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Sociocultural and Historical Perspectives on Diversity in Spain

Abstract

The image of Spain in the 21st century is defined by the coexistence of the descendants of different peoples who have arrived in the region over the past centuries and decades. Since prehistoric times, the history of the Iberian Peninsula has been marked by interactions between the groups that settled there; sometimes these relationships have involved a certain type of subordination and domination (for example, conqueror versus conquered), and at other times they have been characterised by the peaceful or conflictual coexistence of different societies. Thus, immigration, coexistence and assimilation have always been fundamental to the social and cultural life of Spain. To this day, cultural historians and philosophers have not been able to agree on whether the diversity of society has been an advantage or a disadvantage for the development of Spain. In this article, I will examine the approaches to this social and cultural diversity in different historical periods and the basic arguments used by scholars and scientists to support their beliefs. In analysing the issue, we look at prominent works and authors in Spanish cultural history, searching for and comparing possible arguments. We try to answer the question to what extent the search for homogeneity or diversity has been part of the Spanish self-definition in a given historical period.

Keywords: Spain, identity, diversity, multiculturalism, coexistence

When visiting Spain today, the traveller will see a diverse and multicultural country. In addition to the Spaniards who were born in the country, today's society is made up of different nationalities. The diversification of society has not, of course, left Spain's national identity intact, but the foundations of its current variant come from the past. The aim of my article is to outline the



basic approaches that allow us to trace the main pillars of the self-definition of Spanish society in the 20th and 21st centuries. In some cases, as we shall see, it was an identity imposed on society and individuals from above, that is, from a political-ideological authority.

I. In search of the Spanish identity

In his monograph on the different historical memories of Spain,¹ the historian Ricardo García Cárcel poses the following question: since when can we speak of a Spanish identity? According to the author, the answer depends on the criteria by which we examine the subject.

- If we consider the creation of a unified Spanish state as a fundamental premise of Spanish identity, then the first Bourbon monarch, Philip V, must be at the centre of our interest. The Nueva Planta decrees issued by this king between 1707 and 1716 unified the institutions and laws of the various Spanish kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula into an absolutist and centralised kingdom. The centre was Castile, and Spanish society became increasingly homogenised.
- If we take a territorial approach to the development of identity, we can speak of a Spanish identity since the beginning of the 16th century, when the Catholic Monarchs (Queen Isabella I of Castile and King Ferdinand II of Aragon) and their descendants gradually established close cooperation (but not yet unification) between the main Spanish kingdoms, while preserving their own institutions and laws.
- If the institutionalisation of a common language can be a decisive factor, then the emergence of the Castilian language, also at the beginning of the 16th century, is the central element.
- If Spanish identity is linked to national sovereignty, the only point of departure is the adoption of the Spanish Constitution of 1812 (the Constitution of *Cádiz*), the first Spanish constitution and the first to mention the sovereignty of the nation.

García Cárcel, in his book mentioned above, cites other possible factors, some related to philosophy or intellectual history, but does not provide a clear answer. Other authors have also addressed this issue, each exploring the question of identity from a different angle. The most common approach is to con-

¹ García Cárcel 2014.

sider the role of religion, either alone or in combination with other factors. For example, José Álvarez-Junco, in his monograph on the subject,² argues that the collective identity of the Iberian Peninsula since the Middle Ages was defined primarily by the Catholic religion, combined with a relationship (essentially loyalty) to the Spanish Crown and Empire, with all other factors being marginal over the centuries; in the 20th century, however, politics took over the role of these factors, blending with the particularities of the regional identities (Catalan, Basque, Gallego). At the same time, Jesús Torrecilla points out in his study that the myths of different historical periods have also played an important role in the formation of Spanish identity, with the “mythical activity” of the Spanish nation in each period consciously trying to shape its identity in a way that affected both its own society and its perception from abroad.³

Of course, there is no common denominator on this issue; therefore I will try to highlight the key points and show which factors cannot be ignored when examining this topic.

II. The components of Spanish identity

The history of present-day Spain has been marked by the relationships that have developed over the millennia between the different groups of people who have arrived in successive waves and those who were already living in the Iberian Peninsula; at times these relationships have been marked by subordination and domination (mainly through the conflicts that naturally arise between conquerors and conquered peoples), and at other times they have been marked by the peaceful or conflictual coexistence of different peoples. Each group brought with them their own traditions, religion and forms of government developed in their former homelands, and conflicts often arose between the new influences and the established order. As the different cultures came together, clashes of varying intensity were inevitable, including wars that spread to all regions of the peninsula and fundamentally changed the vision of the future. As a result, Spanish society has always been defined by the coexistence of the different peoples who have migrated to the region. Throughout history it has received and absorbed the influence of several ethnic groups: Iberians, Celts, Greeks, Romans, Visigoths, Jews, Arabs, Berbers,

² Álvarez-Junco 2013.

³ Torrecilla 2009.

Slavs and Franks, among others, have shaped the linguistic, religious and cultural diversity that we now collectively call Spanish. Multiethnic relations and the voluntary or involuntary adoption of new cultural elements have been part of Spain's history from its beginnings to the present day.

Since the 19th century, historians have debated whether the diversity of Spanish society has been an advantage or a disadvantage in the development of Spain: would it have been better to create a more homogeneous society or, on the contrary, does heterogeneity add to the real value and uniqueness of the Spanish people? In this case, as we will see below, it was primarily the religious component that provided the basis for the theoretical reasoning and the ensuing debates.

The arguments used in the debate multiplied throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, and in the middle of the last century they came to the fore in a series of reflections by two historians: Américo Castro, a philologist and cultural historian of Brazilian origin who carried out his academic work first in Spain and then in the United States, and Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, considered one of the most outstanding Spanish historians of the 20th century. In the 1940s and 1950s, the two engaged in a wide-ranging debate on the kingdoms and peoples of medieval Spain. Their perspectives may still be relevant in the 21st century, as some elements of the cultural and religious processes of the Middle Ages would have repercussions in later times. The two historians debated during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco (1939–1975), trying to define the nature of the Spanish people and the Spanish consciousness. Their theories became part of national and international Hispanic historiography. Moreover, their influential arguments have come to the forefront several times in recent decades when the ruling power (whether dictatorship or democracy) has sought support for its beliefs about national consciousness and identity in the ideology of one of these historians.

The starting point of the debate is the relationship between Christian peoples and other religious groups. Américo Castro argues that it would be a mistake to give Christianity an almost exclusive role in identifying the roots and fundamental components of Spain. We cannot relegate other peoples and religions to the periphery of national history; they must all be present in our assessment with the weight that their importance deserves. According to Castro and his followers, Christians, Arabs and Jews together shaped the image of the peninsula and contributed valuable elements to the complex image we now identify as Spain. The culture and society would have been much poorer and simpler if these three groups had not been present with their individual visions; the present is therefore a synthesis of the interaction of these three ele-

ments. His fundamental book on the subject is *España en su historia. Cristianos, moros y judíos* [Spain in its history. Christians, Moors and Jews], published in 1948.⁴

The other approach takes the opposite view. According to this perspective, the essence of Spain lies in Christianity and can only be interpreted in relation to this religion; other religions and ethnic groups were rather obstacles to the development of the nation, and their role must be examined in the light of how Christianity managed to overcome them. For Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz and his followers, the Muslim conquest and presence was above all a period that should be treated as a parenthesis in the history of the nation; the country should not be proud of this era, because it changed (and also deformed) the intellectual and cultural physiognomy of the country, diverting the nation from the Christian path and leaving many unfavourable consequences. With the exception of the Islamic religious groups, most of the peoples, including the Romans and the Visigoths, have influenced the development of Spanish society, mostly in a positive way, and have determined what we can consider Spanish today. Sánchez-Albornoz's most important work is *España: un enigma histórico* [Spain: a historical enigma], published in two volumes in 1957.⁵

This latter approach is clearly the result and also the continuation of the predominantly intolerant view that prevailed in the Christian kingdoms of Spain during the *Reconquista* of the peninsula⁶ and the expulsion of the Arabs (15th century), and which still had many adherents in the 20th century – it is no coincidence that the Francoist dictatorship, organised on a national-Catholic basis, and the political and social groups that made it up, favoured this view of history, even though Sánchez-Albornoz was a leading figure on the Republican side. In the democratic era, however, Castro's interpretation became legitimate in mainstream historiography and cultural history. The debate between the two historians continued in the following decades.⁷

The formation of the Spanish national consciousness is clearly influenced by the most remarkable events of the past. Until the early 20th century, the Spanish nation was less concerned with defining itself than with issues that directly affected its daily life, such as internal civil wars and struggles with other

⁴ Castro 1948.

⁵ Sánchez-Albornoz 1957.

⁶ The Spanish *Reconquista* was a long period of history in which the Christian kingdoms of the Iberian Peninsula attempted to reclaim territory that had been conquered by Islamic armies in the early Middle Ages. This reconquest began in the 8th century and lasted until the fall of Granada, the last Muslim stronghold in Spain, in 1492.

⁷ See: Lapeyre 1965; Maíz Chacón 2009; Baumeister–Teuber 2010.

countries, or the reforms carried out by successive governments. The Catholic Monarchs, Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand of Aragon, who married at the end of the 15th century, established close cooperation between their kingdoms, and their successors were forced to deal with the different levels of development and traditions of the various regions. The result of these contradictions was that the empire, which appeared to be somewhat united from the outside, was in fact full of conflicts and eventually broke up as a result of various internal and external processes.

At the beginning of the 19th century, most of the Spanish-American colonies became independent, and by the end of the century the last colonies (such as Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines) had also broken their ties with the Spanish monarchy; the resulting sense of loss led Spanish society to seek a way of reinventing itself. Once a world power, it became a country confined almost exclusively to the Iberian Peninsula, and society found it difficult to adapt to this new situation. How can people accept and understand that yesterday they ruled a colonial empire and today they are no more than a middle power? This trauma was compounded by internal political and social problems: the first third of the century saw a rise in corruption and inefficiency in the institutions that governed the country. Society was faced with a situation in which what little remained of its former glory was being managed by its leaders with a high degree of incompetence. Intellectuals were disillusioned, and the upper classes feared that the concerns of the lower classes would explode in the face of this situation. New answers had to be found to the questions “Who are we?” “What do we want?” “Where are we going?” in order to prevent the country from falling into the abyss of despair and apathy.

III. Approaches to self-definition

Writers, philosophers and historians tried to find a way out of the trauma of the tragic outcome of the Spanish-American War of 1898, looking for clues in the past and in a possible future – members of the Generation of '98, such as Miguel de Unamuno, Azorín, Pío Baroja or Ramón del Valle-Inclán, tried to portray a possible vision of the future, identifying and interpreting the successes and failures of the past.⁸ The search for a path to follow and the assessment of a seemingly hopeless situation also had a major impact on political life. In the 1920s, the first radical manifestations of sympathy for Italian fas-

⁸ Csejtei–Laczkó–Scholz (eds.) 1998.

cism appeared in Spain, as did the first attempts to create a Spanish organisation on the model of the Italian National Fascist Party. It seemed to be an alternative that could perhaps provide a more satisfactory response than the previous ones.

In 1921, the philosopher José Ortega y Gasset published his historical essay *España invertebrada* [Invertebrate Spain],⁹ in which he argued that among the many threats facing Spain, the separatist aspirations of nationalities (such as the Catalans and Basques) posed the most serious problems for the nation. According to him, people are defenceless when patriotic feelings have disappeared from their conscience, and he believes that Spaniards currently fall into this category. He is concerned that a growing part of society is made up of masses who are incapable of making important decisions for themselves. Ortega y Gasset's ideas would soon appear in the imagination of the defenders of Spanish fascism. From then on, the conservative press argued with increasing intensity that a leader like Benito Mussolini was the only guarantee that the successes in Italy could be repeated in Spain.

After the conservative Miguel Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923–1930), in the Second Republic, which was established in 1931 with the fall of the monarchy, radical conservatives became more active because they were concerned about the popularity of the left and the rights and privileges that some regions had obtained. The journalist Ernesto Giménez Caballero became one of their main ideologues: he saw the end of the 15th century, the period of the Catholic Monarchs, as a precursor of Spanish Fascism and, therefore, as an epoch in national history to be followed. According to him, Spain would soon again set the course for the development of humanity, regaining the power it had once possessed and which had been usurped by inferior races. He thought that Italy was striving to do the same in all areas of life, but that it was probably the “Spanish genius“ that would have to undertake the real mission.¹⁰ The identity of the Spanish nation would have to be defined by this Spanish genius – his proposals would soon have many followers.

For conservative and nationalist groups, the 1936 uprising that led to the Spanish Civil War was necessary, in part, because of the regions' aspirations for autonomy and the potential rupture of the country's indissoluble unity, so national cohesion was a high priority from the first moment of armed conflict. For Franco's dictatorship, which followed the Civil War and lasted until 1975, Spanish identity could not be confined to the Iberian Peninsula. The

⁹ Ortega y Gasset 1921.

¹⁰ Giménez Caballero 1932.

so-called imperial will, embodied by the Falange, showed that although the Latin American colonies had already been separated from the mother country, a certain kind of reunification was possible on a spiritual level. From this point of view, no real separation had taken place, because no earthly power could divide the peoples of the Hispanic race. In their vision, the great and invincible Hispanic empire continued to exist on a spiritual level, and Franco's National Movement was the guardian of this unity. The idea of *Hispanidad* overcame the difficulties: the common past, language, traditions, culture, religion and the blood flowing in both Spaniards and Latin Americans would unite the peoples on both sides of the Atlantic ocean forever. This approach dominated both social and cultural policies, with particular emphasis on the cinema as the main instrument for influencing people.¹¹ In some ways, the idea resembled what Benedict Anderson would later call the "imagined community".¹² These groups generally do not know each other, they no longer belong to the same nation, but for historical reasons they are part of the same community. They share a common past, language and traditions. As a result, Spanish identity has become an integral part of Hispanic identity, underlining the unity of all Hispanics.

After the loss of the last colonies, unity took on a transcendental meaning at the beginning of the 20th century, as opposed to the autonomist or pro-independence ambitions of peninsular nationalisms. Franco's dictatorship placed a centralist Hispanic nationalism at the heart of its national policy, excluding anything that did not proclaim the unity that dated back to its own medieval Castilian traditions, so that the aspirations of the nationalities for self-government were unacceptable to the regime. National identity had to be in line with this ideology. Anyone who disagreed with this approach was branded anti-Spanish and a traitor: the monopolisation of patriotism is obviously an inherent feature of dictatorships.¹³ However, when a dictatorial regime disappears, there is a danger that national identity will be replaced by a void, sometimes with the need to rebuild it by incorporating new elements.

In 1937, an anonymous author published an article in the Falangist magazine *Vértice* entitled *La estética de las muchedumbres* [The Aesthetics of the Crowds], which shows us how they tried to influence the masses. The starting point of the article was that after the First World War, under the influence of Bolshevik propaganda, the peoples of European countries lost their ability to

¹¹ Lénárt 2011, Lénárt 2012.

¹² Anderson 1983.

¹³ Anderle 1985: 162–164.

think and the national parties became fragmented and incapable of providing leadership. It was then that a new ideology and a new state were born, led by a strong, sure and immovable leader, the *Caudillo*, from the collaboration of patriotic forces and spirits. Francisco Franco's statements were based on the fact that the masses were decisively influenced by the representation of heroic achievements, and that festive events and religious ceremonies drew society under their influence. People had to feel that they were an important part of the new Spain and that everything was happening for the benefit of Spaniards. This could only have the desired effect if the people were aware that they were not a group of individuals, but belonged to a community. This mass, if it loved its country, had to be unconditionally at the service of Franco, because the system he created was designed to save the Spanish people.¹⁴ The ideal Spanish (or Hispanic) identity therefore did not exist at the level of the individual, but only at the level of the community.

Franco's aim was to restore an idealised image of the Spain of the past, modelled on the period of the Catholic Monarchs. The symbols of the regime's cultural roots evoked the same principles that characterised the imperial existence of the 16th century, with its religious and classical culture. In schools, special emphasis was placed on the history of Imperial Spain and on explaining the ideological foundations of *Hispanidad*, the sense of being Hispanic. The main objective was to show that the Spanish nation was morally irreproachable and that the imperial spirit of *Hispanidad* raised it to an even higher level.¹⁵ In terms of religion, Catholicism became an omnipresent factor.

The regime proclaimed the superiority of the Hispanic race. The foundations of the idealised Spanish identity had to be found in the past so that everyone could be aware of its dominance. For the dictatorship, any historical event that guaranteed the survival of the country could become part of the national canon, so the Catholic Monarchs were honoured for the reconquest of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews and the discovery of America. The Bourbon era, a period of decadence, no longer belonged to Franco's national history, but the early years of the 19th century did, when the Spanish people rose up in the name of national self-determination in defiance of the Napoleonic invaders. This led directly to the justification of the Civil War of 1936–1939, in which, according to this interpretation, Spain had to defend itself against the conspiracy of foreign powers. Parallel identities were created that fit perfectly into the dichotomy of “victor and vanquished”. Us and them. From the point

¹⁴ The content of the article is summarised by: Llorente 1995: 27.

¹⁵ Delgado Gómez-Escalonilla 1992: 122–123.

of view of the victors: we are the patriots, the people of the new Catholic Spain, and they are the traitors, the anti-Spanish. From the perspective of the defeated (i.e. the oppressed or refugees in exile), we are the defenders of democracy and they are the tyrants.¹⁶

The fall of the Spanish dictatorship in 1975 gave way to a period of democratic transition and, from 1982, to the era of democracy. A citizen who had spent most of his life, or at least his childhood and youth, under a dictatorial regime had to redefine why he considered himself Spanish, why he felt that his origins and his links with Spain distinguished him from people in other countries of the world. Whereas in previous decades he had not had the opportunity to define himself and interpret his relationship with the nation according to his own convictions, he finally had the freedom to decide the meaning of the components that made up his identity. This redefinition took place in parallel with Spain's integration into the Western system: not only in institutional terms (European Economic Community, NATO), but also by joining the ranks of the European democracies, the so-called Europeanisation. From that moment on, belonging to Europe became part of the Spanish identity.

In his studies, essays and book on the socio-political approach to Spanish identity, political scientist Jordi Muñoz questions whether the principles based on Franco's national-Catholicism have really been replaced by democratic patriotism. He argues that the leaders of the democratic transition and the drafters of the new Spanish Constitution of 1978 conceived of the new national identity as a nationalism based on consensus. The left and the right, of course, saw things differently, but for the rest of the 20th century, with the exception of some extremist ideologies, the whole nation took the Constitution of 1978 as a set of fundamental principles and wanted to introduce any changes through future amendments to that Constitution, not by denying or withdrawing it. Castilian Spanish would remain the common language of all Spaniards, but the languages of the regions were given co-official status in their respective autonomous communities.¹⁷

During the decades of Franco's national-Catholic dictatorship, religion played a substantial role in the self-determination of this traditionally Catholic and deeply religious country, but its importance diminished during the period of democratic transition. It was not religion that failed them, but the loss of trust in the Catholic Church (mainly because of its close collaboration with the right-wing dictatorship) contributed greatly to the fact that religion no

¹⁶ Lénárt 2011, Lénárt 2012.

¹⁷ Muñoz 2009.

longer played an essential role in the daily lives of Spaniards. This is also the reason why many people make a distinction between religion and the Church: religious people do not necessarily go to church because many disagree with the actions of the Spanish Catholic Church; those who are anti-clerical are not necessarily atheists, but simply reject the institution for the historical reasons mentioned above.¹⁸

Jordi Muñoz, in his monograph *La construcción política de la identidad española* [The Political Construction of Spanish Identity],¹⁹ writes that from the period of democratic transition (1975–1982) to the present day, it has been possible to distinguish two basic concepts of identity in Spain, which he calls constitutional national identity and traditional national identity. The foundations of constitutional identity are the Spanish language (that is, the traditional Castilian), the entire history of the country, respect for the Constitution of 1978 and the unquestionable unity of the country. Traditional national identity is based on other elements: it includes emotional identification with national symbols such as the anthem and the flag, the glorification of certain periods of the past and the identification of Catholicism as the true spiritual basis of the nation. These two approaches are not necessarily mutually exclusive; their components can even be combined to form a complex identity. Most Spanish sociologists today continue to work with these two dimensions of identity when studying these issues in relation to the recent past, but since the 1990s a third aspect, the cultural, has also become important. In the past, this element did not constitute a separate category, it was included in the other two, but today its existence as an independent category is justified. Culture, of course, has to be understood in the broadest sense, ranging from the artistic canon to bullfights, classical dances and other traditions, to symbolic and commemorative sites.

Spanish national identity, like most national identities, is first and foremost a cultural construction influenced by personal, social and political changes. Javier Moreno Luzón and other scholars of contemporary nationalisms argue that the symbols of a nation, such as the flag or the anthem, do not have a specific meaning in themselves, even when they are claimed by two opposing ideological-political formations. What is important is the meaning that the symbol acquires in a given historical context and the role it plays in the life of society. The Spanish flag, for example, although there is a consensus on its meaning, does not play the same role in regions with alternative iden-

¹⁸ Pérez-Agote–Santiago (eds.) 2008; Pérez-Agote 2010.

¹⁹ Muñoz 2012.

tities. The Franco regime appropriated national symbols to such an extent that, in the democratic period, people's attachment to them was increasingly seen as extremism, even though they no longer had that nationalist meaning. As a result, it is more common for people to define themselves not in terms of group membership, political sympathies or religious beliefs, but as individuals influenced by these factors, in addition to their family, environment and social network.²⁰

IV. Guidelines for the future

An inescapable issue in the past and current formation of Spanish identity has been the question of the so-called “black legend” and the reactions to it, which is perhaps the most important myth of Spain, linking the past with the present (and the future). It is a collection of negative stereotypes about the Spanish nation, fed by various sources (the cruelty of the Inquisition, the abuses in the Americas, the subjugation of other peoples, the general “laziness” of the Spanish, etc.). Although many attempts have been made to refute it (such as the creation of the “pink legend” or the “white legend”, offering the opposite interpretation of the factors mentioned above), negative approaches still persist, especially with regard to the medieval Spanish kingdoms and the modern discoveries and colonial empires. Today, for political reasons, historians and social scientists are once again frequently revisiting this topic in the paradigms and narratives associated with the Spanish nation, but their arguments do not add new elements, they only render the explanation of an interpretation that is biased in one direction or another, in an increasingly radical tone.²¹

The identity of Spaniards, as we have seen, was often artificially influenced by the groups and individuals who governed the country. At the beginning of the 21st century, this effort was mainly directed abroad: between 2012 and 2018, the program was known as *Marca España*, and between 2018 and 2021 as *España Global*, a project managed by government departments to improve Spain's image abroad, presenting it as a more attractive country than before, especially in the fields of culture, economy and technology. Under the coordination of the State and the guidance of diplomats, the “pink legend” has thus been redesigned with new elements that do not draw on the past, but rather

²⁰ Moreno Luzón–Núñez Xeixas (eds.) 2013.

²¹ The most important recent works on the subject are: Payne 2017; Ibáñez 2018.

focus on the present and future of the country, highlighting only its positive and attractive features.²² Although this program was aimed abroad, but it also served as an important reference point for the home country to focus on the positive elements of self-definition.

Ideological differences and political sympathies, as well as regional factors, continued to play an important role in defining Spanish identity: at the turn of the millennium, in Catalonia or the Basque Country, where nationalist currents were strong, a resident was more likely to consider himself primarily Catalan or Basque than Spanish; in other autonomous communities, this kind of (self-)distinction was less common. With the advent of democracy, national identity in many regions has been transformed into a national-regional identity, dating back to the Christian kingdoms that emerged during the Arab conquest, the regional conflicts of medieval and modern Spain, and the territorial reforms of the Second Republic (1930s), which were in line with regional demands.²³ As a result, in the democracy the autonomy needs of both the historical regions (e.g., Andalusia, Aragon) and the communities of the so-called small nations (Catalonia, Basque Country, Galicia, Navarre, Valencia) were met, while other regions became autonomous communities for other reasons (political, traditional, etc.). In this way, as Juan José Linz defined it, Spaniards have developed a dual national identity: both the Spanish and the regional aspects have become part of their identity, which has become increasingly present in recent decades, both in terms of culture and language. This image has become even more complex in the 21st century, when immigration has turned Spanish society into a truly multicultural society.²⁴ The intensification of the Catalan independence issue in the 2010s²⁵ has brought about a significant change: while in Catalonia we are witnessing the strengthening of regional national consciousness, in the rest of Spain – especially as a result of the Catalan events – the importance of Spanish identity and the search for

²² López-Jorrín–Vacchiano 2014.

²³ Harsányi 2005.

²⁴ Szilágyi 1998: 114–129, Szilágyi 2009: 46–54.

²⁵ In 2017, Catalonia, an autonomous community in northeastern Spain, held an independence referendum on 1 October which the Spanish government declared illegal. Despite the obstacles, the referendum went ahead and the results showed that 90% of those who voted were in favour of Catalan independence. However, the turnout was low due to the police action and the boycott of the referendum by opponents of independence. The Catalan government declared independence on 27 October, but the Spanish government dissolved the Catalan parliament and imposed direct rule from Madrid. The issue remains unresolved, with some Catalan separatists continuing to push for independence, while others seek greater autonomy within Spain.

unity have been accentuated. In addition, the personal relationship of the individual with his or her national history and with national symbols is, of course, always imbued with political overtones.

For the younger generations, national identity is combined with a European and global identity. Today, a resident of Spain can be defined as Spanish, Catalan (which is interchangeable with any other nationality in the country), European and cosmopolitan. In today's Spain, Europeanism has become the strongest bond for several reasons. On the one hand, many Spaniards go abroad in search of a better life. On the other hand, a large proportion of young graduates get to know other cultures during their higher education by studying abroad on scholarships; in fact, in the pre-Covid era, Spain was the largest recipient and sender of students abroad.²⁶ For them, it is natural that their essentially Spanish identity should include some elements of the identity of the nations they know.

In the 21st century, there is no closed, homogeneous identity that fundamentally shapes the national consciousness. This is even truer in a country with massive immigration. Spain is at the centre of European immigration, and the (re)formation of the country's identity will continue to be influenced by the blending of different cultural traditions. The criteria of self-definition in contemporary Spain are constantly changing due to external influences and have become a multicultural identity that can be interpreted in the widest possible range. At the same time, diversity and plurality have always been part of the Spanish national identity, and the increase in immigration has intensified these phenomena. New identities have been added to the existing linguistic, cultural and historical ones.

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²⁶ García 2019.

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