

THE EMERGENCE OF DEMOCRATIC
SPAIN AND THE “INVENTION” OF A
DEMOCRATIC TRADITION

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1. On the role of civil society and political symbolisms in democratic consolidations

Let me start by a personal remark that may be linked to the general argument I will propose in this paper. I belong to a generation of Spaniards who took on our first political and professional responsibilities during the late 1950's and 1950's in the belief that the framework of Francoist institutions was both inimical to us, and an impediment for the solution of Spain's problems in a spirit of freedom, justice and human creativity. We believed then that, for all its limitations and internal tensions, Western Europe, and the Western World as a whole provided us with the key to a better understanding of our own situation and also with the key to a better future for our country. The Spanish philosopher Ortega had said: "Spain is the problem, Europe is the solution" (echoing Joaquin Costa's position at the end of the century: Ortega y Gasset, 1963, p, 521). Nobody thought Europe could be a definitive solution to our problems; moreover, Europe herself was a problem. But Europe seemed to be the solution for many of the problems we were wasting our energy dealing with; and above all, she had the correct institutional framework within which, we thought, we would be able to solve some old problems, and to face new and better ones: problems we could not solve but which it would be challenging and exciting for us to live with. Therefore we saw ourselves as dissenters of both the prevailing culture and the prevailing institutions of our country and as longing for and trying to anchor our dissent in the European experience.

Usually the dreams of one generation reach fulfillment only in the life of the following ones; but it has been the privilege of our generation not only to dream of and believe in Europe as the solution for our problems, but also to act out that dream and even to see it converted into some crucial features of present day Spain. We are thankful and proud of it, our pride being tempered by the knowledge that we have been extremely fortunate to experiment with liberal democracies and open markets in the context of the Western Europe of the late 1970's (and not in a context similar to that of the Western Europe of the 1930's as our parents did). It is further tempered by the understanding that we have been participants in a large and complex historical process of cultural adjustment between Europe and Spain which has taken place between the mid 1950's and the mid 80's: half of it under Francoism; and half of it under the rule of a liberal democracy.

This paper contains a core argument (sections 2 and 3) and two peripheral elements (sections 4 and 5). My core argument deals with the emergence of a democratic tradition in contemporary Spain. In section 2, I will contend that a process of gradual emergence of liberal democratic institutions and values in civil society preceded and paved the way for the political transition of the 1970's. I will explain that process as an interplay of institutional and cultural changes fueled by both external and endogenous factors. The final result has been a synchronization or homogenization between Spanish culture and

institutions and European ones. In section 3, I will discuss more specifically the process of "invention" of a new tradition in our political culture since the mid 1970's: that of a "democratic Spain", involving a selective collective memory and an array of political symbolisms (myths and rituals) that imply a new understanding of Spanish history and of Spanish identity.

Put into more general terms the argument to be developed in these two sections can be summarized as follows. While considering the transition from an authoritarian regime to democracy we may find useful to make a distinction between the phenomenon of "transition" or regime change (concerning the setting up of new rules of the political game regarding access to, the limits and the modalities of exercise of state power) and that of "consolidation" (referring to the process at the end of which the new rules are expected to be routinely complied with, that is, neither challenged nor reasonably expected to be challenged). Now, it is the main point of this paper to argue, drawing on the Spanish experience, that the success of democratic consolidation depends (a) first, on a previous process of inventing liberal democratic traditions in civil society and (b) second, on the nature of the political symbolisms such as rituals, myths, heroes, dramas or icons (and the cognitive maps and moral orientations embodied in such symbolisms) available to elites and the population at large by means of which people give meaning to and mobilize moral and emotional commitment into what they are doing, that

is, into setting up and keeping in function a liberal democratic polity. In the case of Spain chief among these symbolisms stand those concerning the integrative role of politics: memories of the civil war, rallying symbols (such as the monarchy) and rituals of national reconciliation (such as those involved in the making of the constitution itself or the "social pacts").

By "traditions" I mean sets of institutions (rules and patterns of meaningful behavior) and/or cultural practices (that is, beliefs and evaluative statements embodied in rituals, myths or ideologies) that become a regular and expected part of everyday experience (Gray, 1986, p.41). Societal traditions are labelled "liberal democratic" in the sense that they convey beliefs, imply commitments and shape habits or dispositions which are consistent with the principles of a liberal democratic polity; that is, one which is predicated on basic liberties of the individuals (and their organizations) from state intervention (that is its "liberal" part) and on democratic procedures in decision making on areas of collective interest (that is its "democratic" part) (Hayek, 1976; Sartori, 1987).

In addition to the core argument I will explore in section 4, as a counterpoint to the theme of the homogenization between Spanish and European culture and institutions, the theme of cultural distinctiveness and the search for cultural singularities in present day Spain (partly as a legacy of

other long standing traditions), and finally in section 5, I will propose some suggestions concerning the application of my argument to two current European developments (the construction of the European community and the transitions to democracy in Eastern Europe).

2. The synchronization of Spanish and European historical time

In the life span of one generation Spain has become a modern capitalist economy, a liberal democratic polity and a tolerant and plural society, largely secular with regard to most economic and political concerns and based on values common to all Western European countries, with those of individual freedom and human rights in the forefront. This has been the result of a profound institutional and cultural transformation of which the democratic transition is only one, although a decisive, aspect. We may well still be in the process of catching up with the living standards and productivity levels of some other European nations and of consolidating our political institutions; and we may still have a long way to go before putting our institutions of research and higher education on par with the best in the world; but for all our limitations we are aiming at these things and we imagine they are already within our grasp (higher living standards, the quality of democratic life or advanced research).

Some fifty years ago, in the aftermath of our civil war, things looked quite different. At that time Spain was also trying to catch up with Europe, but with a very different Europe. Spain's models were Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy: not that different, by the way, from the models that so many fascist or authoritarian movements all over Continental Europe were trying to emulate at the time. The vagaries of World War II put this model to rest. The peoples of Continental Europe were liberated mainly by foreign armies that helped to make forceful and irreversible transitions to liberal democracies in Western Europe (Herz, 1982), and to so called "popular democracies", that is to Communist dictatorships, in Eastern Europe. In a few years Western European countries started to rebuild their economies, to expand their markets and welfare states, to consolidate their party systems and democratic institutions, and to grow and thrive in all directions.

By comparison to these European democracies of the 40's and 50's, Franco's Spain looked anachronistic and pathetic. The Spanish state was organized along strictly authoritarian lines. A military dictator held supreme power supported by his comrades-in-arms, the Catholic Church, the business community and large masses of peasants and middle classes, some of them organized in a fascist party. Professional associations subordinate to the state were allowed. The tasks of a liberal state tend to be reduced to those of providing a framework for individual, family and private organizations' goal-oriented activities. The liberal state's collective goals of a

substantive (or non procedural) character are few, and are articulated through a continuous debate loosely linked with negotiations concerning equally legitimate particular interests. Contrariwise, the totalitarian or strong authoritarian state has collective goals, projects and missions to accomplish; and it appeals to "its" nation to follow suit. What is more: such a state claims these goals articulate its nation's deepest wishes and pretends a sort of mystical identification between the nation and the state. The national state that came out of the civil war in Spain had, indeed, ambitious goals in mind. It dreamed of shaping a homogeneous Catholic society, organizing economic and social life along corporatist lines, and becoming an industrial power and a significant colonial empire. Borrowing from different historical layers of the European experience, the Francoist state combined medieval parliaments and features of the Imperial Spain of the XVIth century, giving prominence to the counterreformation church, with the trappings of XIXth century European colonial powers and the new fascist regimes.

These grandiose designs of the state and its associated elites, with the high church conspicuously in first place, required an external environment which was either friendly, or, at least, neutral so that the state could concentrate on the task of imposing its will on a society composed either of enthusiastic supporters or of people demobilized, disorganized and reduced to passivity and fear. The link between these two factors was close. The relative isolation of the country

worked as a precondition for the state and its associated elites to dominate society and to try to reshape it. That was expressed in the twin symbolisms of separation from the outside world and of victory over the internal enemies which were to be given enormous importance during these years. Mythical tales such as that of Numancia's resistance to the Romans (or Sagunto's to Carthago) found their complement in rituals such as the military displays in the annual commemoration of the end of the civil war.

But if the success of the Francoist experiment depended on external factors, these in turn were to prove quite problematic in due time. As the fascist powers started losing the war by 1942, Franco had to play a second best strategy of coming to terms with the Western democracies on the common ground of anticommunism. But Western support in the long run proved to be conditional on Spain opening up to the international capitalist economy; and in turn this proved to be the trigger for the most far reaching transformation of the Spanish economy and Spanish life.

In the 1940's, Spain was an agrarian society with about 50% of the labor force working in the primary sector. Small peasant holdings dominated in the north while latifundistas, with their corresponding masses of an underemployed rural proletariat, were the typical feature of the south. Traditional techniques and deficient forms of organization, combined with hard climatic conditions and semiarid soils,

prevailed in large parts of the country. Yields were low, and agrarian production stagnated. Industrial development proceeded unevenly. Protectionist laws and public investment gave it an initial boost that never went very far because of inefficiency, lack of imported machinery and the weakness of domestic demand. By the mid 1950's it was clear the Spanish economy was going nowhere.

The second half of the 1950's and the early 1960's were the turning point for Francoism. It was caused by Spain's involvement in the network of geopolitical alliances and economic interdependences of the Western democracies. Placed in a choice situation resulting from the changed context of international politics and the failure of its past socioeconomic policies, the Spanish government decided on economic policies that put an end to the dream of autarchy and import-substitution policies for industrial development. (A move probably facilitated by the lessons drawn from the failure of General Peron's policies and his subsequent dismissal from power by the late 1950's) (Waisman, 1987). As soon as it was clear that we were heading towards an open economy to be integrated into the international markets, massive flows of capital, commodities and people came across the Spanish borders, and all sorts of institutional and cultural transformations followed. The ability of the state to control the fate of Spaniards came to an end. The grandiose design became rather a delusion of grandeur instilled in the

rhetorical speeches of the Head of State; until it was all but forgotten, buried in an embarrassed silence.

Peasants became industrial workers or employees and urban dwellers. Millions migrated from the countryside to the towns. The countryside was depopulated; the active population in the agrarian sector fell from 50% to 15% by the mid 1970's. Agrarian technology, professional training and schooling and the social structure of the villages changed; and the traditional institutions of social control (authoritarian families, interference by schoolteachers, churches and local authorities on moral matters, patterns of deference to traditional elites) gradually eroded until they eventually withered away, unnoticed (Pérez-Díaz, 1973).

Millions of tourists invaded Mediterranean Spain and millions of Spaniards spent years of working and living in Germany, around Paris, the Netherlands or Switzerland; thousands of students and young professionals went to study abroad; entrepreneurs imported machines; foreign investors poured capital into the Spanish economy; consumers bought whatever they could of foreign made commodities. As these exchanges became more and more frequent, their meaning was clear for all to read. It amounted to a massive, all pervasive and overpowering experience of learning. The Spaniards were exposed to institutions and cultures, ways of doing things in all areas of life, which were simply much more successful than their own; more successful in giving people more of the things

they already wanted, and some of those they "learned" to want: freedom from scarcity, more opportunity to move upwards, less subjection to all forms of authority, more knowledge and more understanding. Spaniards learned from, imitated and finally came to identify themselves with these Europeans, their institutions and their way of life.

Now, as the state lost its ability to keep the gates of society closed, and as through these gates there came goods of all kinds, both economic and otherwise latent conflicts within Spanish society were activated and worked their way through the old institutional framework, forcing people to create and experiment with new institutions.

With changes in the urban economy came three crucial institutional changes in the system of industrial relations. Collective bargaining, industrial strikes and "semifree" unions responsive to the rank-and-file's demands were either legalized or de facto tolerated between the late 1950's and mid 60's, so that at the time of the democratic transition the working class had accumulated ten or more years of experience in massive strikes, free bargaining and a good measure of de facto representative unions. All these new institutions were in a sense a spontaneous, ad hoc invention of people facing the immediate tasks of defending themselves in the face of exploitation and taking advantage of new opportunities; but they were also an obvious replica of the practices of free trade unionism, collective bargaining and industrial conflict

that workers knew existed all over Europe, and which they had been exposed to while working as migrant workers in European cities.

But even more important: the basic institutions for the creation of culture and the socialization of the new generations were challenged. The turning point of the mid 50's and early 60's was concerned with more than mere economic policies and socioeconomic activities. Changing policies on the economic front were just one critical aspect of a larger paradigm shift in the mentality and behavior of the elites and the country at large. It was a confession of failure on the part of the Francoist Establishment of military men, fascist leaders, businessmen, clergymen and professionals regarding the realization of their Catholic, authoritarian, corporate ideals about a well-ordered-society. From then on it was no longer credible that these ideals could be combined into a plausible scenario for Spain's future.

Church and religion, to begin with, went through a most profound metamorphosis (Pérez-Díaz, 1987). The counterreformist church came under challenge from different quarters. After Pius XII's death, the Spanish Church was more and more at variance with the dominant teachings and attitudes of the Vatican and the European Church; as it discovered with a shock at the Second Vatican Council. The younger generations of priests and laymen, more attuned to the spirit of the times, pressed the old generation of bishops and leaders of

the religious orders for changes as hard as possible, short of engaging in open rebellion. Whether they were Basque nationalists, democrats or leftists of several denominations, in one way or another they challenged the Church's alliance with the State and the authoritarian structure of the ecclesiastic institutions. By the time of the democratic transition, the Spanish Catholic Church had gone full circle and, no longer proud of her role as a crusader during the civil war, she was asking the Spaniards for forgiveness for her failure to avoid that war. But another no less revealing sign of the new times was the fact that a gesture of such symbolic importance went by almost unnoticed; because in the end those clashes between clerics (and devout laymen) of different ages and persuasions took place against the background of a Spanish population which was taking less and less interest in church affairs in general. The Spaniards were going through a process not only of detachment from the Church, but also of mild secularization. While keeping their allegiance to the Catholic faith, their interest in the dogmatic teachings of the Church declined drastically, and their interpretation of morality became more and more of a personal affair (Orizo, 1983).

The institutions of secular culture went through similar changes. The milieu of artists and intellectuals was already far removed from the influence of both the State and the Catholic Church in the 1950's. The attempts made by Catholic "integrists" to shape the university system failed because at

some point during the mid 50's the best and brightest among the university students were already looking in an altogether different direction. They were reading non-Catholic European intellectuals such as Sartre, Heidegger, Nietzsche, Popper, Hegel or Marx. They were engaged in "student politics", already dismantling the fascist student organizations by 1958, and starting new democratic student organizations which were consolidated by the mid 60's. By the time of Franco's death the university had developed a culture of political dissent and had been in a state of continuous unrest for most of the previous 15 to 20 years. A new generation had grown up that by the mid 60's was making its début professionally. These young professionals, journalists, lawyers, doctors, engineers, challenged the established patterns and the culture of their organizations: newspapers, professional associations, hospitals or business firms.

By the time we get to the mid 70's the economic, social and cultural institutions of Spain were already quite close to those of Western Europe, and the cultural beliefs, normative orientations and attitudes that go with the workings of these institutions were also close to the European ones. That is one of the main reasons why the political change to democracy worked so swiftly, thoroughly and rapidly, despite the enormous problems to be either solved or lived with, much to the amazement of those foreigners who persisted in looking at Spain through the memories of the 1930's, the civil war or the first decade of Francoism. At the same time, as the political

transition proceeded, it pushed this process of rapprochement with Europe even further.

By the mid 70's Spain's economy was a modern economy, ranking tenth among capitalist economies throughout the world, with a large industrial sector, a booming service sector and its agriculture undergoing rapid transformation. Economic development had produced a working class uprooted from its rural origins, eager to reap the benefits of continuous increases in real wages and an incipient welfare state that started developing late in the 60's but had kept growing ever since. By the late 70's the standard of living of the average Spanish worker was about one third lower than that of the average French worker and quite close to that of the average Italian worker. When mobilized for collective action in the final years of Francoism, those workers' goals had been economic improvements and legal, free unions. And when free unions were finally legalized by democracy, this did not move the workers significantly beyond the basic economic goals. Both workers' behavior and attitudes throughout these years showed a limited yet significant acceptance of the authority structure of capitalist firms and the basic facts of the market economy, not that different from those prevailing among other Western-European workers. There were conflicts of interest and a high rate of strikes (even a "national strike" in 1988), but more than enough legitimacy and trust had been invested in the system by the workers as to preclude their support of radical alternatives. Despite the economic crisis

with its high rate of unemployment, the record of past economic prosperity made for expectations of the sustained recovery, sooner or later, of the capitalist economy (as had happened by the mid 1980's). And as workers' positions became clear on this point, unions also moved in this direction (Pérez-Díaz, 1987).

By the 1970's the ideological splits which had been so intense in Spain throughout most of our contemporary history had mellowed considerably. The ideological sources of most of our radical right and our radical left were in deep crisis and looking for some peaceful compromise. The Catholic Church was not in the mood for preaching holy crusades and supporting Francoism as she had done in the past. Far from it Catholics were looking for an accommodation with the secular forces and the new regime. Anarchists, Communists, Socialists and anticlerical intellectuals had also mellowed and most of them were taking moderate stands. Most importantly, the vast majority of Spaniards, better or at least more highly-educated than in the past and out of touch with ideological politics for quite a long time, had little willingness to join either side in any ideological battles; and they showed no more than a passing and superficial interest in hearing about them. Theirs had become a culture embedded in countless social rituals of prosperity, bargaining and social dialogue, and therefore it was a culture already organized around values of citizenship, individual happiness, reasonable arguments, freedom of choice and tolerance.

By and large the differences between Spain and Western Europe regarding economic life and culture seem today a matter of degree. Their basic homogeneity is clear. And this certainly applies also to the political sphere. Fourteen years (1976/1990) of uninterrupted democratic rule proves the point that our liberal democracy has become consolidated. We have a political class composed of people of different persuasions but who live together in a rather civil way, regularly coming to the polls, learning their trade in the exercise of different powers, national, regional or local. Politicians and public bureaucrats handle official business year after year, attend to the rituals of political life, solve a few problems, keep the usual confusion of politics within reasonable limits, endure a dose of impossible problems without too much indignity, and have even been able to develop a reasonable consensus regarding the basics of foreign policy, regional politics and anti-inflationary economic policies that very few seem to question. Democracy has become business as usual, an expected and accepted part of the every day life of all Spaniards. However, while societal traditions have played such a key role in preparing the way for democracy, the success of democratic consolidation hinges on these traditions having been combined with the emergence and eventual development of a new tradition of political culture.

3. The invention of "democratic Spain"

The culture of a given society is not a set of stable and consistent beliefs, normative orientations and the corresponding institutions, but rather a repertoire of many such cultures or cultural traditions, which have accumulated throughout history as responses to many different problems. These cultures may coexist peacefully or stand in a complex relationship with each other, or sometimes even be in open conflict. They may be linked to each other by some common grounds they all share, but also by the contentious points or debates in which they are all involved (Laitin, 1988). At each stage of the evolution of society every new generation is faced with new problems, finds this repertoire of cultural traditions as a repertoire of tools (Swidler, 1986) with which to interpret and solve those problems, and makes several choices regarding them; for instance, it has to choose which one of the competing interpretations of its history, recent or remote, is going to prevail. Different segments of the population may choose different traditions and so engage in the cultural debate from different viewpoints. Their choices imply other choices regarding the manner and the intensity of their adherence to these traditions. Their commitment to them may be superficial; or they may deeply anchor their lives and personal trajectories in those traditions. They may adopt a critical attitude towards them, accept some of their elements while rejecting others; they may take elements out of other

traditions; they can combine old and new elements to start or invent new traditions (Hobsbawm, Ranger, 1983).

In contemporary Spain I think we face the emergence and, to some extent, the "invention" of a new tradition, particularly, but not only, in the field of politics. The country is taking on a new identity. She has adopted as the central denotation of that identity that of being a "democratic Spain" as opposed to the Francoist Spain she was for almost forty years. Attached to this symbolic core we find other connotations such as that of being "modern" as opposed to traditional or backward; and being a "citizen" or a member of the Western Community, instead of being an outsider, or marginal to it.

This new tradition is to a certain degree a deliberate institutional and cultural construct. This has been the result of Spanish efforts to combine a process of imitation of successful Western models with a process of learning rooted in their own experience. We have built up our system of political institutions on the founding stone of the Constitution of 1978, which was designed in such a way as to avoid the pitfalls associated with that of 1931. The Constitution of 1978 has been intended to symbolize national reconciliation and accommodation between left and right, secular and religious forces, capitalism and social reform, the center and peripheral nationalisms. The integrative role of politics has been emphasized again and again, both in our institutions and our political culture. The monarchy has gradually emerged as

an increasingly important symbolic rallying point for the nation. National, regional and local elections have been, and are, routinely used as forums for ritual speeches about the virtues of a democratic system that abhors political violence; and campaigns based on images of moderation prove regularly successful in the polls. Moreover, for many years during and since the democratic transition the main business of politics has consisted in a series of pacts and understandings among competing forces. The Constitution itself was the result of such a pact between left and right, and other understandings were reached with the church and the army. Regional and social pacts have been a most prominent part of our political life throughout these years. Regional pacts between centrists, socialists and regional political elites have helped to channel in a rather constructive way regional and nationalistic conflicts; they have been institutionalized in a system of regional mesogovernments or autonomous communities. The social pacts involving politicians, public bureaucrats, unions and business have been instrumental in supporting anti-inflationary policies followed by both centrists and socialists, thus reducing the level of industrial conflicts and helping to consolidate the professional associations (Pérez-Díaz, 1987).

This institutional effort has been considerably helped by a cultural collective attempt, partly conscious and partly unconscious, to forget parts of our history while keeping alive and reinterpreting others. The Francoist past has been

not so much denounced as silenced. References to personal involvement in the civil war have been avoided; the sets of symbols of both victors and losers in the war have tended to be ignored; the church has forgotten about holy crusades; the communists or anarchists, about social revolutions; the death penalty has been abolished; the country has gone on to portray herself as peace loving, and eager for dialogue, reconciliation and mutual toleration. It may even be said that one of the reasons why Spaniards have reacted so late and so inconsistently to the political violence in the Basque country has been the difficulty they have had in reconciling the image they have about themselves and their institutions with the bare facts of political violence; they have reacted to this difficulty by taking refuge in the ritual denunciation of such violence in the Basque Country as "madness" and "useless" (though in fact, from the viewpoint of the Basque terrorists and some Basque nationalists, political violence has been quite a "rational" and "useful" instrument for the fulfillment of their goals).

In constructing this new tradition of democratic institutions and cultural attitudes, Spaniards have, as I said earlier, combined the imitation of successful models of the Western world with the lessons of their own dramatic experience. Looming large in our collective memory of that experience we find a crucial experiment that failed: our II Republic and the civil war of 1936-1939. The success of our present experiment in democracy has depended, and depends, on the fit between the

European models, our present circumstances and that particular piece of our collective memory which is the civil war. (It may also be added that one of the reasons why many Basques and most other Spaniards have understood each other so poorly during the political transition to democracy lies in the different experience they had of the civil war).

During most of the last two centuries Spain has been the locus of a particularly intense debate between two sets of cultural traditions; so intense in fact that this debate is sometimes referred to as a conflict between "two Spains". The conflict affected all spheres of life, religion, forms of social relationships, the economy and political institutions as well as the meaning of our history and our symbolic identity. That conflict culminated in the civil war of the 1930's, this being the last of a series of civil wars and of endemic civil unrest which had been with us since the beginning of the XIXth century.

Yet the civil war has been the most critical historical experience of contemporary Spain, a decisive turning point in the debate between our cultural traditions and in the invention of the new cultural tradition of a democratic Spain. The civil war has been a piece of our collective memory that, for all its obvious dramatism, is open to very conflicting interpretations. Opposing yet very similar and simple Manichaeian interpretations have been traditionally favored by both the right and the left, the winners and the losers, portraying the

war as a contest between good and evil. However, it could also be argued that while the fascists and military forces who rebelled in Spain in the 1930's did something "wrong", they did it because they counted on support from the peasants, church-goers and middle classes genuinely alarmed by the radical threat of some segments of the working class organizations, and the indecisiveness and incompetence of the moderate left; and it could also be added that the whole process was compounded by the imminent clash between German and Italian fascisms, Soviet communism and French and Anglo-Saxon democracies, all of them standing like Olympian gods, or demons, over the puzzle of Spanish domestic politics, and playing with it. This rather complex argument was put forward and debated in Spain during the last fifteen to twenty years before the democratic transition.

The crucial point is that this argument finally prevailed (and most probably having been given an additional and crucial push by the requirements of the transition itself). Therefore the following generation came to interpret that piece of our collective memory in the light of this reasoning, detaching itself somehow from taking sides over the war. As a result, the civil war was given an aura of tragic inevitability. The moral implications of that tragic account were: the share of guilt and responsibility was more or less evenly distributed among the contenders, since they were all to blame; the total amount of guilt and responsibility was reduced, since they were not that guilty, as they were responding to each other's

threats, and they were pawns in a larger game of world politics; and the guilt they still had to bear could be further reduced through suffering: the losers of the war because they were repressed during one generation, but the winners could also (though in a more mitigated way) be seen as finally "losing" too, since eventually their sons and inheritors had to renounce their political monopoly and lose control of the state one generation later.

The civil war of 1936-1939 has been the moral and emotional reference point of the contemporary Spanish transition to democracy in much the same way as the English civil war of the XVIIth century was the moral and emotional reference point for the sociopolitical arrangements that opened the way to modern Western liberalism. The Spanish Civil War has been the national drama ever present in the public mind while the democratic institutions have provided an opportunity for the symbolic ceremonies which again and again have nullified that experience. These democratic institutions can be construed as ceremonies of national reconciliation. The political class and the social leaders of all kinds supportive of the new regime have been the main agents and officiators at these ceremonies, with the country acting as spectator, chorus and accompaniment. The state has been the locus (and paymaster) for the ceremony,

The conventional sociology of the state regards it only from the practical or instrumental dimension, as the agent of

domination and solution to collective problems. As such, conventional sociology can explain many things but cannot explain the intensity of the sentiments of attraction and hostility which political life arouses among the people; it cannot explain their affectionate link with the state and the personal, institutional and material symbols of patriotism, partisan loyalties, confidence in leaders and the passions that mobilize energy for political participation. But the state has a double dimension: that of being an agent of domination and of solution to collective problems, and that of being an exemplary focus for society. Attention to this latter dramatic, symbolic and affective dimension of the state help us to understand not only the Spanish transition but also the workings of Spanish democracy. All the more so inasmuch as in Spain under the transition, the ceremony of calming the community has had a continuous counterpoint in the violence that has afflicted it. This has accentuated the necessity and the urgency of rituals that are part of the activity of the state aimed at exorcising the destructive or demonic forces that threaten our civic life.

4. Cultural diversification and the search for cultural singularities

Properly speaking, cultural traditions involve both institutions and culture, which is to say, sets of beliefs, norms and attitudes. As I have already explained, during the last 20 to 30 years, Spaniards have incorporated some European

cultural traditions into their repertoire thus coming closer to mainstream European culture in all spheres of life. But it is also a European characteristic, when drawing on an increasingly common repertoire of cultural themes, not to impose a common standard or a homogeneous collective identity, but rather to the contrary, to assert a cultural singularity: that of a class, a town, a region, or a nation. European culture may rest on some common assumptions; but her restlessness and her creativity play their part in a never-ending debate among competing cultural traditions which are only very loosely linked to those common assumptions. In what follows I want to suggest three different lines of inquiry regarding this process of search for cultural singularities in Spain, which together can be seen as a counterpoint to the process of cultural homogenization just explored. Firstly, I will look into a cultural distinctiveness that may be construed as cultural backwardness from the viewpoint of the normative ideal of an open (or "liberal") society. Then, I will allude very briefly to the process of societal and individual experimentation with new expressive cultures and cultural identities that seem to be the mark of advanced contemporary (some would say "postmodern") societies. Finally, I will bundle together a few questions referring to the anchorage in territorial identities of the search for cultural singularity.

First and to begin with, there is a kind of historical singularity made out of a vast array of beliefs, customs and

attitudes that are the legacy of a set of other historical traditions and that could be considered a reflection of historical backwardness and inconsistent with the rules and values of an open society (Popper, 1966; Hayek, 1976). Spaniards have been adopting new institutions in the field of economic and political life, and adjusting their attitudes to them. But it is one thing to have the institutions, and to start working on them, and another, quite different thing to have them working properly. For this, people have to internalize the values and the rules implicit in those institutions and therefore have to acquire a sort of "tacit wisdom" (by analogy to "tacit knowing": Polanyi, 1967) that requires a period of sustained self-discipline and moral exertion. Otherwise we may find that the rules of the game of the democratic contest and the due process of law, of open markets and meritocratic competition are systematically distorted in their application. Instead, we may find other rules applied: for instance, the rules of the game typical of those "closed" or "tribal" societies predicated on a rigid moral separation between themselves and the outside world and where everyday life is patterned on a system of patron-client arrangements. We notice arrangements of this sort pervading all sorts of modern societies, though some observers may think they stand out more visibly and are more deeply rooted in Mediterranean Europe by comparison with Northern European countries (Eisenstadt, Roniger 1984). This may or may not be the case. The point is that these arrangements may be concealed behind many different façades such as political

dogma, local patriotism, ethnic pride, or professional ethics; the practical point being that individuals (and organizations) shield themselves from the consequences of open contests (ideological, political, economic, professional or otherwise) and put themselves under the protection of a patron, party boss, bureaucrat or influential friend. These local arrangements are sometimes seen with ambivalence by foreigners coming from more open and universalistic societies and sometimes as an indication of, or in association with, an art of living which their own supposedly less imaginative populations would have lost touch with (Enzensberger,1989).

The point is, however, that there are sets of rules whose internalization identify people and societies as "civilized" or "uncivilized" according to the normative standards of open societies: such as the rules that require work to be honestly done, eschewing deception, sloppiness and cover-ups for technical incompetence; the rules of respect for the dignity and freedom, property and physical safety of individuals, irrespective of their power, wealth, status, gender, religion or ideology; and the rules of logic and rational argument in intellectual exchanges and moral debates. These three sets of rules on production, sociability and cognition imply the recognition of a private space for individuals in which to make choices and to be held responsible for them, including most prominently those choices concerning the groups and the other individuals to which they choose to develop a moral and affectionate commitment (in other words those choices

concerning the moral communities to which they belong). Therefore, these sets of rules require of people not only to be ready to submit to external sanctions following the breaking of these rules, but, above all, their inner conviction that these rules and that private space are, so to speak, "sacred", that they are the identity marks of their membership in a "civilized society". Only if such inner conviction is widespread enough may we talk of a civilized society; otherwise we face a "promise" of civilization not yet fulfilled.

Now, once the moral commitment to a community is decided on, the next question is what kind of political morality is going to prevail in that community, the point being that only a certain type of political morality is consistent with the productive, sociability and cognitive rules of open or civilized societies. By contrast, there can be a conversion of democratic politics into a game to be played as a contest for power among professional politicians and their electoral machines, that the sovereign people may attend mostly as spectators; an allowance for the administration of justice to be so inefficient that cheating with the law becomes the prevailing social expectation; an issuance of legislative decrees and administrative orders suited to the particular interests of bureaucrats, unions, parties or firms; a provision for unemployment subsidies as a complement for earnings in the underground economy, on a massive scale and with the complicity of local authorities, parties, unions and

churches: all these, among others, would be signs that the promise of a civilized society was far from being fulfilled. Such a low level of civic morality may be compatible with an outward respect for legal formalities and regulations that, in fact, everybody knows can not be reasonably complied with, unless society stagnates; and it may also be compatible with reiterated assertions of democratic principles. But inner respect for the law is bound to be eroded and disappear under these circumstances; and in such a framework many individuals will tend to play the game of mutual exchanges, as well as with public authorities, in a spirit of self-assertive hyper-individualism where they will pride themselves for outsmarting everybody around; and they will use their inside knowledge of the public institutions for their own particular advancement. This is a type of cultural singularity that, from such normative viewpoint, Europe should have little use for, since it is witness to a failure of the institutional mechanisms of free citizenship, open markets and moral character.

These signs are visible in Spain, but not only there. We may find similar traces in other parts of Europe and everywhere in capitalist democracies throughout the world. It could be that some societies are moving precisely in the direction of such closed and neoclientelistic societies, shielded from outside competition and stagnating. But in that case the situation should be defined as that of a field in which we find two competing cultural traditions, that of an open society and that of the tribal societies of the past: an open contest

whose outcome has to be decided again and again, generation after generation.

Secondly, a rather different kind of search for cultural singularities arises from the internal dynamism of modern societies. Relatively homogeneous standards concerning the liberal democratic politics, general laws, open markets and bureaucratic procedures of an open society allow for many significant institutional variations, and they are compatible with many different forms of sociability, life-styles and expressive cultures. Our contemporary way of life, while pushing towards some homogenization in the spheres of work and the economy, and even politics, allows for a greater and greater range of choice in other spheres. For instance, nearly all the collective identities of our contemporary societies are in the process of being challenged and redefined. Social classes, political parties, professional associations or churches no longer have the means for controlling individuals and shaping their choices (including those choices concerning the collective identities they adhere to) as they had in the past. All these collective identities have become loose identities, and individuals tend to redefine their attitude and eventual commitment to them, in their own terms. Of course the individuals' choices may be influenced by their families, the media, schools and many other institutions; but the fact remains that the range for individual experimentation with different kinds of commitments to the family, morals, ultimate beliefs, gender relations, the state and so on, is expanding,

and that the cultural diversity following from this spills over into life styles and consumer patterns. That diversity is likely to grow even further due to the fact that more and more people seem embarked on a "tradition of the new" (Rosenberg, 1960), that is, a continuous experimentation with beliefs, morals and ways of living, as well as experimentation with their self images, and therefore with the values of internal consistency and continuity in their personal lives. We find increasingly frequent indications of this rather general trend in Spain during the last decade, particularly in the spheres of family patterns, life styles and private morals, but also in the kinds of attachments people develop to unions, churches, political parties and public organizations in general.

Finally, to what extent this search for cultural singularity is anchored in territorial identity is very much of an open question. In the Spanish experience of the last 10 to 15 years there seems to be a revival of local and regional patriotism. Regional differences have always been important in Spain, rooted in a dramatic history of medieval kingdoms and a diversity of languages, economies and even ethnic groups. Several factors exacerbated these regional tensions in the last century and a half, particularly between Catalonia and the Basque Country and the rest of Spain. Economic growth in those regions attracted migrants from other parts of the country. The regional middle classes, proud of their economic power, uneasy about their collective identity being threatened

by the new migrants, and resentful of the lack of political power, embraced the nationalist ideology of the time, often with the support of a traditional church. Tensions reached a climax in the 30's and played a role in the civil war, only to be forcefully repressed under Franco's rule. Now the liberal democracy has engaged in a policy of devolution of power to these regions, which has led to a quasi federal system of regional autonomies and municipal decentralization, with the cortege of the collective rituals of regional and local politics that have reinforced these regional and local identities (in some cases they are even in the process of inventing them).

Another related question is to what extent we may witness a similar revival of interest in the national characteristics of Spain as a whole. Spanish elites and the Spanish population talk now of Europe 1992 as a challenge to be met, of the need to assert ourselves in face of the European community. But Spaniards right now are rather uncertain about how to combine their present European identity with a Spanish identity which would be consistent with their very strong intuitive feelings of cultural distinctiveness, the rather weak concept of their national interests being confronted by the national interests of other European nations, and their uncertain reading of Spanish history: a thousand year old history of reconquest, discovery, counterreformation and many other collective adventures, some fortunate, some unfortunate, which have left a cultural heritage and possibly some traits of a national

character. Sometimes Spaniards talk of the peculiarities of our sense of honor, our vision of death and our ethics of hospitality. But they still seem to be at a loss to articulate for themselves, let alone be able to communicate to others, the confused feelings they may have about this heritage. These uncertainties may be compounded now by the contradictory movements of a "push" towards European integration and a revival of the nationalisms which are resulting from the collapse of Eastern Europe's totalitarian regimes.

5. From Spain to Europe

Western Europe has been a key factor in the cultural and institutional changes in Spain just discussed, but it may be that, in return, Spanish developments could be helpful for an understanding of the predicament in which Europe (both Western and Eastern) finds itself today. In these concluding remarks I will offer a few tentative thoughts suggesting (a) that some features of the "invention" of a democratic Spain parallel the "invention" of the European Community in ways that deserve exploration, and (b) that if societal traditions and political symbols have played a role in the Spanish transition, analogous phenomena could be seen at work in the current transitions in Eastern Europe.

Concerning the parallel between the Spanish transition and the European Community, the argument could be summarized in four

points. First, building up new political institutions probably requires a combination of intense and contradictory collective sentiments of hope and fear. Beginning with fear, let us note that the horrors of the Spanish civil war find an obvious parallel in the horrors of the two world wars that from the European perspective could be construed as European civil wars (between national states, but also during the Second World War, within most continental nations) . The extraordinary dimensions of those self-destructive experiences explain not only the need of deep emotional and symbolic underpinnings for the subsequent political institutions (of democratic Spain and the European Community) and the stress put on the integrative role these institutions have been expected to play, but also the rearrangements of the Spanish and European collective memories that accompanied them.

Second, the collective effort needed to keep these institutions working and developing even further require not only fear of a revival of the past, but also hope. However self-confidence and hope, which is to say, a belief in an open and promising future, do require sooner or later tangible proofs of success. Spaniards regained a measure of self-confidence and hope as a result of the ability of civil society to grow, diversify, organize itself and dare to challenge traditional beliefs and values in the fields of religion, morality, the economy and politics during the last fifteen to twenty years of Franco's regime. Spaniards developed that self-confidence even further thanks to the

success of the democratic transition itself, the relative soundness of the new political system to handle most regional conflicts and the capacity of the economy to manage through the economic crisis of the late 1970's and early 1980's (Spaniards' relative optimism in the face of the challenges of the European integration in the 1980's rests on these experiences of success). It is clear that the Spanish experience can be seen as a late-comer variant of the more general Western European experience of success in the tasks of reconstruction, economic growth and social and political stability of the postwar period (corroborated as it were by the present withering away of the totalitarian states of Eastern Europe).

Third, these very experiences of regional rivalries in the Spanish case and of national conflict in the European one, have provided the impetus for experimenting with polycentric political systems. In Spain we find the de facto federal system of the state of autonomous communities. It is a system with an in-built ambiguity. It may be a system with a diffuse distribution of power in which there would be no clear hegemonic center, or it may be a system so defined as to facilitate continuous renegotiation of the terms of the agreement between a central political locus of both instrumental and expressive authority, and several peripheral (subordinate yet potentially centrifugal) forces. The institutional "text" allows, therefore, for several readings and performances, and the equilibrium of the whole may hinge

on either the interplay among several "centers" or on the relationship between center and periphery. The institutional experiment of the European community has a similar in-built ambiguity. The formal experiment with a polycentric political system would rule out a clear hegemonic power within the community by one strong nation (or a de facto alliance between two or three "core" nations). Yet the national elites of the stronger national groups tend to use the system in order to advance claims for leadership or such a hegemonic position (hence the tension between De Gaulle's and Monnet's interpretations of the system: Monnet, 1976, p.654). Lately the prospects of an imminent German reunification have made this claim both more credible and in a sense, given the memories of the second world war, more puzzling. So it is clear that the institutional ambiguity of these experiments with polycentric political systems is related with deeper cultural ambiguities regarding the definition of what is going to be the paramount collective identity these institutions refer to in the minds and the hearts of the elites, as well as of the populations at large. And this makes both experiments acutely vulnerable to a revival of centrifugal nationalisms.

Finally, it is worth noting that the relative success of these institution-building processes has depended (until now) on the relatively low salience of the issue for these new political actors of having a distinctive foreign policy. This has followed from the fact that those developments have been crucially dependent (a) on the links of Europe, and Spain,

with the world capitalist order and the system of the Western defence alliance in which Europe, and Spain, gradually became integrated, and (b) on the fact that within these networks Europe, and Spain, have occupied positions of relative inferiority and de facto subordination vis-à-vis the United States for a very long time. Until now this circumstance, for all its obvious humiliating connotations, seems to have had some rather useful effects. This may be shown by the fact that when the European countries have engaged in a search for a distinctive foreign policy, they have frequently looked for inspiration in their imperial past and have entertained delusions of grandeur, and as a consequence they have become entangled in disastrous colonial adventures (witness the Suez affair), they have played at mere symbolic politics, and they have hindered the development of the European Community. In the Spanish case the imperial past was so removed in time (and had become so controversial in the eyes of the Spaniards themselves), that it played no significant role in defining foreign policy, even less so since Spain had been accustomed to having no role to play in international politics for most of the XXth century, and Franco's foreign policy was little more than a shrewd continuous exercise in regime survival. The goal of European integration filled the vacuum of a meaningful Spanish foreign policy and provided a plausible and useful common reference point both for significant sectors of the Francoist regime and for most of the democratic opposition to it. By the time of the transition, that goal had come to be taken for granted by the entire political class as well as

by civil society. It was another additional factor helping to create a broad social and political consensus and to consolidate the new political institutions. But in terms of defining a foreign policy in the long run, this could only have the paradoxical result of making the issue of a future Spanish foreign policy largely irrelevant.

But now the parallel breaks down. While Spain may largely dispense for having a foreign policy of her own in the future, Western Europe finds herself at a watershed in the development of her Community institutions at a time when her environment has been altered dramatically, enlarging the range of her options. She is pushed from within and pulled from without towards a position in which she has to define a foreign policy of her own. Confronted with this challenge it is far from clear that she will succeed. But she has a chance, and she may gather her wisdom and her determination together and try to do so.

For Western Europe meeting the challenge of the present hour requires a proper understanding of the terminal illness of the political and economic regimes of Central and Eastern Europe. We witness there the end of a failed experiment that looks beyond recovery, much to the amazement of many people in the West who had a powerful vested interest in keeping the system alive; hard-liners because they needed an enemy; and soft-liners because they neither questioned the legitimacy of the Eastern European rulers, nor gave up the hope of eventually

seeing them as potential allies in their fight for "social justice". The collapse of communism results from the combination of a profound crisis of the ruling class of the totalitarian regimes (that is, the communist parties in control of the state, the economy and most cultural institutions) and a new assertiveness on the part of civil society.

As of now it seems obvious that the communist party of the Soviet Union has failed in the military and economic competition with the liberal societies, and is being forced, however reluctantly, into giving up the pretences of being a superpower - particularly since it is proving itself unable to deliver the basic collective goods of economic growth, social integration and even a sense of collective or national identity. The wavering, procrastination and merely symbolic performance regarding substantive issues of the last five years of Gorbachov's rule proves that Carl Schmitt's characterization of the liberal democracy as the stage for an "endless debate" with no real and final decision in view (Schmitt,1985) was wrong and missed the point. Totalitarian regimes can be more rhetorical and inefficient than parliamentary democracies. However in the course of the debate something quite important has become clear: the irrelevance of Marxist theory for helping to define and solve the problems at hand, and of Marxist morality for motivating people into performing their duties as citizens, workers or members of a moral community. And the symbols that embodied and gave

sensuous expression to these theories and morals, and were so powerful in the past (icons such as red flags, Lenin's statues, sickles and hammers; slogans of class-struggle, vanguard parties or scientific socialism; mythical tales of the October revolution; shrines, such as Lenin's tomb, etc., etc.), no longer evoke the feelings of enthusiasm, respect or fear they used to. They are becoming question marks and embarrassments.

By contrast, we witness the emergence of societal traditions, everywhere in the communist world but more particularly in Central Europe, linked to alternative political symbolisms and preparing the way for alternative political regimes. The ruled population has defined itself as different from, and opposed to, the political class: this act of defiance has been the first and main step in the process of its emancipation from totalitarian rule. Such a defiance has been symbolized by a name: the name of "civil society". This is a term with a very complicated semantic history and open to several interpretations (Pérez-Díaz, 1977 and 1987; Keane, 1988). At this point, I only want to indicate that the use of the term in the context of Central and Eastern European recent political developments gives it a very specific meaning: that of denoting a set of social actors and institutions different from and opposed to another set of actors and institutions referred to by the terms of "political class" (the communist party and its party-related organizations, nomenklatura, etc.) and "state". Such a "civil society" is supposed to be "reborn"

(Rupnik,1988) (or to have "returned": Pérez-Díaz, 1987), meaning that she stands on her own, independent from the political class and the state, and what is even more: rejecting the claims by the political class and the state to define and be responsible for the solution to the collective problems of the country. Pregnant illustrations of such a "rebirth" are the church and Solidarity in Poland; the workers, intermediaries and consumers involved in the markets of the "second economy" in Hungary (even if they are part of a hybrid and confused society: Hankiss, 1990); and the network of cultural dissidents, intellectuals and students in Czechoslovakia. All these groups and institutions have taken advantage of the diminishing capacities of the totalitarian states to impose a high level of physical coercion on their subjects; and they have seized this opportunity in order to create semiprotected spheres in which different principles of social integration, different logics of economic performance, different rules of intellectual debate, and different symbols of collective identity have been defined, explored and partly implemented in a relatively sustained manner during the last ten to twenty years. These are already "societal traditions" which could be taken as founding stones for the new political (and economic) institutions which are in the process of being built. Moreover those traditions can also be understood as bearers of values and norms largely consistent with those of the liberal democratic regimes. Finally, in the wake of those traditions there emerge an array of political symbolisms and a reassessment of the national histories (including that of

their most dramatic events such as civil war, foreign invasion and popular acquiescence to despotic power) that challenge the ingenuity and the will of these countries to retain a sense of continuity, self-respect and hope in the future.

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Abstract

The analysis of the experience of regime change in Spain from authoritarian to democratic rule highlights the crucial role that an emergent liberal democratic tradition plays in the process of consolidation of democracy. Although Spain's new liberal democratic tradition set its roots in spontaneous processes of cultural and institutional change that took place in civil society in the fifties and the sixties, it is above all an "invented" political tradition born with democracy. Such invented tradition involves a selective reading of Spain's collective memory and an array of political symbolisms (myths and rituals) that imply a new understanding of Spanish history and Spanish identity. In the case of Spain chief among these symbolisms stand those concerning the integrative role of politics: memories of the civil war, rallying symbols (such as the monarchy) and rituals of national reconciliation (such as those involved in the making of the constitution itself or the "social pacts"). The final section of the paper contains some suggestions concerning the application of this argument to the analysis of other current European developments such as the construction of the European Community and the transition to democracy in Eastern Europe.

Resumen

El análisis de la experiencia española de cambio de régimen político del autoritarismo a la democracia revela que la emergencia de una tradición política liberal democrática es un factor crucial para la consolidación de la democracia. Aunque esta tradición liberal democrática emergente tiene sus raíces en procesos espontáneos de cambio cultural e institucional que tuvieron lugar en la esfera de la sociedad civil en los años cincuenta y sesenta, es también, en buena medida, una tradición "inventada" en la democracia. Dicha tradición comprende una lectura selectiva de la memoria colectiva y una panoplia de simbolismos políticos (mitos y rituales) que implican un nuevo entendimiento de la historia y la identidad de España. Entre dichos simbolismos destacan los que conciernen al papel integrador de la política: memorias de la guerra civil, símbolos unificadores como la monarquía, y rituales de reconciliación nacional como los pactos constitucionales y los pactos sociales. En el último apartado se sugiere la aplicación de este argumento a otros procesos políticos actuales como la construcción de la Comunidad Europea y los procesos de democratización de los países del Este de Europa.