The Multifaceted Origin of Separatist Sentiment in Catalonia: The Interdependence of Culture, Economy, and Politics

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ABSTRACT

The Multifaceted Origin of Separatist Sentiment in Catalonia: The Interdependence of Culture, Economy, and Politics

A thesis presented to the Graduate Program in Global Studies

Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
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Waltham, Massachusetts

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On September 11, 2012, over one million demonstrators took to the streets of Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia, Spain. Being Catalonia’s “National Day,” many were expected to be waving the Catalan red and yellow-striped flag, the Senyera. However, a new flag had replaced it: a separatist-inspired Catalan flag that included a white star on a blue background, signifying an independent Catalonia.

Although there are several reasons for the rise of separatist fervor, many claim it is a direct result of the economic recession in Spain combined with a history based on the cultural unity of a people, with language playing a large role. This thesis argues that it is impossible to hold accountable only the weakened economy or a common identity as a reason for increased separatist sentiment. While each is important in its justification, a third aspect of Catalonia plays a significant role: Catalan politics. Catalan regional parties have been historically strong and have become an indicator of the strength of separatist sentiment in Catalonia.
Due to a shared history and the repression experienced during the Franco regime, a unique Catalan identity has formed. These factors are presented as the basis for the strong cultural landscape that exists in Catalonia which has further increased separatist sentiment. Catalan social policies and political involvement in regards to the separatist movement have increased national identity, as well as the historically successful Catalan economy juxtaposed with the unstable Spanish economy, which has fed fire to the flame of perceived difference and the quest for independence.
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List of Abbreviations

AC  Autonomous Community
CDC  Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya
CiU  Convergència i Unió
ERC  Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya
EMU  European Monetary Union
ETA  Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (Basque Homeland and Freedom)
EU  European Union
EU-15  The countries comprising the EU as of 2004. These include: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, United Kingdom.
ICV-EuiA  Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds
IV-EA  Iniciativa Verds-Esquerra Alternativa
LOAPA  Ley Orgánica para la Armonización del Proceso Autonómico (Organic Law for the Harmonization of the Autonomy Process)
PP  Partit Popular
PSUC  Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya
PSUC-ICV  Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya-Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds
PSC-PSOE  Partido de los Socialistas de Cataluña-Partido Socialista Obrero Español
PSC-CpC  Partido de los Socialistas de Cataluña-Ciutadans pel Canvi
UDC  Unió Democràtica de Catalunya
Introduction

Every year on September 11 since its post-Franco reinstatement in 1980, Catalans commemorate their defeat at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession on September 11, 1714, with *La Diada Nacional de Catalunya* (The National Day of Catalonia.) On this day in 2012 an estimated 1.5 million people took to the streets of Barcelona to demand independence for Catalonia. Although Catalonia has significant autonomy under the Spanish state, Catalans feel that it is not sufficient due to the many social, economic and political restrictions that still exist. In response to this insufficient autonomy, Artur Mas, the President of the Generalitat of Catalonia and head of the most influential regional party of Catalonia, Convergència i Unió (CiU), held snap elections shortly after the demonstration on November 26, 2012. His goal was to gauge support for a proposed referendum on secession from Spain, which was most likely to succeed if CiU had the absolute majority. However, although this referendum signals the pro-independence stance of Mas, CiU did not win an absolute majority but instead lost seats to the pro-independence, right-wing nationalist party, Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC). Although this meant the referendum would not be pushed at that time, the significance of the win by the separatist ERC signifies the growing separatist sentiment in Catalonia today. The September 11th protest and the November 26th elections reaffirmed that Catalonia is in the midst of an independence movement. But why now? What prompted the increase in separatist sentiment in last decade?
Amid a devastating recession, the Catalans began to examine the structure and function of their economy, controlled in large part by the Spanish state. Political parties began to push for economic reform and/or autonomy, claiming the policies of the Spanish and those ideal for the Catalans differ greatly, a situation which inhibits Catalonia’s ability to reach its full potential.

When living in Málaga, Spain, as an English teacher for the Ministry of Education in 2010 and 2011, I was made aware of the strong national and regional sentiment felt among Andalusians. Although I was aware of the regional flag that represented Andalusia, I most noticed the Spanish flag that adorned many balconies along the Mediterranean and in the city center. At the time I did not think much about it, but when taking a short trip to Barcelona, I learned of the different language and culture that existed there. The Catalan flag was more prevalent than the Spanish flag, and Catalan replaced Spanish on many advertisements and signs. In fact, when in a smaller neighborhood of Barcelona, I heard many people speaking a language that I first thought was a French dialect (which I did not say to a Catalan, as this would almost definitely cause offense!) When I listened more closely I discovered that I could pick out a few words, seemingly Spanish words, but I did not understand the totality of the conversation. After looking into the history of the region and discovering the separate culture and language that existed, I became incredibly interested in how Catalans cope within Spain.

The Independence Movement on Catalonia’s National Day in 2012 moved me to realize the motives of this separatist fervor. Studying global economics at the time, I was made aware of the great economic imbalances between the Spanish state and Catalonia. Between this realization and the recognition of a Catalan identity, I understood why Catalans were vying for independence. However, the Catalan elections in November of the same year brought a new facet to the increase in separatist sentiment: the political economy. I realized how important the
political economy is to Catalonia. It is the driving force for the movement, claiming a unique
culture born from a shared history and the apparent economic imbalance as its platform in order
to mobilize the masses. This is the moment I arrived at the conclusion that the increase in
separatist sentiment cannot be attributed to only one facet of Catalonia and “being Catalan.”
Indeed it encompasses a distinct economy, culture and political landscape that was born from a
shared history whose origins are centuries old. These facets are each distinct in the way in which
they account for the rise in separatist sentiment, but are also in many ways interdependent, which
this paper intends to convince.
Identity in Catalonia

Identity politics have long been pertinent to the building of a Spanish state, yet the state remains fragmented and minority nations are left dissatisfied with the level of autonomy they possess. The failed nineteenth and twentieth century attempts to create a single Spanish nation resulted in historically present peripheral nationalities, namely the Basque and Catalan. Specifically during the period of democratization and the writing of the 1978 Spanish Constitution, the Spanish state was forced to decentralize and accept plurinationalism, recognizing these peripheral nationalities. In Spain, these peripheral nationalities are concentrated in specific areas, solidifying the claim to a unique identity and defined nation. In Guibernau’s discourse on Catalan nationalism, she states that a Catalan nation (albeit without a state) indeed exists, as Catalans possess what Guibernau claims as the features of a nation: “a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself.” 1 The percentage of Catalans who identify as being more Catalan than Spanish or solely Catalan has increased significantly in the past couple of decades, from 31.4 percent in the period 1990-95 to 52.9 percent in 2012. 2 While the existence of a Catalan nation is undeniable, it feels its identity is being compromised as a result of the power and influence of

3 Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió,“Dossier De Premsa Del Bop: 2a Onada 2012,” Baròmetre d'Opinió Política, (Barcelona: Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012), 31.
the state. According to Muro and Quiroga, although a territorial identity has been defined by the center via institutions, monuments and other forms of banal nationalism, the peripheries have taken steps (with little help from the center) to preserve their nation by strengthening the economic, social and political identities that are the foundation of the nation. While this may be true, the center-periphery paradigm is very present in Spain and its constant evolution has escalated tensions between the peripheries. While the center continues to represent the state through displays of banal nationalism and while it holds such administrative power, the peripheries will continue to be at its mercy and will have to “define themselves in terms of, or in opposition to, it.”

Not only must the Catalan nation cope with its identity being compromised by the state, but it must also deal with a lack of the political representation needed to ensure the implementation of economic, social and political policies specific to its needs. Gottlieb argues that the modern international order puts the state, territorially defined, above all other forms of political organization; states receive the most representation and are the most legitimate actors in international affairs today. However, in a state that is plurinational, antagonisms exist between states and the minority nations of these states, which who often lack representation. It is when these nations feel repressed that they begin to question the legitimacy of the state in its affairs and thus the possibility of self-autonomy. Examples of this can be seen in Scotland, Flanders, and Catalonia, all cases where differences manifested through language, the economy, political

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5 Ibid., 19.
7 Ibid.
representation and social identity have driven these minority nations to seek more autonomy. These subordinate nationalities are putting into question the viability and legitimacy of the current international order, which is one based on cooperation and representation and cannot function properly without these. Representation in international organizations is desirable for any nation, as many economic, political and social decisions are based on those of international norms, often set by international organizations. So long as these organizations continue to have such an influence on the international order, these minority nations will continue to seek substantial representation. As a result of the desire for more representation and the awareness of a unique identity, minority nations often feel that independence is the most practical option. It is obvious in Catalonia’s case that an identity-based explanation for separation is obvious. However, it is impossible to ignore the link that Catalonia’s identity has had on establishing a power-based explanation (which is seen in the political arena as Catalonia’s influential political leaders seek greater representation within Spain as well as the EU) and a status or grievance-based explanation (as seen in Catalonia’s historically strong economy and its recent struggles, arguably as a result of decisions and policies implemented by the state.) As Gottlieb states, the most democratic and peaceful solution to the desire for autonomy is to find a way in which significant representation can be achieved without territorial sovereignty. However, until then, minority nations such as Catalonia will continue to fight for independence.

The History of Catalonia

Although there are many reasons as to why separatist sentiment has grown in Catalonia over the past few decades, the history of the region dives deeper into the continuous struggle for recognition and autonomy that has beset the region. When assessing the history of Catalonia, one may understand the origin of the collective identity of the Catalans and their shared history. This shared history acts as the cement of the independence movement which binds Catalans and, along with the economic situation and strong political capacity of the Catalan regional parties (each having long histories, adding to the shared history), gives them motivation to fight for independence.

The Beginning of a Nation

Before the existence of the nationalism seen in Catalonia today, it experienced regional nationalism in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as a result of the formation of the Spanish state. The marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabel of Castile led to the eventual formation of a Spanish state, one which was pluralistic and respected all aspects of its regions. The birth of the Spanish state and the colonization of the Americas shifted the axis of commerce from the Mediterranean Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. This gave Castile more control and influence, and established Catalonia as a peripheral power, though not completely losing its economic influence as its geographic location was still crucial in developing the new state. Also contributing to the shift in influence was the relative openness of Castile in that it had fewer legal
barriers in terms of trade which ensured its place as the economic and political focus of attention, and eventually being established as the center of Spain. Spain's growth during this time resulted in it needing more men and money, and thus a forceful attempt by the Crown to streamline the tax system and military service with the local states. Revolts ensued, but Catalonia was defeated in its attempt to defy these demands as it saw itself losing its autonomy, although it still maintained "her special liberties" (a degree of freedom in language and culture). However, when Philip V of the Bourbon dynasty gained power in Spain, Catalonia lost all autonomy, its culture was repressed, and it was, for the first time, integrated into the Spanish political system.

The Renaixença

Despite its loss of autonomy, Catalonia’s economy grew to be essential in the success of Spain as a whole due to its geographic location, laying the groundwork for the influence of the Catalan bourgeoisie. After a period of Hispanic nationalism in which Catalonia took part (as it was still tied politically and economically to Spain), liberals gained power and Spain became centralized. The Catalan Renaissance (*renaixença*) is important in Catalan history, as it was the first attempt in centuries at reviving Catalan through literary culture. However, it was soon extinguished by the central government via public education in Castilian after 1850. Nevertheless, this period was one of modernization and cultural reconstruction that laid the foundation for a stronger, more influential political and cultural arena in Catalonia. Catalonia made known its distinctive cultural mark not only throughout Spain, but, unlike the rest of Spain, throughout Europe. Antoni Gaudí’s architecture, whose work can be seen across Barcelona, is
one example of many that was born from this period of modernization, which helped to foster a stronger Catalan nationalism.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Catalonia in the 20th Century}

Modernization brought with it a new influence and leadership in Catalonia: a growing bourgeois class whose trade and business interests developed as a result of the region’s location and was unique from Spain. Dissatisfied with the seemingly backward centralist government, the Catalan bourgeois separated itself from the Spanish centralist identity by creating the first significant Catalan regionalist party, \textit{Lliga Regionalist}, in 1901. Shortly after, the \textit{Lliga} created the Commonwealth of Catalonia (\textit{Mancomunitat}), an administrative council that joined the provinces of Catalonia.\textsuperscript{11} According to the political scientist André Lecours,

\begin{quote}
With the Structures of the \textit{Mancomunitat}, the \textit{Lliga} gave new momentum to a movement of cultural affirmation that included an effort to standardize the Catalan language. In short, the struggle against centralisation [sic] in Catalonia involved, as it did in Galicia and the Basque provinces, providing objective markers with subjective meaning and, consequently, projecting, bolstering and promoting a regional identity. (“Regionalism, Cultural Diversity and the State in Spain,” 219)
\end{quote}

The \textit{Lliga}’s involvement in the strengthening of the Catalan identity demonstrates the undeniable influence that politics has had in creating a sense of identity among the Catalans. This will later be reiterated and tied in with the current state of the Catalan economy to demonstrate the significant and inseparable role politics, culture and the economy has had on increasing separatist sentiment in modern-day Catalonia.


The next major event in Catalonia’s history was in 1931 with the overthrow of the Spanish monarchy and the establishment of the Second Republic which resulted in its first Statute of Autonomy of 1932, recognizing it as autonomous within Spain. This sparked the restoration of the Generalitat and gave the Catalan language “co-official” status alongside Castilian. However, Franco’s regime halted the progress of Catalan autonomy when it gained power in 1939 after the Spanish Civil War and instilled centralist, Spanish-nationalist views in which pluralism was condemned and diversity all but extinguished.

*The Franco Regime*

Leading up to and during the Franco regime, local Catalan leaders were exiled, political institutions crumbled and culture and language were repressed. According to Lecours, as the state began to centralize, industrialized Catalonia’s bourgeois class became increasingly wary of the effect such institutions would have on Catalonia. These institutions were “considered backward and associated to rural interests,” according to the powerful bourgeois class.¹²

For the first couple of decades of the Franco regime, development of Catalan autonomy and Catalan identity decreased dramatically. However, as a result of severe repression and increasing awareness that Francoism had a guaranteed future, a new wave of Catalan nationalism seemed inevitable if the Catalan identity was to be preserved.

In response to the repression, Catalans began to publicly display aspects of the Catalan identity, as evidenced by the creation of Catalan media, public display of the Catalan flag, published literature and articles in Catalan, the organization of cultural groups, holding

clandestine classes only in Catalan and other public demonstrations. This reemergence of Catalan identity was important in preserving the language and culture of the region which saw decay during the Franco regime. Although the repression from the Franco regime did not end until 1975, Catalan identity persevered in preparation for the transition to democracy.

*The Transition to Democracy and its Significance in Catalonia*

“Probably the most dangerous legacy of Francoism was the need for a democratic response to the demands of the historical nations, which had endured years of repression topped by repeated attempts at their annihilation.”13 After Franco’s death in 1975, Spain decided that in order to be accepted by the European community, it must modernize and become democratic. Because this means a more secular, less-homogenized Spain, it was understood that the necessary level of heterogeneity in Spain could be gained by recognizing the historic nationalities that had been repressed for decades under Francoism, that of Catalonia included.

After a couple of years of living under the Franco regime’s law without Franco, the 1978 Constitution was born to solidify the impending change to democracy in Spain. Among many democratic policies, article two was and still is one of the most game-changing articles for the regions of Spain. Article two reads: “The Constitution is based upon the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation, the common and indivisible patria of all Spaniards, and recognizes and guarantees the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions forming it and solidarity between all of them.”14

14 Spanish Const. art. II, § 1.
This article divided Spain into 17 “autonomous communities” (ACs), that gained a certain degree of freedom from the state, however limited. Also, it defined Catalan (and other “historic nationalities”) as a “nationality” but not a nation, an important distinction which challenges the existence of a Catalan identity apart from a Spanish identity in later years.

The center-periphery relations of Spain and Catalonia during the transition to democracy is most evident in politics. When the new government of Spain was tasked with drafting a constitution to reflect the newly democratic state, all major political parties of the time took part. This included Convergencia Democratica de Catalunya (CDC) and Esquerra Republica de Catalunya (ERC) who, along with the Basque parties, "had intense preferences on the decentralization issue."15 Also, these parties expressed great interest in establishing in the constitution a list of civil rights and liberties in which all regions would have a say in creating. Catalonia’s involvement in the drafting of the constitution, subsequent creation of autonomous communities and recognition of “nationalities” paved the way for Catalonia's continuous quest for increased autonomy (and eventual desire for independence.) It is evident that Catalonia’s political role has been a significant one in establishing the presence of a unique identity of Catalans and in giving a strong argument for independence.16

Although center-periphery relations have changed, Catalonia’s political power has not. The political economy of Catalonia has encouraged separatist fervor as parties are being more vocal about the problems with the state and are beginning to take a stance on separation from the state, which will be shown below in more detail.

Catalonia’s Cultural Landscape

As defined by anthropologist Ernest Gellner, “culture is understood as a unique way of life, a series of features that a human group inherits and shares: language, values, facial expressions, etc.” Among industrious societies, culture can be a mobilizing power. It has the potential to encourage various people with various opinions to unite. Those who share a culture, according to Gellner, make up a nation, politically and territorially. Although the term “nation” is highly contested and includes many aspects of a society, including those which are cultural, political, historical, sociological and territorial, it will be defined as group of people who recognize and share a common culture, who is evolving and self-forming. Due to the unity that sharing a common culture may produce, it is obvious to see that it can be “a great mobilizing power on a political level.” Therefore, it can be argued that a strong culture has the likelihood to produce a strong political force, which is a necessary component in the formation of an independent state. Although it is difficult to assess the strength of a culture, the extent to which it exists may be a good indication of its strength. For Catalonia, the strength of its culture is evident through the region’s foundation and history, linguistic policies, displays of banal nationalism and public sentiment on identity.

18 Ibid., 101.
The Foundation of the Catalan Identity

There is no doubt that a distinctively Catalan culture exists. The foundation of this culture lies in the history of the region, dating back to 1114 in which the name “Catalunya” first appears in Liber Maiolichinus, a Medieval Latin chronicle, and in 1150 in Liber Ludiciorum, the first known document in the Catalan language. Catalonia’s claim to the historical presence of a Catalan nation is further supported in its creation of a Catalan government institution known as the Generalitat and of a feudal constitution in which the idea of pactism was first introduced. This well-known trait of Catalan relations is based on the view that the control of society should be rooted in negotiations and accommodations rather than domination. Pactism persists among Catalans to this day as they are known to pursue policy redesign in a nonviolent manner, as evident in “La Via Catalana,” a recent peaceful protest in which millions showed their support for Catalan independence and the acceleration of the proposed meeting between the Spanish and Catalan governments by forming a human chain that stretched along the eastern coast of Spain from France into Valencia.

The weakening feudal system, decline in population as a result of the Black Death, and a civil war weakened Catalonia in the next few centuries. Despite the infamous marriage of Isabella I of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon that created the Spanish state in 1469, the Generalitat still had considerable control within Catalonia and an influential role in Castile. However, after the war of the Segadors in 1659, the Catalan territories in present-day France

20 Ibid., 45.
were taken over by the French government and all Catalan institutions were abolished. With Philip V of the Bourbon Dynasty in power, Castilian became the official language and the display of Catalan culture was squelched until the *Renaixença* of the nineteenth century.\footnote{Alland, *One Nation, Two States: An Ethnographic Study of Nonviolent Resistance to Assimilation*, 44-46.}

The Catalan *Renaixença* was a critical movement in the development of Catalan culture, as previously stated. Most noted during this period is the extent to which Catalan was used in everyday life. The historical development of the Catalan language is important in defining Catalan nationalism as it serves as a way in which a collective experience and a shared history are expressed.\footnote{Elisa Roller, "When Does Language Become Exclusivist? Linguistic Politics in Catalonia." *National Identities* 4, no. 3 (2002), 274.} Especially during the *Renaixença* of the 1800s, the language was further developed through prose and poetry. Other literary works, such as novels and newspapers, were produced and aided in securing a national identity in Catalonia, defined in large part by the Catalan language.

*Catalan linguistic policy*

As previously stated, language has been a prominent factor in the creation of a national identity through the unique ability among Catalans to express the collective experience and shared history that defines its culture. Its development through the *Renaixença* solidified the shared history of Catalans through text and an increased awareness. Because language had become so tied to a shared identity among Catalans, it is easy to see why the subsequent repression of the Catalan language brought about fear that Catalan culture, and thus identity, would soon fade away. Through many means, Catalans have fought to keep their language, Catalan, alive as it has often been repressed to promote a unified Spain, who declared Castilian
Spanish its official language. Especially seen during Franco’s dictatorship, this repression led to the collective realization of the importance of preserving Catalan, the driving force of Catalan culture.

It is evident that, “linguistic policy in Catalonia has played a prominent role in the reinforcement of the Catalan nationalist movement.”25 Specifically, it has been a tool used by Catalan political parties to not only bring to light the strong presence of a culture set apart from that of Spain but also to garner support in order the further the Catalan agenda, economically, politically and socially. Linguistic policy is but one example of the interdependence of politics and culture: Catalan politics depend on culture in order to further the Catalan agenda, and culture on politics for preservation purposes. The reemergence of Catalan culture was highly correlated with the Catalan language policies of the post-Franco period. In response to the reiteration of Spanish being given “official status” in the 1978 Constitution, Catalonia took advantage of its freedom to speak its own language within its territory, a right stated in the Spanish Constitution that was given to the Autonomous Communities. The 1983 Normalization of Catalan Language law went into effect for the purpose of encouraging the use of Catalan and extending its usage in public administration, mass media and education by offering subsidies so as to make the normalization affordable and more likely to succeed.26 Educating in Catalan was a major step in the way of normalizing its usage as a result of this policy. Of course, language use is encouraged in order to “protect a minority language/culture within the Spanish state and to use it (language) as a powerful symbol of differentiation,” as Catalans constantly claim that “Catalonia is not


16
Spain”, a popular phrase of the nationalist move. Also, the Llei del Català (Catalan Law) of 1997 is a language policy which aided in increasing the use of the Catalan language and thus preserving its identity. The “Catalan Law” reiterated the 1983 laws, but also included quotas of 50 percent spoken Catalan of cable television and radio, and 25 percent of music programs. It also stressed that university professors ought to have knowledge of both Catalan and Spanish, and general civil service positions ought to have knowledge of Catalan that is “appropriate to their functions.” According to Roller, “linguistic policy has shifted from an emphasis on education to promotion and regulation.” However, because Catalan has become the primary language used in public administration, i.e., courts, many Castilian-only speakers have been excluded, and fought to be included, reiterating the “us versus them” battle between Spain and Catalonia. Although this did force the Catalan government to adopt a more balanced-use policy, as the Spanish state questioned if using Catalan had become obligatory rather than optional, Catalonia succeeded in increasing its usage, as seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Linguistic ability in Catalan (1975-2001) (in percentages)*

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<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>74.3</td>
<td>80.98</td>
<td>90.61</td>
<td>93.76</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>94.97</td>
<td>97.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>64.08</td>
<td>68.34</td>
<td>73.7</td>
<td>75.30</td>
<td>78.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t understand</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>19.02</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>2.6</td>
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As seen in Table 1, there has been a dramatic increase in both those who speak and understand Catalan since the end of the Franco regime. According to Elisa Roller, this increase can be attributed to three factors: the end of the Franco regime, the resurgence of the Catalan culture (often displayed through language) and the linguistic policies adopted by the Generalitat in the years after the Franco regime.30

Due to language’s prominence as a nation-building strategy, it is accurate to assume that the nationalist movement which is seen today is highly correlated with the increase in Catalan as a spoken language, a result of the language policies enacted in 1983 (Language Normalization Law) and 1997 (Llei del Català).31,32 However, the increase in nationalism through language is mainly due to the cultural implications these linguistic policies have had on the Catalans. Furthermore, the multitude of language laws in recent Catalan history shows the role politics have taken on—a role not only in preserving culture in Catalonia, but in strengthening it and thus solidifying the unique identity of Catalans among Spaniards.

31 Ibid., 274.
Although language has proven to be an important factor in defining Catalan identity and thus in Catalan nationalism as is seen through its history of repression and policy, it is not simply the language itself that evokes such strong feelings. According to Weber, “a ‘nation’ is not identical with a community speaking the same language.”\textsuperscript{33} However, when this language is linked to the culture of the masses, it becomes significant. For example, in the United States, the majority of citizens speak English. Even so, it is not this concept in and of itself that defines the American “nation”- in fact, it is deeply rooted beliefs and ideals, produced from the “memories of a common political destiny.”\textsuperscript{34} This combined with language may make an argument in defining American nationalism. National solidarity in Catalonia is deeply rooted in language, but in a language which is strongly linked to a cultural past. Literature produced in Catalonia dates back to the Renaissance period, and even before. “Catalans can point to a rich body of literature in Catalan and to linguists’ judgments that Catalan is a distinct language” and one of the most important distinctive features that separates “Catalan” from “Spanish.”\textsuperscript{35} The creation of newspapers and the teaching of Catalan history and culture during the resurgence of Catalan in the Franco regime, for example, also demonstrate how language has created a bond between the Catalans during a time when all other demonstrations of culture were all but extinguished. The promotion and preservation of the Catalan language has been demonstrated not only through its everyday use in the Catalan governmental organizations, but also through its rich cultural and political history. It has created an “imagined community” in which “the tie of the language is perhaps the strongest and most durable that can unite mankind.”\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{35} McRoberts, \textit{Catalonia: Nation Building without a State}, 139.
Catalan usage has continued to grow in Catalonia with the aid of Language Policy funding from the Generalitat. Funding for programs and subsidies that incorporate the Catalan language in some way has steadily increased in the last decade, as shown in Table 2.

Some of the items financed by these funds include subsidies for films in Catalan, Catalan festivals, the parla.cat online Catalan language course, funding of Catalan language institutes, Catalan language examinations and certificates and subsidies for conferences and presentations which promote the use of Catalan.37 It is obvious that language policy has been of the utmost importance in post-Franco Catalonia, and that it has reinforced its use and presence in the region. With the promotion of the Catalan language via literature, film, music, festivals, etc., its culture continues to be a dominating force. The consistent increase in the funding of the promotion of the Catalan language reiterates the positive correlation that exists between linguistic policy in Catalonia and Catalan separatist sentiment.

Displays of Catalanism: A unifying power

Although language is one of the most defining factors of the Catalan identity, there are many smaller symbols of Catalonia that, together with language, perpetuate Catalanism and the sense of a shared history. The Catalan flag, known as the Senyera, first appeared in the twelfth century. A national symbol of Catalonia, it is seen across the region today; government buildings, homes, businesses and schools display this iconic symbol of Catalonia. However, a new development in recent years is the separatist-branded Catalan flag that includes a white star on a blue background as a symbol of an independent Catalonia. In a 2010 report on public

national sentiment in Catalonia, the majority of Catalans display the Catalan flag, as seen in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** Per quina bandera s sent millor representat, per la catalana o per l’espanyola?

![Bar chart showing percentages](chart.png)


*Note:* The x axis translates left to right: La catalana (Catalan), Les dues (Both), L’espanyola (Spanish), Cap de les dues (Neither), Altres (Other), NS/NC (No response).

Whether or not the original Senyera or newly-adopted independentista Senyera is a Catalan’s flag of choice, it is apparent that the pride in the Catalan culture is shared among all.

Also branding the Senyera is the world-renowned football team, FC Barcelona (Futbol Club Barcelona). The slogan of the team, “més que un club,” is in Catalan as is the original version of the team’s anthem. This is one obvious way in which Barça, the nickname among fans, is known to support Catalonia and the Catalan culture. Although it has not publicly taken a stance on independence, the fans often display the independentista Senyera during games in Camp Nou, the infamous stadium of Barcelona. They show support for the football club and
Catalonia by singing the Catalan national anthem, waving the independentista flag and chanting things such as “Independence!” and “We are not Spain!”

It is obvious that a Catalan identity exists, one which is based on a shared history, language and culture. The cultural landscape of Catalonia fosters each of these through its strong language policy and displays of banal nationalism, such as the Senyera and support for the local football club, FC Barcelona. While this culture has been present for centuries, even during the period of repression due to Franco’s regime, it has recently shown signs of increasing strength, seen in the number of those who feel “Catalan”—whether it be shown simply through language or displays of nationalism. It is important to note the role politics have taken on as a result of Spanish control over the daily lives of Catalans. This strong role can be noted especially in language policy, and is one way in which Catalan politicians not only pursue more cultural freedom, but also seek to further their general agenda (whether it be related to economics or the separatist movement.) The cultural landscape of Catalonia is used as a tool by Catalan politicians to strengthen their identities and therefore influence in Catalonia and beyond, an integral factor in the increase in separatist sentiment.

Catalan Politics

The political arena of Catalonia has developed drastically since Franco’s death in 1975, including the crucial role played by center-periphery politics. This development has demonstrated the changing political sentiment among Catalans which has been greatly affected by the increase in the demand for autonomy. In order to understand how this increase came about and what the future may hold for Catalonia, the political arena since democratization ought to be analyzed. The strong support of the regional parties by the Catalan people demonstrates the strength of the political arena of Catalonia, but more importantly the political arena demonstrates the increase in separatist sentiment through recent electoral results.

Democratization in Spain

First, democratization of Spain brought many changes for its regions. According to Guibernau, Spain was “beginning to embrace democracy” which “modified the balance of forces in Madrid.” Regional parties were reestablished and gained legitimacy in the newly defined ACs; and power was slowly being transferred from the central government to the ACs through the Ley Orgánica para la Armonización del Proceso Autonómico (LOAPA.) Although significant for all ACs, this was an especially important era in the development of Catalan nationalism. For decades, Catalans were forced to repress their language, culture and political desires as a result of Franco’s dictatorship. Democracy required cooperation among all regions and the central

39 Guibernau, Catalan Nationalism: Francoism, Transition, and Democracy, 2.
government. It also required that citizens of these regions have more say in regional policies. Catalans took this opportunity to embrace autonomy and develop their regional parties and government, equally vital aspects of the strength and influence of Catalonia. The formation (and reformation) of these key regional political parties laid the foundation for increased cultural cultivation and served as a way for the citizens of Catalonia to demonstrate their support (or lack thereof) for the Catalan nation and its secession from Spain. However, although on the surface LOAPA appeared to be a democratic way of passing more power to regions, its underlying purpose was to ensure that democracy was in place (to appease the influential, democratic European countries) all while firmly stabilizing the state structure and laying “down the bases for a state with homogenous regional governments,” reflecting the interests and continued power of the center which would soon cause tension between Catalonia and Spain.\(^{40}\)

Reemergence of Catalan Politics

Catalonia is a multi-party state consisting of many strong regional and national parties. The nationalist right-of-center Convergència i Unió (CiU), the left-wing Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya (PSUC), the socialist Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC-PSOE) and the separatist left-wing Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC) were the main regional parties during the transition to democracy. The latter three (CiU, PSC-PSOE and ERC) are currently the most influential parties and have taken a majority of the seats in Catalonia’s parliament with 50, 21 and 20 seats, respectively.\(^{41}\) CiU was created as a coalition of two parties, the Convergencia Democràtica de Catalunya (CDC) and the Union Democràtica de Catalunya (UDC) and has


nearly always held the majority of seats in Catalonia’s parliament, making it a powerful force in the Catalan political arena. In fact, CiU is arguably Western Europe’s most powerful regional party which demonstrates the extent of its strength and influence.\textsuperscript{42}

Since the first Catalan elections in March 1980, the establishment of a strong majority government or, “government machinery,” of Catalonia has been vital in developing its government, gaining regional support for autonomy and ensuring an independent Catalonia could politically function.\textsuperscript{43} Despite the influence of strong national parties, the regional party CiU has been a consistent representation of the power and influence of Catalonia in Spain and beyond. CiU has held the most seats in parliament of any party since 1980 (although it lost absolute majority in 2003 until 2010, where it again gained an absolute majority),\textsuperscript{44} the period of democratization when it was again given recognition.

Each party views differently the definition of Catalan identity, nationalism and the economic and political relationship between Spain and Catalonia. These perspectives and how they have evolved since the transition to democracy give insight as to how the political arena is a vital aspect of the increase in separatist sentiment in Catalonia. Because Catalan culture and the economy are two important aspects of the platform and actions of each political party, the strong relationship between the cultural landscape, the economy and the political arena is unmistakable and reiterates that the separatist movement has been fueled by all of these aspects as a whole.

\textsuperscript{43} Barcells, \textit{Catalan Nationalism}, 177.
\textsuperscript{44} Álvarez-Rivera, "Election Resources on the Internet: Elections to the Catalan Parliament."
**Convergencia i Unió (CiU)**

CiU is a coalition between the Catalan, nationalist and liberal party Convergència Democràtica de Catalunya (CDC) and the regionalist, Christian democrats, Unió Democràtica de Catalunya (UDC). Although Catalan nationalist, it has usually not defined itself as secessionist, however in response to the increasing separatist sentiment in recent years, it has demonstrated a change in ideals, and to an extent supporting the separatist movement by joining ERC in calling for a 2014 referendum on independence. From its formation in 1979 to 2003, CiU governed the Generalitat under the leadership of Jordi Pujol, president of CDC. Although Pujol had traditionally been in favor of more autonomy under Spain, in 2011 he declared his support for independence due to the mistreatment of Catalonia by Spain for many years. Despite the obvious setback in loss of majority votes in 2003, CiU again gained the majority in 2006 and in 2010 its leader, Artur Mas, took control of the Generalitat. Like Pujol, Mas has expressed interest in secession from Spain, mainly through his proposal to hold a referendum to gauge support for independence in Catalonia.

The changing sentiment in regards to independence for the leaders of CiU (and many CiU voters) has to do with the recognition of Catalonia as a nation and Spain’s lack of support. Although CiU recognizes the uniqueness of Catalan culture based on a shared language and history, its platform is progressive in that it recognizes the crucial role globalization has played in the persistence of Catalan culture. These changes ought to be embraced, while at the same time the fight to save the Catalan culture must continue.

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Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya- Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds (PSUC-ICV)

PSUC is a communist organization formed in 1936 that believes in the self-determination of Catalonia but whose aim is to integrate the working class into Catalan politics and to increase acceptance of the presence of a national identity in Catalonia. It claims that the ties between some sectors of the Catalan bourgeoisie and the centralist Spanish state is detrimental to the Catalan working class.\textsuperscript{48} It also recognizes the obvious economic differences between Spain and Catalonia and their economic structures.

By the early 1990s, PSUC had created a coalition with both the Initiative for Catalonia (IC) and Els Verds (V). This coalition created an organization that encompassed not only social and political policies but also environmental.\textsuperscript{49}

PSUC-ICV defines Catalan nationalism as “Catalanism” and in fact does not use the expression nationalism, as Catalanism is very specific to Catalonia. Nationalism, according to PSUC-ICV, is greatly tied with language and culture. Catalonia, however, encompasses more than just these aspects. With that said, although “pro-Catalan culture and language,” PSUC-ICV does believe in the pluralist Catalan identity which accepts those who do not speak Catalan as being Catalan. PSUC-ICV therefore claims the belief that there should not be restrictive linguistic policies in place as it would be detrimental to the Catalanism movement and would exclude many Catalans. Accepting multiculturalism within Catalonia as well as Spain is key to the success of both.\textsuperscript{50}

These defining characteristics of PSUC-ICV are encompassed in the idea that federalism would ultimately be most beneficial to the Spanish state and its ACs. Although accepting of the

\textsuperscript{48} Guibernau, Catalan Nationalism: Francoism, Transition, and Democracy, 95-96.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 98-99.
monarchy (so long as democracy is constitutionally guaranteed), PSUC-ICV favors federalism as an answer to the demand for sovereignty. Federalism would mean achieving true equality among the nations of Spain in culture and language while maintaining solidarity in the Spanish state.⁵¹

PSC-PSOE’s role in Catalan politics has always been prominent, despite its recent loss of seats.

*Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC-PSOE)*

PSC and PSOE joined forces in 1978 to create a unified regional socialist party. Under its socialist ideology, it vies for a classless society and for the plural nature of Catalonia to be realized under a Spanish state. As PSUC, it does not use the phrase “Catalan nationalism” but instead, Catalanism, to distinguish the national identity of Catalonia from that of Spain. Also like PSUC, it considers federalism an aspect of progressive Catalanism.

Social cohesion and the increasing role of the working class in Catalan and Spanish politics are two key aspects of PSC-PSOE. It stresses the importance of cohesiveness among Catalans, rich and poor, and how this will ultimately save Catalonia and the Catalan identity. In regards to the Catalan identity, the Catalan language is of vital importance in protecting Catalonia’s identity. It must be fully recovered by being transformed into Catalonia’s “proper” language.⁵²

*Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC)*

ERC is arguably the most extreme Catalan political party. It considers itself to be left-wing, independent from national political parties and traditionally composed of the working-

⁵² Ibid., 113.
class. It is a separatist party whose ideals on an independent Catalonia are very solidified. ERC was the strongest party during the Second Republic of Spain in the 1930s and the first two presidents of the Generalitat, Frances Macià and Lluís Companys, both represented the ERC.\textsuperscript{53} This fact alone shows the strong influence and significance that ERC has had in modern Catalan politics.

However, the ERC experienced a devastating decline during Franco’s dictatorship as it was nearly destroyed because of the death, imprisonment or banishment of the majority of its supporters due to its strong Catalan nationalist platform. It wasn’t until its reestablishment during the transition to democracy in 1977 that the party would begin its long, slow journey to the top of the polls. The reestablishment of ERC signified that separatist sentiment still existed in Catalonia and that Catalan nationalism was still present despite the grave repression it experienced during Franco’s dictatorship.

In 1989, Àngel Colom, a former leader of the secessionist, linguistic national initiative organization \textit{La Crida}, took the role of General Secretary of the ERC. With the inclusion of activists from \textit{La Crida}, ERC’s platform became more radical as evident from its Ideological Declaration. The ultimate goal of the Catalan party is to “achieve the independence of the Catalan nation within the European Union through peaceful and democratic means.”\textsuperscript{54} Colom argues that Catalonia must become a state to save its nation. This idea of self-determination is the main focus of ERC’s Ideological Declaration which highlights rights such as “the right to life, existence and collective identity; the right to the territory which has been the specific

\textsuperscript{53} Guibernau, Catalan Nationalism: Francoism, Transition, and Democracy, 85.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 88.
geographic framework of its historical development until the present time;” and “the right to the use and to the promotion of the nation’s own language in all spheres of social life.”

According to Guibernau, the type of nationalism ERC supports is a “democratic and progressive type of nationalism, which has to emerge as a positive and constructive element, as a factor of social progress and civil cohesion, affecting all the citizens of the nation.” The nationalism of Catalonia is reflected in its society, economy and politics and differs greatly from that of Spain. ERC believes the structural differences between Catalonia and Spain have caused the problems seen in Catalonia today, specifically the increase in debt and unemployment. The only way to ensure continued development and productivity in the historically prosperous Catalonia is to separate from Spain in order to have full autonomy to create infrastructure and regulations that are most appropriate for Catalonia.

Although many Catalans agree with the majority of ERC’s platform, they have been turned away due to its radical stance on independence. However, despite its continued radicalization over the last decades, it is seeing an increase in support which coincides with the increase in separatist sentiment.

The Shift of Power and Influence

For decades, CiU and ERC have been the primary parties responsible for the attempt to create a politically autonomous Catalonia. CiU has always represented a desire for more autonomy while not pushing independence and its “discourse over home rule is usually couched in the context of greater autonomy for Catalonia vis-a-vis the central state rather than outright

56 Guibernau, Catalan Nationalism: Francoism, Transition, and Democracy, 89.
independence”58 while ERC has always been rather vocal in its support for an independent Catalonia. Although CiU has kept its right-of-center stance in regards to independence, the party’s (and Catalan Parliament) leader, Artur Mas, has recently leaned towards independence over increased autonomy.59 This increase in separatist sentiment from the CiU leader has been best demonstrated by his proposed referendum, which, despite a loss in his party’s seats in the recent November elections, he still plans to pursue in 2014.

With that said, it is vital to analyze Catalan election trends to get a better understanding of the national sentiment towards independence among Catalans. As shown in Tables 2 through 7, CiU has held the majority of seats in parliament since the reestablishment of the Generalitat in 1977.60 Although this demonstrates the strong ties to regionalism and the importance of regional interests among Catalans, it is the increase in the support for ERC, the separatist party, that is a key indicator of the extent of the desire for independence, all which has been fueled by the lack of official representation (and often times of oppression) of a unique identity and a deteriorating economy. As seen in Table 7, ERC made a significant jump in the number of seats held from 2010 (Table 6) to 2012, made even more significant by the fact that it is traditionally been one of the least-represented parties, in part due to its extreme left platform. This shift in power led to the majority of parliamentary seats being shared between CiU and ERC, forcing the two to work together. While having ultimately different ideologies, the two parties are intending to become a powerhouse in order to push through the referendum on independence and gain legitimacy.

58 Ibid.
59 Mas, "Scotland Is Getting Its Referendum—Next up Catalonia."
among policymakers in Spain. Not only do the election results reflect the will of the people, but it has also reiterated that Catalans feel that voting for these regional parties ensures that the social and economic policies needed for Catalonia will be sought after, even if secession becomes the only option.

**Table 2.** March 20, 1980 Election Results- Catalonia Totals

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<tr>
<th>Ticket</th>
<th>Votes</th>
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<td>Convergència i Unió (CiU)</td>
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<td>Partido Socialista de Andalucía-Partido Andaluz (PSA-PA)</td>
<td>71,841</td>
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<td>Solidaritat Catalana (SC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>156,402</td>
<td>5.8</td>
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61 EcoDiario.es, “Así Son Los Planes De CiU Y ERC Para Alcanzar La Independencia De Cataluña,” In elEconomista.es, elEconomista.es, 2013, [http://ecodiario.eleconomista.es/politica/noticias/4677717/03/13/Los-planpes-de-CiU-y-ERC-para-alcanzar-la-independencia-de-Cataluna.html#.Kku8WFPhX0bIqrb](http://ecodiario.eleconomista.es/politica/noticias/4677717/03/13/Los-planpes-de-CiU-y-ERC-para-alcanzar-la-independencia-de-Cataluna.html#.Kku8WFPhX0bIqrb).
Table 3. May 29, 1988 Election Results- Catalonia Totals

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Table 4. November 16, 2003 Election Results- Catalonia Totals

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### Table 5. November 1, 2006 Election Results - Catalonia Totals

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<td>Ciutadans-Partido de la Ciudadanía (C’s)</td>
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<td>Others</td>
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Table 6. November 28, 2010 Election Results- Catalonia Totals

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<td>(ICV-EuiA)</td>
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**Table 7. November 26, 2012 Election Results- Catalonia Totals**

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<td>Convergència i Unió (CiU)</td>
<td>1,112,341</td>
<td>30.68</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC)</td>
<td>496,292</td>
<td>13.68</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya (PSC)</td>
<td>523,333</td>
<td>14.43</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partit Popular (PP)</td>
<td>471,197</td>
<td>12.99</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iniciative per Catalunya Verds-Esquerra Unida i Alternative (ICV-EuiA)</td>
<td>358,857</td>
<td>9.89</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ciutadans-Partido de la Ciudadaní (C’s)</td>
<td>274,925</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUP-Alternativa d’Esquerres</td>
<td>126,219</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Catalonia’s Economy

According to Brancati, “if economic development is uneven, it may increase ethnic conflict and secessionism.” This is evident in the case of Catalonia, which has always been one of Spain’s wealthiest regions. Catalonia has found that for the first time, a majority of its voting population supports secession. Although the previously mentioned cultural differences between the Spanish state and Catalonia are undoubtedly a primary reason for the increase in separatist sentiment, it is impossible to ignore the apparent economic disparity between the two. This disparity is a result of the historical strength of the Catalan economy (implementing measures of “industrial protectionism”) that has persisted over centuries and the economic structure imposed by the Spanish state. It arguably reached its peak in the last decade during the 2008 Spanish recession, intensifying the separatist sentiment.

In order to understand the reasons for the increase in separatist sentiment, it is important to be aware of Catalonia’s economic history, the economic imbalance between Spain and Catalonia and the call for secession from the Catalan people. According to Salvador Estapé, Catalonia’s economy is unique and strong for several reasons, including

A diversified industrial base, a high degree of economic openness, a trade hub within Spain with a high logistic potential in the Mediterranean, an entrepreneurial tradition with a segment of dynamic export-minded companies, a high standard of living, a good level of human capital and some of the most advanced research and educational centres. (“A picture of the economy and business in Catalonia: threats and opportunities.” 46)
Many of these characteristics that define the Catalan economy are not found throughout Spain and when paired with a strong political arena and unique cultural identity, is a recipe for policy-making disaster. As Desquens points out, the post-Franco period of democratization began the economic transformation of Spain, which was solidified with its incorporation into the European Union in 1986. However, it was the adoption of the euro in 1999 that aided Spain in both developing and destabilizing the economy. These effects have been seen in all regions, including the prosperous region of Catalonia.

*The 2008 Spanish Recession*

The regime change of 1975 transitioned Spain into a democracy that secured its position as a developed state. Although since this time the economy had slowed, it was still experiencing growth. When Spain joined the EU in 1986, the confidence in its markets began to rise. Catalonia supported Spain in joining the EU, as the EU was a sign of multiculturalism and would possibly give the Catalans more recognition as a unique nation. In 1999 Spain adopted the euro and began developing at a very fast rate, with Catalonia continuing its great contribution.

However, the dark side to Spain’s economy revealed a country that was taking advantage of the high-confidence, low-risk interest rate it received as an EU member by heavily borrowing. The housing market sky-rocketed in Catalonia, and the realization of its lack of sustainability set in and investors began to bail. Not only this, but Spain had shown to be significantly less productive than its borrowing allowed, which also decreased the confidence of lenders. Unemployment was steadily increasing at 5 percent in 1977, 21.5 percent in 1985, decreasing

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some in the 1990s, and greatly increasing to 26.2 percent by October 2012, while at 17 percent in Catalonia.⁶³

Although Spain experienced a successful ten or fifteen years of growth, when the housing bubble burst, it burst quickly, sending Spain into severe debt with no easy way out. Figure 4 shows the severity of the Spanish housing bubble by comparing it to that of the United States, whose recession hit around the same time. According to the figure, the housing bubble reached its peak around 2009 with the average house price at nearly $150,000 higher than that of the United States (US), whose recession was known to severely affect the global market.

The housing crisis was transferred to the banks due to credit given for construction and property development activities. Loans at nearly 45 percent of Spain’s GDP were given for these activities, when their worth was less than 20 percent of that. The role of politics (albeit negative and on a national scale) can be seen in the furthering of the economic crisis. For example, the political advantages of the construction and property development economic model included a "reduction in unemployment, given that these are labour-intensive activities (favoring

politicians), an increase in housing value (favoring the median voter who is usually a home owner), and a generation of large tax revenues (particularly real estate) for the different public administrations (favoring politicians)."65 According to Carballo-Cruz, “in this context, it can be stated that for many years, there was no political interest in halting the excessive growth of construction activities and property development."66 Catalonia (as well as other regions of Spain) was subject to the consequences of Spain’s irresponsible policies and felt their grave effect, demonstrating but one example of the detrimental effects Spanish policies can have on Catalonia, whose economic model is unlike that of Spain.

It is no doubt that this recession has negatively affected Catalonia, as it has in each region in some capacity. However, to what extent has the recession been responsible for the increase in separatist sentiment in Catalonia in the last decade? The following will further analyze the economic relationship between Catalonia and Spain, and make clear the undeniable truth that this relationship has caused tension between the two, which has increased separatist sentiment.

The Economic Imbalance between Spain and Catalonia

As explored in previous topics, Catalonia feels displaced from the state for many reasons. A difference in history and language perpetuates Catalonia’s sense of identity and separation from the Spanish culture. According to Catalan International Businessman Joaquim Boixareu, a contrast exists between the traditions of the Catalans and Spaniards. He says that the Catalan tradition is associated with “a greater respect for democracy and compromise, and with a very

65 Carballo-Cruz, "Causes and Consequences of the Spanish Economic Crisis: Why the Recovery Is Taken So Long?,” 312-313.
66 Ibid., 313.
active civil society. To him it is obvious that Catalonia is a nation, not because the law may declare it so, but because we are a cultural, historical, economic and linguistic reality which goes back a thousand years.\(^67\) However, also included is differentiation between the economies and functions of each region. The economy of Catalonia has always been more developed and more successful than that of the other Spanish regions, including that of Madrid. Problems first arose in the eighteenth century when Catalonia was developing into an industrious society and desired the implementation of "industrial protectionism," a common economic policy for infant industries which did not follow that of the Spanish economic model as Spain as a whole was not as developed as Catalonia (a fact that still exists today). Recently, the tension between the Spanish state and Catalonia has heightened due to the 2008 financial crisis experienced by the area and a historical belief that the economic policies of the Spanish state threatened the stability, growth and development of Catalonia. This in itself has redefined the "us versus them" concept that has always been a factor in Catalonia’s identity. This concept now includes an "us versus them" in economic terms—the "us" who are responsible for a large portion of Spain’s production and tax revenue, and the “them” who unfairly distributes “us” taxes to other regions and who create the policies for “us,” although these policies may not be in the best interest of the Catalan economy.

The economy of Catalonia has been important to furthering and globalizing that of Spain for centuries. In fact, during a period of modernization (which is also cited to be a cause of increased nationalism) in 1989, Catalonia ranked first among the self-governing communities of Spain for the volume of foreign investment received, absorbing one-third of the total amount of

foreign capital invested in Spanish firms. Barcelona serves as the headquarters for many firms and companies and attracts consumers via tourism, making it a vital piece of the Spanish economy.\footnote{68}{Alex White and Raphael Brun-Aguerre, "Catalan Challenge Asks Real Questions of Europe,” Economic Research: Global Data Watch (London: JPMorgan Chase, 2012), 4.} Currently, Catalonia accounts for around 20 percent of Spain’s GDP while its population is roughly 15 percent of Spain. As seen in Figure 5, the share of GDP of Catalonia is significantly higher than most regions in Spain, and it ranks as the region with the highest share of Spain’s GDP, out-ranking Madrid. In 2005, Catalonia (in the EU-15) would have a GDP per capita between Sweden and Belgium (ranking it between 6th and 7th) and Spain would be 13th below Italy, further demonstrating the strength of the Catalan economy.
Figure 5. GDP per capita in PPS in the EU-15 countries. Relative position of Catalonia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GDP per capita in PPS</th>
<th>Index on EU-15 average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Luxembourg</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Catalonia</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EU-15 average** 25,856 100

*Figures without Catalonia. If it is consider, Spain has a GDP per capita of 24,282 euros and an index of 94. 
Source: Eurostat and personal compilation

Note: *Figures without Catalonia. If it is consider, Spain has a GDP per capita of 24,282 euros and an index of 94.

In her paper on the effects of decentralization on ethnic conflict and secessionism, Dawn Brancati points out that in many countries, “secessionism … has been motivated by the belief that a particular region is better off economically as an independent state,” which may be the case for Catalonia, according to many separatists. The state takes a hefty percentage of

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Catalonia’s GDP via taxes which is then used to provide services for Catalonia as well as the other ACs, who are not as productive as Catalonia.\textsuperscript{70} With this being the case, Catalonia argues, it would benefit from seceding in order to better allocate the tax money Spain would normally receive to services more suited to the region. This “extra” capital would also aid Catalonia in tackling the debt it has accrued over the last decade, partially due to the fiscal imbalance it has with the state. As mentioned previously, Catalonia is responsible for 25 percent of Spain’s total taxes, more than any other region, yet it receives significantly less in public investment from the state.\textsuperscript{71} This has created the large fiscal imbalance which has been, on average, around 8.5 percent of Catalonia’s GDP for the last decade. In 2005, 8.7 percent of Catalonia’s GDP went to the central government in comparison to 6.3 percent from Valencia and 5.6 percent from Madrid, two wealthier regions of Spain in terms of GDP per capita.\textsuperscript{72} Although it is common for wealthy regions to not see one hundred percent of their tax money returned in services, the imbalance is significantly larger than other comparable wealthy regions, such as California in the United States which, in 2005, had a fiscal deficit of 2.92 percent of GDP, and the Flanders region of Belgium at 4.4 percent.\textsuperscript{73} In fact, Catalonia’s deficit is the highest of any EU region.\textsuperscript{74} As seen in Table 8, the fiscal deficit has at times been more than double that of the comparable region of Flanders (4.4 percent), and more than triple that of California (2.92 percent).

\textsuperscript{70} Desquens, "Europe's Stateless Nations in the Era of Globalization: The Case for Catalonia's Secession from Spain."
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{72} White and Brun-Aguerre, “Catalan Challenge Asks Real Questions of Europe,” 4.
\textsuperscript{73} Núria Bosch, “La viabilidad econòmica d’una Catalunya-Estat” (presentation, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Catalonia, Spain, February 28, 2013).
\textsuperscript{74} Desquens, “Europe’s Stateless Nations in the Era of Globalization: The Case for Catalonia’s Secession from Spain.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% GDP</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% GDP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>2009</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Also of importance is that Catalonia claims its economic model is very different from Spain’s. Catalonia’s companies are “small, export-oriented and innovative.” Spain’s model involves large companies that used to be state-owned which significantly affects its openness in the global market. Although Catalonia has seen consistent growth in many areas of its economy, it must contribute more to innovation and technology to stay competitive in a globalizing world. However, due to Madrid’s control of these sectors of the economy, Catalonia’s potential is limited and these differences cause an imbalance in policy-making and implementing between the two economies. Catalan companies pay high taxes and do not see a sufficient return

76 Ibid.
in public services and infrastructural investment, making the region less competitive.\textsuperscript{77} Desquens argues that under its current structure and with so great a fiscal deficit, Catalonia will never be globally competitive.\textsuperscript{78} An example of the lack of infrastructural investment can be seen in transport issues.

\textit{A Lack of Control over Infrastructure: Transportation}

The consequences of inadequate infrastructure on the economy are obvious: development is hindered, the region is unable to expand its market (especially in regards to a lack of transportation) both which lead to a lack of investment of all forms, foreign and domestic, and the cycle of underdevelopment continues.\textsuperscript{79} It could be argued that due to Catalonia’s lack of control over its infrastructure and infrastructural projects, its level of development is rapidly decreasing. This is especially seen in the transportation sector of the region.

First, there is the Barcelona airport, a huge international hub with many terminals and a modern facility. However, as Germà Bel, an economics professor at the University of Barcelona says, the problem lies with the lack of control the Catalan government has over the airport. For example, the Spanish air transport authority organization, AENA, “depends entirely on Madrid authorities,” and the majority of its decisions are based on keeping Madrid the center of air travel in Spain. Iberia, one of Spain’s largest airline companies, used to be run by the government. Although it is now privately owned, AENA and its administrative restrictions give it priority

\textsuperscript{77} Strubell, \textit{What Catalans Want: Could Catalonia Be Europe's Next State?} 76, 78.
\textsuperscript{78} Desquens, “Europe’s Stateless Nations in the Era of Globalization: The Case for Catalonia’s Secession from Spain.”
routes to departure gates in Barcelona’s new T1 terminal (funded by the Spanish government), ensuring Iberia, with Madrid as its hub, is the primary beneficiary. While it is obvious that Spanish companies are given priority in Catalonia, what is most detrimental to the continued development of the region is that it has no control over decisions and policies such as those of air transport. Of course, it is easy to see how politics are heavily involved in advocating for more control over funding and administrative control over infrastructure such as airports.

Second, the railway system is outdated and limited. The “infrastructure collapse” in 2007 of Rodalies railway system, the Barcelona railway system operated by RENFE (the Spanish railway company) seriously put into question the investment priorities of the Spanish government. According to Bel, during his time as a member of parliament in the Spanish Parliament for PSC, requests for transport investment, specifically railway investment, were denied, as all investment was put into the new rapid train system (AVE). Although this railway system was originally thought to be the link to Europe the country had been waiting for, its services are limited to Spain and France. The lack of investment via renovations in Rodalies led to a railway system back up. Many businessmen, economists and politicians (Bel, Joaquim Boixareu, the Managing Director for a large Catalan metallurgical company) claim that Catalonia’s lack of control over policy-making and funding of its transportation system, as well as Spain’s poor decision-making has significantly slowed the development of not only the Catalan region, but of the country as a whole. Both Bel and Boixareu point to the need for better freight and passenger railway systems along the Mediterranean corridor (Barcelona-Valencia-Perpignan), a very active and important

80 Strubell, What Catalans Want: Could Catalonia Be Europe's Next State?, 70, 76.
81 Ibid., 72.
82 Ibid.
area, economically. Because Spain consistently denies Catalonia the ability to invest and develop economically, it only seems natural for Catalans to seek more control in order to ensure a prosperous future.

To reiterate, it is in fact the combination of this lack of economic control and the proven financial damage Catalonia has seen (partially as a result of Spanish policies), implemented Spanish policies that ignore Catalan needs and interests, and of course the unique culture with which many Catalans identify that has caused the increase in separatist sentiment we see today.

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83 Strubell, *What Catalans Want: Could Catalonia Be Europe's Next State?*, 70, 76.
Conclusion

Despite a centralist Spanish state that has tried to create a unified Spain through attempts to quash the Catalan culture, Catalonia has preserved itself as a unique entity. From Franco to the recent decision of the Spanish Constitutional Court to annul several articles of the 2006 Statute of Autonomy of Catalonia, Catalans have been fighting to keep their culture alive. It is obvious that “the mainstream Catalan nationalist movement … has traditionally focused on cultural and linguistic promotion.”\textsuperscript{84} However, this promotion has always existed, to some extent, as previously stated. It is the poor economic state of Catalonia, thought to be a consequence of decisions and policies made (or not made) by the state, that has garnered more support for secession, causing the increase in separatist sentiment seen today. Catalan politicians are successfully increasing awareness of Catalonia’s situation, as seen by the elections of the past few years in which secessionist parties are winning more seats in Parliament. By fighting for a referendum on independence, Catalan political parties and politicians are showing their strength and influence. The obvious truth is this: the increase in separatist sentiment in Catalonia is not entirely a result of the economy or that a different language is spoken by many in the region. The foundation of this separatist sentiment is a unique culture and shared history and the sentiment is being fueled by economic hardship, both of which are being exploited by Catalan political parties in their argument for independence. When results are not achieved, the fight will continue.

\textsuperscript{84} Desquens, "Europe's Stateless Nations in the Era of Globalization: The Case for Catalonia's Secession from Spain."
and often will strengthen. With time and each denial of more cultural recognition and linguistic autonomy, each blow to the economy due to a continued lack of infrastructural investment, Catalans become more willing follow the possibly dangerous path of secession, as seen with Jordi Pujol.

This research aids in identifying not only the triggers of separatist sentiment in Catalonia, but also in other regions where there has been an increase in nationalist sentiment. It will be beneficial for states in which stateless nations are known to exist within by giving a change for preemptive control over the area, possibly by increasing autonomy. Of course it would also be beneficial for those states that are unaware of any such nations, as it gives the key signs of a stateless nation and the consequences when all factors (cultural, political and economical) are present.

Catalonia is a key example of the consequences that may ensue as a result of a lack of sufficient representation and control. More research is required to determine the weight of importance of each the economy, politics and cultural identity in the increase in separatist sentiment in regions under the control of a state, such as Catalonia. It seems that this could be dependent upon the shared history of the people of the region, the level of control of the state, location, or a number of other factors, unique to the region and ethnicity. Some examples of regions without a state include the Tibetans, Kurds, Palestinians, Flemish and Scottish, among others, all with unique reasons for an increase in separatist sentiment. While studies of each region is relevant in the general study of the origin of separatist sentiment, most of these “ethnicities” lean more on one factor than other. In the end, it is obvious that Catalonia a special case as each factor supports the other and plays an equally important role in the increase in
separatist sentiment, a concept which may be further studied and applied to the stateless nations that exist across the globe.

*The future of Catalonia*

The referendum in November of 2014 will provide a clearer picture of the level of support for independence, although this in and of itself will not be enough to convince the Spanish state to allow an official referendum that would allow the secession of Catalonia from the region. While at this time the EU claims it supports Spain’s decision, as it is a declared nation-state and member of the EU, arguments have been made that in order for Spain to act as a true democracy, it must allow Catalonia to hold a referendum if it is what the people want. This especially holds true as Great Britain is allowing Scotland to hold an official referendum in September of 2014, and Catalonia will fight to also be allowed this opportunity.85 The right to self-determination is widely thought to be a democratic right, and Catalonia will continue to argue this point as long as separatist sentiment continues.

Bibliography


Spanish Const. art. II, § 1.