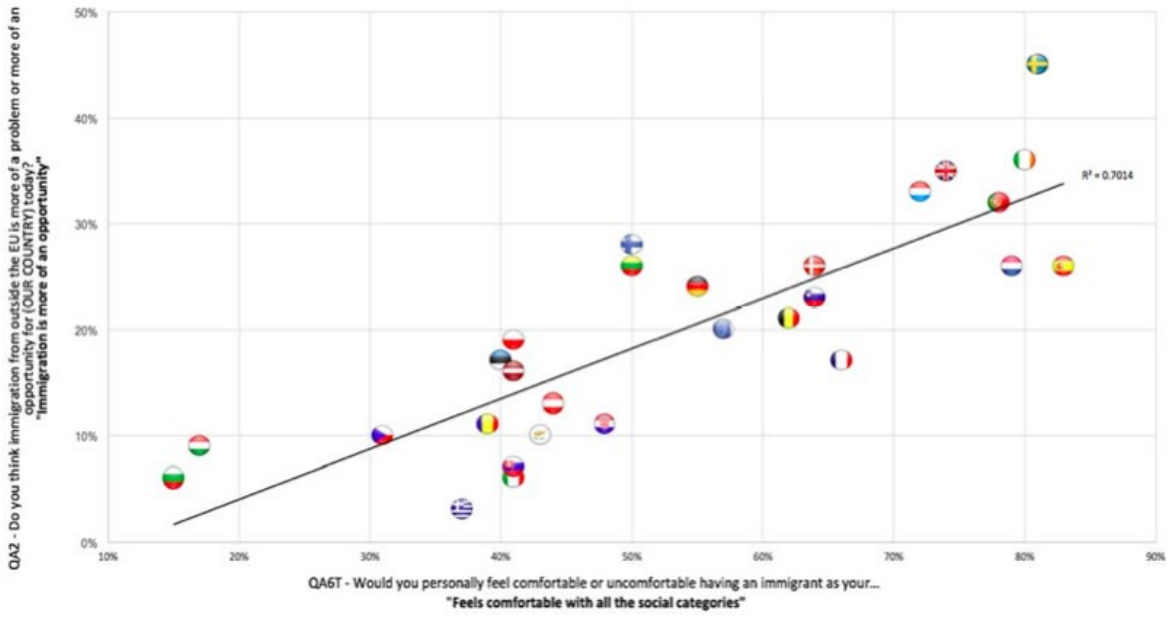

Figure 9: Eurobarometer Report: Integration of Immigrants in the European Union

As a possible counterargument, the Eurobarometer study claims that “there is a consistent tendency for respondents who have personal ties with immigrants to feel comfortable

having social relations with immigrants compared to respondents who do not have personal ties" (Eurobarometer, 2018). As such, it would make sense to claim that if the number of immigrants in Spain has risen, then it is more likely Spanish citizens have developed more personal ties with immigrants and will therefore feel more comfortable and accepting. However, only around 50% of Spanish citizens claim to have daily interactions with immigrants in one or more contexts, according to the Eurobarometer, and therefore it is difficult to determine how a rise in the number of migrants in Spain throughout the 21st century has affected the number of personal relationships between immigrants and Spanish nationals and their subsequent ability to feel comfortable with one another.

Ultimately, it is clear that attitudes towards immigrants in Spain have changed over time and yet there is a consistent belief that the integration of immigrants is essential to the betterment of the host country in the long run (Eurobarometer, 2018). There are different views of what it means to be well-integrated, but the most relevant to this study is the "immigrant's commit[ment] to the [host] country's way of life by accepting the values and norms of the host society" (Eurobarometer, 2018, p.89). In other words, the immigrant's willingness to subscribe to the socio-cultural norms of a nation − the underlying definition of national identity in this study − is a determining factor of their ability to integrate into a host society. Sixty percent of respondents believe this to be "very important" and 36% believe it to be "somewhat important" to integration into Spanish society (Eurobarometer, 2018). Additionally, 87% of Spanish citizens claim sharing cultural traditions to be important to full integration (Eurobarometer, 2018). This analysis of attitudes regarding integration make sense in the context of Alkopher's model of securitization of identity. A society which places emphasis on the subscription to cultural and social norms as a method of societal integration is one that views social cohesion as central to national identity. However, if social cohesion, or a general agreement upon social and cultural norms, does not exist then there is bound to be uncertainty, or even crisis, when it comes to national identity.

F. *Who is Excluded?*

As has been discussed previously, the degree to which a migrant in Spain is able to integrate is largely dependent on their ability to adapt to the dominant socio-cultural climate of a nation. Spain is no exception to this rule as certain immigrants are treated more favorably and with more leniency than others, including those who are most easily able to integrate into Spanish society and those who boost Spain's national reputation as a migrant friendly nation. As Spain has become the main entry point of migrants to Europe within the last year, it has publically made the world aware that, unlike its neighboring Meditteranean nations, Spain prioritizes the humanitarian nature of this struggle (Benavides, 2018). Spain, therefore, has becoming far more accepting of migrants arriving *by sea* than other European nations. However, at the same time Spain continues to strengthen its ties with Moroccan migration services in order to slow down migration from sub-Saharan Africa and keep these migrants out off the cities of Ceuta and Melilla, thus outside of Spain (Hedgecoe, 2018). Though Spain is far more tolerant than many other European nations and generally a progressive nation by European standards, their ability and willingness to be accepting to all should not be overstated. A poller from from firm Metroscopia claims Spain has a "fragile tolerance" of others, one that is often contingent on the others' needs being met by society, indicating their tolerance is more or less dependent on integration and immersion into society.

G. Drawing Connections: When "Internal Other" and "External Other" Meet

The next step of this research involves understanding the intersections of internal otherization and external otherization to understand how otherization, in general, impacts national identity. An analysis of immigrant experiences in Catalonia reveals that otherization has the power to be a unifying force, yet it also expresses itself differently among various groups of people. Particularly, these differences in types of otherization are augmented in times of conflict,

like during the Catalonia Independence Movement. Immigrants to Spain tend to migrate and settle towards the metropoles, most notably Madrid and Barcelona. In fact, just under 14 percent of Catalonia's residents are foreign-born, one of the highest concentrations in all of Spain (Dowsett, 2017). Therefore, immigrant voices hold a powerful weight in Catalonian political happenings. In particular, throughout the independence movement, the voices of immigrant activists and supporters were largely propped up by pro-independence advocates in order to display Catalonia's desire to create "a very open and integrated society" (Dowsett, 2017).

However, many of these migrants still face many struggles finding home and/or citizenship (and subsequently the right to vote) in their new home (Dewan, n.d.). Migrants face challenges integrating into Catalonia because being in this region means adapting to two different, often contrasting cultures. For example, migrants living in Catalonia must learn the Catalan language often along with Spanish in order to truly integrate into the national Spanish society, but also into their local Catalan society. In this sense, immigrants are welcomed into Catalan society as they recognize their similarities in their challenging relationship with the Spanish state, but at the same time immigrants face similar challenges of assimilating into a new society. In fact, immigrants claim that they did not truly feel settled into their new home and "truly Catalan" until they were able to speak the regional language (Dewan, n.d.). However, to a degree this continued importance placed on integration is unique in the case of Catalonia versus in the rest of Spain since the Catalan identity has also been traditionally repressed. This desire for migrants to assimilate to Catalan culture, adopting their language and traditions, is seen by many Catalans as a sign of respect for their historically undervalued culture (Dewan, n.d.). Catalans desire to be welcoming to migrants and to be respectful of other cultures, however, years of repression have resulted in a culture proud and defensive of their own traditions. Therefore, it becomes challenging to come to clear conclusions on the intersectional power of otherization. Though Catalonia might be more welcoming to migrants than the rest of Spain,

there still exists many of the same challenges of prioritizing assimilation to the dominant identity to embracing the cultural diversity of outsiders. Otherization can be a unifying force among those who do not feel welcome in a powerful, dominant society but there also exists various levels of privilege within otherization as welcoming societies continue to hold power over outsiders. The balance between inclusion and exclusion is tenuous and becomes all the more ambiguous among different groups of “others”.

IV. Research Implications & Recommendations

The implications of this study are very real in the current context as Spain continues to feel the impacts of the Catalonia Independence Movement and as it continues to receive more migrants of increasingly diverse backgrounds. The most clear implication of this research has been the seen in Spain’s most recent elections in April of 2019. This election was approached with much apprehension throughout the state because it had significant implications for the future of the nation considering its recent tumultuous political past. Overwhelmingly, the nation turned out to declare their support for the new left-wing government and for continued regional autonomy (Minder, 2019). On the surface, it would seem this election has proven Spain’s support for diversity, multiculturalism, and liberal politics. In reality, however, the road to this election was littered with a variety of ultraconservative voices normalizing a type of nationalism that has historically been taboo in Spain since the end of Francoism (Minder, 2019). Most distinctly, the populist far-right, anti-immigrant party Vox gained seats in the Spanish Parliament for the first time in history. While many scholars have viewed the slow emersion of more nationalist parties as a latent threat to Spain, this initial nationally scaled victory for the Vox party signals that this threat is becoming more of a reputable concern. Additionally, this rise in Vox’s influence in government is reflective of a further splintering of Spain’s political parties that has been occurring for the past four years. While Vox’s influence also merited a strong and

ultimately victorious response from socialist and leftist parties, it also represents a newly prominent and institutionalized voice of exclusionary politics in Spain. As politics in Spain splinters and moves rapidly toward the extremes and as identity politics become more prominent around the world, the goal of creating a unifying national identity grows even more elusive.

This research also revealed the fact that attempts to create unification and inclusion can actually be an exclusionary force. In the case of Spain, there is a reciprocal cycle of exclusion and inclusion of “others”, both internal and external. On the one hand, “otherness” threatens the centralization of a uniform, socio-culturally cohesive national identity. However, on the other hand, the attempts to centralize and unify an identity leads to even greater exclusion of those who do not want, or who are unable to fit into the status quo of a nation. In terms of recommendations, this cycle of exclusion and inclusion can ideally be broken by shifting the conversation from prioritizing assimilation as the root of societal cohesion to embracing multiculturalism as the solution for seemingly conflicutal identities. Since it is clear that immigration will continue to bring people of diverse identities to Spain and that its history of regionalism is historically entrenched and unavoidable, the only way for Spain to form and stabilize its identity is if it embraces the “others” that inhabit it and create a state that embraces diversity and difference.

V. Conclusion

When a society is “confronted with or challenged by immigration, nations tend to redefine or reinforce what they believe to be the basic characteristics binding together the members of their particular “in group”’ (Kleiner-Liebau, 2009, p.34). However, if a nation is unable to find these basic characteristics that would theoretically define and unite its people, how can it address the challenge of immigration and come to a collective approach to integration or multiculturalism? Such is the case of contemporary Spain, as its contentious

history with multiculturalism and regional diversity has created a people divided by their own particular groups' unique characteristics and unable to unite under a single national identity. Kleiner-Liebau's reference to "Others," both internal and external, is particularly relevant to Spain's situation as diverse cultural groups and regional identities pose a challenge to the consolidation of a national identity that could bring its people together and develop national cohesion.

Given the unique nature of the Spanish state itself in terms of regional history and immigration, perhaps the solution to Spain's challenges in national identity formation is to address the need for multiculturalism and plurality. Many studies have assessed Spanish perspectives on the integration of immigrants into society, but if Alkopher's different models of integrationist and multiculturalist approaches to immigration are be applied, there seems to be lacking research in regards to the potential for and opinions towards multiculturalism specifically in the case of the Spanish state. Such a perspective would be particularly interesting in the Spanish case study given the inherent multicultural nature of the Spanish society. Spain's multifaceted identity proves challenging to those who wish to create a central national identity. Moreover, if the majority of Spanish citizens stick to the belief that migrants should be integrated into the national framework, but simultaneously cannot seem to develop consensus on what this identity actually is, then addressing the "immigration issue" will become all the more challenging as globalization continues to grow stronger and become more powerful a force.

Ultimately, this research has shown that the existence of "otherness" is a powerful factor in determining a nation's ability to form and maintain its national identity. Given Spain's already rocky relationship with national identity, the strengthening division among regional identities and increased presence of diverse immigrants in recent decades pose a challenge to the formation of a centralized Spanish identity. Ultimately, "nations derive their cohesion and their strength from a sense of shared identity − from the story they tell themselves about who they are as a collective. When that sense of a shared story is eroded, the nation frays" (Abend, 2017, n.p.).

Spain's long history of exclusion and repression makes finding a shared story among its uniquely diverse population a great challenge. Therefore, the question arises of whether or not the nation is sustainable if it cannot integrate these various histories into a shared identity. Furthermore, as these internal divisions continue in Spain, so do various forms of backlash, including, most notably, far right nationalism. This phenomenon has been investigated in the case of other European nations that have undergone national identity conflicts, but more research needs to be done on this trend in the case of Spain. Additionally, Spain's specific responses to recent immigration surges should be investigated in greater depth and links need to be drawn between these crises and changing trends in perceptions of immigrants among Spanish nationals. Ultimately, in order to address the further splintering of Spanish society, it will be important to further investigate the power of otherization on a society and to determine how a national identity can either support the cohesion or disintegration of a society.

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